TAHIR ZAMAN

ISLAMIC TRADITIONS OF REFUGE IN THE CRISES OF IRAQ AND SYRIA

Islamic Traditions of Refuge in
the Crises of Iraq and Syria

RELIGION AND GLOBAL MIGRATIONS

Series Editors: Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Jennifer B. Saunders, and Susanna Snyder

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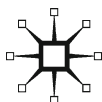*Health, Wealth, and Power in an African Diaspora Church in Canada*
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Acknowledgments

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A Note on Language

Arabic words in this thesis are transliterated on the basis of a simplified version of the *International Journal of the Middle East* (IJMES) system. All translations in this manuscript are my own. To preserve the Levantine and Iraqi dialects I replaced the phoneme /a/ with /eh/. I employ recognized English spelling for proper nouns and lexical terms that are commonly used in the English language.

Refuge in Religion and Migration

Taxi drivers stuck behind the wheel in cities of the Middle East are always looking to edge that bit further ahead. They may even decide to take a circuitous route only to end up beside the same car that they had been alongside in the very same traffic jam only ten minutes previously. When asked why, the driver's stoical reply more often than not is: *ḥaraka baraka* (there is blessing in movement). Movement is a recurrent theme in Islam. One only has to think of the prayer itself and how the devotee moves throughout it. First she is standing, then bowing, then prostrating, and then seated. Zakāt or the giving of alms commends that wealth be distributed and circulated from the wealthy to the poor. Movement is apparent once again in the tracking of the lunar cycle to mark the beginning and the end of the month of Ramadan and other auspicious occasions in the Muslim calendar. The pilgrimage to Makkah calls on adherents from around the world to make the journey—for some an arduous one, for others less so. Arriving in Makkah, the first port of call for pilgrims is the Ka'bah, which they circle seven times. Then there is the *hijra* or the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions from Makkah to Madina, the memory of which Muslim refugees remind themselves of to come to terms with their own displacement. The Prophet too was a forced migrant.

And then there are journeys that we undertake within ourselves; journeys that transform who we believe ourselves to be and where we are heading. Such ontological itineraries are thrust upon forced migrants in ways in which most people only think about under times of extreme duress—illness or on the passing of a loved one. At such times of anxiety, Muslims often utter the *ḥawqala*, a phrase that Prophet Mohammad commended as being one of the treasures of Paradise: *la ḥawla wala quwwata illa billah* (there is

no movement/transformation or power except from Allah). The word *ḥawla* has no direct translation in English and captures the sense of both movement and transformation; it is movement with change in mind.

Change is often understood as being imposed upon displaced people. Fate is a word that crops up time and again when displaced people tell their stories of how they were compelled to leave their ancestral homes. "It was written for us," "God decreed it should be so," "we left it in God's hands," and "what choice did we have" are just some of the oft-repeated phrases one hears when listening to refugee testimonies about their experience of displacement. The notion that refugees are passive victims of circumstance is far from uncommon. Displaced people from the global South are often typecast as such and can be found aplenty in the archives of television news footage, magazines, and newspapers, cutting forlorn beleaguered figures, caged in a circuit of dependency, desperately in need of humanitarian aid and assistance. For some of us looking on from the outside, yielding oneself to fate or providence offers further proof of the passivity of refugees who find themselves being swept away by a tide of events over which they have seemingly very little control.

Literature on refugees has, for the most part, done little to challenge such commonly held assumptions. Moreover, academic output has often been characterized by a policy orientation that seeks to develop recommendations for international humanitarian agencies, NGOs, or specific governments. Surprisingly, there has been a striking paucity of research pertaining to the sociocultural lives of refugees. This book represents a modest attempt at addressing this imbalance. By locating this study at the intersection of a number of subject areas—the sociology of religion, forced migration studies, and Middle East area studies—it sets out to explore the possibility that perhaps the turn to the transcendent has been mistakenly interpreted as resignation and abnegation, whereas it actually ought to be considered as an expression of agency—the decision-making and strategizing of people acting under immense constraint. The notion of agency puts individuals at the heart of social inquiry where they are social actors continually interpreting, re-interpreting, and internalizing their experiences while simultaneously acting upon them.

It is precisely the nature of the particular vulnerabilities or risks forced migrants are exposed to when confronted by an authoritarian state—be it Iraq or Syria—and their response to such hazards that underpins the conceptual framework on which this book is based. The following chapters are an exploration into the many ways in which forced migrants take up positions in relation to other influential and powerful actors including the state, international humanitarian agencies, and NGOs as they struggle to come to terms

with the circumstances of their displacement. The use of the term "humanitarian field" as opposed to "humanitarian space" is deliberate and a distinction needs to be made. The latter, often used by humanitarian actors, denotes the operational context or environment in which humanitarian assistance is delivered with emphasis on (a) security conditions, (b) adherence to core principles of international humanitarian law, and (c) access to targeted populations (Loescher 1998, Brassard-Boudreau and Hubert 2010). In contrast, the term "humanitarian field," following Pierre Bourdieu's contributions to understanding social relations, is used throughout this book to capture the relations of power inherent in delineating and realizing the possibilities, limits, and constraints of humanitarian work. This study can therefore be read as an attempt to advance a greater understanding of what we might call the structuring of the humanitarian field. In doing so, this book sets out to examine a subject area that has received little systematic investigation in the social sciences—the intersection of migration and religious affiliation in the context of emplacement strategies of displaced people.

The "dual imperative" (Jacobsen and Landau 2003) of wanting to carry out rigorous research while simultaneously alleviating the suffering of forced migrants through influencing the ways in which policy-makers and practitioners understand the processes of forced migration, has trapped many academics and researchers of forced migration and refugee studies in a tautological bind. Adopting the presuppositions, categories, and concepts of policy-makers and practitioners to frame research inquiry in order to be "policy relevant" (Bakewell 2008) invariably results in the re-production of a specifically state-centric discourse of refugees and mass-displacement making it increasingly difficult to ascertain where innovative change to the status quo can actually come from.

The growing numbers of forcibly displaced people serve as a cautionary, and all too real, reminder for academics to move beyond a state-centric reading of refugeehood. As Hannah Arendt (1968:275) so cogently argued, the figure of the refugee is called into being as one whose rights are not recognized by the territorially circumscribed nation-state. The original fiction of nation-state sovereignty and a people bound to it means that the figure of the refugee, in this scripted role, is consigned to remain outside of territorially defined rights to citizenship. Continued adherence on the part of concerned agencies and institutions to remain blind to this particular elephant in the room has arguably resulted in the rise of protracted refugee crises. Since the end of the Cold War, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s re-orientation away from third-country re-settlement and toward repatriation to country of origin as the preferred solution for crises of mass-displacement indicates a failure to consider that at the heart

of many instances of mass-displacement is the rupture of the social contract between those who have been compelled to seek asylum and the state (Shacknove 1985). Options for forced migrants have been severely curtailed by the increasingly securitized lens through which South-North migration is viewed by states in the global North. More and more, forced migrants find themselves at an impasse between the proverbial rock and hard place. Given this state of affairs it is not unreasonable to conclude that it is difficult to maintain reliance, in any meaningful way, on the nation-state and its institutions to helpfuly resolve the plight of ever-growing numbers of displaced people.

Framed by a wider discussion on sociocultural traditions of asylum, refuge, and sanctuary in the contemporary Middle East today, I will be using a case study on how religious networks, institutions, and traditions are utilized by Iraqi refugees in their bid to negotiate exile in Syria. I shall reflect on how such understandings, situated outside of legal frameworks, can be mobilized to offer alternative modes of protection and assistance to displaced populations in the region at large.

Much has happened since undertaking fieldwork in Damascus between March 2010 and March 2011. The Arab spring that initially offered much promise and hope has descended into outright war between the Syrian state and multiple competing actors—producing a displacement crisis on a scale beyond the magnitude of the Iraq War. At the time of writing this, Mukhayim al-Yarmouk—a principal site of my research lies besieged by Syrian government forces with no access to humanitarian aid, food, medical supplies, or fuel. Many of the participants who helped create this study have been displaced once again—seeking refuge in the few remaining neighborhoods in Damascus where violence has been relatively limited or neighboring Turkey or the Kurdish autonomous region of Iraq. The lucky few who had the requisite capital to do so have made it further afield—to the major cities of Europe. Many remain in transitional spaces where uncertainty clouds any clear expectation of what a possible future may hold. The brutality of the Syrian conflict and the menace of sectarianism make any discussion of Syria, as a hospitable space or sanctuary, appear seemingly redundant.

However, a narrative much overlooked in current analyses of the conflict in Syria is that of Syria not as a theater of war but paradoxically as a place of refuge and sanctuary. In neighborhoods, towns, and entire villages across the country Syrians have opened the doors to their homes to fellow Syrians displaced by the conflict in nearby areas. From a survey of 52 neighborhoods in the city of Aleppo carried out in March 2013 an interagency study found that of 511,900 registered internally displaced people 289,000 were hosted by local families.[1]

It is also important to recognize that for a short period between 2005 and 2012, Syria was indeed a haven for hundreds of thousands of refugees from Iraq. While it is clear that many Iraqi refugees have been compelled to move once again, the most recent estimates from international agencies indicate that 42,400 Iraqi refugees continue to receive assistance in Syria.[2] This study strives to capture this critical episode in history. It illustrates the tensions prevalent in Syrian society on the eve of a destructive episode in its history through the ambivalent experiences of Iraqi forced migrants. Their everyday interactions wherein religion is diffused through social space as a practice of conviviality, coincides with being confronted by boundary maintenance and exclusion from local networks. Iraqi refugees escaping a sectarian conflict at home find themselves discreetly challenging identity-centric understandings of religion put forth by the Syrian and Iraqi states and established structures of religious authority.

There are significant gaps in the literature concerning the role that religion plays in refugee communities—an indication that religion and faith has until very recently been considered by many researchers to be less important a concern than issues of class, race, ethnicity, or gender. I contend otherwise—and propose that religion is linked in complex ways to all of the above. What is required is a holistic approach to migration and religion; one that will allow us to locate the intersections at which religion is situated.

Surveying the literature, it quickly becomes apparent that such an approach has been lacking. Much of the discussion centering on faith-based organizations (FBOs) has been written in the context of the global North (Nannestad 2008, Korac 2005, Furbey 2007, Cheong et al. 2007). Similarly, the few studies that have examined the relationship between forced migration and religion have often done so again in the context of refugees living in the global North (Gozdziak 2002, McMichael 2002, Shoeb et al. 2007).

Moreover, discussion on religious traditions has either been concerned with the perspective of service providers and advocacy groups (Nawyn 2005, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008) or consisted of text-based analyses of Islamic traditions (ElMadmad 1991, Muzaffar 2001, Zaat 2007, Manuty 2008, Shoukri 2011). Indeed, much research examining migration and religion has been restricted to ideas of inclusion and exclusion—weighting studies toward exploring religion primarily as a repository of social capital. While there is much to be gained from this, such a narrow conceptualization runs the risk of restricting religion to the confines of institutions—in particular, the mosque or church—and overlooks the possibility that religion can be practiced spatially in what are popularly perceived to be more secular spaces.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's (2011) welcome intervention on faith and migration in the context of organizations in Sahrawi refugee camps points

to how refugee spaces can be politicized and inscribed with both religious and secular messages depending on perceived audiences as part of a strategy to gain resources. My emphasis, however, is on the experiences of refugees, rather than political organizations, as they pass through and inhabit spaces, which speak to refugees in both a sacred and secular vernacular.

Here, I am thinking not only of visual productions of space but also of what the anthropologist Charles Hirschkind (2006:6) has termed "Islamic soundscapes" as a means of locating and interpreting religious understandings and practices of forced migrants in urban spaces. How do Islamic acoustics resonate with displaced people as they navigate new surroundings? To what extent, for instance, does hearing and listening to recordings of Qur'anic recitations in markets and cafés impact on how Iraqi refugees come to terms with their experience of displacement? The same question can be asked of the call to prayers, or even radio phone-in shows debating the qualms of the faithful and exhorting believers to be mindful of this life and the next. How do such cultural soundscapes affect refugee attempts in their pursuit of the project of home-making? These are just some of the questions that have yet to be addressed in studies investigating the sociocultural worlds of refugee populations.

Conflating the right to asylum with immigration pathways in the global North has seen a rise in policies aimed at restricting and confining the movements of refugee populations to countries neighboring the country of origin—characterized by fortress Europe. The reluctance of neighboring states to fully integrate displaced populations results in neighboring countries being viewed as staging posts or "transit" areas en route to locations where it is imagined and expected that more lasting forms of protection can be secured. Today, there are growing calls for the reform and re-invigoration of the international protection regime to resolve tensions surrounding the sharing of burdens and responsibilities toward refugee populations (Hathaway 2007). It is in this context that sociocultural meanings of refuge and the displacement process—in particular religious understandings—take on greater significance.

With traditional so-called durable solutions to the Iraqi displacement crisis seemingly unavailable, the protracted nature of the crisis provides the backdrop to which religion as a social and cultural resource emerges as integral to enabling Iraqi refugees to construct an inhabitable world—in the process refugees move beyond the management and care of UN agencies, international NGOs and the state—establishing their own mechanisms of self-reliance. The complex and heavily bureaucratized juncture at which refugees are located in social space indicates that the struggle to make homes is contingent on asymmetrical relations of power. The argument put forth

repeatedly throughout this book is that Iraqi refugees are prompted to reflect upon their specific experiences of religion and to mobilize their understandings of religious traditions in innovative and unforeseen ways. This allows Iraqi refugees to take positions that contest dominant narratives of the state, religious institutions, and international humanitarian agencies.

In proposing that refugees are active social agents this study opens up possibilities to examine tensions that arise through the taking of positions by refugees and other actors in the humanitarian field. Of particular interest is how understandings of notions such as the "stranger," "hospitality," and "neighbourliness" are contested between a specific religious or sociocultural tradition and a dominant, state-centered discourse on refugees, which casts the latter as "unwanted" (Marrus 2002) or at best as temporary guests—and guests, as common wisdom unfailingly reminds us, should never seek to outstay a welcome.

Tensions between competing narratives bring forth both contradictory and complementary practices wherein universal religious traditions simultaneously transcend and coalesce with the logic of the nation–state. This raises questions on how such tensions are manifested in countries hosting large numbers of refugees. What are the difficulties that often prevent refugees from securing access to material and social resources in neighboring countries? To what extent do traditional structures of religious authority— mosques and other Muslim religious institutions and networks constitute a site of inclusion and opportunity for refugees in a society under intense economic and societal pressures? Moreover, do such tensions exist at the interface between refugees and religious networks and institutions or not? And where does the state fit into all of this?

Previous experience in researching on religion and migration had already alerted me to some of the difficulties and challenges involved. Will I only be affirming my own experiences? If so, am I not in danger of confirmation bias—following a circuitous argument that conveniently brings me to answers I have arguably been in search of? Reflecting on these concerns, I arrived at the conclusion that applying a narrative perspective to research on religion and migration would help tease out ambiguities, contradictions, and paradoxes—especially in relation to representations of religious identity that respondents may wish to relate for the occasion of an interview. In addition, it served to remind me that the researcher is always present in the research, however much the text I produce may veil this fact. In light of this, the issue of positionality and reflexivity on the part of the researcher is a recurrent theme—drawing attention to my presence and perspective; reflecting on my interpretation of participants' testimonies. Recognizing knowledge, imagination, and gaze to be situated is an acknowledgment of

the differentiated and variegated ways in which the world is seen and constructed (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002).

Testimonies from refugee participants allow a better understanding of the significance of religion in the initiatives and strategies employed by forced migrants in their everyday lives. It is this focus on the "lived experience" of refugees, which encourages migration and religion to be approached as *holistic* matters. Both migration and religion are whole-life experiences—the holistic nature of each means that it is difficult to gauge where one begins and the other ends. To overcome this particular difficulty the reader is invited to take a journey with Iraqi refugees as they relate episodic life histories. Such testimonies provide key insights into conditions under which agency is activated and allows us to better consider the circumstances within which people set out strategies and act upon them.

This is not to say that the use of testimony to illustrate refugee experiences is unproblematic. Memory is a two-way street. The postmodern trend of problematizing grand-narratives has opened the door to cultural theorists and historians to explore subjective narratives constructed through mining the "partial" and "local" sightings afforded by memory (Radstone 2000:84)—questioning the temporal nature of memory whereby it is revised to conform to more recent experiences. Succinctly put, the here and now drives the production of representation of past events as configured by memory. The present becomes the site of contestation and contradiction. Expectations of the future: where we hope to be; who we hope to be; and what we hope to be doing, shape, and mold our memories of the past in order to attain coherency over our lives.

Memories are implacably untidy. They are merged with other people's recollections and institutional tellings of past events so that the lines between an individual's memory and collective memories become blurred. In this sense, no study of memory can be strictly labeled a study of "pure experience" or "pure events" (Kuhn 2000:186); rather once articulated, memory is subject to revision—it actively makes meaning and is open to interpretation. Yet, care must be taken not to over-extrapolate and over-interpret. Failure to do so can lead to a Dante-esque hermeneutic circle of hell. Memory work can be a fraught endeavor. It raises the specter of calling into question the testimonies of vulnerable people who in the case of refugees have undergone profound experiences of displacement. For many participants, the decision to take flight was a difficult one to undertake risking their own personal safety and the safety of their families. For others, the journey to find refuge involves difficult and tense encounters with authority figures at the border in addition to the culture of mistrust encountered at the UNHCR. Given this vulnerability of participants, in making private words public, do we

not have an added responsibility to shield participants from the dangers of misinterpretation?

Much can be learned from the experience-centered narratives of Iraqi refugees as they shed light on formation and transformation of a religious disposition. In chapters 2 and 3, I draw on testimonies of Iraqi refugees and juxtapose their representations of the past against official histories. In doing so, I remind readers that unlike Richard Brautigan's *Sombrero fallout* stories do not simply fall from the sky but are received in broader contexts and are dialogical constructs.

The agency of social actors is without doubt constrained by hegemonic discourses or master narratives. And yet, where one finds constraint, resistance will surely not be lagging far behind. Iraqi refugees situate themselves in relation to hegemonic accounts producing counter-narratives employing components from within the reference frame provided by master narratives. This was how events in Iraq were, lest they be forgotten. This was their attempt to be written into history; aware that research will be disseminated and their hitherto unheard stories finding a wider audience. Providing a platform for voices rarely heard is an aspect of this book, which serves to remind us that displaced people are people with histories. These histories are important not only for providing a perspective on past events but for humanizing people who are all too often treated as bureaucratic entries on the spreadsheets of organizations and institutions ostensibly charged with the care, control, and well-being of displaced populations.

A leading scholar in the field of narrative studies once remarked that it is the individual rather than the world or nature that tells stories (Riessman 1993:2). Is it facile to point to the existence of the state and other institutions; do they not also tell stories and construct narratives? More importantly, do they not shape the stories individuals tell? Narratives certainly reveal how social agents apprehend the world and add valuable insights into how agents wish to be perceived, but they fall short of unmasking the presuppositions on which the telling of the stories are constructed. Questions demand to be answered if refugee testimony is to be mobilized: to what extent do institutional structures manipulate popular or collective memories of refugees? What does this mean for alternative readings and understandings of refugeehood? By demanding a particular narrative from displaced people in order to secure refugee status, are memories—and by extension experience-centered narratives—on their own, sufficient to understand the religious practices and dispositions of refugees?

As researchers of the social world, and in particular the processes of forced migration, it is imperative to move beyond solely looking at how protagonists interpret things and take into account spatial understandings

and practices of agents in addition to the presuppositions that structure their accounts. Refugees are continually asked to produce and reproduce narratives of past experiences by state agencies, NGOs, international humanitarian agencies, and researchers. Often, the focus is on the triggers of displacement. This focus on past experience contributes toward the creation of what can be called a persecution narrative. This lends itself to a "performative dimension" allowing humanitarian actors to identify "bona-fide" refugees (Malkki 1996:384).

The persecution narrative often eclipses present experiences. This can have a devastating impact on the well-being of refugees who—when a durable solution is not available—find themselves forgotten in a protracted refugee crisis. The experience of displacement is one marked by contradictions, paradoxes, and ambiguities. It is not only about loss but also about emplacement or making place. The key word here is "place." Thinking of space and place *relationally* allows researchers to triangulate the narratives of forced migrants with their positions in social space in relation to institutional actors.

The preoccupation with *tawṭīn* (third-country resettlement) as being the sole durable solution means that many forced migrants do not face up to the prospect of staying in a neighboring country for a lengthy, perhaps undetermined, time. It also draws attention to the presuppositions structuring the social space within which refugees are situated. What do the terms "third country re-settlement," "return," and "local integration" mean for refugees on the one hand, and researchers or institutional actors on the other? Hegemonic or master narratives are not restricted to those produced by the state but include other institutions—most notably, in this case, the UNHCR. Religious discourses also sit in tension with those of the state. Yet these master narratives are not produced and re-produced in a vacuum but stand alongside and in distinction to scripts that operate at meso-levels, in particular the family, helping contribute to structuring the perceptions of individuals as they make sense of their social positioning. The hegemonic efficacy of collective and communal scripts ought not to be overlooked as they are intimately entangled with personal dispositions and attitudes. What became abundantly clear through the numerous interviews I carried out with Iraqi refugees in Damascus was a gritty determination and resolve of all participants to tell their persecution narrative.

The most clearly bound segments of interviews came unsurprisingly at points where participants related their experience of persecution. The lapse of time and the intervening repeated tellings had made the events in Iraq more tellable (and for the researcher) seductively interesting to listen to. Some participants had less cultural capital and know-how to deal with institutional actors such as the UNHCR. The following example perhaps

best illustrates this. Bassam is a tailor in his early forties. His family had moved to Baghdad from the South of the country half a century earlier. They had never owned property in Baghdad. At the age of 18 he was conscripted into the army. I had asked him why he had chosen to live in the Sayyida Zayneb district of Damascus, known for hosting large numbers of Iraqi refugees. He told me that his choice was primarily based on the fact that there were lots of Iraqis living in the area and because "people talk to one another about their worries, the particulars of their lives and what makes them suffer." Unprompted, he proceeded to give a short account of the generalized fear of living through a sectarian conflict, painting a morbid account of what had happened to neighbors and the impact this had on him. Later in the interview, I asked him what contact he had had with the UNHCR. He told me:

> *Bassam*: I didn't know a thing about them, even when I first got here. Some people [in the neighbourhood] told me you have to register, so we registered. They [UNHCR] gave us some forms and told us to fill them in. Now, you have people who are lying so that they can get out [of Syria] because they know what to do to get out. But we tell the truth and facts and if you were to ask me a year later, I'll tell you the same story: I don't know how to say something that didn't happen. They told us to go and register with the UNHCR, and we went and we haven't heard a single thing from them [UNHCR] since.

Here, Bassam reveals that neighbors had signposted him to the UNHCR. His earlier account of the pervasive fear of persecution, which was quite possibly drawn from both personal experience and the stories he had heard from neighbors in Sayyida Zayneb, reinforcing his account, did not tally with the requirements of the UNHCR, which looks to elicit *individual* accounts of persecution. Those aware of UNHCR requirements tailor their stories to fit the "persecution narrative" demanded from refugees. Inconsistencies that arise through telling of events contingent on memory do not necessarily indicate that the truth is not being told. Yet, the UNHCR acting as policeman and indeed employing the methods of police, cultivate "a culture of disbelief" (Marfleet 2006:233) to discredit the accounts of refugees. For Bassam, the "truth and facts" were what compelled him to seek refuge in Syria. Why is it not sufficient for the UNHCR? He asks.

Other participants, notably the Palestinian-Iraqi community, were more meticulous in detailing dates and names of friends, neighbors, and relatives who had been killed. This suggested to me that a connectedness to the wider Palestinian Diaspora and an awareness of the importance of testimony

in challenging dominant narratives was part of their cultural capital. The experience and memory of displacement from Palestine served notice to Palestinian-Iraqis of the importance of recording testimony. Indeed, this was partly why the Palestinian-Iraqi Community Association in Mukhayim al-Yarmouk consented to giving me access to participants. One respondent, Abu Fu'ad, was particularly keen on relating his life story, which amounted to over eight hours of recorded interview material. Other interviewees presented the warning notes threatening them with death if they did not vacate their properties. Similarly, Iraqi refugees with a university education presented more coherent narratives that conformed to UNHCR expectations of what a persecution narrative ought to be. One respondent, Farouk, presented me with photographic documentary evidence of the physical abuse his son had suffered at the hands of a kidnap gang.

The telling of these stories allows respondents to "make sense" of the research interview. Interactions with resident foreigners from the Global North can be viewed as an opportunity to increase the overall composition of capital. Contacting refugees with the intention to have a meeting with them immediately alerts participants to the presence of an outsider. Immediately, some have expectations of what this meeting could entail: a British researcher interested in meeting them to discuss their situation necessarily creates expectations. Other participants are keen to help as it provides them a break from the monotony of daily routine.

At the core of this study is a focus on the reformation of sociocultural resources in the lives of displaced people. Mobilizing recent advances in the Sociology of Religion on how religions are fundamentally concerned with practices of "crossing" boundaries and "dwelling" (Tweed 2006), I develop insights into the dynamics of religion in the everyday experiences of forced migrants today. Central to this is a move away from institutional understandings of religion emphasizing instead the lived, everyday "ordinary" of refugee actors and their engagement with religion as a *modus vivendi* and practice of conviviality. It is in experiences of neighborly relations that lived understandings of religion emerge. In so doing, Iraqi refugees in Damascus produce a distinctive geography of belonging, which moves beyond spaces of institutionally sanctioned religion and challenges formal frameworks of religion. The re-calibration of religious practice as the mutual accommodation of difference worked out through everyday interaction can be interpreted both as a response and challenge to identity-centric or even sectarian readings of religion promulgated by institutional actors—notably the state.

Epiphanies on the road to Damascus, I would suggest, are the exception rather than the rule. People do not turn to religion but rather they develop an orientation toward religious practices and beliefs over time—it

is a decidedly slow burn. A religious disposition is therefore one that begins with conditions preceding arrival into the world; it is one nurtured through early socialization during infancy and only later re-configured in relation to our specific conditions of existence. This is of particular importance in helping consider the circumstances under which a religious disposition is inculcated and what prompts forced migrants to mobilize religious resources or not. It gives rise to important questions on how one should go about the business of theorizing and conducting empirical research on religion.

State–society relations in the Middle East have long been viewed through the lens of exceptionalism—social and cultural understandings are asserted to be products of the particularity of Islam. This need not be the case, a more nuanced approach is demanded—one that is both empirically grounded and theoretically informed. The work and legacy of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, has done much to open up pathways to how we perceive the production of culture and space in the global North and how both the production and consumption of culture and space are intimately linked to relations of power. Yet, there has been scant use of such advances in sociological theory in studies of the Middle East—despite the fact that Bourdieu's own work originated with a study on the Kabyle in Algeria. Through the use of some of Bourdieu's key concepts such as field, habitus, and capital, I propose an understanding of religious practice and experience, which makes as much sense of religious practices and ideas in the Middle East as it does of Muslim subjectivities in traditionally non-Muslim countries.

In the process of writing this book, I was compelled to look anew at my own experiences and memories of those passed down to me by my family—in short, my own religious habitus. In doing so, I was reminded that the insights I have developed over the course of researching for this book have been at best partial and positioned truths. As someone whose self-constructed understanding of identity has been significantly shaped by migration and lies at a criss-crossing intersection of race, class, religion, and gender, presenting narratives of Iraqi refugees brings to light any assumption of a fundamental distinction between self and Other (Abu-Lughod 1991).

Clearly, the experiences I have had, as a Muslim living in London, have taken place within a context of multiculturalism, migration, and as a racialized Other, specific to the politics of Britain in the late twentieth century. This is not to say that my experiences translate directly to those of Iraqi refugees in Damascus. Nonetheless, comprehending how Iraqi refugees experience religion also demands a particular understanding of the politics and recent histories of Iraq and Syria—not along the lines of evolving debates on racism and identity but rather on class stratification and the instrumental use of communitarian politics by successive regimes in Iraq and Syria. I was

interested to learn how the Ba'thist regime under Saddam Hussein impacted on how Iraqis understood matters pertaining to identity and religion. Key junctures during Saddam's rule over Iraq included two wars in quick succession: the Iran–Iraq War and the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The consequences of both continue to live with Iraqis to this day. This book sets out to address the ways in which the expectations and religious experiences and practices of Iraqi forced migrants have been modified by experiences of conflict and displacement.

It was with these ideas and experiences in mind that I turned my attention to the unfolding crisis in Iraq and Syria. Nothing had quite prepared me for the extent to which the pervasive reach of a security agenda governed the lives of ordinary people and institutions in Syria. Although I had read accounts of life in Syria, a large body of the literature tended to focus on the perspective of the state (Seale 1988, Hinnebusch 2001, Perthes 2004) and only very recently had there been growing attention paid to the struggle to open up political space on studies concerning Syria (Wedeen 1999, Ismail 2009, Pierret 2009).

I arrived in Syria with expectations of my own. While living in Cairo between 2004 and 2005, I came to learn of the difficulties faced by Sudanese refugees in that city. The ambivalence of the state and the discordant behavior of the UNHCR regarding their claims for refugee status had prompted some from within the refugee community to protest outside a large mosque in a middle-class suburb of Cairo. Within a short space of time, rumors of the lewd and drunken behavior of refugees were circulating among resident Cairenes. A full-blown moral panic concerning the refugees had been constructed. Some refugees complained of being on the receiving end of racist taunts. All this seemed far removed from the stories that my grandparents, parents, uncles, and aunts had told me of their experience of displacement. Moreover, the demonizing of refugees did not correlate well with Muslim traditions that presented the figure of the Prophet as a *muhājir* (migrant) and celebrated the ideal of hospitality—traditions I was familiar with.

So, why was there so much antagonism toward a vulnerable refugee population in a country where religion seemed highly visible in the public sphere? Charismatic preachers filled Egyptian airwaves, newspapers and magazines were replete with advertisements taken out by companies promoting "Islamic" products and people's conversations were increasingly punctuated by Islamic phrases. The British Council in the Agouza district of Cairo where I worked had a designated prayer room where staff and students could assemble for prayers in congregation. During the month of Ramadan, students would spill out into adjoining corridors. The hijab was worn by women of all social classes and men would not only sport a beard but also

the *zbīb* (lit. raisin)—a mark on the forehead carefully developed through repeated prostration while praying.

Yet, in the many conversations I had at the time with both Egyptians and refugees I was struck by the paucity of involvement on the part of Islamic networks and institutions. What could explain this reluctance to engage with refugee communities? Egyptians I knew suggested that they had problems enough of their own living under the constraints of a neoliberal agenda set by the state. Refugees, after all, had the possibility to leave Egypt for greener pastures through re-settlement programs. People from the South of Sudan simply attributed it to racism.

During this time, I had also been able to see at first-hand the salience of religious networks in the lives of Eritrean, Somali, and Sudanese refugees—albeit from the perspective of a different faith tradition. Much like FBOs currently active in London, church organizations and international NGOs were vigorously involved in providing a network of support to refugees arriving in Cairo. Churches such as All Saints Cathedral in the Zamalek district of Cairo (originally built with European expatriates in mind) and the Sakakini Church of the Sacred Heart in Abbasiyya have now become important hubs for refugee congregations. For many refugees coming from or via Sudan, the Church of the Sacred Heart is where they alight in Cairo. In 2005, resettlement opportunities to the global North were available. Large numbers of refugees finding themselves at the gates of the Church of the Sacred Heart found temporary emergency lodgings in classrooms of schools run by the Church. Networks of information were mobilized to relay information back and forth between Cairo and towns and cities in Sudan. Over time, the church became a key link in the migration networks linking Cairo to the Horn of Africa.

During the preliminary phases of my fieldwork in Damascus, I had anticipated finding FBOs working diligently and openly to meet the needs of refugee populations as is the case in London and Cairo. However, as I mentioned at the outset of this introductory chapter, this study is about the decision-making and strategies of people acting under extremely constrained circumstances. This includes not only the refugees and the service providers who participated in this project but the researcher also. The fact that security concerns are uppermost in the state's relations to its citizenry meant that participants' relationships with me were always affected by the omnipresent shadow of Syrian state security services looming menacingly over us. For the large part this remained something unsaid between me and my participants. Although implicit, this does not negate its significance.

As mentioned earlier, there is a growing body of work that pays attention to text-based Islamic traditions—most notably from the Qur'an and *aḥadīth* literature. This monograph is concerned primarily with the experience of

"lived religion" but one cannot be understood without the other. Although traditions are mentioned in passing in the narratives of my participants, I have found it useful to preface each chapter of this book with an epigram taken from the Qur'an or *aḥadīth* literature. This provides readers unfamiliar with Islamic tradition to get a sense of an Islamic cultural approach to matters of asylum, assistance, and protection.

The central chapters of this book focus on a case study of Iraqi refugees and are book-ended by a consideration of broader debates on the role of religion in the lives of displaced people in the contemporary Middle East. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to sociocultural readings of refuge and sanctuary in the region and provides a framework for understanding religion and migration as holistic experiences. In addition to utilizing testimony from participants to provide context to the displacement of Iraqi refugees and consider triggers for their displacement, chapters 2 and 3 also trace the genealogy of religious dispositions of my research participants providing important clues to how religious traditions would be mobilized in Syria. Chapters 4 and 5 also mobilize data gathered from the field in Damascus to consider the situation of Iraqi refugees on arrival in Syria. An epilogue to this book considers whether the experiences of Iraqi refugees have any relevance to other displaced populations in countries neighboring Syria today, and indeed if there are continuities to be acknowledged between the two crises.

In chapter 1, I explore Islamic traditions pertaining to matters of hospitality, assistance, and sanctuary to the stranger. By locating my inquiry into the significance of Islamic representations of asylum and protection, and the initiatives employed by forced migrants in their everyday lives, I conceptualize a "bottom-up" approach that seriously considers the expectations and entitlements of refugee populations. Such an approach begins with the agency of forced migrants themselves as opposed to the state-centric model that is at the heart of the modern international protection regime. Reconfiguring understandings of refuge and sanctuary away from positivist legal frameworks and toward "lived experiences" of refugee populations opens up avenues for uncovering the sociocultural DNA of notions such as hospitality, conviviality, and protection in the Middle East. I call for a consideration of Islamic traditions and practices in the Middle East in a sustained dialectic with the experiences of resident populations. To do so, I engage with the work of Tweed (2006), who calls upon metaphors of crossing and dwelling to better understand religious practices and experiences.

Chapters 2 and 3 interweave testimonies from participants with a contextual overview of the events and debates, which prompted the forced displacement of Iraqis. This approach has the advantage of allowing me to

chart the ways in which a religious disposition or habitus is structured over time. It reveals changing attitudes toward religious actors and institutions. As such, the use of testimony in these chapters can be considered as a means to map the religious field in Iraq by mobilizing the memories of participants. It is a reminder to move beyond lackadaisical assumptions of configuring refugees as a tabula rasa. Such assumptions serve to conceal the agency of refugees—strategies and expectations they may have developed before taking flight and are possibly called upon again once more in a country of first refuge. It also highlights the necessity to consider religion holistically and not instrumentally or something that is only "turned to" during moments of heightened stress.

In chapter 2 I make the case that any discussion on the mobilization of religious resources in Damascus demands to be foregrounded in prior experiences and interactions with religious networks and institutions in Iraq. Such interactions become more clearly visible during times of crises wherein a weakened state appropriates religious discourses and symbolism to bolster its authority. During such events, attitudes and orientations toward religious ideas and actors are contested and re-interpreted, not only by the state and clergy, but by the laity also. I examine the repercussions of key events in Iraq's recent history on the religious field in Iraq starting with the Iran–Iraq War. Critical junctures in the recent history of Iraq have contributed toward establishing a certain disposition that Iraqi refugees have in relation to understandings of religion, religious actors, and religious institutions—which is ultimately reflected in their decision-making in Syria.

Chapter 3 provides both a more immediate context to the displacement of Iraqi refugees and a continuing analysis of the genesis and development of their religious habitus. It considers what happens to attitudes toward religion in the context of changing dynamics brought about by sectarianism and the threat of displacement. Testimony from Iraqi refugees sheds light on the reactive aspect of sectarian narratives, demonstrating it to emerge from a political context rather than one that is produced from below. A political context in which the American occupation inculcated and exacerbated a sectarian politics wherein formerly disenfranchised groups sought to not only claim a stake in post-Saddam era Iraq, but contest ownership and control over resources of the state. In so doing, minority groups such as Palestinian-Iraqis, Mandaeans, and Christians were targeted. Baghdad was transformed into a site for the "un-mixing of neighbourhoods" as political actors looked to assert their authority through mobilizing religious symbolism. The role played by clerics and religious institutions in the advancement of a sectarian discourse colors how Iraqi forced migrants in Damascus perceive religious actors and institutions resulting in what I call a "trust deficit."

Chapters 4 and 5 bring us to the site of my fieldwork: Damascus. Chapter 4 maps the humanitarian field in Syria. This chapter presents a nuanced examination of the role of religious networks and institutions in the strategies of forced migrants in urban contexts. It considers how FBOs, in relation to the state and the UNHCR, work to integrate displaced populations into their new surroundings. I examine how Iraqi refugees, as active social agents, utilize religious networks and institutions in conjunction with established international humanitarian organizations to produce a distinctive geography of exile. I also draw attention to how the Syrian state exerts influence over religious actors and how this affects the decision-making of forced migrants. I contend that partnerships formed between the state, UNHCR, and international NGOs result in a protection impasse for Iraqi refugees in Damascus.

Chapter 5 continues with a spatial analysis of religion in the lives of Iraqi refugees in Damascus, casting additional light on the relational and intersubjective aspects of home-making, which are central to the process of emplacement. I consider the extent to which Syria can be conceptualized as a familiar space for Iraqi forced migrants, wherein cultural practices including religious practices are sustained and realized through social and kin networks—and also mediated through a new urban setting with its attendant relations to the state. I also propose that communal "home-like spaces" are produced and inhabited by Iraqi forced migrants as a means to aggregate and add to existing non-material forms of capital to access more material resources. Finally, I explore how the familial home continues to function as a sacred space for Iraqi refugees. I argue that all three modes of home noted here: domestic dwellings, community organizations, and the city constitute key spaces, which in addition to being inscribed with religious significance, are able to articulate a sacred vernacular. In doing so, they help to orient Iraqi forced migrants in the wake of displacement.

The concluding epilogue considers whether the experiences of Iraqi refugees have much to tell us about other cases of mass-displacement in the region—notably the current Syrian refugee crisis. Mobilizing fieldwork carried out over ten weeks on the Turkish-Syrian border in late 2013 and discussions with members of Syrian self-help initiatives based in the United Kingdom and in Turkey during the summer of 2014, attention is drawn to the complex intersections between the religious, humanitarian, and political fields, which produce both a discourse and practice of faith-based humanitarianism.

The Noble Sanctuary: Islamic Traditions of Refuge and Sanctuary

If one among those, who associate partners with God, asks you for protection and assistance, grant it to him, so that he may hear the Word of God, and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge. (The Noble Qur'an 9:6)

Introduction

Visiting the immigration and passport offices in the Baramkeh district of Damascus is an instructive experience. As a foreign researcher on a multi-entry tourist visa to Syria this brief brush with the authorities never failed to fuel anxiety—fearing each visit would be the time my visa was no longer to be extended and my stay in Syria cut short. The confusion and babble of the applicants, unsure of which document needed to be notarized by which official and exactly how many different stamps were required, was in stark contrast to the lethargy and dismissiveness of the chain-smoking officials in their starched white police uniforms.

In this small, smoke-filled, overly crowded, drab space the territorial borders of Syria were condensed. Here, the nation-state flexes its muscles and plays out its role of intimidating door-man: if your face and name don't fit—you're not staying here. Dagestani and Indonesian students jostle with Iranian pilgrims and Somali mothers trying to keep up with the demands of

irritable immigration officials. For displaced Iraqis seeking refuge in Syria, a separate room of immigration Mandarins deal with their visa-extension and short-term residency applications. Designated guests, rather than refugees by the Syrian state, Iraqis were often marked apart from other categories of foreigners and Arabs—the anxiety of not knowing whether an extension to remain in Syria would be granted etched deep into their faces. The ambiguity and ambivalence of being a guest subject to the whims of capricious state policy was captured by Abu Yaseen, a Palestinian from Iraq who had sought refuge in Mukhayim al-Yarmouk—a Palestinian refugee camp in the southern over-spill of Damascus:

> *Abu Yaseen*: I'm living here as a non-permanent resident. It's possible that they [the government] issue a decree at any moment that says "Goodbye, it's time for you to leave the country." It's possible at any moment. Maybe there is no chance for re-settlement and the Syrian government has had enough and says "okay, time to leave." So, we live in constant anxiety and that's why you feel that you really are a stranger away from home.

The feeling of "constant anxiety" is not reserved for Iraqi refugees in Damascus alone. Unrelenting apprehension is also a sentiment readily echoed in the experiences of Syrian refugees displaced in neighboring countries today. The military coup against the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood on July 3, 2013 resulted in a dramatic reversal of fortune for Syrian refugees in Egypt. From being favored guests, they woke up one morning to find themselves on the receiving end of a crackdown by Egyptian immigration authorities—tarnished by association to the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Displaced Syrians whom I met in Gaziantep close to the Turkish-Syrian border in the autumn of 2013 were only too well aware that sanctuary could not be taken for granted. The ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party's anti-Assad agenda had become increasingly conflated with its authoritarian rhetoric and neoliberal practices—alienating a significant section of Turkish society. A street-protest movement across cities in Turkey in the summer of 2013, triggered by discontent with urban development policies of the state had become a platform also for those opposed to Turkey's involvement in the Syrian conflict. A car bombing in a border town in the province of Hatay further ratcheted tensions between local residents and incoming refugees. A foreboding atmosphere loomed large over the precarious lives of Syrian refugees in Turkey—would they suffer the same fate as their fellow exiles in Egypt?

In this chapter, I take up the equivocation surrounding notions of hospitality and what it means to be a guest in the context of mass-displacement—"a stranger away from home." The term "guest" is less a legal status delineating rights and protection measures for forced migrants than it is a sociocultural designation. In which case a number of questions present themselves: what responsibilities does the state have, if any, toward its guests? What does it mean to be a guest of the state? How long does it take before a welcome is out-stayed? Are there any hosts other than the state?

Islamic traditions pertaining to matters of hospitality, assistance, asylum, and sanctuary to the stranger draw attention to initiatives employed by forced migrants in their everyday lives—making it possible to conceptualize a bottom-up approach that seriously considers the expectations and entitlements of refugee populations. Such an approach begins with the agency of forced migrants themselves as opposed to the top-down state-centric model at the heart of the modern international protection regime.

In the absence of a defined legal status for Iraqi refugees in Syria, relationships at the local neighborhood level take on added significance in negotiating a geography of exile. Here, Iraqi refugees find themselves in neighborhoods inhabited by a diverse array of communities including Kurds, Circassians, Palestinians, Armenians, displaced Syrians from the Golan Heights, and recent arrivals from drought-affected rural communities. Such urban spaces are characterized by both conviviality and conflict. Residents mobilize a "learned grammar of sociability" (Buonfino and Mulgan 2009:16) to navigate new surroundings—a grammar drawn in no large measure from a reservoir of religious resources.

It is here that a more nuanced understanding of religion is demanded than that which the sociology of religion has traditionally provided. In particular, a careful consideration of Islamic traditions and practices in the Middle East in a sustained dialectic with the experiences of resident populations is required. Through an engagement with theologies of migration, emphasizing "trans-temporal" and "trans-locative" (Tweed 2006) insights into religious experience and practice, it is possible to offer an analysis of the dynamics of religion in the transnational space that many refugees occupy today.

The argument I seek to develop here contends displaced populations in the contemporary Middle East are able to mobilize nonmaterial "religious resources" to help gain access to further resources by positioning themselves in relation to existing religious institutions and networks. The extraordinary circumstances in which forced migrants find themselves encourage a re-imagining or re-energizing of particular understandings of religious traditions to create inhabitable worlds. Rather than merely consuming religious

resources, social agents challenge the passivity assigned to them in the religious field and in fact engage in the production or re-assembling of religious resources, competing against institutions that are often regarded as dominant producers of religious resources. The social space that displaced people in the contemporary Middle East inhabit extends beyond that organized by the nation-state and has a specifically Islamic transnational dimension—providing forced migrants with alternative understandings of belonging.

Transnational Islam

The extent of the influence of human migratory processes on transnational spaces is not beyond dispute. Grillo (2004) suggests that transnational Islam can be found in various contexts including a binational framework, migratory circuits, and the "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) of Muslims—the *ummah*. In contrast, other scholars maintain that the migratory aspect of transnational Islam and networks of religious organizations have been overstated while studies have tended to overlook the capacity of transnational Islam to transmit ideas; establishing and legitimating a normative discourse (Bowen 2004). Not only has the mobility of people multiplied exponentially over recent years, but there has also been an increased circulation of cultural practices and of the symbols and meanings that are attached to them.

The Damascus suburb of Sayyida Zayneb presents itself as a site of transnational Islam—offering an opportunity to examine the role religious networks and institutions play in the reception of large numbers of migrants. The district of Sayyida Zayneb takes its name from the shrine dedicated to the granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad and is a key place of pilgrimage for Shi'i Muslims from across the world. It is also home to *al-makātib al-wukalā* (representative offices) of *mujtahids* from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Yemen, and Pakistan, who are instrumental in the collection of the *khums* religious tax that is used in part by the *marja'iyya* for the implementation of charitable projects.

Importantly, Sayyida Zayneb is home to a number of different low-income communities other than Sunni and Shi'i Iraqis. A dense warren of shopping arcades and street markets to the East of the shrine are a hive of activity with the hustle and bustle of Kurdish, Palestinian, and Golani street-vendors. Pilgrims from Iran and Iraq throng the crowded avenues. Here enterprising local traders have learned to conduct simple business transactions in dialects of Iraqi Arabic and Farsi. Entrepreneurial Iraqis have established small businesses in the area. Those with sufficient capital have opened up restaurants offering Iraqi cuisine, bakeries serving Iraqi flat bread, grocery stores, and tailoring workshops. The district is also an integral hub of the transport

network linking Damascus to the major cities of Iraq and is the first port of call for many Iraqis arriving in Syria. Many of the transport companies and taxi stands operating from Sayyida Zeynab are Iraqi owned. Sayyida Zeynab is a space where people and goods circulate—here, mobility is far from aberrant. Difference is accommodated and interaction commonplace.

Transnational dimensions of Islam are also evident in the field of knowledge production and dissemination. Traditionally, the *Hajj* or annual pilgrimage to Makkah was the vehicle through which the *ummah* manifested itself. The same can be said for lesser pilgrimages to shrines such as that of Sayyida Zayneb. Today, advances in technology have meant that the *ummah* is connected in innovative ways. Technology that was once railed against by the clerical establishment as being the hallmark of profanity has been embraced wholeheartedly by the very same clerical establishment. Economies of scale are now available through the medium of the Internet, where *mujtahids* offer fatwas on everyday living and disseminate their opinions to a diverse and international audience. The mushrooming of satellite dishes on rooftops across the urban sprawl of cities such as Cairo, Amman, and Damascus facilitates broadcasts of ideas and opinions of *mujtahids* directly into the living quarters of tens of millions of people. Mass migration and technological advances, far from "destroying the soil in which traditional religiosity [is] rooted" (Bourdieu 1979:70), today act as a key fertilizing ingredient for the production and consumption of religious ideas and practices.

Mujtahids, however, do not hold a monopoly over viewing habits. While visiting homes of participants, the television would invariably maintain a background hum as I listened to respondents talk about their experiences. Other family members would be skipping through the tens of channels available. Hollywood sits casually side by side pictures beamed live from Najaf or Makkah. Charismatic clerics—some garbed in traditional attire, others who would not look out of place on any rush hour commute in any postindustrial city—give advice on the minutiae of religious practice. Younger members of the household manage to find their way back to channels devoted to Japanese cartoons dubbed in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The use of MSA rather than a local dialect for cartoons aimed at children is interesting in itself as it maintains a closer link with Qur'anic Arabic—a reminder that sacred spaces are not produced on a blank canvas but are part and parcel of a greater scene.

Damascus, the site of my fieldwork, is a city that has been central to the circulation of ideas, people, and cultural practices in the Near East for millennia. For much of the last 1,400 years these exchanges have been heavily accented by Islam. In more recent history, the Syrian Arab Republic posits its territory and people to be an integral part of the broader Arab nation.

Dawn Chatty (2010:37) makes the point that for the nation-states carved out from the Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire—unlike European nation-states—culture and understandings of national identity are *not* exclusively tied to territory. This she attributes to the experience of mass migrations, both forced and voluntary, over the past hundred years, which has made widespread "the acceptance of mobility as normal rather than an aberration [...] the tradition of overlapping heritages and homelands, imagined and rooted, sometimes in the same spaces, has meant greater acceptance of the portability of culture and national identities, a kind of local cosmopolitanism" (ibid.). The territories of the former Ottoman Empire, including the modern state of the Syrian Arab Republic, still carry traces of the *millet* system[1] employed by the Ottoman administration to manage the numerous ethno-religious communities that formed the Empire. The cultural memory of the *millet* lives on in the interactions between the many ethno-religious communities that continue to reside in Damascus today. This mutual accommodation of difference or what Chatty calls "local cosmopolitanism" is made possible by a deeply embedded tradition of welcoming the other in Islamic teachings, which continue to resonate in the cultural practices of the Middle East today.

The rupture of displacement further affords displaced people in the Middle East the possibility to re-imagine or re-energize past traditions as well as having access to a shared cultural capital, which transcend borders across the region. The following section outlines various modes of protection ostensibly available to forced migrants through Islamic texts and traditions.

Islamic Traditions of Protection

Religion has made something of a comeback. The much-heralded secularization thesis now seems very much out of touch with the realities of heightened transnational movements of people, goods, and ideas. International relation theorists have somewhat belatedly tapped into the new zeitgeist and are offering telling contributions to our understandings of postsecularity. This postsecular moment, it is argued, recognizes that not only has secular modernity exhausted itself in its failure to organize social, cultural, and political life, but also acknowledges that values of freedom, equality, and justice can be located outside of secular frameworks (Pasha 2012, Mavelli and Petito 2012). Postsecularity, therefore, acknowledges a need for moving beyond a merely straightforward linguistic translation of religious idiom into a secular vernacular. Indeed for some, the postsecular calls for "a practical translation" and "the transfer of teachings into human and social life" (Dallmayr 2012:970).

In much the same way the novelty of transnationalism has been questioned, scholars question whether religion had ever been distanced from politics in the first instance. That is to say, had the binary of religious/secular hidden from view the many ways in which governments across the world employ religion to their own ends? Elizabeth Shakman Hurd reminds us that debates on postsecularity often overlook the fact that religion has never been located outside of power and has long been wielded by agents of the state and market forces—occupying "different spaces under modern regimes of governance" (Hurd 2012:954). The growing trend toward explicitly operationalizing religion by states and other institutions works toward—not so much the exclusion of religion from public space—but rather delineates the tolerable limits under which religion can be manifested publicly. Simply put, the favouring of institutional and hierarchical readings of religion—accommodating so-called good religion while withdrawing oxygen from expressions of "bad religion" (ibid.:946–960).

Nowhere are the contradictory relationships between state and religious actors more apparent—and nowhere is a "practical translation" of religious ideas arguably more needed—than in the case of the rapidly growing numbers of forced migrants who are unable to avail themselves to the hospitality of neighbors. This situation develops with tragic consequences when they are confronted with the harsh reality that none of the three so-called durable solutions are immediately available to offer an avenue to live meaningful lives. Faced with this dawning realization, ever-greater numbers of forced migrants attempt unauthorized and often life-threatening journeys to secure refuge. From that moment, at every step their identities and being becomes defined by the binary of legality and illegality. Everyday actions, the likes of which you or I take for granted, such as moving across borders, securing a livelihood or finding shelter, become criminalized. The nation-state extends its panoptic gaze by outsourcing surveillance to airlines, transport companies, employers, and landlords who are threatened with fines should they carry out transactions with so-called illegal immigrants.

So what is it that a religious idiom can provides us in our understanding of migration practices and regimes of protection for those who find themselves on the very limits of social, cultural, and political life—refugees? Over 600 million Muslims live in countries where Islam is the official state religion (Stahnke and Blitt 2005:954). From a legal perspective this means that Islamic jurisprudence is enshrined in the constitutions of many Muslim majority countries as a key source for legislation. Some commentators question the possibility of constructively employing Islam as a means to realize human rights in predominantly Muslim States arguing that there is a tension between secular international norms and Islamic law (Baderin

2005:30). However, in the area of refugee rights I would argue that this is precisely what is needed in areas that fall under an Islamic cultural zone: an exposition of modes of Islamic protection for forced migrants in keeping with standards of protection enshrined under the 1951 Geneva Convention and in some instances affording forced migrants even greater protection. This is not merely an instrumental or operational use of religion but an understanding of religion that potentially allows for cross-cutting solidarities beyond the nation-state.

This alternative perspective on law posits that individuals should follow injunctions laid out in key religious texts, that is the Qur'an and *aḥadīth*, which command people to establish the prayer, observe the month of Ramadan, give alms and charity to those in need, respect the rights of parents and neighbors, respect the rights of orphans, and so on. A leading contemporary Iranian philosopher, 'AbdolKarim Soroush (2000:62) notes that the language of religion (here meaning Islam):

> is the language of duties, not rights [...which] imply respecting the rights of others at the expense of oneself. What is at issue here is not *my* rights which are to be respected by my neighbours, but *their* rights which I am supposed to respect. (Emphasis original)

This is pivotal to understanding that in the case of forced migrants in the Middle East, implicit within the mobilization of cultural resources in the form of religious traditions and practices, is the idea of entitlement. Moreover, there are some powerfully emotive symbols within Islam commending the notion of refugee protection. The process of displacement encompassing the triumvirate of flight, asylum, and sanctuary are covered extensively in Islamic traditions—most notably in the Qur'an and *aḥadīth* literature. For refugees and those seeking asylum in majority Muslim countries, the re-imagining and mobilization of such traditions can potentially unlock the means for extended protection rights (Arnaout 1987, Elmadmad 1991, Muzaffar 2001, Manuty 2008, Shoukri 2011). Indeed, it has been suggested that within the Islamic tradition, asylum is a "moral and legal right" (Abd al-Rahim 2008:19).

For those interested in extending the protection space available to forced migrants, the practices of the early community of Muslims conceivably provides a legitimate and fruitful source of protection mechanisms for refugees and those seeking asylum in the Arab and wider Muslim world. Matters pertaining to protection and assistance are referred to 396 times in the Qur'an; 170 in relation to the needs of vulnerable people; 20 make specific reference to *hijra* (flight) and *amān* (asylum); 12 mention sanctuary; 68 verses refer

to *zakāt* and charity; more than 100 other *aḥadīth* deal with persecution and oppression (Zaat 2007:6). Despite this, there had been little systematic *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) on this under-researched issue and only recently has there emerged an awakening of academic interest in the field of refugee studies to explore ways in which refugee protection mechanisms can be bolstered through understanding sociocultural traditions.

The UNHCR recognizing the value of Islamic traditions as a source of protection for those seeking asylum, particularly in countries with a predominantly Muslim population, has recently begun highlighting aspects of Islamic Law that correlate with the International protection regime. António Guterres, the UNHCR (in Abou El-Wafa 2009:5) writes:

> More than any other historical source, the Holy Qur'an along with the Sunnah and Hadith of the Prophet of Islam are a foundation of contemporary refugee law [. . .] The international community should value this 14-century-old tradition of generosity and hospitality and recognize its contributions to modern law.

Modern law, subservient to the logic and demands of the nation-state, extends rights only as far as the nation-state will allow. Unsurprisingly, religious narratives have been appropriated by the nation-sate only where they are deemed in accordance with its narrative. Divergence is clearest at territorial borders and particularly with respect to the figure of the stranger.

The "stranger" in the Muslim Imagination

In Arabic, the word nation or homeland is often translated as *waṭan*. In the context of modern nation-states, the right to belong is contingent on having been born in that country—*jus soli* (the law of soil) or on having a hereditary right—*jus sanguinis* (the law of blood). The Arabic term *waṭan* refers to any place that is inhabited (*maḥal al-insānī*), making no mention of either soil or blood. Premodern notions in the Muslim world of who is entitled to residency are contingent on the actual fact of residency—*jus domicili*. The vestiges of this open tradition toward migration, and indeed toward the stranger, continue to be inscribed in the social and cultural practices of people in the Middle East.

However, under the dictates of the nation-state, citizenship becomes a matter of formal rights granted to those with a legal status: a logic that reduces belonging to the nation—and is heavily contingent on birthright. Strict adherence to *jus sanguinis* laws, as is the case in the Syrian Arab Republic, means that for refugee communities such as Palestinians, statelessness is

passed on to the children of stateless people (Gibney 2009:50). Such a legal position stands at odds with Islamic tradition and deeply rooted traditions of hospitality. This gives rise to the question of how people situated within such competing narratives reconcile these tensions and paradoxes.

A further example of divergent readings of belonging, offered by Islamic traditions in contrast to the state, concerns treatment of the *gharīb* (stranger) or *ajnabi* (foreigner). Another phrase oft-used in Islamic traditions to denote the stranger include the *ibn al-sabīl* (literally the son of the path) and is interchangeable with *ʿābir al-sabīl* (traverser of the path). A *ḥadīth* of the Prophet states: "Be in this world as if you were a stranger or an *ʿābir al-sabīl*."[2] Here, we can see that the Prophet did not directly equate the stranger with the *ʿābir al-sabīl*. Franz Rosenthal (1997:37), in his excellent essay on representations of the stranger in Medieval Islam, observes that the stranger is defined as "one who may take up residence in a foreign place," whereas an *ʿābir al-sabīl* is "one who intends to go to a faraway place (because he is in a difficult situation and cannot stay in one place)." Both terms clearly cover the process of displacement; the latter term is consistent with the early stages of flight and seeking asylum while the former can be equated with contemporary ideas about refugee status or an equivalent thereof. The *ḥadīth* also points to the metaphor of religion or a life well-lived in accordance with God's Laws as being a journey or a crossing.

Ambivalence toward the Stranger

The term *gharīb* was often used less as a legal category than an all-embracing label for any individual who had left her original place of residence voluntarily or involuntarily: it was not contingent on the length of stay. It encompassed students, religious scholars, wandering ascetics, pilgrims, traders, and forcibly displaced people—clearly an ambiguous and nebulous term. On the one hand, good treatment of strangers was a highly regarded custom of pre-Islamic Arabian culture such that those who demonstrated kindness and generosity to strangers were lauded with the title of *maʾwā al-gharīb* (refuge of the stranger) (Rosenthal 1997:68). This attitude toward strangers was further institutionalized by Qurʾanic and Prophetic injunctions, which encouraged generosity and good conduct toward strangers. In particular, the bolstering of the pre-Islamic tribal practice of *jiwār*—the granting of protection and assistance to the one seeking refuge illustrates the central importance of hospitality toward the stranger. One *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet states: "Islam began as a stranger, and it will revert to its (old position) of being strange. So good tidings for the strangers."[3] While the exact meaning of this *ḥadīth* is open to interpretation, it unequivocally celebrates

the stranger—encouraging good treatment toward the other as a fundamental concern of Islam.

On the other hand, negative dimensions of leaving one's original place of residence were frequently expressed in *adab* literature. Most notably was the recognition that leaving one's ancestral lands was accompanied by a diminution of social and material resources. Rosenthal notes that the binary of *dhilla* (humiliation) and *'izz* (prestige or honour) were most commonly employed by poets in the Abbasid court to reflect on the experience of being in a strange land. He writes:

> [Prestige] tends to vanish whenever home, family, and the friends among whom one has grown up are abandoned and have become nothing but a fond memory. The familiarity with them that had provided protection and comfort becomes desolation, the depressing feeling of being alone and having nobody to turn to. It complements the poverty that was seen as something that strangers as a rule were unable to overcome. (Ibid.:42)

The linkage of *'izz* and *dhilla* to alienation or distance from home by Arab court poets of the eighth and ninth centuries (ce) points to the central importance of relational aspects of home in understanding religious practice and belief. The ninth-century poet 'Ali ibn al-Jahm at the court of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muttawakil captures the anguish of displacement and the struggle for emplacement that many Iraqi refugees in Damascus would find familiar:

> Pity the stranger in a foreign country,
> what has he done to himself!
> He left his friends, and they had no use
> for life after he was gone, nor did he.
> He enjoyed great prestige when he lived near his domicile,
> but later, when he was far away, he was downcast.
> Being a stranger far away, he says:
> God is just in whatever He does. (Ibid.:46)

In the Arab imagination the loss of social and material capabilities through being made an exile is a fate worse than penury—it speaks of a poverty of relationships. A popular proverb in Damascus warns of the fate that lies in store for one forced to leave his home: *mīn tarak dāru 'all miqdāru*—the one who leaves his home, lessens his value. To overcome this loss, human activity is re-interpreted through the narrative of religion. The idea religion is able to offer legitimation in a way that the state does or cannot is one

that came up time and again in my conversations with displaced people in the Middle East. Belief in Islam ameliorates the anguish that comes with a life in exile. Being a refugee is unstigmatized. One Iraqi refugee I met in Damascus told me:

> *'Aref*: For Iraqis to leave Iraq it was hard. No one wanted to leave Iraq; they needed a safe place to go. I found my belief in Islam makes it easier for me to think about being a refugee. It's a hard thing to do, to leave your home, but I know that my Prophet did the same, and he was a refugee. If we think about it, in Islam we see that borders are not important, there are no nationalities. The differences are with language. All the land belongs to God and you can find a place to live and work wherever you go.

An Islamic narrative allows refugees to re-imagine their migration. As 'Aref reminds us: "all the land belongs to God." Territorial sovereignty belongs to God rather than the state. Everyone has the right to move freely without hindrance—borders have no place under this schema. A Qur'anic injunction to demonstrate kindness to categories of persons includes among them *al-jār dhil-qurbā* (the related neighbor) and *al-jār al-junub* (the unrelated neighbor). Al-Tabārī in his exegesis of the Qur'an states that the unrelated neighbor is one who is not necessarily Muslim and the command in the Qur'an is directed toward the treatment of all neighbors. Thus, the traditional interpretation of the unrelated neighbor equates it with the *gharīb* or stranger (ibid.:38–40). The Islamic narrative demands that the stranger is entitled to "find a place to live and work wherever [he goes]."

With the emergence of the nation-state, an alternative term came into popular usage; *ajnabi* (pl. *ajānib*) whose root j-n-b is used to mean to put to one side. The word *tajannub*, which shares the same root as *ajnabi*, means to avoid—transforming the stranger or foreigner into someone to be avoided. This can be attributed in part to the encounter with colonialism and the confusion engendered through being made subordinate to a people who did not share the same worldview. The nineteenth century witnessed traditionalists vying for the hearts and minds of local populations in the territories of the Ottoman Empire with reformists. The latter looked to introduce new laws and challenge orthodoxies based on *taqlīd* or the imitation of colonial powers. While reform-minded individuals considered cultural and ontological borrowings from Europe an opportunity to cast off the shackles of stagnation attributed to orthodoxy, traditionalists understood such reforms in the light of colonial expansionism—strangers were now understood to be uninvited and unwanted guests. Paradoxically, supporters of orthodoxy—increasingly

blurring discourses of nationalism with religion—were championing a view at odds with centuries of lived Islamic tradition, which upheld the virtue of accommodating the stranger.

Welcome to the Family: Islamic Narratives of Brotherhood and Hospitality

Ahlan wa sahlan—an oft-heard expression in the Arabic speaking world is more than simply a welcoming phrase. Literally, it is an invitation for someone to be at ease as if they were at home with their family. The notion of fictive kin relationships is a prominent feature of propriety in the Arab and wider Muslim world. Suad Joseph (1996:200) observes that through the use of the family idiom in wider social relations, people in the Middle East "call up the expectations and morality of kinship." Often, displaced people I spoke to would refer to me as *akhi* (brother) and I would reciprocate by referring to elder respondents as *'ammi* (my paternal uncle) or *khāla* (maternal aunt). Doing so was in recognition of the trust they were imparting to me in narrating their stories, in addition to ascribing to the social norm of deference to elders. As such there is an implicit understanding of that as a fictive family member I would not do anything that would put them in harm's way. The framing of the Other as brother is a common motif in early Islamic tradition and one often employed to accommodate strangers from within the imagined community of Muslims—the *ummah*.

In May 2013, a car-bombing in Reyhanlı, a border town in the Hatay province and home to a growing Syrian refugee population, threatened to further stoke the fires of local sectarian tension and bring the Syrian conflict into Turkey. The response of the ruling Justice and Development Party led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was in keeping with the Turkish state's narrative of the conflict to date.[4] Mobilizing references to early Islamic tradition and the centrality of narratives of sanctuary prominent in foundational myths of countries arising out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, he reminded local constituents:

> We are the grandchildren of a *muhajirūn* generation, but at the same time we are the grandchildren of an *ansār* generation [...] my siblings in Reyhanlı should serve as *ansār* to the *muhajirūn* who fled from the brutality of al-Assad. They should fulfil the same duty, they should also open their homes exactly like it happened at the time [of the Prophet]; and they should not see them [the refugees] as a criminal element against themselves.[5]

Erdoğan's reference to *muhajirūn* (emigrés) and *ansār* (supporters) harks back to a pivotal moment in Islamic history. The Islamic calendar begins not with the birth of Prophet Muhammad, nor with the date of the first revelations or even the conquest of Makkah, but rather with the date of his flight from Makkah to Madina—with the act of *hijra*. Taking flight from persecution to find sanctuary features heavily in early Islamic historiography. Early Muslims not afforded the protection of influential personalities and clans in Makkah were commended to seek refuge across the Red Sea under the protection of the Negus of Abyssinia—modern-day Ethiopia. Indeed, the *hijra* was deemed a *compulsory* act for every Muslim until the Battle of the Ditch five years after the Prophet had fled Makkah himself and an act positively encouraged in the Qur'an.[6]

The significance of the Prophet's *hijra* lay not only in the act itself as a spiritual journey of self-renewal and religious re-birth but perhaps just as important was its material and social implications—the response it engendered. Securing sustainable livelihoods for displaced people was as much a concern at the time of the Prophet as it is today. The *muhajirūn* who had sought refuge in Madina found themselves at an economic and social disadvantage, having been forced to abandon much of their wealth in Makkah. Forced migrants from Makkah were accustomed to earning their livelihood through commerce rather than through craft and agriculture; the mainstays of the economy in Madina. Many had left their friends and families behind in Makkah and felt alienated in their new surrounding. How did this community of believers respond to the challenges of hosting a displaced population? The response of the *ansār* has been celebrated in the Qur'an and held forth as an example for future generations: "But they (the *ansār*) give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their own lot."[7]

The Other as Brother

Islam considers all believers to constitute a single universal brotherhood. In the Qur'an it categorically states: "the believers are but a single brotherhood."[8] There are countless *aḥadīth* complimenting this verse: Imam Bukhari one of the foremost compilers of authentic *aḥadīth* reports that the Prophet said: "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself." The duties of brotherhood are further expounded upon in the following *ḥadīth*:

> A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim—he does not wrong him nor does he forsake him when he is in need; whosoever is fulfilling the needs of his brother, Allah is fulfilling his needs; whosoever removes distress from

a believer, Allah removes from him a distress from a distressful aspect of the Day of Resurrection; and whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection.[9]

Despite the apparent generosity of the *ansār*, it was deemed necessary to legislate for a system guaranteeing the *muhajirūn* a means to earn a living and make a contribution to society. In contemporary parlance, a durable solution facilitating local integration was to be found. Within the first year of the hijra, the Prophet established a contract of brotherhood: the *mu'akhah*, between 45 men of the *muhajirūn* and an equal number from the *ansār* promoting mutual support between the pairings in matters of material assistance, care, advice, and even extending to inheritance rights, though this was later to be abrogated.[10]

Islamist governments aside, official state discourse is more reluctant to use fraternal language to describe refugees in the Middle East—be they Iraqis in Syria or Syrians in Lebanon and Jordan. A more conservative appellation refers to refugees as *ḍayūf* (guests)—bringing with it the attendant notion of hospitality and the limits thereof. Derrida (2000:149–150) reminds us:

> The problem of hospitality [is] coextensive with the ethical problem. It is always about answering for a dwelling place, for one's identity, one's space, one's limits, for the *ethos* as abode, habitation, house, hearth, family [and] home.

It is this juxtaposition of the Islamic *ethos*, which celebrates an unconditional and universal hospitality against the limits on hospitality imposed by the state, which Iraqi refugees in Damascus negotiate. Hospitality recognizes that the host have ownership and mastery over resources that she is prepared to share with the guest. Derrida's treatment of hospitality posits that conditions are placed on hospitality to manage this ethical encounter with the Other. This tension between ethical and political imperatives of hospitality is present at all times and not a choice in favour of one at the expense of the other (Derrida 2000, 2001).

As Hannah Arendt (1968:275) so forcefully argued in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the logic of the nation-state dictates that rights are territorially bound. Yet, religion demands we meet our duties unto others—including the stranger. The intervention of the humanitarian regime, led primarily by the state and international agencies and NGOs, to manage displaced populations means that organic and constantly negotiated host–guest relationships and identities are disrupted, transformed, and replaced by bureaucratic categories (Brun 2010). Later in this book, I consider ways in which

the Syrian state and international agencies such as the UNHCR transfigure Iraqi refugees into a group pushed to the sides—a marginalized group set apart from the local population whose ability to perform the role of hosts is circumscribed largely by the Syrian state. In chapter 5, I take up Derrida's approach of understanding "home" or more precisely home-making as being the underlying sentiment or *ethos*, which informs the religious beliefs and practices of Iraqi refugees. Moreover, home-making is the *eidos* or the practical undertaking of religious ideas.

Zakāt: A Welfare Mechanism for Forced Migrants?

Given the paucity of literature investigating and recording associations between Islamic traditions and refugees, it is unsurprising that very little has been written on how assistance can be given to forced migrants through Islamic welfare mechanisms. Muzaffar (2001:5) suggests that a framework for the assistance of forced migrants already exists in countries with a majority Muslim population in the form of *zakāt, sadaqa, awqāf*, and *khums*. In his survey on modern state approaches to *zakāt*, Powell (2009) finds that of 40 predominantly Muslim countries, 24 have yet to institutionalize the payment of *zakāt*. This can be attributed to a history of colonialism in those countries where modern legal systems had been superimposed upon existing traditional legal systems creating hybrid legal regimes. Even so, in countries such as Turkey 69 percent of the population today make *zakāt* contributions despite there being no legislation compelling them to do so (Hassan 2007). However, in countries where the government does not enforce the payment of *zakāt* through legislation, the collection and redistribution process remains decentralized. The evidence points to a skewed redistribution of wealth in favor of those who have nurtured relationships with those who are charged with distributing the wealth and not necessarily to those in most need (Prihatna 2005).

The Qur'an provides a comprehensive list of those eligible for the receipt of *zakāt*:

> Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials (appointed) over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth) and the (ransoming of) captives and those in debts and in the way of Allah and the *ibn al-sabīl* (wayfarer); an ordinance from Allah; and Allah is knowing, Wise.[11]

Forced migrants are eligible to receive *zakāt* on the grounds that they (depending on individual circumstance) meet three of the criteria in the

aforementioned verse. Displaced people are often excluded at the margins of society with little access to resources and are in some cases destitute. In addition, many are in a transitory state. Certainly in the case of Iraqi refugees in Syria, a considerable number of forced migrants have expressed both an unwillingness to remain in Syria or return to Iraq; preferring the option of moving to a third country for resettlement (UNHCR 2010a). This pattern is being borne out once again in the case of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries today.

In Syria, Turkey, and Lebanon, the state does not collect *zakāt* from its citizens. However, this does not mean that citizens of these states do not pay *zakāt*, or *sadaqa*—only that it may be paid through unofficial channels. The role of local nongovernmental community-based organizations becomes pivotal in redistributing wealth. In light of the exclusionary asylum policies pursued by many states today, some forced migrants awaiting their refugee status to be determined have been left destitute. Thus understanding of whether forced migrants can be included in the category of *'ābir al-sabīl* could potentially have far-reaching consequences.

A consequence of forced displacement today is the management of refugee populations as passive actors. Roger Zetter (1991) has amply demonstrated that refugees inhabit a highly institutionalized intersection of social space where they are in contact with NGOs, intergovernmental agencies, and various state bodies. Refugees are subjected to a bureaucratic labeling process that is used instrumentally and demands conformity on the part of those displaced in exchange for much needed resources—setting into motion a vicious cycle of powerlessness. Displaced people imbued with negative terms of recognition with little access to material resources constitute a marginalized group. Marked as beneficiaries or passive recipients of aid, forced migrants find their dignity being diminished and are confronted with greater inequalities that serve to buttress negative terms of recognition. It is the struggle and desire to break free of this debilitating discourse that prompts a re-imagining and re-invigoration of religious resources—activating a network of hitherto unseen relations.

It is said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The category of *ibn al-sabīl* raises some uncomfortable questions on how religion can augment inequalities and was something I had not initially considered when thinking about the mobilization of religious traditions in a context of mass-displacement. Although an *ibn al-sabīl* is eligible for *zakāt*, many of the Iraqi refugees I met in Syria would not ordinarily have considered themselves as recipients of *zakāt*. In my conversation with Abu Fu'ad, a 72-year-old Palestinian from Iraq living in Mukhayim al-Yarmouk, I was reminded of the gulf in social distance existing between myself as a researcher and

Abu Fu'ad, a refugee: I had never been displaced. The following extract captures the intersections of the different discourses that a refugee in the Middle East inhabits:

> *Tahir*: Do you consider yourself as being an *ibn al-sabīl*?
>
> *Abu Fu'ad*: [long pause] I'm [pauses] not an *ibn al-sabīl*. If I'm able to work I'm not an *ʿābir al-sabīl*.
>
> *Tahir*: Why? Are you not cut off from the wealth you had?
>
> *Abu Fu'ad*: I'm cut off from what I had, but international humanitarian organisations don't provide the support for me here that I'm entitled to and they are responsible for me. This is the reason for the distress we are in [pauses] I'm not an *ʿābir al-sabīl*. I apologize for not answering fully. This is a tough question for me [wiping away a tear, he chuckles]. I've never felt that I was one. Despite being in a very bad situation, under very harsh circumstances, I've still been able to keep my head held high. It's very difficult for me to answer this question.
>
> *Tahir*: Can you say why you find it difficult?
>
> *Abu Fu'ad*: There's not one of us who has passed through what we have passed through, except being in need. We've always lived a life of being in need. For more than sixty years, we've always been dependent in a way. We were cut off from what we own in Palestine and we've been cut off from what we have in Iraq. Call us whatever you want to call us.
>
> *Tahir*: I don't want to give you any more names. As far as I'm concerned you're Abu Fu'ad.
>
> *Abu Fu'ad*: So, you know what I mean.

Here, Abu Fu'ad reveals to us the knotted position he occupies in social space. On the one hand, he is adamant he falls outside the category of *ʿābir al-sabīl* if he has the ability to work. Yet on the other hand, we know that in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan the right to work outside of the informal sector is severely restricted by the state. This leaves refugees such as Abu Fu'ad dependent on international humanitarian agencies and NGOs; effectively becoming *ʿābir al-sabīl*, albeit under a secular script. His switch from the first person "I" to the communal "we" demonstrates a shift toward the narrative of Palestinians in general. Although Palestinians in Iraq were never under the remit of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), an Iraqi ministerial body was responsible for administering the needs for Palestinian-Iraqi refugees. In Syria, this responsibility now lies with UNRWA. The responsibility he assigns to humanitarian agencies is in recognition of being deemed unwanted following the

formation of a new nation-state—be that the creation of Israel in the wake of the Nakba in 1948 or regime change following the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the failure of political elites to successfully recompense him for his loss.

When Abu Fu'ad states that: "We've always lived a life of being in need [...] call us whatever you want to call us," he is referring to a perceived sense of loss in value, which results from prolonged interaction with the state and humanitarian agencies as a "beneficiary." For some, the label *'ābir al-sabīl* along with the secular *lāji'* (refugee) are both considered as negative terms of recognition. This "gentle, invisible violence" (Bourdieu 1990a:127) endows institutional actors: the state, humanitarian agencies, religious institutions, and even academics, with the power to name and represent. Abu Fu'ad recognizes this to be the case and in resisting discourses of being passive recipients of aid he is "able to keep [his] head held high."

Categories such as *'ābir al-sabīl*, *muhajirūn*, *ansār*, and assistance mechanisms such as the *mu'akhah* provide forced migrants with a sacred script that chimes with a secular humanitarian lexicon of asylum-seekers, host communities, local integration, and protection measures. Stretching the humanitarianism as faith analogy we find in bureaucratizing the regulation of aid secular humanitarian actors engage in what could plausibly be described as the transubstantitation of aid. As Elizabeth Cullen Dunn (2012:6) has cogently argued on her work on the "adhocracy" of aid agencies in Georgia, under the rubric of humanitarianism a political problem is transformed into one that is not; compassion becomes bureaucracy and suffering a technical problem waiting to be solved. The oft-heard complaint of refugees that "they [aid agencies] treat us like numbers" is testament to the pervasiveness of the standardizing discourse and the ways in which displaced individuals are broken into bite-sized bureaucratic chunks. Under an alternative religious reading of humanitarianism, people in need of aid are not bureaucratized but are brought into the fold of family. Furthermore, religious narratives provide displaced people—often compelled to move by the actions of the state—a means to maintain understandings of belonging and interconnectedness, which extend beyond the nation-state.

Experiencing Religion

A religious experience commonly calls to mind an encounter with the Divine, the sacred, or the mystical. It is likely to be considered a subjective experience; hidden from everyday human understanding and perhaps indescribable, which catches an individual off-guard and does so only temporarily before she lapses back into mundane reality.[12] However, religious

experiences or experiencing religion can be more grounded in everyday interactions or lived experiences of religion. This takes us away from thinking of about the sacred or divine in limited subjective ways. Instead, it brings us directly to the notion that religion organizes social space such that it emphasizes an individual's relations with other social actors.

To suggest that an attitude toward religion or having a particular religious disposition is something acquired at a fixed moment in time and remains unbending or unchangeable is highly reductive. A religious disposition is more than just an identity marker; it is a particular teleological prism through which the world is lived and experienced. It provides agents with spatial and temporal reference frames that position bodies within homes, homelands, and the cosmos (Tweed 2006:97–98). It is not a static label but is developed and informed through everyday practices over time. Social actors are not one-dimensional and a religious disposition cannot explain all social practices they engage in. Religious actors and institutions are situated within a constellation of other complementary and often competing networks, which together comprise society. In short, the religious field is one of conflicting interests and is itself intricately linked to other competing and sometimes complementary fields. Religious symbols in and of themselves do not inculcate a religious disposition but understandings of religious truths are mediated through power (Asad 1993). As such, a nuanced reading of context is required where other political, cultural, economic, and historical factors are considered in relation to the role of religion in the everyday lives of Iraqi forced migrants residing in Damascus.

Having faith in a religious belief is not wholly an individual experience, age-old traditions are re-negotiated, re-interpreted, and filtered through the experience of living in the contemporary world. Religion moves beyond being just a social institution, it becomes a cultural resource that is actively mobilized and contested rather than passively consumed. This can affect power relations as religion is disseminated through new technologies and occupies previously unseen spaces. Commenting on the deregulation of religion in a seemingly secularized world, James Beckford (1989:170) endorses this view:

> Religion has come adrift from its former points of anchorage but is no less potentially powerful as a result. It remains a potent cultural resource or form which may act as the vehicle of change, challenge or conservation. Consequently, religion has become less predictable. The capacity to mobilize people and material resources remains strong, but it is likely to be mobilized in unexpected places and in ways which may be in tension with "establishment" practices and public policy.

Tradition and Change

The sphere of religious activity is a contested site: ordinary people, religious institutions, and the state can all line up to contest the meaning of religious traditions. There can be little doubt that religion acts as a palliative to the real social and economic distress that people are faced with. Marx's oft-quoted reference to religion being "the opium of the masses" reminds us of the power of the state in marshalling religious narratives to further its own ends, but what is often omitted is that religion is equally "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation" (Marx and Engels ([1955] 1985:11) As such, religion is more than merely cultic devotion: it is moral action wherein a life well-lived is one that is in accordance with God's commands. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of religion—a reminder that religious traditions are understood and acted upon in specific contexts.

Numerous examples of Islamic political activism throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first attest to the ways in which religious traditions have been innovatively re-energized and re-configured to contend with emerging realities. Whether this is Sayyid Qutb's (1974:87) recovery and reformulation of the term *jahilīya* in response to rapid modernization programs of countries of the Middle East or Musa al-Sadr re-imagining the narrative of Imam Hussein's martyrdom at Karbala from one of victimhood and dispossession to one of revolutionary politics, Muslim thinkers, theologians, and activists have repeatedly sought a return to the early community of Muslims as exemplars on how to confront dilemmas of modernity.

It has been argued elsewhere that the Qur'an and *ahadīth* have historically been read and interpreted by men in a patriarchal context and by and large women have been socialized into accepting these readings as wholly authentic (Barlas 2002). Such gendered readings of religious texts can also be seen as an example of how traditions can be re-interpreted and mobilized to advance claims made by marginalized groups in contemporary societies. Similarly, refugees find themselves at the margins of society, and: "are in search of traditional beliefs to which to attach themselves, to 'create a past' for themselves which will legitimate them in a way which just being themselves in the present will not allow them to do" (Shils 1971:133).

Conflict-induced displacement transforms society. Forced migrants oscillate between the twin poles of loss and regeneration (Camino and Krulfeld 1994). Here, theologies of migration take on added significance in aiding displaced people come to terms with social transformation—helping them "make homes and cross boundaries" (Tweed 2006:54). The utility of dwelling and crossing as metaphors for religious belief and practice opens

avenues to consider how Iraqi refugees orient themselves in space and time in the wake of forced displacements—affecting ways in which domestic and neighborhood space is inscribed with religious significance. The notion of movement and flux inherent in this understanding of religion captures the dynamics of tradition being interpreted anew as a means to satisfy a need to be connected to the past in order to legitimate a way of being, which the present will not allow. Refugees are active social agents; dwelling does not imply passivity. Rather, it refers to the transformation of what may be alien surroundings into an inhabitable world of their own construction. As Tweed points out (2006:82), dwelling "is a verbal noun, and that signals something important; dwelling like crossing, is doing [. . .] It refers to the confluence of organic-cultural flows that allows devotees to map, build and inhabit worlds. It is homemaking."

Religious Practices in the Shadow of the State

In light of the earlier discussion on hospitality, conceptualizing religion as dwelling and crossing is particularly pertinent to the lived experiences of refugee populations. Crossings necessarily indicate boundaries some of which are temporal and others territorial. The state plays a leading role in policing and demarcating the latter. Tweed (2006:54) acknowledges his definition of religion to be "stipulative" and that there may be "blind-spots," which from his position as researcher he has been unable to identify. In the case of refugees, the role of institutions and structures is overlooked—chief among them being the state—which influences the practices and decision-making of refugees. Tweed's ethnographic study of Cuban migrants in Miami in the early 1990s presents a skewed analysis of refugee experience, in that it neglects to address the fact that under the rubric of the Cold War, the Cuban Diaspora in the United States had up until the late 1980s enjoyed a uniquely privileged position with respect to its relationship with the host government (Masud-Piloto 1996). The refugees who gathered at the shrine in Miami were ideologically in-line with and supported by cold-war political agendas of the host state. Observing the crowd gathered at the shrine, Tweed (2006:6) notes:

> The chants from the crowd of "Salva a Cuba" and the floral message "Libre 94" looked towards the future and expressed a hope—that the national patroness would bring democracy and capitalism to Cuba.

And yet, Tweed fails to take this opportunity to examine closer the linkages between US policy and the reception of the Cuban refugees in Miami.

What were the conditions that prompted the Cuban community in Miami to conflate nationalist politics with the practicing of their faith? What role did the clergy play in Cuban politics before, during, and after the 1959 Socialist Revolution? Are there any inherent linkages connecting democracy, capitalism, and religion in Cuba? If so—why do such relationships exist and how did they come about in the first instance? These are questions that Tweed overlooks and deserve consideration when examining the role of religion in the lives of forced migrants. The patronage of the host state is not as readily accessible to Iraqi refugees as it was for the Cuban exiles—the focus of Tweed's study. Iraqi forced migrants, though granted access to a safe haven in Syria, are denied the right to work by virtue of their "tourist" entry status (though they have a presence in the informal sector) and have limited access to healthcare and education.

In the case of Syria, where religious institutions had been incorporated into the bureaucratic apparatus of the state under the Ottoman Empire (Zubaida 1995), it becomes evident that religious resources are more than just cognitive, moral, and affective processes in character but are social and cultural in composition also. The co-option of traditional structures of religious authority by the state is significant in that it is an indication of the salience of religious capital in the over-arching field of power. As a functioning arm of state apparatus, religious authorities have been and continue to be used to endorse state positions to legitimate social inequalities and justify state policy. Institutions and social agents (including displaced people) battle it out for the right to name, represent, and legitimate the conditions of their existence.

Religious narratives can thus be viewed as master narratives that compete and interact with other master narratives such as that of the nation-state. They can also be used to structure counter-narratives produced by subalterns and marginalized groups to help negotiate their position in social space and to formulate strategies that aim to strengthen the volume and structure of resouces to which they have access or to mobilize religion "in unexpected places" as Beckford (1989:170) puts it.

Conclusion

In this book I am most interested in demonstrating how forced migrants—as active social agents—develop a range of choices and strategies. In this chapter, I considered the possibility that Islamic traditions, networks, and institutions may be pivotal in helping refugees in the contemporary Middle East to do so. By introducing religion into the debate on forced migration, I am not looking to reduce the understanding of all social interaction through the

prism of religion—a sociological *deus ex machina* one might argue. Instead, I hope to draw attention to linkages between religion and social interactions and undertakings, which may at first glance seem wholly unrelated.

In trying to understand the Iraqi experience of exile in Syria it is imperative not to lose sight of the fact that despite having crossed a border, Iraqi refugees find themselves in space, which is largely familiar. This familiarity is itself grounded in the cumulative sociocultural history of the stranger in the Muslim world as a welcome figure rather than a hostile entity. Islamic understandings of belonging are broader than territorially bounded notions of nationalism, so that over hundreds of years in countries such as Syria a "local cosmopolitanism" (Zubaida 1999, Chatty 2010) has emerged allowing diverse communities to live alongside one another. This analysis is not particular to the experiences of Iraqis alone but can be extended to other mass-displacement crises in the region—the most recent being the Syrian refugee crisis.

Religion must be recognized as a social and cultural resource that enables the project of emplacement or home-making. To be a stranger one has to arrive in an already inhabited place. Hospitality is therefore an integral aspect of emplacement. Hospitality or the practice of welcoming a stranger—something that was prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia and consolidated upon with the advent of Islam—should be recognized as a feature of a practical ethics. That is to say the practice of welcoming a stranger encourages the mutual accommodation of difference and in doing so an ethical disposition is developed. The vast corpus of Islamic traditions pertaining to asylum and assistance to refugees supports this proposition and provides an alternative framework of protection, which displaced people can lay claim to. It allows us to think beyond the narrow constraints of a legal discourse on refuge, which privilege state actors and consider sociocultural understandings anchored in the lived experiences of refugees themselves.

The reluctance of social theorists to address the issue of constraint in relation to the project of "home-making" must be addressed directly. In the first instance, refugees are marked by coercion throughout their migratory experience. Second, the state plays a fundamental role in the delineation and demarcation of boundaries under which religion is understood and acted upon in society. In short, religious actors are shackled by the state. For religiously oriented Iraqi refugees there is a double bind: they are constrained as displaced people whose access to material resources is limited by the state and they are limited as religious actors in Ba'thist Syria. In the following chapters I will explore the significance of religion, understood as practices of crossing and dwelling, in the shadow of authoritarian states.

CHAPTER 2

Sowing the Seeds of Displacement: Religion and Society in Ba'thist Iraq (1980–2003)

Abdullah bin 'Amr mentioned that Allah's Apostle said: The best among you are those who have the best manners and character. (Sahīh Bukhāri Vol.8, Book 073, Number 056)

Introduction

It was the day of Eid al-Adha- the feast to celebrate the end of the Hajj- and I had been invited to have lunch at the Rābeta Falastīniya al-'Iraq [the Palestinian Iraqi Community Association] in mukhayim al-Yarmouk. Around 40 men were seated cross-legged on the floor, with a substantial spread of rice and shanks of lamb laid out in the center of the room before them. I took my place next to Tariq, who would turn out to be a valued friend and contact at the Rābeta. Turning to me he asked "so what brings you here?" "Kull sana wenta tayyib" I replied. "It's Eid al Adha, Hajj Eesa and Abu Hassan invited me," "No, why are you here in al-Sham?" persisted Tariq. Almost, as soon as I had finished telling Tariq about my research project, I was prompted by Abu Hassan, the director of the Rābeta to address everyone gathered to do the same. Later that afternoon, members of the assembled group took turns to pull me to one side to catch a word with the new face in their midst. I found myself re-iterating how and why I had come to be spending the afternoon with them: what had brought me to Damascus.

I mention this rather ordinary interaction as it was a question asked of me time and again by participants, other researchers, neighbors, immigration officials, taxi drivers, grocery store owners, and almost everyone I met. My answers would oscillate between the noncommittal, vague, and ambiguous response of "what's not to like about Damascus" to lengthy discussions on the partition of Kashmir—how my grandparents and parents had adapted to life on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control as refugees and my meditations on mobility. This in turn made me reflect on the context of the question and my response. Who was asking? Where were they asking? Why were they asking? If the people I had met were interested in my personal motivation for carrying out research on religious traditions of asylum in the context of Iraqi refugees in Damascus and the many different incidences in my life that had brought me to this specific juncture, then surely the same ought to apply to the people whose experiences I was interested in learning about. To understand how and why, if at all, Iraqi forced migrants mobilized religious networks and traditions in Damascus lies in broader processes not only in the here and now but in the recent past; in Iraq.

This chapter explores the possibilities of mapping the religious field in Iraq before mass-displacement through the testimonies of Iraqi refugees in Damascus. Any discussion on how and why Iraqi refugees mobilize religious traditions and networks in Damascus demands to be fore-grounded in prior experiences and interactions with religious networks and institutions in Iraq. Testimonies of Iraqi refugees in Damascus can be a useful means for understanding how Iraqi refugees relate to religious networks, institutions, and actors. Such testimonies allow religion to be placed alongside other competing and complementary concerns over time. Testimonies are based on memories layered atop of older memories, latticed with collective memories, recalled and performed at a point in the here and now.

Here, it is useful to think of experience as being akin to the bricks of a plastered wall. A religious habitus,[1] I suggest, is a certain disposition that informs those experiences and can be thought of as the sand in the mortar, without which the wall would collapse. By examining the life histories of Iraqi refugees in Damascus, I hope to strip back the plasterwork and lay bare the interstices where religion is situated in the lives of forcibly displaced people. Experiences are not extraneous to time but extend over time and space. As a researcher, I arrived at a point on this temporal continuum and asked participants to talk about their experiences and in doing so they reflected on them from the here and now.

All too often refugees are presented as a *tabula rasa*—a category of people without a history. While this is convenient for humanitarian actors and agencies interested in enumerating, cataloguing, and administering to the

needs of displaced people, in making such an assumption there is a significant risk of making invisible strategies and coping mechanisms displaced people may have developed over time to contend with pressures they faced before taking flight. The secular bias characteristic of much humanitarian work of international NGOs and agencies, in particular, conceals the possibilities that religious resources offer in helping refugees negotiate their experience of exile.

To understand whether religion indeed can play an ameliorative role following displacement is contingent on acknowledging that displaced people are not a *tabula rasa*. Testimonies of participants are juxtaposed against their memories of critical events in Iraq's recent history with acknowledged histories. In doing so, I intend to shed light on the multifaceted ways in which the religious habitus of the people I spoke to is developed, structured, and evolving. Through careful listening to the experiences of Iraqi forced migrants we are better equipped to interpret how and why they position themselves in relation to religious networks and institutions in Damascus. The unearthing of memories is not an excavation of historic facts but rather the illumination of the multivalency of events. Discussions with participants on the immiseration of Iraqis between the Gulf wars elicit linkages with increased sectarian tensions in Iraqi society; the retreat of the state from its welfare responsibilities and the re-emergence of tribal solidarities—coloring the fabric of Iraqi politics. For others, the fall-out of the Iran–Iraq War is recognized as a defining point in which the politics of identity and belonging begin to take hold—converging and coalescing around notions of religious belonging to produce sectarian sentiment.

Memories elicited from respondents bring to light generational differences in how such incidences of disjuncture and crisis are remembered. It is during such times of crisis that relationships between state, society, and structures of religious authority are made explicit. A weakened state appropriates religious discourse and symbolism to bolster its floundering authority. In doing so, attitudes and orientations toward religious ideas and actors are contested and re-interpreted, not only by the state and clergy, but by the laity. The religious field is therefore not a closed circular system in which religious specialists are the lone players. Instead, the religious field is one that is influenced by other fields—it does not exist in isolation, disembedded from other spheres of social activity.

Understanding this involves interpreting religion within a wider constellation of social relations including the field of education encompassing learning passed through the family, state–citizen relations, and kin networks. In this chapter, I shall demonstrate how the home as a site of learning helps inculcate a religious habitus—shaping dispositions toward religious actors,

networks, and institutions. To speak of a habitus is to consider the personal histories of my interlocutors; their current economic and social condition, and how the former relate to their decision-making and day-to-day practices in Damascus.

Religion under Ba'thist Iraq

The Iran–Iraq War was a watershed moment in the Ba'thist discourse on religion. Until then, Ba'thism had showed considerable ambivalence toward religion and was keen to maintain a strict separation between state and religion. The clerical class had lost its monopoly in key fields including education and law (Abdul-Jabar 2003b). The ability of Shi'i clerics in particular to generate income through pilgrimage to the shrine cities was heavily curtailed through the imposition of bans on commemorating key events in the Shi'i calendar such as the 'Ashura festival where the martyrdom of Imam Hussein is commemorated. Moreover, the shift in the Iraqi economy from being agricultural to industrial meant that there was a subsequent shift from the population being rural to becoming urban. The initial movement of landless, largely Shi'i migrants in the 1950s saw them settle in newly built suburbs such as Madinat al-Thawra. The dislocation that came with the loss of social and welfare networks that had previously been based on tribal solidarities meant that many new migrants gravitated toward labor movements and communism,[2] finding these movements to be politically meaningful in their new surroundings. The decimation of the labor movement under the Ba'thist regime meant that clandestine Shi'i Islamist movements increasingly became the only conduit for opposition to Saddam Hussein.

Importantly, these developments reveal a generational shift in attitudes toward religion. One area in which such generational shifts are evident is in attitudes toward marriage. As discussed in chapter 1, a fundamental concern of any religious tradition is to enable people to make homes and cross boundaries. Marriage is deemed by many in the Muslim world to be the point at which people pass from youth to maturity and the first stage of a family's home-making project. In Islam the significance of marriage is underscored by the Prophetic ḥadīth: "When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion." The following section examines the testimony of participants with respect to the issue of intermarriage.

Intermarriage

Any loose talk of ethno-sectarian identities has to be tempered with the understanding that identities are multiassociational and fluid rather than

fixed rigid categories. Academics and policymakers have long viewed Iraq through the prism of sectarian identities while neglecting regional affiliations. Later in this chapter we shall see how tribal affiliation under the last two decades of Ba'thist rule was equally, if not moreso important as a key identity marker. Many of the Iraqis I met were from families in which intermarriage among Shi'i and Sunni was commonplace. An unsurprising fact given that many of the respondents were from Baghdad—a city akin to other cities of the former Ottoman Empire, characterized by a long history of a number of different ethno-sectarian communities living cheek by jowl. For such a cohort, carefully pencilled lines demarcating identity based either on tribal or sectarian affiliations seem reductionist.

One such example was Mahmoud. Mahmoud is a softly spoken, 65-year-old physician who had completed postgraduate studies in the United Kingdom during the 1970s. This had been the one occasion in his life where he had lived abroad in a foreign culture; leaving a lasting impression on him. In the corner of the living room of Mahmoud's home lie a stack of English novels. During the course of our many conversations Mahmoud would often wander across the room in his slippers to fetch some smoking tobacco, cradling a pipe in his right hand. The image is one that would not have looked out of place in England. Mahmoud had grown up in Aadhamiye, a largely Sunni area that was later to be the site of intense sectarian conflict during the American occupation. His father was a Shi'i military officer from Hilla and his mother, Sunni. Mahmoud described his father as "a religious man who prayed but did not push his views on to his children." Religious education at school was at primary school level with less emphasis on religious studies at secondary school. Later in life, on returning from his studies in the United Kingdom, Mahmoud married Hāla whose family were Sunni and who was herself a committed, practicing Sunni Muslim:

> *Mahmoud*: I didn't know there was anything like Sunni and Shi'i until I got to university. It wasn't a big deal to be Sunni or Shi'i. After that I learned that some families if they are Shi'a, they prefer to marry someone from the Shi'a and the same for the Sunnis, but most people they don't differentiate like that. My best friend at college—he was Jewish. For the first year, I thought he was Christian. His name was Maurice—he had changed it from Moshe. After a year I knew he was Jewish and I told him that I heard he was a Jew. He said "yes, is that a problem for you?" I said "no." He said "you were born with your father and mother as Muslim and I was born with a Jewish father and mother." So, it wasn't a big deal what somebody's religion was.

Hanan is 29 years old and grew up in Basra in the south of Iraq. Her family are Sunni though she described them as not being overtly religious—only her mother would pray and fast on a regular basis. Her father had a career in the military before moving into commerce and opening a chain of supermarkets. Although Hanan took to wearing a hijab in 2004, no other member of her household had done so before her. Her decision to wear the hijab was one borne out of conviction and an expression of her independence. At the time I met her, she was volunteering as a counsellor at a women's rights organization in Damascus. I had asked her about the repercussions of the ḥamla al-īmāniye or faith campaign instigated by the Ba'thist regime in the late 1990s:

> *Hanan*: Looking back now—it wasn't sudden like a blink of an eye but yeah in the space of a year or maybe a few years—the whole of society changed. People started to pray and yeah many things changed. Whenever people talked about things they would connect it with religion [...] people became not only conservative- they became closed-minded. They started to see people in terms of how they looked and not who they are. This was something new, it didn't happen before, I mean before the ḥamla al-īmāniya [faith campaign]. Oh and there's something else, I think that even *ta'ifiye* [sectarianism] became more and more visible after people became religious.
>
> *Tahir*: [registers surprise by raising an eyebrow].
>
> *Hanan*: Please don't tell me this has nothing to do with religion—it does. I'm going to give you a simple example. Before I became religious, I was about to marry someone—my ex-boyfriend. He was Shi'i and I'm Sunni and we were going to get married and have a family and such, but we never thought about this [being from different sects]. After, I became religious—of course we broke up for other reasons and not just this—so after I became religious, I started to think what if? What if we get married and just to be selfish I want him to follow the same rituals and customs that I do or the other way round he wants me to follow the rituals and customs of his faith, or maybe it's our families that are putting on this pressure, it would put the whole marriage at risk. Now for me, it's okay for me to marry someone from another sect, but I need to be sure that he's very open minded—that he won't interfere with my own beliefs and practices. I wouldn't do the same to him and we'd have to be very open towards the children and I need to be sure that this issue isn't going to be a source of problems. I need to make sure that his family don't interfere also—my family too. It's all very difficult. Nowadays, everyone interferes and it becomes a problem.

I know people and I've met many women through my work who have been divorced because they are from a different sect—and they've been married for many years in some cases twenty years or more. So, I think logically, for us as Iraqis it's not good to inter marry unless as I told you we make sure that everyone understands the other.

Mahmoud had grown up in a very different Iraq from Hanan. The urbanization of Iraqi society had only just begun and religious education at schools was only taught nominally. With the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958 the new regime led by Abd al-Karim Qasim enacted a law that would have significant repercussions on the religious field. The Personal Status Code of 1959 marked a radical departure from previous laws that had been a knot of disparate and occasionally overlapping Islamic rulings by different schools of Islamic Law be it Hanafī, Shāfi'ī [Sunni], or Ja'farī [Shi'i] that upheld parochial tribal and patriarchal values. The Personal Status Code thus served to eradicate differences between the sects while maintaining that it was still based on Islamic precepts. The progressive interpretation of Islamic Shari'a as stated in the Code addressed gendered inequalities in Iraqi society. Polygamy was severely restricted; dissolution of marriage was extended to women in a number of different circumstances while a husband's unilateral right to divorce was curtailed. In addition, in matters pertaining to inheritance, women were given equal rights. Such debates received considerable attention in Iraqi media at the time and were a matter of much debate.[3] As a significant piece of legislation, the Personal Status Code of 1959 directly impacted on domestic understandings of religion; it drove at the heart of re-configuring power relations within families.

Both Mahmoud and Hanan had come from families that they had described as not being overly religious. Mahmoud's generation can be seen as part of the milieu that agitated for social change. The revolution of 1958 brought with it a burgeoning of liberal values and laid down the gauntlet to advocates of long-held social norms opening up women's participation in urban life. Identities were coming to be shaped more by social class and political orientation rather than ethnicity or religious affiliation (Al-Ali 2007:108). Hanan's parents were part of that very same generation. In both cases, one parent was regarded as someone who prayed regularly but neither had parents who asserted their views of religion onto their children. For Mahmoud, intermarriage between Sunni and Shi'i was not considered to be a remarkable or exceptional occurrence.

Mahmoud's anecdote about a Jewish acquaintance reveals much about attitudes toward communitarian identities in the early 1960s. Following the 1958 revolution, the government of Abd al-Karim Qasim broadened

its support beyond the land-owning Sunni class and enjoyed popular support across the many different faith communities in Iraq. However, being Jewish had increasingly become equated with being Zionist. The government of Abd al-Karim Qasim had begun to co-opt the Palestinian cause as an important cog in the struggle for wider Pan-Arab ideals.[4] Mahmoud does not dwell on why his friend had felt it was necessary to change his name to a more Christian name; in narrating the story of Moshe, Mahmoud is demonstrating a stance against the sectarianism that has become so prominent in Iraq in recent years.

Hanan, on the other hand, grew up in an Iraq where religion was once again reclaiming cultural and social space. Faleh Abdul-Jabar (2009:89) points to the changing skyline across cities in Iraq where the mosque to person ratio shot up from 1:37000 at around the time Mahmoud was entering university to 1:3500 by the late 1990s. The state had also begun to relax its grip on control over mosque attendance, even encouraging it with the institution of the faith campaign that I shall address later in this chapter. Hanan's assertion that society had changed rapidly is perhaps more indicative of the fact that her own social interactions were widening through going to university than there being a sudden shift in attitudes. What is undeniable is that there had been a significant change in intercommunal relations. This change in attitudes cannot be understood without taking into account the cumulative effect of events of the early 1990s and in particular the repercussions of the quelling of the Intifada Sha'abaniye, when the Southern provinces of Iraq rose up against the Ba'thist regime. In his examination of sectarianism in Iraq, Fanar Haddad (2011) points to competing narratives of events surrounding the uprising put forth by the state on the one hand and Shi'i activists on the other. What emerges is a complex picture wherein Shi'i victimhood and grievances against the Ba'thist regime—which employs the sectarian discourse of *Shu'ubiyah*,[5] is portrayed by the very same regime as sectarian agitation fostered by outside powers. This in turn, further entrenched sectarian identities.

Hanan's assertion that "nowadays, everyone interferes" is an acknowledgment that households in Basra had begun to privilege sectarian identities. Her father, a former Ba'thist officer in the Iraqi army, would have been familiar with the state discourse on both the Gulf war defeat and the uprising that followed. For a young woman planning on getting married, consent of the family (although not a legal requirement) is deemed necessary. The heightened sensitivity to sectarian affiliation at the level of households that built up through the 1990s made intermarriage a distant prospect. Hanan's work at a women's rights organization brings her into daily contact with Iraqi women in Damascus whose marriages have failed. For many of the

women she meets, sectarian pressure and in some cases the overt threat of violence to divorce spouse affiliated to a different religious sect vindicate, in her view, her decision not to intermarry.

Hanan and Mahmoud are examples of people whose early lives were not overtly influenced by matters of religious identity. A religious identity at home jostled alongside other identities of social class and gender; of being Iraqi and of being Arab. Below, I examine two cases where religion played a more prominent role in the childhoods of my participants.

Growing up with Religion in the Home

'Aref is 24 years old and had left Iraq in 2005. He described his family as being "religious but not *mutazammit* [strict]"—allowing him to watch television and listen to music. His grandfather was the Shaykh at the neighborhood mosque and this had given his family some prestige. At school he was known as the grandson of the Shaykh. I had got to know 'Aref through the Iraqi Student Project where he was studying to get a scholarship for a university education in the United States. In class discussions he would often make reference to an Arab and Muslim identity. For him, the two were inseparable. On one occasion he confided in me that he used to share typically Iraqi jokes and songs with the other [younger] students so that they would not lose their sense of "Iraqi-ness." On another occasion I saw him lead other students in the *qiyam al-layl* prayer[6] during Ramadan when we had gone on an excursion one night to see a meteor shower that was predicted to take place. I asked him what it had been like to grow up with religion in the home and whether his friends had similar upbringings:

> *'Aref*: I had two friends that were killed in the last war. But like me, they were religious people, they would pray five times a day at the mosque. We made our mosque like our homes. Every day you could see us there at prayers, or activities; cleaning the mosque, helping the elderly and providing food to the poor.
>
> *Tahir*: What do you mean by activities?
>
> *'Aref*: Different kinds of activities. First of all, I remember working in the mosque—if it needed cleaning, bulbs needed changing or walls needed painting—we used to spend so much time just hanging out at the mosque. The second thing would be collections; my grandfather and then later the Shaykh who came after him would collect money from people who have extra money for the poorer people. He would give us some food or gifts in bags and would direct us to houses to go and give them the bags.

As a child 'Aref had spent much time in and around the mosque. This was not unusual practice for many young Iraqi males at the time. 'Ayyash al-Kubaysi, a spokesperson for *Hay'at al-'Ulamā al-Muslimīn* [The Association of Muslim Scholars], posited a direct correlation between the international embargo on Iraq and the increased visibility of Islam or as he put it, during the decade preceding the American invasion young men "were reared in the mosque," and "the mosque embraced them" (cited in Baram 2005:9). 'Aref's reference to his local mosque being made like home is a significant theme that cropped up time and again in the conversations with my respondents. As the home is kept clean and tidy, so too is the mosque space and it falls on the shoulders of local worshippers to ensure that it remains so. It alludes to a domestic understanding of religion, which privileges notions of home and family. It serves to remind us how deeply entwined religion is in more ordinary daily practices, concerned equally with the mundane world as much as the transcendental.

Religion as akhlāq

Sara headed the women's committee at the Palestinian Iraqi Community Association and was responsible for women's activities at the center. On our very first meeting, she told me how struck she was when arriving in Syria and seeing Palestinian Syrian girls dressed in "western" attire. Sara would always be dressed in the cloaked *abaya* and hijab. For her, this was an expression of religious commitment as important as the activities she organized at the center. It was a sign of her moral and social awakening—the two are inextricably linked: faith is a vehicle for her agency. A verse from the Qur'an oft-quoted by Muslim activists affirms this particular understanding of agency where social change can only be instigated by moral transformation: "verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves."[7] Her commitment to her faith was derived from an understanding of Islamic ethics and had been something that she had learned at home rather than at school:

> *Sara*: My father—May God bless him, always used to say that education is essentially the learning of *akhlāq* [good manners and ethics]. So, when you have sound ethics, you can find the true image of Islam. We were raised on knowing what is permissible and what is forbidden [*ehna mutarabbiyin 'ala halāl wa harām*] yes, no—right and wrong. So we depend on our faith to perfect our *akhlāq*. If you have *akhlāq*, you can find the path through life a lot easier. At school, we'd just be told how to memorize certain verses from the Qur'an and that was about

it. I would often go to the mosque every Friday to listen to the Shaykh giving his sermon. He would talk about how to deal with people, about *akhlāq bil din* [good manners and ethics in religion]. These were the most important things. Religion is something important to build the foundations of our lives and after that you can deal with your affairs gradually built on those foundations.

Sara's coupling of education with ethics and a "true image of Islam" brings us back to her understanding of religious commitment. Her surprise at how "western" the clothing of women in Damascus affirms Talal Asad's (1996: 397) suggestion that the social sciences ought to approach the study of Islam as a "discursive tradition." The education Sara refers to is an education in Qur'an and *aḥadīth* literature, which bears upon the ethical and moral outlook of an individual such as Sara and results in practices projecting what she terms the "true image of Islam."

The importance Sara attaches to *akhlāq* in pertaining to how she conducts herself cannot be underestimated. It is through the prism of *akhlāq* that all other dealings are predicated upon. In Bourdeuian terms, *akhlāq* is embodied cultural capital in the form of habitus. When Sara speaks of being "raised on knowing what is permissible and forbidden" she is speaking of a particular education passed on to her from her family; a certain way of interacting socially, a specific way of reading the game that is life. This is something that Bourdieu (1962:108) himself recognized while working on the Mzab region in Algeria where an "atmosphere of Islam [...] permeates all of life, not only religious or intellectual life, but private, social and professional life." Although he does not name it as *akhlāq*, this is precisely what informs the polite set phrases that punctuate everyday conversation and interaction. Similarly, Sara's assertion that through *akhlāq* "you can find the path through life a lot easier" and relating this to how she deals with people suggests that being attuned to akhlāq is what actually brings "regularity, unity and systemacity to [her] practices" (Bourdieu 1990a:59).

From a theological perspective, Islam is built on the concept of *tawhīd* [the oneness and unity of God]. The Islamic declaration of monotheistic faith, the *shahāda: La illaha ilallah Muhammad al-rasul Allah* [there is no deity except the one God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God] can be interpreted to mean that belief in the unity of God can be practiced in how people interact with one another through the example and teachings of Muhammad. Knowing how to deal with people is at the core of religious understanding and experience for many of the people I spoke to in Damascus. This structuring of relationships can perhaps be best visualized in the form of concentric circles—at the heart of which lies an individual's

relationship with self and God. The following circle includes family and expands outward to include kin networks, neighbors, colleagues, and peers in the workplace. Beyond this lie people with whom there are bounded relations such as traders in the market-place and those with whom interaction is fleeting and transient—strangers.

Having an ethics based on Islamic precepts provides actors with a shared understanding of how to read social situations. Succinctly put, it informs their decision-making process. However, to argue that ethics alone guide decision-making would be to over-egg the pudding. People do not always behave according to definite ethical principles, including their own ideal codes of thought and conduct. The context in which religious traditions and ideas emerge and gain relevance is of immense significance. What were the conditions that allow emphasis to be placed on religious identity rather than ethical concerns? The answer, I suggest, lies not in the religious field alone but in its relation to other fields and the wider field of power.

Key events in recent Iraqi history have helped shape attitudes and dispositions toward religion, religious actors, networks, and institutions. Religions do not exist outside of social space; they are part and parcel of the multiple fields, which, in aggregate, comprise social space. The conditions under which a religious habitus is developed cannot be understood independently of changes in other fields. Bradford Verter (2003), writing on the utility of a Bourdieuian theory of practice to the understanding of religions, observes that Bourdieu employs a particularly narrow and rigid concept of field. Bourdieu acknowledges that fields are autonomous, be it the field of education, religion, science, art, or politics. Each field contains structural parallels with the overarching field of power (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:98–99, 105–110). However, he falls short of explicitly recognizing that changes in one field may impact on another. In the case of religion, he retreats back to labored Marxist readings of religion as being a means of veiling political and economic domination, failing to apprehend how religion could possibly "be connected to the symbolic economy of a broader cultural nexus" (Verter 2003:156). Even where it is employed to dominate politically or economically, Bourdieu fails to recognize the agency of social actors.

Written out of Bourdieu's account are ordinary people, who are described as being "dispossessed" and "excluded" from the production of religious capital and thereby become "profane" (Bourdieu 1991:9). In so doing he mistakenly assumes that religion is a closed circular system in which hierocratic institutions monopolize production of religious ideas. Herein lays the difficulty with Bourdieu's approach to religion: conflating religion with the institutions of religion he has reduced it to being an organizational means through which the interests of the few are able to dominate, exploit, and

oppress the many. Understanding religion as *akhlāq* or embodied cultural capital is a reminder that the materialist emphasis in Bourdieu's theory of practice necessarily occludes a relationship that is hugely significant to those who self-identify as believers. Individuals ascribing to Abrahamic traditions—to continue with the analogy of sports, which Bourdieu is fond of—are playing past the whistle and envisage extra time. As such, relationships are configured with God in mind. While Bourdieu certainly helps our understanding that the state is a central actor in disciplining religious identities and practices, he also neglects the fact that for believers God is very much in the game.

The Iran–Iraq War

Before Saddam Hussein officially assumed power following the resignation of President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr on July 16, 1979, Iraq was riding the crest of a wave; on the cusp of what many of my interlocutors nostalgically referred to as "the golden age." Thanks largely due to its immense reservoir of oil wealth Iraq was considered to have been transformed from a quasi-feudal society to a modern urban one over a period of 50 years. In 1947, just over one in every three people lived in an urban area. In the space of four decades, 72 percent of the Iraqi population was residing in an urban area (Abdul-Jabar 2003b:62). Key social indices from the time seem to uphold the notion of a "golden age": GNP per capita stood at $1,594 per capita; nearly three times that of the average GNP capita of less industrialized countries (Ismael and Ismael 2004:127). A comprehensive commitment to the building of a social infrastructure based on health and education continued unabated from the 1950s until the assumption of power by the Ba'thist regime (ibid.:127–129). By 1977 there were signs that Iraq was gravitating toward becoming a more militarized state. The ratio of health spending relative to military expenditure revealed that Iraq had fallen behind all other Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) members, with an equivalent of 6 percent of its defence expenditure spent on the healthcare sector (Sivard 1980). This shift toward a greater military industrial complex was to be further compounded by Iraq's war with Iran.

In February 1979, the Islamic revolution toppled the Shah of Iran, sending shock waves reverberating throughout the world. The leaderships in Iran and Iraq each viewed the other as being illegitimate and unrepresentative of their people. Ayatollah Khomenei and the Iranian leadership sought to appeal to fraternal links with the Iraqi Shi'i to help depose Saddam and the Ba'thist regime. With the growing presence of Hizb al-Dawa, and in reprisal for an assassination attempt on Tariq Aziz (the deputy prime

minister of Iraq), which was attributed to Iraqis of Iranian descent the Ba'thist regime set out to expunge all threats of the Islamic revolution spilling over into Iraq. This culminated in the execution of the leading Shi'i cleric Mohammad Baqr al-Sadr and his sister Amina Bint al-Huda. Membership of Hizb al-Dawa was declared a capital offence. Thousands of Shi'i clerics, students, and activists were arrested in the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala and in the Baghdad suburb of Madinat al-Thawra (Chubin and Tripp 1988:27). Anyone having the slightest semblance of Iranian ancestry was deported—the Arab organization for Human Rights put the upper limit for the number of deportees at 400,000 (Babakhan 2002:183). Under the pretext of re-claiming full sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab, Iraq launched an invasion of Iran and attacked ten of its airfields on September 22, 1980.[8]

Where Iran sought to appeal to their Shi'i co-religionists in Iraq by Islamicizing the conflict, in Iraq parallels were drawn between the current conflict and the early Islamic conquests when the Arabs took on the might of the Persian Sassanid Empire at the battle of al-Qadissiya in 637AD. The propaganda machinery of the regime was quick to dub the war *Qadissiyat Saddam* or the *Qadissiya* of Saddam (Dawisha 2009:234) Saddam Hussein in his addresses to the nation appealed to the Arab identity of Iraqis; as Arabs they were pitted against their Persian foes:

> Iraq is once again to assume its leading role. Iraq is once again to serve the Arab nation and defend its honour, dignity and sovereignty. Iraq is destined once again to face the concerted machinations of the forces of darkness. Saddam Hussein, Nineveh, April 15, 1980 (cited in Chubin and Tripp 1988).

One particular group in Iraq for whom the Arabization of the Iran–Iraq conflict was to have long-lasting repercussions were the Palestinians who had settled in Baghdad and Mosul after having been displaced from their ancestral homelands in Palestine. The following section considers the testimony of these Palestinian-Iraqis, drawing attention to generational differences in how the events of the Iran–Iraq War are remembered.

Palestinian Memories of the Iran–Iraq War

For many Iraqis this was the beginning of an age of almost continual, unfettered war. I had met Abu Fu'ad, an avuncular man of 71 years with a bristly moustache, at the Palestinian Iraqi Community Association in November 2010. Abu Fu'ad was one of many Palestinian Iraqis of a

certain generation who had twice been displaced; first, from Palestine in 1948 at the age of seven and then once more in 2009 from Baghdad. The *nakba*[9]—or the cataclysmic events of 1948, which resulted in the protracted displacement suffered by Palestinians—had instilled in him, as with many others of his generation, an understanding that Palestine was at the core of an Arab identity. Growing up in Baghdad, listening to Gamal Abdel Nasser's speeches had awakened within him a political consciousness encouraging him to take part in student demonstrations in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The star of Arab nationalism was on the ascendency regionally and the centering of the Palestinian issue resonated with the Ba'thist ideal of "one indivisible Arab nation." From his student days onward he would be what he called *hizbi*—a committed member of the Iraqi Ba'th party. In the years that followed, he took up a position in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, working as an inspector of government storehouses. His opposition to the Iran–Iraq War ultimately led to him being ousted from his position at the Ministry. I asked him about the impact that the War had had.

> *Abu Fu'ad*: "Up until the war, the *tandhīm al-Falastīni* [Palestinian organisation] had been a part of the regular army. Then it became part of *jaysh al-sh'abi* [the popular army]." I mean it was only made up of something like 600 fighters. At the beginning, people were eager to fight against the Iranian attacks. As a result, there were a series of rifts in the relations between Palestinians and Iraqis. They say to you: "you're a Palestinian; you have an issue of your own. You're not an *ibn al-balad*, why do you want to go and be conscripted to fight the Iranians?" Why would that individual say that? It's a result of the issue of sectarianism that Iraq was experiencing at the time; the issue of Sunna and Shi'a. When the Iranian revolution took place—who was being held back? In Iraq it was the Shi'a that were hemmed in. People who weren't Iraqi nationals were supposed to show their loyalty by fighting side by side with the Iraqis against the Iranians. So, that's why it seemed to Iraqis that we were mercenaries; *mutrazaqa* [...] they'd say some things which didn't make sense. "You've been our guests for forty years—why are you fighting?" We were forced to do it, in all honesty. It wasn't our intention, it wasn't because we loved Saddam Hussein or that we were with him; that we were *Saddamiyīn* [Saddamists]. There was compulsion. For instance, an employee affiliated to the party, people who had interests that tied in with the state, we were all forced to join in. From that time on, relations between us and the Iraqi community at large just worsened. We felt that we were competing with them in showing

loyalty to the country. Then, this kind of attitude just became more widespread, more universal among Iraqis. They said you're Sunna and that's why you fought against the Iranians. We were hated, we weren't praised [for participating in the war]; I mean this was forced on us. As a result I tried to, widen relations with Iraqis, tried to get closer to them, to make them understand. Some of them did understand. They'd say "you're in the same boat as we are."

In this account of the Palestinian-Iraqi experience of the Iran–Iraq War, Abu Fu'ad is trying to come to terms with why Palestinian-Iraqis had become targets of neighboring Iraqi Shi'i. He traverses almost 25 years to locate what he regards as the root cause of his current predicament of having been forcibly displaced to Syria. The accusation of fighting against Iran for sectarian reasons, comes from the same quarters that later organized and employed sectarian violence against the Palestinian-Iraqi community. He switches from an account of Palestinian-Iraqis volunteering at the outset of the war to doing so under compulsion. This apparent contradiction perhaps lies with the dilemma that Palestinian-Iraqis found themselves in as "guests for 40 years" rather than being an "*ibn al-balad*" or a native son of the country.

Ambiguity as a defining characteristic of Palestinian and Iraqi relationships was further compounded by the sense that Palestinian-Iraqis always had to prove themselves as hospitable guests despite the behavior of the host to other family members "by competing with them [Iraqis] in showing loyalty to the country." The ultimate litmus test for loyalty to any state is willingness to serve in the armed forces. Yet, Palestinian-Iraqi involvement in the war generated ambivalence among Iraqis. The bureaucratic labeling of Palestinians as "guests" by the state was adopted in public discourse in Iraq. A popular Arabic proverb has it that the stranger should be well-mannered— *Ya gharīb kun adīb*. Likewise, Palestinians were expected to know their place and show gratitude for the hospitality shown to them rather than challenge the stratification that placed them below the status of citizen. Fatima, a 40-year-old housewife from Mosul, told me:

> *Fatima*: Whenever there would be a problem between us and our neighbours or someone, they'd remind us we are Palestinians living in Iraq. They'd say things like *enta nazzil wa dabchu 'ala sath* [you're a guest and you dance on my roof]. It's an old Iraqi proverb that means you think you're better than us; that you don't even have respect for your hosts.

Here, the limits of conditional hospitality have been reached. In designating Palestinian refugees as guests, the Iraqi state reminds Palestinians in

Iraq they are not fully entitled to the resources of the state irrespective of the duration of their residence in Iraqi neighborhoods and communities—a narrative echoed by other marginalized Iraqis. Abu Fu'ad's analysis of the role of Palestinian-Iraqis in the war, places Palestinian-Iraqis in the same bracket as every other Iraqi who was compelled to take part in Iraqi society as envisaged under the dictates of the Ba'thist regime. To say no to the regime was to risk losing your job, business, and perhaps your liberty and that of family members. The incorporation of *al-Tandhīm al-Falastīni* [Palestinian Organization] into *al-Jaysh al-Sha'bi* [the popular army] was not one that was decided upon by the Palestinian-Iraqi community. The *Jaysh al-Sha'bi*, made up of 75,000 Ba'thist volunteers,[10] was created to act as an alternative to the military as the sole means of coercion; to mobilize violence in the service of the core of the Ba'th party—in effect, a militia. By association, the Palestinians were also tainted with the accusation of being mercenaries for Saddam, despite Abu Fu'ad's insistence that their role was limited and secondary in both number and function.

For both my interlocutors and I, the uneven, thorny terrain of memory is mapped out from the vantage point of our co-constructed interviews in the present. Scholars in the field of memory studies have long pointed to the salient function of retrieving the past to serve the needs of the present. Listening to Abu Fu'ad's narrative of the Iran–Iraq War, I became increasingly aware that past events and memories of past events are invariably re-interpreted in the light of current modes of being and recent experiences. It also serves as a reminder that my cohort of respondents was identifiable, not only along lines of gender and religious affiliation, but also by generations. One virtue of mapping the memories of my participants through experience is that it makes manifestly clear that some respondents had lived through events that others had not.

Earlier in this chapter we saw through the testimonies of Hanan and Mahmoud, how there had been a shift in attitudes toward the prospects of intermarriage among Sunni and Shi'i Iraqis. Similarly, Abu Fu'ad's experiences helped shaped how he interpreted communal relations and by extension religious networks, institutions, and traditions. As mentioned above, he had lived through the *Nakba* where he had witnessed Christian Palestinians martyred in the defence of his village. This helped create a sense of solidarity among the displaced Palestinians irrespective of which faith community they belonged to, or what Abu Fu'ad called "a feeling of brotherhood" as they fled from the Zionist army to Jenin. The rhetoric of Arab nationalism—which theoretically transcended communal difference—allowed him to position the loss characterized by the *Nakba* at the heart of what it meant to be Arab, Iraqi, and Palestinian. The outpouring of

popular support shown to Palestinians on their arrival to Iraq left a lasting impression on him. He told me:

> *Abu Fu'ad*: Some of the 'ulamā demanded that every family in the West
> Bank and Jordan should welcome as guests the Palestinian families
> that had been dispossessed [...] During the course of the journey,
> at Rutbeh, the first town which you come across once you cross the
> Jordan/Iraq border—the people of Rutbeh started crying when they
> came out to welcome us on our way to Iraq. You could sense the feel-
> ing, the emotions. They were deeply affected and were crying over
> what had happened to us. They gathered whatever they had to spare
> from their homes; clothes, blankets and distributed it amongst us.

Marked by such experiences, Abu Fu'ad refused to be drawn into a bounded sectarian identity and stressed the importance of engaging with all Iraqis regardless of communal affiliation. Such shows of popular support for displaced people also helped shape his attitude toward religious actors in the humanitarian field; enabling him to bridge the gap between the disposition to believe and the disposition to act. I had asked him if Islamic traditions pertaining to protection and asylum had any relevance today. He told me:

> *Abu Fu'ad*: Yes, I think there is a connection between those traditions and
> what happened to us and I noticed something like this. When there
> was the *Nakba* there was a certain feeling of brotherhood among us.
> If one had something and another didn't they would offer it to him;
> aid was shared out equally among the people. When we came to Syria,
> some of the people here opened their doors to us and let us stay with
> them. Others provided material support; food, and day to day things.
> Religion does play a big role. Even churches have been providing a lot
> of support. Why? Why do churches do this? Their teachings tell them
> that this is the right thing to do. So religion does play a big role in the
> provision of aid and in creating this fraternal feeling among people.

For other Palestinian-Iraqis, who had grown up under the shadow of Saddam Hussein's Ba'thist regime under which sectarian identities had been instrumentalized, a different narrative emerges. In some cases, the conse-quence of the Iran–Iraq War was felt further afield. Mu'tasim was born in Baghdad but at the age of four had moved to Saudi Arabia where his father had managed to find work as an Arabic language teacher at a govern-ment school in the Dammam province.[11] As such, Mu'tasim spent much of his childhood in Saudi Arabia, returning to Baghdad each year during the

summer break from school. He eventually returned as a 14-year-old with his family to Baghdad in 1990. I asked him what it was like growing up in Saudi Arabia at the time:

> *Mu'tasim*: I woke up in Saudi, I really did. The ten years of my life I spent there I became aware of Saudi—its different provinces, its geography. Little by little, the most important thing I came to understand was just how much the Shi'i in Saudi hated us because of the war between Iran and Iraq. They didn't consider us Palestinians but rather Iraqis and that was it they'd insult Iraqis […] I remember when Khomeini died around the end of the 1980s—I was around 14 years old. One of the Shi'a around where I lived said "*entu kafara* [you're disbelievers], Iraqis are disbelievers. Saddam is a *kāfir.*" What do I know about these things? I was a kid at the time. What's a Shi'a what's a Sunna? I didn't know. All I knew was that I was Muslim just like them. I didn't know. And it was here that we started to see the issue of Sunna and Shi'a—an issue between Iran and Saudi. So here I started to notice things. At school, there were teachers who were Shi'a and they disliked me to the point that they would make it hard for me in the classroom. But the Sunna teachers—no; they would be really helpful and spend time with me. There was this one time, when another student attacked me and beat me. I responded by doing the same. A teacher came—he didn't know who had started the trouble and immediately hit me, can you imagine? This used to bother me a lot and I wanted so much to leave Saudi and live in Iraq where we didn't know anything of Shi'a and Sunna—and where everyone I knew was either a relative or a friend.

Again the Sunni–Shi'i cleavage immediately rose to the fore in my conversation with Mu'tasim' with no prompting of the issue of sectarianism. In seeking to understand the role that religion played prior to the displacement of Iraqis, it would be ill-considered to disregard the very negative consequences of identities forged primarily around religious belonging. I return to the consequences and causes of sectarianism in the following chapter. Indeed, the issue of sectarianism was a common feature of many of the conversations I had with Iraqi forced migrants from all faith communities, raising questions on narratives of persecution.

Interestingly, Mu'tasim was considered by Saudis to be an Iraqi rather than a Palestinian. He told me he had got into fights with local Saudi teenagers on the grounds of being an Iraqi and Sunni. Given his age at the time and his interactions in Baghdad being limited to staying in his local neighborhood, visiting friends and family, Mu'tasim had idealized Iraq as being a refuge free

from sectarian cleavages. This was a discourse of Iraq that Mu'tasim's father's generation would have recognized; as we saw with Abu Fu'ad, this was a generation that had come of age with Arab nationalism. However, unlike Abu Fu'ad, who recognizes that the Shi'a in Iraq were a marginalized community under the Ba'thist regime, Mu'tasim fails to make any connection between the subaltern position of Shi'a in Saudi society and his interactions with them. For him, Shi'i figures of authority, teachers in this case, and older Shi'i youths are equally culpable of being carriers of sectarianism. In contrast, the Sunni teachers are shown to be empathetic and kind.

The Wider Impact of the Iran–Iraq War

The human cost of the war with Iran was staggering; over a million people, from both sides, were killed. A generation's aspirations and hopes were dealt a crushing blow, lives were turned on their heads, as breadwinners were taken away to fight, some never returning. Farouk was a university student in Baghdad studying Hebrew literature. Unlike the more marginalized Palestinian-Iraqis who had begun to feel the searing heat of the sectarian flame, Farouk's memory of the war is typical of the many middle-class Baghdadis whose experience was primarily marked by the loss of loved ones and lost opportunity, in particular the chance to travel abroad:

> *Farouk*: I lost a lot of people close and dear to me. That was the main impact of the war on me. It affected me on a human, social and psychological level. Two of my cousins on my mother's side of the family were martyred. Another two cousins on my father's side were martyred also. These were people I had grown up with and gone to school with; they were close to me. Because of the war, there was little or no opportunity to travel. I wanted to complete my postgraduate and doctoral studies in England and I got permission to do so, but then events took a course of their own and the decision was cancelled. That was in 1986 and it was supposed to be looked at again but it wasn't. Instead, they opened a department for higher studies at the University of Baghdad. I then got the chance to continue with my studies at the end of the 1990s.

A shortfall in the labor market emerged, which was taken up by 1.25 million Egyptian laborers and others from Arab countries (IOM 2004). One respondent remarked: "If you threw a rock, it would have landed on the head of an Egyptian. There were so many [Egyptians in Iraq] at the time." Here, we can only conjecture as to what the impact of such a significant

number of Egyptians on the Iraqi religious field was. What is clear is that it coincided with a greater visibility of the Salafist trend in Iraqi public space. Abu Yaseen a Palestinian-Iraqi school teacher who regularly attended *dhikr*[12] at the mosque of the Sufi shaykh Abd al-Qadr Jeelani told me:

> *Abu Yaseen*: After the Kuwait war, the government was pre-occupied with this war and we know what happened, happened. There appeared in Iraq, the idea of *Salafiya* [Salafism] or what they call in Iraq *Wahabbiya*. [Wahabism]. A lot of books started coming out on this idea in bookstores. In Baghdad, there's a famous market full of booksellers called Souq al-Mutanabbi, and you started to see more and more of these books on display. At that time, you were really hard pressed to find books on real Sunni texts. For example, I tried to find a certain book on the *madhab* of Abu Hanifa. I couldn't. Lots of people started joining this [Salafi] trend.

More research needs to be carried out to ascertain whether there is a direct correlation between the migration of Egyptian labor to Iraq and the trend toward Salafism in certain Sunni quarters. My own experiences, albeit in an altogether different context of a cosmopolitan London, suggest that this may indeed be a possibility. Increased migration from noncommonwealth countries to the United Kingdom in the late 1980s and 1990s meant that my own idea of what Muslim meant—here, read South Asian—expanded to include Somali, Arab, Turk, Kurd, Nigerian, and Bosnian, to name but a few. Identities began to coalesce around a shared faith. This was as much in recognition of having shared cultural practices that stemmed from faith as it had to do with negotiating racial identities in 1990s Britain. Feeling neither wholly British nor identifying fully with a Kashmiri identity, belonging was sought in diasporic formations that cut-across ties of ethnicity and found a sense of home in a more expansive religious identity and belonging. Increased interaction with other kinds of Islam led me to question cultural practices that were tied with the Islam I had learned and inherited from my family.[13] With this came recognition of the differences and similarities of the various Islams we carried not only in our minds but in our bodies. This was most evident, for instance, in the slight differences of the prayer ritual as performed by the four different *madhāhib* or schools of Law in Sunni Islam. This in turn engendered an impulse to seek-out, learn, and know what I thought at the time to be a more "authentic Islam." I began to be increasingly exposed to the writings of prominent clerics such as Shaykh ibn Taymiyya and more contemporary clerics including Shaykh Hamid al-Din al-Albāni—both of whom are key figures in the Salafist canon. My exposure

to their writings came through networks of friends, informal study circles, at mosques, and organized lectures.

During the Iran–Iraq War, children grew up without seeing their fathers for months on end, as they were called away to serve on the front lines. Another respondent referred to Baghdad as having "become a city of women."[14] Simon had been married a few years before the war began. He had regularly found work in the construction industry throughout the 1970s and had started a family. The war intervened and robbed him of what he saw as vital years between him and his children:

> *Simon*: We had four children. Every three months I would come back and see them once. When the children don't see their father or talk to him on a regular basis, a wall of separation builds up between them. It's difficult to raise a family correctly like this. On top of that don't forget there were a lot of martyrs as a result of that war and that impacted greatly on society and the children that were left behind [...] I had two tours of six months each and then it was eight years in the army followed by another shorter stint of two months in 1990. I mean it wasn't that we really wanted to be there—we were forced to be on the front lines and do our military service. Every war in the world leaves a negative impact on society. First of all, the economy is annihilated, the country is faced with high unemployment, and you start seeing discrimination much more clearly.

Conceptualizing religion as being integral to the process of home-making assists understanding of religious ideas in relation to lived everyday practices. In chapter 1, I drew attention to the salience of home-making in our understanding of religious practice and beliefs. The "wall of separation" that Simon speaks of captures the strains put upon family ties and threats to understandings of home. These tensions, which began with the Iran–Iraq War and continued through a decade of a debilitating sanctions regime imposed on Iraq, can help explain the "worldly roots of religiosity" (Abdul-Jabar 2003a) in contemporary Iraqi society. On his return to civilian life, Simon found a country that was a mere shadow of the one he remembered before the war. Unemployment was rife; as a laborer on a construction site, he faced stiff competition for work from Egyptian migrants. Iraq remained an economy that was predominately dependent on its oil revenues. With the price of oil plummeting along with Iraqi capacity to pump oil, food prices, and other imported commodities pointed in the other direction. Iraq had gone from owning $35 billion in foreign reserves at the beginning of the decade to accumulating debts in excess of $100 billion by its close (Dawisha 2009:223, Abdullah 2003:190).

Religion cannot be divorced from the material context of the lives of people—changes in one field may have ripple effects in another. That is to say, changes in the field of politics or law for instance have repercussions in the structure of the religious field. The repercussions of changes in one field affecting another became more pronounced following the corrosive impact of sanctions on Iraqi society.

The Invasion of Kuwait and Sanctions

With the conclusion of the Iran–Iraq War, a massive reconstruction effort was required, estimated to cost around $452.6 billion (Abdullah 2003). Instead, a raft of economic measures including the privatization of state agricultural holdings and small industry, along with a downscaling of welfare provisions through the reduction of subsidies and the removal of price controls on basic commodities led to the further decline of the Iraqi economy. This was compounded by the collapse of oil prices resulting in a loss of $7 billion in annual revenue to the Iraqi treasury (ibid.:190–192).

Saddam Hussein responded by accusing Kuwait of sabotaging the Iraqi economy through purposefully suppressing oil prices by pumping more than their OPEC quota allowed. On August 2, 1990 Iraqi troops and armored divisions rolled into Kuwait heralding the beginning of an ill-fated occupation and 13 years of sustained sanctions against a beleaguered population. On August 6, 1990 the UN Security Council passed resolution 661 requiring a comprehensive ban on all imports to and exports from Iraq "not including supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs."[15]

For an economy that was heavily dependent on trading oil exports for basic necessities including food staples, the impact of resolution 661 was crippling. The 1991 Gulf War led by the United States and its allies witnessed more than 170,000 bombs dropped over Iraq (Cordesman 1999: xvi) shattering what remained of the country's already fragile industrial infrastructure. The Iraqi Economists Association noted that the bombing campaign aimed specifically at Iraqi public infrastructure was "the direct cause of the collapse of economic activity in Iraq in 1991" (cited in Gordon 2010:22). Per capita yearly income fell from $3510 in 1989 to $450 in 1996 (UNICEF 2003:2) translating into "the nullification of nearly half a century of growth and improvement in the living standards of the population" (Al-Nasrawi 1994: xv).

The economy was not the only aspect of Iraqi society to suffer. The blanket nature of the embargo also had a hugely disruptive impact on the health sector. Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, 92 percent of Iraqis had access to safe

drinking water and 93 percent were within the coverage of modern health facilities (Field 1993). Health infrastructure had been funded through the oil bonanza of the 1970s. British and Japanese firms were contracted to build clinics and hospitals, while physicians were sent abroad to Europe and North America to receive government-funded training (CESR 1996:8). The reputation of Iraqi health services was second to none in the Middle East.

As of 1995, Iraqi hospitals were carrying out major surgical operations at 30 percent of pre Gulf War levels and were faced with acute shortages of rudimentary medicines (Al-Nasrawi 2002:96). In a visit to hospitals and health clinics in the South and Central provinces of Iraq Garfield et al. (1997: 1474) found Iraq to be "a second world country, accustomed to a first world health system, which now has the epidemiological profile of a third world country." They sketch an almost Dickensian picture of the state of health services in Iraq where one-third of hospital beds were unavailable and unsanitary conditions prevailed in most hospitals—one hospital had a cleaning budget of just $2 per month. Chronic shortages of anaesthetics and surgical materials and appliances meant that doctors were being forced to improvise and modify their practices (ibid.).

The blanket ban on imports exacerbated food insecurity in a country, which had till then imported 70 percent of its cereals, vegetables, oil, and sugar (WHO 1996:9). A World Health Organization report found Iraqis were more likely to suffer from clinical disorders such as obesity rather than any risk of malnutrition (ibid.:2). In the space of less than a decade, one million children under the age of five were to be found malnourished (UNICEF 1997. In the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War it was estimated that just over 46,900 children under the age of five had died as a direct consequence of the war and the sanctions. Garfield (1999) puts the figure of under-five mortality at 227,000 for a seven-year period following the war, others found that the under-five mortality rate had increased fivefold in the four years after the war, putting the figure in excess of half a million children (Zaidi and Smith-Fawzi 1995:1485).

Under the aggressive leadership of the United States, resolution 661 was interpreted so extremely that it seemed almost entirely arbitrary and random in designating which goods could be considered as having an industrial use. In her excellent analysis of the sanctions regime in "Invisible War," Joy Gordon meticulously lays bare the culpability of the United States in the suffering endured by the Iraqi population at large:

> Iraq could buy finished clothing, but not sewing thread, because that was an "input to industry." Because Iraq was permitted to buy only finished products, Iraq lost the benefit of the value added in production while its

own labor [*sic*] and manufacturing plants lay idle. These measures went well beyond any rational concern about dual-use goods or the use of Iraqi industry to rebuild its military. (Gordon 2010:234)

Iraqi refugees I met confirmed the corrosive impact of the sanctions regime. Moreover, its effect was not merely limited to the durations of the sanctions themselves but the fall-out continued to influence events well into the American occupation. Mohammad is a short, bespectacled man of 37 years. I had met him through Sister Therese at the Convent of the Good Shepherd in the old town of Damascus. Mohammad had been an officer in the Ba'thist military. Having graduated from university with a degree in electrical engineering, opportunities for work had become increasingly remote. He had come from a relatively well-to-do Sunni family of merchants and military officers in Baghdad. Like many others from Baghdad, his family was originally from elsewhere, from Fallujah. This was a source of much pride for Mohammad. Eventually, for lack of options, Mohammad had settled for an administrative job in the military. I asked him how the sanctions had impacted on him:

> *Mohammad*: We were left with no money. Any savings you had just lost all value. They became a tenth of what they were. If you had a million dinars it was now worth a hundred thousand. This was a great loss for us. We started selling what we had. Our cars, the gold that we had in our family, my mother's gold, my sister's gold. The banks were turning people away. The value of what we had in the banks amounted to ten million dinars—it all went. This brought us to an end. After this, I had to start working as a taxi driver [...] there were people, lots of them who continued with their education and had got further qualifications and they were working as plumbers. The economic blockade annihilated Iraq completely. Iraq is the country between the two rivers [*balad ma bayn al-nahrain*]; it's a country of agriculture and industry. It has natural wealth and resources. Its teachers, doctors, engineers started working as painter decorators. A monthly salary of 30000ID would be the same as a one dollar or maybe just over a dollar and ten cents. It got to the point where a single dollar was worth 4000ID and then it dropped back down to 3000ID. It was a catastrophe. Could you imagine surviving on that for a month? It's impossible. So a person was forced to look for alternative work just to keep going. Your salary was a dollar and a tray of eggs would be worth $3[...] My daily routine at the time was reduced to waking up and going to work and then from that job going onto the next job and then returning home exhausted. You never got a chance to do anything else. At that time

> there wasn't even satellite television; we just had two TV channels. The Americans realized that if the country didn't go down in flames they would destroy the infrastructure of the country little by little, gradually. So we got to the point where people started hating the government. That's what they [the Americans] were working towards. So we had got to that stage. After that we arrived at the point of the beginning of the end and we've ended up where we are today.

Mohammad recognizes the abrupt slide of a proud and self-sufficient Iraq to one that had been robbed of its wealth and talent. His reference to Iraq being the country between the two rivers recalls Iraq as being the cradle of civilization that had given the world so much, only for its educated people to be humbled into working low-paid manual jobs. He follows up by talking of a determination and resolve to continue regardless of the futility of the situation where a monthly salary would barely be able to purchase one-third of a tray of eggs.

As with Abu Fu'ad earlier in this chapter, Mohammad connects the events of the 1990s to his current status as a displaced person in Syria. The severity of the blockade becomes a defining event in the Iraqi calendar; the principal point of departure to which many subsequent developments can be traced back. This extract of Mohammad's testimony also captures the very "public" register of many of the testimonies I had gathered.[16] The oral-historian Allesandro Portelli (1997: 27) posits a communal mode of what he calls "history-telling." This is characterized by respondents referring themselves to the first-person plural "we" rather than "I" and considers a social and spatial referent that encompasses the neighborhood, the community, and the workplace. Mohammad's continual use of the communal "we" designates such a shared experience when talking about the impact of the sanctions. These are stories that have been picked up along the way from others caught in the same trajectory and braided into more individual accounts. Mohammad's use of the motif of a tray of eggs was used time and again by other interlocutors also to demonstrate the immiseration of the Iraqi middle class.

It is in the context of a protracted war with Iran and the biting, degenerative consequences of a sanctions regime in the following decade that we begin to see religion take on greater significance; integral to meeting the psychosocial, cultural, and political needs of many Iraqis at individual and collective levels. However, state control over religious institutions—a situation homologous to Syria—combined with the erosion of the welfare commitments of the state meant that alternative structures and spaces were found in which religion could be located. The following section considers one such space which re-emerged in the 1990s.

The Re-emergence of Tribal Solidarities

An important consequence of the Iran–Iraq War was the re-assertion of the tribe into the cultural and sociopolitical structures of Iraq during Ba'thist rule. In what follows I chart the re-embedding of tribal solidarities into the fabric of urban Iraqi life. I venture that the re-emergence of tribal groupings in an urban context is coterminous with the re-energization of religious solidarities in Baghdad during the 1990s; religion and tribalism in the Iraqi context are not mutually exclusive.

Faleh Abdul-Jabar (2003c:79–91) contends that this process had its roots long before Saddam Hussein took power and disputes essentialist notions of what tribal affiliation in Iraq means. He posits that in the recent history of the Iraqi state, there has been the emergence of three distinct forms of tribalism: étatist, military, and social. Drawing exclusively from favored Sunni Arab clans, the first form relates to how the Iraqi state integrated tribal elements from their rural base into the bureaucratic structure of the state itself, and in particular the security services, in a bid to bolster the precarious hold over power that the ruling elites had to that point enjoyed.[17] Military tribalism was a more limited phenomenon and is used largely to refer to the recruitment of Kurdish tribes against the Kurdish peshmergha who were militating for autonomy from the Iraqi state. In the war against Iran they were deployed as a frontier force.

In contrast, social tribalism was discovered rather than created by the Iraqi state. During the early years of the Iran–Iraq War, Shi'i-Arab tribes in the south of the country, with no prompting from the state, spontaneously rose up to defend their territory against Iranian troops, bringing into sharp relief the divergence between Arab and Persian Shi'ism. The Ba'thist regime seized on this opportunity to re-energize tribal traditions of valor, honor, and courage through promoting tribal war poetry extolling such virtues (Al-Ali 2007:155). With the prolonging of the war, the state had begun to recede from its welfare commitments to rural areas. In such spaces, the *fakhd*[18] would re-assert old leadership duties that it had once enjoyed. By the beginning of the 1990s, the rehabilitation of the tribe was complete. Tribal leaders were invited to the presidential palace to give *bay'a* [pledge of allegiance],[19] hoisting their tribal banner aloft before presenting it to the palace as a token of obedience and submission to the state (Abdul-Jabar 2003c:92).

While tribal solidarities were being rehabilitated and re-inserted into Iraqi society, other factors were also at play. The 1950s saw the migration of rural masses from the southern provinces of Iraq to the capital. Many were settled during the rule of Abd al-Kareem Qasim (1958–1963) in the newly created eastern suburb of Madinat al-Thawra. Although Madinat al-Thawra came

to have a largely Shi'i demographic, other faith communities had also taken the opportunity to settle in Baghdad. Among them were the Mandaean Sabean community[20] from the southern provinces of 'Ammara, Nassriya, and Basra.

I met Hamid, a jovial character with a hearty laugh, at his home in Jaramana, a southern suburb of Damascus and an overspill of the Christian community of Bab Touma. Jaramana is also home to a large Druze community and a significant number of Iraqi refugees of all faith backgrounds. An over-sized painting narrating key tenets of the Mandaean faith with the central protagonist being John the Baptist dominates the wall of his living room, behind the dining table. Various family members were coming and going as it also happened to be Hamid's birthday. Hamid is also a significant personality in the Mandaean community. In Iraq he was a representative on the Minorities Council and was also part of the committee that had been assigned to oversee the translation of a sacred Mandaean text: the *Ginza Rabba* from an archaic Mandaean dialect of Aramaic to Arabic. As is the case with many Mandaeans, Hamid was a goldsmith and jeweller—a profession, along with carpentry and smithing, which has traditionally been handed down from father to son and for which Mandaeans, in particular, are renowned for through the length and breadth of Iraq. Hamid explained to me that though the tribal system in Iraq is predominantly Sunni, Shi'I, and Kurdish, there are avenues of participation open to other faith communities:

> *Hamid*: The main clans, in the area we were from, were the al-Muhammad and the al-Su'ad. We had an alliance [*taḥaluf*] with them. I mean, my father, my uncles, my grandfather agreed a pact [*mithaq*] with them. So for each individual in your community you would pay them a tribute of sorts. What was this in return for? If you had a difficulty, these clans would protect you. Do you know what I mean? They would protect you. They called us in Iraq, *dabāb al jirsh*. We're not originally from this clan, but given that we are allies [*mutaḥalifīn*] we were given this name. So, all Mandaeans are allied to them through this. Even when there is a problem amongst us, the clan would arbitrate.
>
> 　For instance I'm allied to the Chināneh and someone else [another Mandaean] is allied to al Su'ād then these two clans would sit down and resolve our problems for us, because the clan is the one that has the power. The tribal leaders are the ones with power. Even if we had problems with Muslims—ordinarily, we'd be afraid; they're Muslims and they consider us as being below them, but I say don't talk like that I'm with the Chināneh. They'd say but your Sobi and I say yeah but I'm Chināneh. So, we let the sheikh know and he knows who

you are because we give them money. So we'd say such and such said this to me and I have a problem with him. The Sheikh would say, go and don't worry. He'd go and see the sheikh from the other clan and resolve the problem. You see how the system works.

You asked me about the group of Mandaeans that were poor living in al-Thawra. Each of these was strengthened by their links to the *'ashīra*. Not all were poor just because they lived in Thawra. Some opened jewellery stores in Thawra—they worked there. They were protected by these *'asha'ir*. Do you understand what I mean? People would understand—This one is Sobi, but he's Chināneh also [. . .] Everyone would be known to the shaykh of the *'ashīra*. My father was a well-known and respected man. So, these tribal leaders [*shyūkh al ashā'ir*] were friends of his. They all would call on him for favours. He was a sociable man. Whenever there was an occasion or celebration they would invite him and he would visit them. So all he had to say was that he was known by such and such and they would say "we're at your service." And that's how problems would be solved. That's what relations were like.

Here, Hamid shows how identities were negotiated and where necessary a clan identity was privileged over and above a religious identity. His description of *dabāb al jirsh* closely resembles what Edouard Conte (2003) refers to as an "agnatic illusion" whereby an elective kinship is forged. However, asymmetric relations prevail and the one seeking protection is not always the equal to the one granting protection. According to Conte (2003:33) the one seeking refuge and protection is affiliated to the tribe through a process known as *kitba*.[21] He tells us:

This written, publicly negotiated and proclaimed pact [*mithaq*] combines various aspects of the covenants of brotherhood [*mu'akhat*], neighbourly protection [*jiwar*] or political alliance [*hilf, muhalafa*], all three in existence from the remote past.

However, this can only take place where there is a possibility and acceptance of intermarriage (ibid.:42). In the case of Mandaeans, this is something that is inconceivable. Thus, only through tribute can neighborly protection [*jiwār*] be ensured. Here, we see how tribal solidarities were re-constructed anew in urban geographies. The Mandaeans who had settled in Baghdad continued to rely on tribal solidarities to resolve disputes that arose with their neighbors. Hamid's reference to his father and his relations with the tribal leaders suggests that despite their re-emergence, tribal solidarities may

not have been as effective in their new urban settings. Ordinarily, the power of certain tribes was limited to particular regions in Iraq. Rapid urbanization meant that the strength of the tribe was fractioned as members were relocated to urban centers where power is diffused through the bureaucracy of state apparatus rather than through tribal solidarities. In addition, étatist tribalism had favored specific Sunni clans from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, privileging them over clans from other regions in Iraq.

In the context of Baghdad, a microcosm of Iraqi society, cleavages between privileged and nonprivileged clans came to the fore. Moreover, with the formation of the modern Iraqi nation-state, social mobility through channels other than the tribe had meant that there was a considerable segment of urban society that had no tribal affiliation. The reconstruction of tribal solidarities and the intrusion of customary law into the fabric of urban life meant that recourse to justice could be negotiated through the authority of the tribe rather than the police or courts of law, which were increasingly seen as corrupt institutions of the state. The revenue stream generated through the collection of taxes, tributes, and penalties allowed tribal actors to leverage greater political influence and power (Abdul-Jabbar 2003:93–95).

By 1997, the diffusion of power between the state and tribal groups in an urban milieu had meant that state employees with no tribal solidarities were subject to growing levels of intimidation by tribal groups. In response, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) of the Ba'th party felt obliged to issue Resolution no. 24 reminding tribal groups in no uncertain terms that they were subordinate to the state.[22] This tension became particularly apparent during the mid-1990s when the state sought to capitalize on growing religious fervor in the face of the debilitating effects of the economic blockade on Iraq.

The Faith Campaign

The *ḥamla al-īmāniye* or faith campaign initiated by the Ba'thist regime in the early 1990s can be seen as an appendage to the ongoing social tribalism of the time; a means of re-affirming tribal identities. Much of what was proposed by the regime under the faith campaign was concordant with the beliefs and values of the millions of migrants who had made their way to urban centers across Iraq. Paradoxically, following the failure of the Iran–Iraq War, it was also a response to the Iranian revolution that had triggered a renewed orientation to religion or what some of my interlocutors referred to as a *saḥwa īmāniye* [awakening of faith] through much of the region. Coupled with living under the intense pressures that came with economic blockade, it was perhaps unsurprising that many Iraqis would turn to religion.

For the Iraqi state, this was a double-edged opportunity to operationalize religion for its own purposes—a reminder that the relationship between religion and politics is less a binary but more fluid than it would first seem and that the secular state in fact plays a key role in articulating and even transforming religion (Hurd 2012). First, it provided the prospect of appeasing increasingly influential tribal elements on whom the state was growing more and more dependent for providing both welfare and security. Secondly, much like other states in the region had done, it sought to curb the influence of conservative elements by co-opting the discourse of Islamist actors. Abu Fu'ad explained to me why he thought many Iraqis had turned to religion:

Abu Fu'ad: Religion, we say, is like the tears of a friend; it's hard to deal with. So, Saddam found this faith campaign to take them [the Iraqi people] away from getting involved in politics that was based on religion, it wasn't because of faith. That was the point of establishing the campaign. It had nothing to do with true religion. The state was scared of the emergence of political parties that were based on religion. The state failed; it failed in its attempt to do so. In fact, the opposite happened. People started going to mosques a lot more than what the state had expected or desired. The state had wanted to prevent people from finding refuge in political parties based on religion but that's exactly what happened. Everyone had their own interests, the opposition and the government. People just wanted a bite of bread whether they got it from the state or from somewhere else. The important thing was that they were able to satisfy the hunger of their children. No more and no less. I mean, the Iraqi people faced unprecedented pressure on life that the world had not seen before. Hunger, poverty, unemployment, from all sides there was pressure.

Abu Fu'ad's assertion that the faith campaign had "nothing to do with true religion" is meaningful. It draws attention to the way in which the faith campaign was regarded by many as being an instrumental tool in the hands of state—where religion was mobilized for the services of communitarian politics. It also highlights a struggle between the laity and the state over the meaning of religious traditions. The laity is shown to be active agents rather than mere consumers in the religious field when Abu Fu'ad claims "everyone had their own interests." The failure of the state to assert its authority over the Iraqi people by means of the faith campaign is also testament to the struggle in the religious field.

The impact of the faith campaign was also keenly felt by minority groups. The conservative mores of tribal traditions dictated that visible signs of a liberal culture they were unfamiliar and uncomfortable with were targeted by the state. This manifested itself in increased control over

women's bodies and prohibitions on the public consumption of alcohol. For the Mandaean community this carried an additional existential threat as some Sunni preachers encouraged attacks on them. Mandaean tribal solidarities with Shi'i clans meant that they were exposed to less of a threat from Shi'i neighbors.

To counter the growing hostility engendered by certain Sunni preachers and to refute the allegations made against them, notable members of the Mandaean community met with the Mandaean clergy to pressure them into accepting the need for a translation of a sacred text—the *Ginza Rabba*—from an archaic Mandaean dialect of Aramaic into Arabic. The clergy relented and a committee was formed in 1995. Hamid was a key member of the committee. Here, he explains how eventually the Mandaean community had to seek public recognition from the regime, and in particular from Saddam himself, to guarantee their protection:

> *Hamid*: It [the faith campaign] was more about the Sunni mosques; they were the ones who were constructing such ideas. It was the Sunni current that was putting forward ideas like that at the time. They had the loudest voice, because the government was also Sunni. So, they felt they were strengthened by this. So at that time, it was largely amongst the Sunnis that you would hear those kinds of words. Mostly in West and South Baghdad: in Doura, in areas like Bay'ā, in areas that were far from the centre—on the outskirts of Baghdad. In those areas, there were Mandaeans who heard what they were saying. You know, on Fridays they use loudspeakers to deliver the sermon. The Mandaeans would be sat at home being able to hear everything that the preacher would be saying. There would be sermons on Fridays where the preachers would say that the Sabeans are *kuffār* [disbelievers] and they don't have a religion, they don't have a Prophet, they are *zanādiqa* [atheists]. You can take their women, their homes, and their wealth—these [Mandaeans] are not Muslims. However, we would inform the Ministry of *Awqāf* [endowments] what these preachers were saying, that such and such mosque on this date at this time with this particular preacher gave a sermon saying x,y and z. Then they would hold them to account. Some from the *Awqaf* would be in agreement with them, others sympathetic to us. You know, the employees of the Ministry of *Awqaf* themselves are preachers at mosques. It wasn't really until we had published the *Ginza Rabba* and gifted it to Saddam Hussein which got mass exposure on television in the news, that the issue came to an end [...] We wanted this meeting with Saddam because we knew that all the journalists and the television

stations would be following it and that they would speak about the Mandaeans. They would say that Mandaeans are originally Iraqi and are good people, and everyone should respect them. After these words were broadcast on television, you couldn't find any [Muslim] cleric having the courage to say insulting words about the Mandaeans.

According to Hamid, the attacks on the Mandaean community came from areas in which there were mixed populations or where there were a significant number of Sunni Muslims. The complexity of the Iraqi religious field is illustrated by the divergent views within the Ministry of *Awqāf* that appointed state-sanctioned clerics to lead prayers in mosques. In light of the earlier discussion on the phenomenon of the re-tribalization of Iraqi society, albeit in a modern urban context, the extract above demonstrates that for Mandaeans, being under the aegis of particular tribal groups in Baghdad was insufficient in the face of sectarian attacks. Recourse to the state for protection was required—and in particular the personal endorsement of Saddam Hussein.

The faith campaign also impacted on other minorities in Iraq, notably the Christian community. The prohibition of the selling alcohol disproportionately hit Christian businesses. At schools, religious instruction was inserted into the curriculum but covered Islam only. Mary, a 39-year-old from Baghdad al-Jedida told me how constrained life had become for Christian communities in Iraq:

Mary: You know at the time of Saddam Hussein, there wasn't anything in particular for the Christian faith. Yes, there were some private schools where you could get a religious education but at state run schools there was nothing like that—it's nothing like it is in Syria. I mean, it was only really through the family you know that we'd get a religious education [. . .] It's not like it is here where, I don't know, children at the beginning of their primary education—they get some religious guidance. It's true that we had religious freedom in Iraq, I'm talking to you now about before the collapse of the regime, but it wasn't like here where they have huge celebrations and they practice their customs and ceremonies as and how they like, it wasn't like that. At the same time, there was no war on Christians—nothing like it has been in recent years I mean, after the fall [of the regime]. I mean we got on with our lives, I mean we weren't afforded a luxurious life or anything. It was pretty normal, we got by. That's what I mean. From what I've seen of the Christians here in Syria, how can I put it? They have rights. Nothing is kept from them.

Again we are reminded of the central importance of the home in nurturing religious dispositions. For many Iraqis—until the advent of the faith campaign—the home rather than school was where a religious education would be learned and passed on. Arriving in Syria had alerted Mary to just how difficult it was to find a conduit for religious expression in Iraq after the Iran–Iraq War. A generation had grown up believing that despite not being able to show an open display of religious commitment, they enjoyed religious freedom. That, this would culminate in the targeting of the Christian community was something that Mary had until then never contemplated nor anticipated. Only through reflection on and the re-telling of past events, is Mary able to re-frame those very same events; making obvious the dissonance between then and now. In the context of forced migration, this inability to anticipate the prospect of exile leaves refugees wondering how they could have ever prevented it from coming to pass (Taylor 2009).

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide the reader with an overview of the context, which preceded the displacement of Iraqis post from 2003 and onward. I have made the argument that the seeds of displacement had already been sown as far back as the Iran–Iraq War. The memories of participants provide a particular representation of the past. This is a past constructed from the standpoint of the present. Both my participants and I, in a dialogic process, provide the reader with the context to the Iraqi displacement crisis. By calling forth these particular articulations of past events, participants are making meaning of their present circumstance.

As a researcher interested in exploring how—if at all—forced migrants mobilize religious traditions in exile, I argue we must first explore the genesis of a religious habitus. The testimonies of Sara and 'Aref point to the importance of home: it is in the comfort of the home where an embodied cultural capital or a religious habitus is nurtured. Sara reminds us she "was raised on knowing what is permissible and what is forbidden." The rules of the game, the constraints on how to conduct social relations were set early in life. However, dispositions can change over time. Attitudes toward religious traditions, actors and institutions are subject to the interactions and experiences people have of them. Not all participants have shared the same experiences. Older respondent's memories of recent events in Iraqi history from the Iran–Iraq War onwards, reveal an idealized or even imaginary notion of Iraq's past as being untainted by communitarian politics, whereas for younger respondents religious belonging has long been a prism through which identity is negotiated in Iraq. The testimonies of Ḥanan and

Maḥmoud illustrate the differing contexts in which they had considered the idea of marriage. Maḥmoud was doing so at a time when progressive changes in the legal field of Iraq were underway, which had direct repercussions on domestic understandings of religion. Hanan, on the other hand, was considering marriage at a time when public space was increasingly imbued with religious and communitarian overtones.

The deprivation and degradation of Iraqi infrastructure as a result of sanctions also meant that the state began to seek out alternative societal structures to bolster its authority. Here, we began to see the re-emergence of tribal solidarities worked anew in an urban context. A corollary of this was an increasing conservatism. Once again we are reminded that changes in one field can filter through into other fields. The mobilization of religious traditions cannot be considered in isolation, disregarding the context in which they are first mobilized. The rise in conservatism was expounded by the state embarking on its *ḥamla al-īmāniye* [faith campaign] to garner continued loyalty and support from a population that had increasingly turned toward religion to deal with the vicissitudes of life under the sanctions era. We were reminded in this chapter by Abu Fu'ad that the attempt by the state to mobilize religious resources did not pass by uncontested. His assertion that the faith campaign "had nothing to do with religion" demonstrates that contrary to Bourdieu's ideas on the laity merely passively consuming religious goods, the laity is actively engaged in a struggle with the state over the meaning of religious traditions.

A consequence of the faith campaign and its populist readings of Islam was that adherents of minority faiths such as the Mandaeans and the Christians became visibly marked as "Other." Questions of identity increasingly became more explicitly galvanized around notions of religious belonging. This proved to be an explosive mix when combined with an occupation that sought to play on sectarian differences to further American control over Iraq. The ensuing sectarian violence became a key trigger for the displacement of millions of Iraqis. In the following chapter, I consider the extent to which the experience of sectarianism colored the attitudes of Iraqi forced migrants toward religious networks and institutions.

CHAPTER 3

The Un-mixing of Neighborhoods: Iraq on the Eve of Displacement

And when we made a covenant with you: You shall not shed your blood and you shall not turn your people out of your cities; then you gave a promise while you witnessed. Yet you it is who slay your people and turn a party from among you out of their homes, backing each other up against them unlawfully and exceeding the limits; and if they should come to you, as captives you would ransom them—while their very turning out was unlawful for you. Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other? What then is the reward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the day of resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous chastisement, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do. (The Noble Qur'an 2:84–85)

Introduction

It has been consistently argued that the aggressive sectarianism and violence, which accompanied the resistance to American occupation, were key drivers of general instability in the country resulting in the displacement of millions of Iraqis (al-Khalidi and Tanner 2006). This is borne out in the testimonies of the Iraqi refugees I spoke to—iterated in their persecution narratives. Yet, there is an acknowledgment that the heavy footprint of the American occupation itself was pivotal in igniting a sectarian conflict that had lain simmering under the surface of Iraqi society.

Sitting in the offices of the Rābeta one day, Tariq—the administrator at the Rābeta, likened Iraqi society to a ball of cotton wool: "inside [this ball of cotton wool] is a branch of thorns." He told me. "America and Britain wanted to rip out the branch of thorns. When they did this, the cotton separated and tore apart. They [America and Britain] are the ones who brought these sectarian identities to the fore." Tariq's metaphor is an insightful one capturing the visceral tearing apart of the fabric of Iraqi society. It recognizes that sectarian identities prior to the American invasion had been a sensitive issue; handling required the utmost care. Grabbing blindly at the ball of cotton wool would only serve to cause harm. Although it was apparent that the regime had employed sectarian discourse and practice to maintain its grip on power, legitimate complaints of the Shi'i community were not addressed. Indifference shown by non-Shi'i Iraqis to the Intifada Sha'abaniyah helped nurture a sense of grievance among Shi'i Iraqis. While Saddam concentrated his efforts on courting tribal support through the ḥamla al-īmāniyeh, the Shi'i faithful were still denied the right to commemorate important rituals such as 'Ashūra and Arbaīn. With the American occupation looming on the horizon, resentment toward the Sunni Ba'thist elites was already on the rise. The thorn was beginning to prickle uncomfortably beneath the cotton wool.

This chapter provides both a more immediate context to the displacement of Iraqi refugees and a continuing analysis of the genesis and development of the religious habitus. As argued throughout this book, religion cannot be understood sui generis. Instead, it sits within a matrix of intersecting and mutually reinforcing fields. Religion is not merely a set of discrete doctrinal beliefs and practices but also provides a moral order that underpins social relationships. This underlying moral order is challenged when faced with social transformation of which forced migration and conflict can be both cause and consequence. This chapter considers what happens to attitudes toward religion in the context of the changing dynamics brought about by sectarianism and the threat of displacement.

Sectarianism in Iraq, although set within the language of religious symbolism should be seen as a consequence of re-emerging tribal solidarities after the first Gulf War and the Ba'thist quelling of the Intifada Sha'abaniyah, rather than a practice of everyday "lived religion." Testimonies of Iraqi refugees demonstrate how a sectarian narrative is re-active and emerges from a political context rather than one that is produced from below. This is not to say that the religiosity[1] of an individual is not affected by changes in the political field but rather a sectarian narrative is produced in the field of politics, whereas religiosity is located across a number of fields. The narratives put forth here are complex interactions that blur the boundaries between

past and present. The movement of participants' narratives back and forth in space and time between Iraq and Syria captures the ongoing development of the religious habitus of the displaced Iraqis I spoke to.

Central to this reading of events is how the American occupation inculcated and exacerbated a sectarian politics in which formerly disenfranchised groups in marginalized districts of Baghdad sought to claim a stake in post-Saddam-era Iraq. Changes in the field of law—in particular, the de-ba'thification law and the dissolution of entities law registered on the fields of religion and education. Exploring the experiences of minority groups such as Palestinian-Iraqis, Mandaeans, and Christians, Baghdad becomes a site for the "un-mixing of neighbourhoods" as political actors seek to assert their authority by mobilizing religious symbolism. In this climate of overtly aggressive sectarianism,[2] the role played by clerics and religious institutions in the advancement of a sectarian discourse is questioned—coloring how Iraqi forced migrants in Damascus perceive religious actors and institutions resulting in a trust deficit.

Defining Sectarianism

How precise are labels such as Sunni and Shi'i as sociological categories? Faleh Abdul-Jabar (2003b) insists they are not. Rather, he argues that these categories can be misleadingly reductive, overlooking the social and cultural diversity within them. Such categories, he tells us, form "a loose cultural designation, which may differentiate a certain group from another in religious terms but never specifies social, cultural (not to mention political) differentiated aspects within this 'group' itself" (ibid.:63). The reality is that spaces within which all-encompassing designations such as Sunni or Shi'i are found, are cut across by kin networks, professions, and neighborhood solidarities (ibid.:34). Simply put, to think of such sectarian identities under discrete monolithic headings is to ignore the fact that there are economic, social, and political factors that cut across such cleavages. A Shi'i housewife from the well-to-do neighborhood of Resafe in Baghdad may have more in common with a Sunni from the same neighborhood than she would have with a co-religionist from Madinat al-Sadr.

What processes and conditions produced the increased salience of sectarian affiliation after the American invasion? The religious field is one set within the wider field of power. It is openly contested by interested parties advancing particular positions within the overarching field of power. Both discourse and social space can be appropriated to advance these interests at the expense of the Other who becomes subjugated, dominated, and excluded. In Bourdeuian terms, the religious field provides a key site for

battles over cultural, economic, and symbolic capital. When identity is reduced to primordial notions of religious belonging, sectarianism emerges as the prism through which everyday relations and happenings are experienced, producing a set of distinctive processes and practices.[3] The memories held by displaced Iraqis of everyday life, allows us to consider how their encounter with sectarianism has colored attitudes toward religious actors and institutions in Syria.

Sectarianism in Iraq did not emerge overnight nor was it expressed in a uniform manner. It has developed as part of a long process that should be scrutinized contextually. Fanar Haddad (2011:10) identifies four primary antecedents to help explain the mobilization of sectarian identities in the struggle for power following the collapse of the Ba'thist regime: foreign influence, economic competition, competing myth-symbol complexes,[4] and the contested cultural ownership of the nation. The complexities of sectarian politics in the region go beyond the remit of this book and much has been written elsewhere (Al-Bayati 1997, Makdisi 1996, 2000, Weiss 2010, Haddad 2011). The issue I wish to address here is the way in which sectarianism bears upon the lives of Iraqi forced migrants—how it shapes attitudes toward religious networks and institutions.

Sectarianism has been a feature of the contemporary Iraqi political landscape ever since the drawing up of a new constitution following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958, privileging Sunni elites over other groups (Al-Bayati 1997:31–38). The focus here, however, is on contemporary understandings and the most recent period during which battles over symbolic and cultural understandings of religion in the Islamic world intensified—namely from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 onward.[5] As we saw in the previous chapter, this served to conflate a proclivity toward Iranian resentment with an anti-Shi'i sentiment, resulting in the forced deportations of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi-Shi'i, and mass arrests of Shi'i activists and students.

Tribal Solidarities Re-visited

Aggressive sectarianism became more entrenched after the American occupation, as US troops sought to assert control over Iraq, subduing some kin-affiliated networks while seeking to co-opt others. It is important to note here also that the ḥamla al-īmāniyeh (the faith campaign) was in part attributable to recognition of the growing salience of tribal solidarities. Networks of patronage based on kinship and clan identities had become a key feature of Iraqi politics, effectively forming a "shadow state" (Tripp 2002), which did not collapse with the capture and subsequent death of Saddam Hussein.

Despite the downfall of the Ba'thist regime, these networks remained intact and in the early stages of the American occupation were typified by the area North West of Baghdad known as "The Sunni Triangle," where insurgency was strongest. Indeed, it has been argued that the model of the "shadow state" was fully resuscitated in the political processes of the new Iraq with fatal consequences for the Iraqi people (Tripp 2007:306). In more recent years, American forces looked to co-opt some of these tribal networks into the Sunni-led "Awakening Councils" as an important component of its strategy against Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

Conflation of tribalism with religious belonging results in sectarian practices. The doyen of Iraqi sociology, Ali al-Wardi (2005:6), has argued that sectarianism is more an expression of tribal solidarity than a religious practice: sect becomes tribe. Many of the inhabitants of marginalized and disenfranchised districts were originally Shi'i migrants from the south of Iraq: re-emergence of tribal solidarities in conjunction with the Ba'thist regime practice of rewarding loyal tribes with a system of material privileges promoted a struggle for economic, cultural, and symbolic capital. Long-standing regional rivalries between Shi'i dominated provinces south of Baghdad and Central Iraq were reconfigured into a conflict between those who were deemed to benefit from the patronage of the state and those who had been excluded. Economic and social marginalization on the periphery of Baghdad was intensified in the 1990s with the arrival of a newly displaced population from the south of the country. The Government mandated destruction of livelihoods and communities of the Marsh Arabs in the south[6] and the quelling of the Intifada Sha'abaniyah or what has commonly come to be known as the Shi'i uprising in March 1991, resulting in the dispossession and displacement of a significant number of Shi'i to overcrowded and poor neighborhoods such as Fudhayliya and Madinat al-Thawra, latterly renamed Madinat as-Sadr.

The Intifada Sha'abaniyah should be recognized as a key point in the contest for control over religious symbolism. Slogans such as *ma ku wali illa 'Ali, wa nreed hakim Ja'afari* (there is no protector other than 'Ali and we want Ja'afari rule) reverberated around the Shi'i heartland of the south and beyond in 1991. These were met with a muted response from non-Shi'i Iraqis who equated such slogans with the threatening ascendency of a theocratic Shi'i state modeled on Iran.[7] The Ba'thist regime responded with a characteristic, brutal, and indiscriminate campaign violating key symbols and sanctuaries held sacred by Shi'i across the world including the shrine of 'Ali in Najaf and the shrines of Hussein and Abbas in Karbala (Haddad 2011:73). The message was clear; the regime alone firmly controlled the production of religious symbolism.

Displacements that resulted from the attack on majority Shi'i provinces of the south produced further disenfranchisement of urban poor who had originally settled in Baghdad in the late 1950s. Conditions and prospects of social mobility for the multitudes in these neighborhoods were exceedingly bleak. By 2003, the label *Shrūgi* (pl. *shrūg*), which had long been used pejoratively for this social underclass, was increasingly imbued with fear. Inhabitants of more affluent suburbs began to envision them as an "unruly mob" (Harling 2010). Chatelard (2011) observes that "[t]he number of *shruqis* [sic] kept growing in the cities and at least in the imagination of those who have been casting them as barbarian Others, now form the majority of the recruits of the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) militia."[8] This view was echoed by one of my participants, Adnan, a Shi'a whose neighborhood came under the control of JAM. He referred to them as *ḥothalet al mujtama'* (the dregs of society). He told me:

> *Adnan*: [They are] people who pedal old wares on animals and carts. They take empty cans, bottles and trash. They push carts in vegetable markets. They carry things in the souq. I'm not saying this to degrade the work they do. No. But they aren't known for having any culture, any knowledge, and they are ignorant. [Am I] right or wrong? When these religious currents like JAM, Hizb al-Islami and al-Qaeda appeared, these people became mercenaries. They would kill people for as little as $50. What logic is this? Who murders? Why don't you kill? Why didn't I kill? God knows [. . .] so when you ask me why I left home, [the answer is] I was living in a Shi'i area and the JAM is made up of Shi'i and they [JAM] are the dregs of society.

Here, Adnan has internalized the Ba'thist state discourse of the Intifada Sha'abaniyah. Prior to the collapse of the regime Adnan had been a state employee, like many other Iraqis. He lived in a new settlement, a prosperous district of Baghdad close to the airport far from the *shrūg* of Madinat al-Thawra. Iraqis living in the central provinces around Baghdad had been shielded from the true extent of the annihilation of the Iraqi military on the Kuwait-Iraq border and the ensuing uprising. In 1991, there were no social media and al-Jazeera satellite broadcasts. Much of the news Baghdadis received on what had happened in the south was either through personal contact or restricted state media sources. Through state-controlled media, a picture of the uprising was portrayed in which the Shi'i of Southern Iraq were depicted as *al-ghawgha'a* (the mob). The Ba'th party mouthpiece, al-Thawra daily newspaper, ran a series of anonymously penned articles over a two-week period in April 1991 in which blame for the unrest was laid

squarely at the door of agitating Shi'i. The articles were unprecedented in that Saddam's regime could be seen openly advocating a sectarian discourse; Shi'i identity—particularly that of the marsh-dwellers from the south of Iraq—and Shi'i rituals were mocked and attacked as being regressive, retrograde, of foreign origin (meaning Iran), and prone to religious extremism. A moral panic was manufactured in which the *shrūg* were cast as folk devils. Residents of Baghdad were informed in no uncertain terms by al-Thawra that the masses of the newly arrived migrants to the capital were not like them. The un-named author opines:

> [T]he son of Baghdad will notice examples of her [a woman from the marshes] rummaging in the garbage of the capital. Let no one think or delude themselves into thinking, that such behaviour is based on, and motivated by, a desire to satisfy urgent material needs. This sort of people owns much more than is owned by some generous souls that do not lower themselves to despicable behaviour. (cited in Haddad 2011:125)

Casting new migrants from the south of Iraq in the role of folk devils allowed Baghdadis to imagine the *shrūg* as people whose morals were not the same as theirs. The implication is that the perpetrators of the violence visited upon Baghdad were without *akhlāq* (ethics) and hence without religion. Adnan was not alone in suggesting this. Mu'tasim told me that in spite of the state having a considerable security apparatus in the city, he had been afraid to enter the densely packed streets of Madinat al-Sadr alone prior to the invasion let alone after, adding "you couldn't vouch for the faces around you [...] their faces were of criminals not people." Other respondents, irrespective of which faith community they belonged to, voiced similar opinions. George, a 58-year-old Assyrian Christian from Doura in Baghdad had spent much of his working life conscripted in the army. He had left school at the age of 14 to help his father in a small family-run bakery that sold flat Iraqi bread. Later he found work in a cement factory. Like many poor Iraqis, George was forced to sell household possessions to make ends meet during the sanctions era preceding the invasion. I asked him what he remembered about the time following the American invasion in 2003. He told me:

> *George*: I was still in Doura. I just remember it being like a volcanic eruption. A person couldn't go to the bank, or to the stores, it just wasn't safe there was no culture, no religion. I mean religion is meant to control and provide order. For example, you're raised on certain traditions—these traditions which you are raised on whether you are Christian or

Muslim, if you are raised on those true traditions, then what happened would not have happened. They would go and break into this store and that bank. What does the church teach you? What does the mosque teach you? It teaches you to be pious, to meet your duties and to be conscious of the things which you do. I mean we were being colonised—what does that require you to do? Does it mean to go and destroy what is around you? But those who have a conscience and are aware of what is happening—they protect their wealth. They don't allow these things to happen. What you had in Iraq was rioting and killing. At six in the evening there wouldn't be a single soul on the streets. The area I was living in was Sunni, and young Shi'i men would come and start firing. God most high doesn't accept that which is wrong. Islam is supposed to be one. But, there, people who didn't have a brain between them were doing these kinds of things. Life became hard.

George corroborates Adnan's labeling of the militias and their supporters as "the dregs of society" in his assertion that those without "true traditions" were responsible for the violence and lawlessness. For George, to be religious means to be cultured and religious institutions are viewed by George as guarantors of order and stability. Here, George is telling me that in spite of the teachings and efforts of religious institutions there was disorder and instability. His memory of those events fits into normative accounts of rioting wherein rioters are depicted as mindless thugs or as George puts it: "people who didn't have a brain between them"; the violence serves no purpose—it is mind-less. Many of the Iraqi refugees I spoke to referred to the events following the occupation as being *fawdawi* (anarchic).

However, a normative reading of the events such as the one narrated by George conceals the structural inequalities of Iraqi society. Almost a quarter of Baghdad's population resides in Madinat al-Sadr (Batatu 1986). Transport and utilities infrastructure connecting Madinat al-Sadr to the rest of Baghdad were minimal. Literacy levels were low and healthcare provision poor. George's memory of communal violence "being like a volcanic eruption" is telling. It intimates that the violence had come as a surprise yet simultaneously concedes that tensions had been simmering and building for a while. However, at no point in my conversation with either Adnan or George did they articulate what these unaddressed grievances were. Their different socioeconomic backgrounds—Adnan, a middle class, Shi'i, university educated professional and George, an unemployed Christian with no experience of higher education—testifies to the pervasive reach of the moral panic manufactured by the Ba'thist regime concerning the *shrūg* in the imaginations of many Baghdadis, transcending both class and religious

affiliations. The following section explores how past grievances were brought once more to the fore by the American occupation of Iraq.

Foreign Culpability

By 2006, Iraq had become a powder keg primed to explode as a fragmented communal and sectarian politics gave rise to the proliferation of heavily armed units across the country; some representing the state security forces, others forming militias attached to political currents, battling one another and a growing resistance to the occupation. The American neoliberal project of a New Iraq had managed to create near laboratory conditions for sectarian conflict that fully ignited at Samarā in 2006; conditions "in which socio-political/cultural differences and divisions entrenched by colonialism have re-emerged; in which competing factions struggle for control over what remains of state resources; and in which insecurity and conflict produce repeated crises of mass displacement" (Marfleet 2007a:400).

In addition to the wide-ranging economic de-construction carried out by the governing Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the political structures of society were also targeted. For the CPA, Iraq was to be considered "a *tabula rasa* (on which) they could reconstruct as they wished" (Cockburn 2006:70). The first two directives issued under the CPA: Order number 1, De-Ba'thification of Society, and Order number 2, Dissolution of Entities, effectively tore down the institutional structures of the previous regime including key government ministries and the military adding to the swelling numbers of unemployed that had already reached around 70 percent (Marfleet 2010a). This was a move that even took the commanding forces on the ground by surprise—they had been expecting Iraqi forces to be involved in the reconstruction effort. The ramifications of this executive order were not lost on some sections of the American military, which, by 2007, were fully engaged with fighting a growing armed resistance.[9] This was made up of many disparate groups across the many different faith communities in Iraq. Some signed up with various Shi'i militias including the Sadrist-led Jaysh al-Mahdi and the armed wing of the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)—the Badr Corps. As the Iraqi political scene became increasingly sectarian, Shi'i militia groups—particularly the Badr Corps—were incorporated into the state security apparatus.

In addition, the CPA established local councils founded along sectarian lines. Each council was made up of representatives from each religious community. The Americans had pushed for a power-sharing arrangement between the Kurds, the Sunna, and the Shi'a. The encouragement of sectarian politics by the Americans led to establishment of the Iraqi transitional

government. Ibrahim al-Ja'afari became prime minister heading *al-I'tilāf al-`Irāqī al-Muwaḥad* (the United Iraqi Alliance)—a coalition of the major Shi'i parties including Ḥizb al-Dawa, SCIRI, and the Sadrist current. Key ministries were apportioned along sectarian lines with the Americans maintaining vigilance over oil production. Culpability for the ensuing conflict lay squarely at the door of America and Iran. For ordinary Iraqis, this was a portent of things yet to come. Abu Fu'ad told me:

> *Abu Fu'ad*: It was clear what kind of ministries we were going to have. It was clear that they were formed along sectarian lines built under the guidance of the Americans, not through the choice of Iraqi citizens. They were appointed before by the Americans. The Americans are directly responsible for the sectarianism that engulfed Iraq—America and Iran. Ja'afari made most of his position as Prime Minister and brought in Solagh, I don't know if you've heard of him, as Minister of the Interior. He was the one who started building the security forces around sectarian identity. That's why the security forces, the police force and the armed forces were mostly Shi'i. Some of the officers, that were quite high ranking due to their experience, were Sunni and that's why the campaign [targeting them] started.

To better illustrate the slow-burn of the sectarian flame in Iraq, the following section explores how different minority groups came to be targeted in the sectarian conflict during the American occupation.

Easy Targets

Palestinian Iraqis

As we saw earlier in the case of the *ḥamla al-īmāniyeh*, the promulgation of Islamic norms through state policy under Saddam's regime had served to ossify sectarian identities. For groups such as Palestinian-Iraqis who lived close to the disenfranchised Shi'i communities of what is now Madinat al-Sadr, this process arguably began as early as the onset of the Iran–Iraq War. Earlier in chapter 2 we saw how Palestinian-Iraqis were singled out as not being native sons of the country and their involvement in the Iran–Iraq War was resented in some quarters—casting Palestinian-Iraqis in the role of mercenaries for Saddam. The invasion of Kuwait also helped blur the lines between the Palestinian issue and the realities of life for Palestinian Iraqis. Playing the "Arab card" during the war with Iran, Saddam sought to re-fashion himself as the Salah ed-Din of the modern era by championing

the Palestinian cause and using it as a justification for the legitimacy of Ba'thist rule. The powerful imagery of the stone-throwing youth of the first Palestinian intifada of 1987 was presented in a religious idiom to galvanize the morale of Iraqi troops on the front line of the war against Iran. A poem titled "I shall throw stones in Your Name, O Saddam" by Adib Nasr captures the conflation of the personality cult of Saddam Hussein with religion and pan-Arab nationalism, where stones are thrown at Tehran in the cause of God, liberation of Palestine, and for Saddam.

In a detailed survey of the speeches and public statements made by Saddam Hussein at the time, Ofra Bengio (2002) reveals that the use of the Palestinian motif had reached a peak in the wake of the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The Ba'thist regime had, at the time, couched the upcoming conflict with America and her allies in religious terms, with the liberation of the holy cities of Islam as a key objective.[10] Abu Fu'ad recalls the particular impact of the invasion of Kuwait on the Palestinian community in Iraq and how both Iraqi state policy and regional Palestinian factions disregarded the lived realities of Palestinian-Iraqis while celebrating the Palestinian cause. He told me how despite the Ba'thist regime's instrumental use of the Palestinian cause, a series of decrees was issued against Palestinian-Iraqis prohibiting travel and the ownership of property and cars. In addition, the regime employed the services of a network of Palestinian informants in other Arab countries to report on the activities of dissident Iraqi figures living abroad. I asked him whether this had served to further strengthen the perception that the Palestinian-Iraqis by association were Saddam loyalists:

Abu Fu'ad: Look, if you remember the Intifada Sha'abaniyah, when this broke out, people said that the Palestinians enlisted themselves to fight for Saddam Hussein and put this uprising down. In reality, nothing like this happened. The sectarian elements pointed to this in order to intensify the rancour and hostility towards Palestinians, and to muddy the reputation of Palestinians so that people thought that we were Saddamists. This had a huge impact. This generated a reaction against Palestinians. Despite the fact, that we were a part of the Intifada Sha'abaniyah. No Palestinian sided with Saddam during that uprising. The only guilt they had was the same as any Iraqi who belonged to the Ḥizb al-Ba'th. There were lots of people who didn't like Saddam and belonged to the Ba'th. It was no more or no less than that. As far as we were concerned, this was an internal matter for Iraqis to sort out. When those declarations were made by Saddam on the issue of Palestine, Iraqis would look on it as Palestinians were profiting out of it. This intensified the hatred and the muddying of the Palestinian reputation.

Lena Jayussi, writing on the modalities of Palestinian memory, suggests the act of recalling not only links the present to the past but also to the future. As such, there ought to be recognition of the fact that the act of agency is inherently involved in remembering, recalling, re-presenting, and re-framing memories. She tells us:

> This is not merely the past viewed through the present, but the present experienced as given, shaped through and by the past, the latter still working its way, its consequences into the present. The past as unfinished, This is a particularly social conception of time [...] the time of social agents working their plans, visions, and desires, appending the present to the past, potentially mortgaging the future. (Jayussi 2007:118)

The interviews with Abu Fu'ad were conducted in the course of nine separate meetings that began in late December 2010 and continued until the beginning of March 2011. A lot can change in a very short space of time. The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a vegetable seller in the provincial town of Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia lit the fuse to what have arguably been the largest uprisings of the "Arab street" since Gamal Abdel-Nasr took on the might of British imperialism at Suez.[11] Egypt, Yemen, and Bahrain were quick to follow the example set by Tunisia, as hundreds of thousands took to the streets demanding bread, liberty, and social justice.

At the time of interviewing Abu Fu'ad, the tension in Syria was palpable. Taxi drivers and grocery store owners who had never spoken a word of politics were quick to elicit the views of their customers. The phrases *Allah yfarrej 'alayhun* (may God give them relief) and *Suriya Allah ḥamyha* (may God protect Syria) were on the tongues of all I met. Iraqi refugees were thinking ahead to where such events could lead. Tariq at the Rābeta looked on warily at these events. "We'll see how long it is before they start bringing out statistics on the demographics of Syria. Once they start doing that you know where things are heading" he told me one afternoon while discussing what the Arab Spring might mean for the Palestinian struggle. The flat screen television on the wall at the Palestinian Iraqi Community Association was permanently tuned in to either al-Arabiyya or al-Jazeera satellite channels. Palestinian-Iraqis gathered at the center would look on with a great deal of nervousness and trepidation. What if the same were to happen in Syria? Would Palestinians be made to be scapegoats once again? In recalling the shift in societal attitudes toward Palestinians that came in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, Abu Fu'ad is re-framing events with an eye firmly set on changes that were unfolding before us in other Arab countries, making it clear that the Palestinians in Syria would be best served by keeping to the sidelines.

Returning to events in Iraq, we must bear in mind that the concerted effort of Iraqi militias to target Palestinian-Iraqis should be seen in several contexts. First, we must consider the Ba'thist mobilization of religious symbolism and the formation of an Islamic resistance against the American occupation by former Ba'thists. Second, we must take into account the increased presence of sectarian-minded Salafists in Iraq. Attacks on Shi'i civilians by *Tandhim Al-Qa'ida fi Balad al-Rāfidayn* (Organisation of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia) had produced calls from Muqtada al-Sadr for what he termed *takfir al-takfiriyin* or the excommunication of the excommunicators (International Crisis Group 2006b:15); a reference to the Salafists, pejoratively called the Wahabbis or even *khawārij*, who had begun to establish themselves in Iraq during the 1990s. A further problem for Palestinians was the perception that they were both Saddam loyalists and Salafists. As a result they were marked by Muqtada al-Sadr's JJAM as a legitimate target.[12]

The basis for Muqtada al-Sadr's legitimacy as a spokesperson for marginalized Shi'i communities does not rest with the traditional system of the *marja'iya* from which Shi'i clerics have wielded control over symbolic, material, and organizational resources (Motahari 2001, Abdul-Jabar 2002). Instead, Muqtada al-Sadr has elevated his charismatic credentials over and above those who enjoy traditional authority (International Crisis Group 2006b:18). A salient outcome of this is that although Muqtada al-Sadr continues to act in the capacity of *marja*, his capacity to amass revenue streams through the collection of *khums* and other charitable donations ultimately derives from the most marginalized and disenfranchised sector of the Iraqi Shi'i populace. Consequently, followers including those in JAM are given free rein in raising their own finances, with the outcome that conflation of Palestinian Iraqis as both Saddam loyalists and as Salafists meant that targeting Palestinians and the appropriation of their property was legitimized by Sadrists for raising funds or for the resettlement of internally displaced Shi'a from mixed or Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad. Abu Yaseen explained to me how Palestinian-Iraqis came to be viewed as Salafists:

> *Abu Yaseen*: The few Palestinian families that lived in my area, even during the time of Saddam Hussein, had nothing to do with the Ba'thists or with Wahabbis. Even though the nearest mosque to our house was a Sunni mosque which had lots of Wahabbis praying there, we'd prefer to go to a mosque further away; the mosque of Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. They [my Shi'i neighbours] knew this. I had been to Najaf and Karbala. They knew this. It was mostly Iraqi Sunnis that would pray at the mosque where there were Wahabbis. Some Palestinians would too. But, they [Palestinians] would be there not because they were Wahabbis but

because it was the nearest mosque to their homes. As a result they were labelled as Wahabbis. Similarly, it was why they [Shi'i neighbours] saw me as someone who was clean. So, they'd ask me why I didn't pray in that mosque and I'd say I didn't like to and they would say "yeah, we know you. You don't like Wahabbis; you're clean people."

Earlier in the week, before interviewing Abu Yaseen, he and I had prayed the Ẓuhr lunch time prayer together in the main hall of the Rābeta. Abu Yaseen noticed that I had performed my prayer in what he later described as a Salafi manner.[13] This had led to some confusion as through our conversations and my dress and behavior code, it was clear that I did not entirely ascribe to Salafi thought and practice. Abu Yaseen's pejorative use of the label *Waḥabi* as opposed to Sunni was used to mark Salafist religious practices as markedly different to his. The mentioning of the mosque of Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was similarly a marker to me that Abu Yaseen identified with Sufi readings of Islam. Equally, his visit to Najaf and Karbala would be considered anathema for Salafists. His assertion that he was regarded as "clean" by Shi'i neighbors sits in juxtaposition to the reality of having been compelled to leave Iraq by virtue of being targeted by Shi'i militias. Abu Yaseen is also asking the retrospective question of why he had been targeted. Much like Abu Fu'ad's reminiscence of the Intifada Sha'abaniyah, Abu Yaseen is absolving himself of any wrongdoing toward the marginalized and disenfranchised Shi'i who were formerly his neighbors. For Palestinian-Iraqis the memory and postmemory of the *Nakba* figures strongly in their narrative of events in Iraq. The telling and re-telling of the events that led to the dispossession of Palestinians and their forcible displacement from their ancestral lands posit the Palestinians as a people against whom a great injustice had been done. Abu Yaseen's visits to the Shi'i shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala demonstrate a particular solidarity among people who felt they had been wronged. It also demonstrates a conversance with the teaching of the Shi'i cleric Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr[14] who had encouraged the Shi'a and the Sunna to pray in one another's mosques (Haddad 2011:113). The immensely popular appeal of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr among Shi'i—cutting across class cleavages—meant that a Palestinian visiting the shrine cities would be seen as following the teachings of a senior Shi'i cleric.

Iraqi-Shi'i perceptions of Palestinian-Iraqis were not simply based on daily interactions between members of both groups; wider narratives were deployed to structure relationships. Geopolitical alliances in the region had resulted in Iraq becoming the battleground for regional supremacy between Iran and the American-Saudi alliance. A new "great game" was afoot. Whereas military responsibility for the occupation was shouldered by

the Americans and the British, the Saudi regime continued to contest the religious symbolism of Iraq, wary of the ascendency of the Iranian-backed cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Iraqi respondents who had ties to the south of the country were quick to confirm this. Hamid, the Mandaean representative of the Council of Minorities in Iraq, told me "everything in Iraq goes through Iran. I heard three days ago, the Minister of Education went to Karbala and found schools being run on an Iranian language curriculum. I don't know how true this is, but what I do know is that towns like Najaf, Karbala and Basra—they're full of Iranians." Similarly Hanan, herself from Basra, echoed this sentiment telling me in hushed tones of how following the American invasion property in Basra's premier shopping street was being bought up by "unfamiliar faces- people we didn't know. There were people from al-'Amara and Nassiriya, and there were some from Iran."

To mount a challenge to Shi'i cultural hegemony in the religious field, satellite broadcasting of religious programming filled the Iraqi airwaves. One such religious channel was Qanat Safa al-Fada'iya (Safa Satellite Channel). Broadcasting through Nile Sat from Egypt, this Gulf-based channel, which often hosts Salafi preachers, consistently launches virulent attacks on the Shi'i creed and religious figures. The tagline reads *bil tawhīd tṣafu ḥayatak* (clarifying your life with monotheism). By calling into question foundational aspects of the Shi'i creed and launching personal attacks on Shi'i clergy, the Safa channel—much like the writer of al-Thawra articles following the Intifada Sha'abaniyah—was prominent in the battle for supremacy over religious symbolism in Iraq. The consequences for the Palestinian-Iraqi community were terrifying, augmenting the suspicions of sectarian-minded Shi'i that the Palestinian-Iraqis were Salafists. The targeting of mosques and homes became a frighteningly common occurrence.

The Safa channel continues to impose itself from outside Iraq on the lives of Palestinian-Iraqis in Syria, causing much consternation. On the anniversary of Saddam Hussein's execution, the channel had planned to air a program titled *Falastiniyun al-'Iraq: Ḥanaq al-Ṣahyūni al-Shi'i* (Palestinian-Iraqis: Zionist Shi'i Hatred). The day before the program was scheduled to air, the management committee of the Rābeta in Mukhayim al-Yarmouk had frantically been trying to get the channel to pull the program off the air. "Why was the programme being aired at this precise moment?" they asked. Abu al-Hassan and Tariq saw the program as being nothing other than an attempt to sully the name of Palestinian Iraqis; entrenching what they regarded as an outright fabrication—the idea that they were Saddam loyalists who opposed the Iraqi Shi'i as much as they opposed the Zionist occupiers of Palestine. "It's nonsense." Tariq told me. "The title of the programme tells you all you need to know. The use of the term 'Zionist-Shi'i'—apart

from being incompatible; one is a creed the other a political ideology—it's just plain stupid." Letters had been dispatched by the Rābeta committee to the channel and a statement posted on the Rābeta's website condemning and refuting the idea of a Zionist-Shi'i conspiracy against the Palestinians. As had been the case with Saddam's instrumental use of the Palestinian issue, this was yet another example of how external influence (this time from the Gulf) would have severe ramifications for a beleaguered Palestinian Iraqi community in Baghdad.

Christians

Purging of the former Ba'thist order by the American occupying forces was interpreted by militias on both sides of the sectarian divide as a green light to openly contest cultural ownership of the nascent state. Much like the CPA, they wished to mold Iraq in their own image. Whereas the Ba'thist regime had originally been avowedly secular, the political forces in the ascendant were now organized along narrow communitarian lines. For the soon-to-be inheritors of the Iraqi state, religious minorities were a reminder of a particular brand of religious pluralism promoted by the former regime, which was at the expense of the Shi'i majority. As such, purging of the *ancién regime* also provided an opportunity to target minority groups (Ali 2011).

As with other minority faith groups the Christian community in Iraq was not under the protection of any militia, thus they represented an easy target for both militias and organized gangs. Anonymous death threats aimed at intimidating home-owners into abandoning their properties were commonplace as was kidnapping of relatives and family members in order to extort a ransom. Threats were not only targeted at individuals but also at institutions. Churches particularly were targeted. As the number of threats targeting the Christian community mounted a general sense of fear and intimidation compelled many to seek refuge. Mary decided after the targeting of her local church that the possibility to lead a life in Baghdad free from the fear of persecution was no longer possible:

> *Mary*: I remember on one day in the summer of 2004 a number of churches were attacked on the same day. In all honesty this frightened us, we could see that they [gangs and militias] had started to target us and then we decided that we had to migrate and get out of Iraq. I remember that someone had thrown some leaflets at our church demanding that the church pay a sum of money and if it failed to do so, the church would be blown up. There were a number of threats like this and not just on the churches. I remember when I'd walk to the church in the

evening when the church was having an event, it wasn't very far from where I lived, I'd be afraid and I'd want to quickly return to my home. It's not like it is here, where you can take your time and there is no fear, there is safety and security. It was a kind of deep fear, when the electricity would be cut off it became more uncomfortable. The whole day you would have to survive without electricity and you had to rely on generators. It was difficult, really. I don't know how we stayed for that time after the collapse [of the regime] God alone knows.

Simon's church had also been targeted. Along with other men from his community, he took turns in guarding the church and keeping watch for unfamiliar faces and vehicles in the neighborhood. The appearance of strangers would elicit much anxiety and fear. With the change in American policy, co-opting Sunni militias into the *quwat al-ṣaḥwa* (awakening forces), Christians in Simon's neighborhood were afforded some measure of protection against rival militias and gangs. Paradoxically, for Simon, his son's affiliation to the local *quwat al-ṣaḥwa* resulted in a direct death threat that compelled the family to flee Iraq in 2010. As with all the respondents I spoke to, Mary and Simon were quick to emphasize fear of persecution for reasons of their religious identity—indicative of the persecution narrative that all my respondents were keen to employ. Minority groups in Iraq were not the only target for militias. In the following section I consider the reach of sectarian militias into public institutions and how this was to have repercussions for the Iraqi population writ large.

Militia Influence over State Institutions

A further consequence of the De-Ba'thification Law was that employment opportunities became increasingly dependent on sectarian affiliation. Before civil war broke out, sectarian groups were taking up positions in civil institutions, which the American occupation had "cleansed" of Ba'thists. The education sector became a key site of struggle and contest between competing factions (Fuller and Adriaensens 2010). Farouk had been teaching at a university in Baghdad. Here he describes how sectarianism directly impacted on the life-chances of students and as the De-Ba'thification Law filtered into society new faces were drafted in resulting in the targeting of established staff members:

Farouk: We saw that the atmosphere had changed—the personnel at the college and the competencies required to work there changed. Until the time came that people didn't understand a thing of what

was happening around them. They started expelling students based on their names. This name would show you belong to this sect and another name would show you belonged to another. There were people seduced by what was happening. At that time people were climbing aboard because of their emotions not because of [any inherent belief in] sectarianism. There were certain areas where having a particular name could land you in a lot of trouble. People started to toy with corruption with support from foreign forces. In this period we started seeing changes in the faces that were teaching at the college. There started to be more duplicity, there started to be more witch-hunts and threats. Everything (went) bad; they targeted the big scholars, the professors and the doctors, the ones who had developed the country. Is it possible to make trouble for a teacher that taught you? Is it possible?

Students at the Iraqi Student Project (ISP) in Damascus corroborated the dismal state in which Iraqi education found itself. Many of them had sought refuge in Syria recognizing that the odds of attaining success in Iraq were stacked against them, particularly if they were Sunni. In August 2009, student demonstrations broke out in Sunni-dominated areas in Iraq including Ramadi, Hit, and Aadhamiye demanding that the Ministry of Education be held responsible for a sectarian agenda that had seen the downgrading of Sunni students' exam results.[15]

Wāsta and Having the Right Connections

For teachers without the requisite levels of social capital, unemployment beckoned. Abu Yaseen had been teaching in Yemen when the Americans invaded. He returned to Iraq four months into the occupation and set about looking for work in secondary education. As was the case with Farouk, it became imperative that faces and names were fitted with the new political alignments that exercised control over the education sector. He told me:

Abu Yaseen: I came back from Yemen and applied for work and they [the Ministry of Education] rejected me. They said you have to bring a document showing that you weren't a Ba'thist, that you belonged to one of the opposition groups. So, of course, I went to Ḥizb al-Withāq, I had a friend there, who wrote out a document saying that I was with Ḥizb al-Withāq and Ayyad Allawi. When I went to the Ministry of Education, they asked me if I was a former Ba'thist. I said "no, why do you ask?" They said "everyone at Ḥizb al-Withāq used to be with the Ba'th." I said "I'm not Ba'thist or anything." They said okay and

registered me, but nothing came of it. Some time passed and I went and got clearance from the office of Muqtada al-Sadr through a friend of mine—that was *wāsta* (brokerage connections) of course, and I was able to get back to work. Of course, it wasn't easy, sorting all this out. So you can see that everyone started belonging to one group or another, and each of these groups, be it Sadr, SCIRI and Badr, Ḥizb al-Islami, Ayyad Allawi or Ḥizb al-Fadhīla all felt they had a right to Iraq. An educated person could see straight away that there would be a sectarian conflict.

For an individual navigating the emerging political realities of post-Saddam Iraq, the bewildering array of political actors influencing what remained of state institutions was a difficult task. Despite Abu Yaseen not belonging to any of the fledgling political factions he made recourse to *wāsta* (brokerage connections). It is worth mentioning here also that although debates on social capital have only emerged in academia over the past two decades, it is a concept that can be crudely equated with *wāsta*, which is prevalent in vernacular discourses and a commonly accepted cultural norm in Arab countries including Syria.

As we saw in chapter 1, *wāsta* often presents itself in the guise of fictive kin relationships with its attendant expectations of reciprocating support and extending solidarity. This is significant as it alerts us to the idea of the relational self. As I make clear throughout this book, religion is best conceptualized relationally. Iraqi forced migrants position themselves in relation to other faith-based actors and humanitarian organizations. Here, Abu Yaseen approached—through intermediaries—both representatives of the Sadr movement and the Sunni *Ḥizb al-Withāq* in order to secure employment with the Ministry of Education. The construct of the relational self is a theme that I will return to in chapters 4 and 5.

Contesting Religious Meaning on Campus

University campuses also became a site for struggle in the religious field. Ibtisam had been a student at Mustansiriya, a prestigious university in Baghdad. On January 16, 2007, a bomb attack on the university left 70 academics and students dead with 169 people injured.[16] A strike was called by student affiliates to the Jaysh al-Mahdi who had a growing presence on campus. The strike lasted two weeks indicating the hold sectarian groups had over educational institutions. Ibtisam told me:

> *Ibtisam*: It was around this time that the Shi'a especially started talking freely because the government was made up of the Shi'a and they

would say things like "you deserved what happened in Fallujah" and I would ask "why?" They would answer "because you Sunna didn't defend us during the Nineties when Saddam was slaughtering us in front of your eyes." I would ask them how the two were connected. What point are you trying to make? This is the American army and they are *muḥtallīn* (occupiers). For sure, there were lots of mistakes committed by Saddam, but there's no need to show hostility to an *ibn al-balad* (native son). I was astonished when I heard these things. I mean, I'd hear this from my own group of friends. We were a group of six friends and one of them would talk like this.

When it would be the occasion for the memorial of Karbala, there would be people dressed in black and they would be doing the *laṭm* (ritual lamentation) and it would make me laugh because this was a college—a place of learning and study *mu le haich marāsīm* (not for these ceremonies) *makan muhassas le dirāse mu hay shaghlāt* (it's a place specifically for learning, not these kind of things). One day they were doing the *laṭm* and they freaked out and started attacking people from the education department and they beat some women—just like that. Why? We don't know.

The incongruity of finding the performance of the *laṭm* in a contested space of authority—the university, allows Ibtisam to associate a religious ritual with acts of violence. For Ibtisam neither ritual nor violence had a place at the university. As was the case with the testimonies of Abu Yaseen, George, and Farouk, Ibtisam also registers surprise and bewilderment at the level of hostility shown to the Sunna and minority groups. Her reference to the antagonism toward an *ibn al-balad* (native son) reveals much of what lies at the heart of the sectarian conflict in Iraq; ownership of the cultural symbols of the state. It refers to the emerging architecture of the new state wherein undesired populations are targeted for removal. Who qualifies as an *ibn al-balad*? Time and again male respondents would hold up the palm of their hand with fingers outstretched as a motif for how they understood belonging in Iraq. The hand represented Iraq with each of the fingers representing the different communities of Iraq. The removal of a finger was a disfigurement of the hand, they argued, whereby it lost its strength and capability. Yet, there has been continuity in the Iraqi state's approach to the various fingers of the Iraqi hand. As we saw in the previous chapter, the state under Saddam had coerced hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Shi'i to leave Iraq under the pretext that they had Iranian ancestry and therefore were not considered as *ibn al-balad*.

By October 2009 the government had decided to temporarily close Mustansiriya University after a professor had been pistol-whipped by a student group affiliated to the ruling Ḥizb al-Da'wa.[17] The presence of the militias was felt in other cities also. Hanan had been studying in Basra at the time. She told me that there were Sadrists who would patrol the university campus despite not being students there; describing them as "people who act religious but don't even know how to read or write [...] they were young and had a certain way of speaking. They just didn't look like university students." Here, Hanan posits a positive correlation between religiosity and education. For her, the Sadrist patrols at the campus were conducted by uneducated people who were distinctly unlike her: "they had a certain way of speaking," which meant that their religiosity was far from being authentic but was a performance.

Much of the time, the Sadrists would concentrate on enforcing moral codes. At the entrance to Hanan's college Sadrist guards not employed or affiliated to the college would take it upon themselves to conduct body searches on students entering the college:

> *Hanan*: If you were a girl, a girl would search you—a woman, actually. She'd be wearing a hijab and a *juba*. The hijab was very extreme—you couldn't even see her chin. So one day there wasn't a female guard there, but one of the Sadrists (a male guard) searched my bag. I told my boyfriend and he was very angry—he ended up having a problem with them. Another time, again there was no female guard, and he said you're not wearing the uniform. The uniform was black white and grey, and I wasn't wearing those colours. He said "give me your college ID card." I said "No, I'm not going to give it to you." He then asked for my bag and again I refused. Then he said "Okay, I'll find out what your name is and then we'll see." I said "Go to hell, do what you want to do." After a week or maybe less, there was a list put up on a notice board with some names on it. It contained a *tanbih* (caution) for students. It happened that all the girls who were on the list were ones who didn't wear the hijab—myself included.

The convergence on university campuses and control over the educational sector in general by sectarian-affiliated groups is indicative of how sectarian politics nurtured from above by the American occupation permeated into the everyday lives of Iraqi citizens. It also presaged the targeting of mixed neighborhoods by militias. The following section considers the impact of greater religious symbolism at the neighborhood level.

Greater Visibility of Religious Symbolism

As whole neighborhoods came under the sway of militias such as JAM, the Badr brigades, Hizb al-Islami, or even al-Qaeda, more and more people were displaced changing the character and demographics of whole neighborhoods. Areas made up of mixed populations particularly close to strongholds of militia-backed groups were particularly susceptible. Hamid told me that the character of his neighborhood changed making it barely recognizable:

> *Hamid*: Religious parties were becoming more prominent on the street and holding people to account. Bars and restaurants were closed. Women had to start wearing the hijab if they came out on the streets and not just the hijab but the *juba* also. Then you started seeing a lot more of Shi'i activities like *laṭm* (ritual lamentation). Barber shops would be separated from the hairdressers for women. Women weren't allowed to drive cars on the street. They closed down the shops that sold alcohol. They were following the example of the Salafists [...] they had changed the *mulamiḥ* (traits) of the neighbourhood and it became an area that was under their mercy. To the point that even the police were controlled by the JAM. Even if you had a problem—a dispute with somebody, you would have to go to their offices or headquarters to resolve the issue. So, the area became locked down by them. During that time, of course, the area had originally been a mixed area with Sunna, Shi'a, and Kurd. I mean, it was really *makhlūta* (mixed). Due to its proximity to Madinat al-Sadr, they were able to have control over it.

The targeting of mixed neighborhoods by sectarian militias was a key trigger for the displacement of many Iraqis. This "un-mixing of neighbourhoods" induces mass displacements caused by—in no short measure—a loss of "community integrity" (Marfleet 2007a:407) as pressures are brought to bear with the targeted killings of key community figures such as health workers, teachers, and religious figures. The loss of familiar and trusted figures, it is argued, cumulatively builds pressure on those left behind to make the critical decision of when to leave (Moore and Shellman 2004). In addition, it should be noted that for the refugees I spoke to, the difficulty did not lie exclusively with neighbors of a different sect but with Iraqis unfamiliar to them who had entered the neighborhood as outsiders—strangers who did not respect the right to neighborhood. A popular saying has it: *Ya gharīb kun adīb*—O stranger be well-mannered. The militias were anything but. With the breakdown of relational understandings of home, displacement often ensues.

This once again points to a key aspect of my argument; namely, relational aspects of home-making lie at the heart of emplacement strategies for Iraqi forced migrants. As Hamid notes, it is the prominence of religious symbolism on the street, which contributed to changing the characteristics of neighborhoods. Where previously understandings of religious tradition had facilitated the mutual accommodation of difference, religious symbolism was now being mobilized by powerful actors to assert claims over the cultural ownership of Iraq.

The fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003 witnessed the return of Shi'i symbolism in Iraqi public space. Shi'i crowds thronged poorer districts of Baghdad beating their chests and carrying cultural artifacts relating to Shi'i rituals. Faleh Abdul Jabar (2003a:15) noted that the "power of ritual had been unleashed" adding that:

> [C]hest beating is a coded display of allegiance to Imam Hussein, as well as a display of protest and a physical statement to convey past grievances. In this ritual, pain is a medium of catharsis. It purifies the physical body and releases trapped agonies; it also holds a promise of happiness to come. (Ibid.)

Past grievances included the abandonment of the Intifada Sha'abaniyah by non-Shi'i Iraqis as well as the numerous socioeconomic inequalities that many of the poor Iraqi Shi'i had to contend with under Saddam's regime. On my many visits to the shrine at Sayyida Zayneb, I would see men formed in circles of all ages and nationalities beating their chests while one from their number would lead the *laṭm*. On different occasions I witnessed altogether less frenetic displays akin to a choral recitation and on others a more physical and energetic display recalling the chanting one might hear on a street protest or a football terrace, drawing perspiration and perhaps even drops of blood from the zealous striking of the chest. Within the confines of the shrine complex, it seemed to me a very moving and spiritual spectacle, one wherein adherents make claim to their right to justice in the face of oppression—this being the driving narrative espoused by the Shi'a behind the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.

However, once taken into public space the very same rituals become merged with already prejudicial and unfavorable attitudes toward the Shi'i urban poor of Baghdad. Hamid and Ibtisam attest to the unease felt by minority groups in Iraq at the renewed vigor and confidence of public displays of faith by the Shi'a. Hamid identifies these assertive proclamations of religious belonging with a concerted campaign targeting the visibility of other minority faiths. Thus the increasingly public displays of ceremonial

mourning by Shi'i Iraqis have become associated in Hamid's memory with the closure of shops selling alcohol and the enforcing of dress and behavior codes upon women. Ibtisam's memory of public performance of *laṭm* places it as an act that accompanied violence on women and others. Similarly, the assertiveness of the Sadrists in Hanan's college targeted their efforts at control over womens' bodies.

Another key indicator of the increased visibility of Shi'i hegemony was the proliferation of nongovernmental offices affiliated to the militias. Once again, turning to the example of the JAM, we can see that the Sadrist movement sought to consolidate itself throughout Baghdad. This was achieved by establishing offices known as *Makatib al-Shahīd al-Thani* (Offices of the Second Martyr) outside its strongholds of Madinat al-Sadr and Sho'la and moving into areas with a mixed Sunni and Shi'i population such as Madinat Hurriye or Hayy al-Salām. A key function of the offices was to oversee the resettlement of Shi'i families displaced through sectarian strife and to act as an arbitrator for local disputes (International Crisis Group 2006b:20). Tariq at the Rābeta al-Falastīniyi al-'Iraq told me that the situation was more complex. In fact, families made arrangements with friends across the sectarian divide to agree to exchange homes as a strategy to attain security. With the establishment of offices came an increased presence of the JAM that conducted local paramilitary parades as a show of strength and as an intimidatory tactic designed to frighten and subdue the remaining Sunni families into abandoning their homes.[18] In addition, as confirmed by both Hamid and Abu Yaseen above, the JAM had significant leverage with government bodies including the police and the Ministry of Education.

Trust Deficits

Haidar describes himself as "a simple Muslim" and "not a scholar of Islam" nor as "someone who practices *tasawwuf* (the Sufi way of life)" but nonetheless tries "to act on the verses of the Qur'an." He had worked in a senior capacity for the Ministry of Health in Iraq for 25 years. Despite being Shi'i, his home came under attack by co-religionists from the Faylaq Badr (Badr Corps), the military arm of the Iranian-backed SCIRI in April 2004. A threatening note left for him made clear that he was targeted for taking care of "wanted" persons. Leaving his hometown in the south of Iraq, with his wife and four daughters, he headed for Baghdad. As mentioned earlier, one of the key functions of the offices established by the Sadrists was to re-house co-religionists who had been internally displaced. However, given the circumstances under which Haidar and his family were initially forced to

seek refuge in Baghdad, it is unsurprising that he would be reticent in choosing to approach Shi'i religious organizations for assistance. He told me:

> *Haidar*: The only support I got was from relatives and friends. Support amongst friends is all there was. Let's say Tahir is a friend. He knows the kind of circumstances I am in, so he helps me, sending me clothes for my daughters, or sending me foodstuff. There was nothing through organisations or anything like that. It was just specific individuals from friends and family. Perhaps there were some organisations operating, I'm not going to deny that, but I never benefited from anything they offered—nor did they help me.

When I pressed Haidar on why he had neither received nor asked for assistance from religious organizations, he was keen to draw a distinction between what he understood as authentic Islam and the emergence of political actors who mobilized religion for more worldly prosaic ends:

> *Haidar*: Islamic organisations would take care of their own (people). The Shi'a would take care of their own and be connected to Iran. The Sunni would look after their own (people). It wasn't like this before the occupation—in fact it was the opposite. Before the invasion there was no such distinction, we were one people; united. Even until now, Islam is employed in Iraq by both the Shi'a and the Sunna. There, the Shi'a are divided into something like twenty different groups—you have the Badr Corps, you have the ones affiliated to Sadr and others to Maliki and it has nothing really to do with Islam. The Sunna are also similarly split. This all goes against the teachings of Islam which tells us Islam is peace, Islam is for the good. Islam is the interpretation of the words of the Prophet, peace and prayers on him. After the Prophet had migrated from Makkah to Madina and Islam triumphed, he [the Prophet] said that everyone was welcome in the refuge of Islam. That's the real Islam. Islam is not killing and taking of innocent lives [...] Islam has excellent laws. Not just excellent but equitable and just. The problem is that the ones who are controlling the implementation of these laws label themselves as religious. They are the ones who are *mu'adin* (antagonistic). They make a lot of mistakes [...] Now you have, forgive me for saying these words, you have the business of Islam at the expense of orphans, at the expense of people who have been cut off from their wealth. So there's no comparison between then (the time of the Prophet and his companions) and now. Here, you can ask any Iraqi whether they have been offered anything by Islamic, I seek

forgiveness in God, I'm not saying Islam but I mean the people who have control over Islamic institutions—have they offered any Iraqi anything? Ask any Iraqi, and they'll say no. They'll say no. Nobody has provided them with anything.

Here, Haidar juxtaposes the fragmentation of Iraqi society following the American invasion with the inclusiveness of the time of the Prophet. "Everyone was welcome in the refuge of Islam," Haidar reminds us. In contrast, barriers today have been erected between Iraqis on the basis of communitarian affiliation which "have nothing really to do with Islam." As with Abu Yaseen earlier, Haidar is presenting himself as someone who is tolerant of others in opposition to the parties that have come to govern in Iraq today whom he labels as *mu'adin* (antagonistic). Unlike Palestinian-Iraqis however, his narrative of persecution begins much later with the onset of the American invasion.

Having identified himself as a believer, Haidar is careful not to disparage Islamic beliefs. He recognizes that I also identify as Muslim and having learned why I wished to conduct research on matters of religion makes clear that his views on religion do not necessarily tally with his views on religious actors and institutions. The two can be mutually exclusive. His assertion that "there is no comparison" between contemporary Muslims in positions of authority and the time of the Prophet and his companions is a marking of boundaries across time and space; boundaries that draw a line between him and religious institutions. The rise to power of religious figures in contemporary Iraq is regarded by Haidar as a commercial enterprise that has come at his expense. His own forced migration from Iraq puts him in the category of people who "have been cut off from their wealth" and his children have effectively become "orphaned" by his prolonged absence from them in Iraq. His choice of using "orphans" and "people cut off from their wealth" as examples, is deliberate as they are both categories eligible for *zakāt*. Religious actors and institutions are often key conduits for the redistribution of income through *zakāt* and *sadaqa*. The *ḥawazat* (theological seminaries) and *makātib al-wukala'* (offices of the representatives of Ayatollahs), which dominate the alleys and crowded avenues around the shrine of Sayyida Zayneb where Haidar lives and works are criticized by some as mechanisms for upholding privileges of the *'ulamā*.[19]

The failure of clerics in Iraq to halt or even stem the upsurge in sectarian violence left many Iraqis who had sought refuge outside of Iraq disillusioned with the role of clerics and religious institutions. I had asked Adnan why he had left Iraq. The conversation began with a perfunctory description of the lawlessness engendered through the rise of the militias and very quickly

developed into a rebuke and critique of religious authorities in Iraq. He was particularly scathing of Ayatollah al-Sistani who is regarded by many as the leading Shi'i religious authority in Iraq. Describing the quietist approach of al-Sistani, which places religion outside of politics, Adnan related a proverb that he attributed to Islamic teaching: "*al-saket 'an al ḥaqq, shaitan akhras* (the one who keeps silent from saying the truth is a mute devil)." For Adnan, the rising power of militias in Iraq was directly attributable to religious authorities. He told me:

> *Adnan*: These people are *zu'rān* (thugs)—I mean the clerics who work to control religion. There are some clerics in history like *al-khulafā'a al rāshidīn* who did a lot for religion, while most of the clerics nowadays like al-Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr and some others work as *murtazaqa* (mercenaries) for religion. What have they ever done for Islam? What have they ever done for Islamic society? What problems have they ever fixed in society? What is their role? Yesterday we were talking, if you go to the church you find help, the church provides for you but the mosque takes from you. This might be politically intentional—this is possible. The criterion has changed. Who is al-Sistani or Muqtada al-Sadr [for me] to go and ask them what I should and should not do? In the end God will take his soul back and erase him from existence. So, I'm not a supporter of these kinds of clerics and I don't have any faith in them or recognize their authority. I don't pray regularly but when I think about Islam, there is our Prophet's example, our Qur'an and there is God. What business do I have with these people? How can I obey a stranger that doesn't play any role in Islam and in Islamic life?

As with Haidar, Adnan is careful not to equate the actions of contemporary religious figures with idealized figures from Islamic history. Adnan's referencing of *al-khulafā'a al rāshidīn*[20] imparts a refusal to adopt the sectarian narrative. The caliphs, who preceded Imam Ali, are often the targets of much invective by sectarian-minded Shi'is. In contrast, Adnan recognizes them as among those "who did a lot to work for religion." His attack is not on religious belief and traditions but rather on what he calls "thugs" and "mercenaries" who "work to control religion." "These kinds of clerics" are the ones he finds irksome and not representative of his beliefs. As Adnan puts it "the criterion" for what constitutes a meaningful role for religious actors and institutions has changed. It is no longer enough that they stay quiet and acquiesce to the demands of political authority but they put themselves at the services of the people, first and foremost.

Conclusion

The roots of the current sectarian conflict stretch far back into the history of the modern Iraqi state. I have shown in this chapter that the Iraqi state under Saddam had adopted a sectarian discourse during the war with Iran. However, it was only openly acknowledged as such following the Intifada Sha'abaniyah. The repercussions of the quashing of the uprising were brought to bear on the lives of minority groups in Baghdad following the American invasion and occupation.

This chapter has explored how the removal of Ba'thist state structures by the American occupying forces allowed for the contest over the cultural ownership of the state. This was primarily played out through assertive mobilization of religious symbolism by emerging political parties that employed a religious idiom to articulate their grievances. Shi'i cultural and religious practices became ever more visible in public spaces, whereas previously the faith campaign had privileged Sunni symbolism and religious practice. Equally important was the alignment of emergent forces such as the Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Badr Corps with the new apparatus of state. The testimonies of Abu Fu'ad, Hamid, Farouk, and Abu Yaseen all point to the influence of militias over security forces and government ministries.

On a methodological note, in the narratives of my participants I noted how they moved back and forth in space and time. This slippage between the "here" in Syria and the "then" in Iraq is indicative of the importance of the genesis and structuring of the religious habitus. To understand how and why a religious disposition is acted upon, we must look into the past to see how it was structured. In the case of my Palestinian-Iraqi respondents we saw how current events in Syria and the looming threat of sectarian conflict showed the past to be unfinished.

Testimony from Iraqi refugees I spoke to in Damascus indicates that many had internalized Ba'thist discourses of the intifada Sha'abaniyah in which the underclass of recent Shi'i migrants from the south of Iraq, residing in the slums of Madinat al-Sadr were cast in the role of folk devils. Mu'tasim describes Madinat al-Sadr as being a no-go zone populated by people with the "faces of criminals" prior to the invasion despite the state having a security presence. Both George and Adnan liken the Shi'i urban poor as being without culture, knowledge, ethics, and religion. As we saw in chapter 2, religion is once again understood as being ethical.

Respondents also indicated surprise at the rapid descent into sectarian conflict. George likened it to a volcanic eruption, while Ibtisam expressed bewilderment at Shi'i classmates who viewed the American onslaught on Fallujah as recompense for the failure of Sunni colleagues to speak out

against what had happened during the Intifada Sha'abaniyah. Both narratives highlight a grievance that had been festering for over a decade and had remained unaddressed.

As sectarianism in Iraq shifted from an assertive to a more aggressive mode, many of those displaced by sectarian conflict expressed disillusionment and anger toward religious figures and institutions, disassociating Islam from the actions and words of leading religious figures. Haidar makes clear that there is a distinction between the teachings of Islam and the actions of militias affiliated to religious groups who traffic in the commerce of religion. Adnan suggests that the dissonance between the words and the actions of key religious figures means that all claims to legitimacy have been lost or as he puts it "*al-mawazīn* (the criterion) has changed." In short, a trust deficit appears. The lack of trust in religious actors and state institutions opens up possibilities for religious traditions to be thought anew by ordinary Muslims. Yet questions remain. Does such disillusionment signal a loss of faith? If so—faith in what? God? Religious institutions? How are such experiences, which played a pivotal role in triggering displacement, reflected and inscribed in the practices of Iraqi forced migrants in Damascus? These questions will be explored in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 4

Jockeying for Positions in the Humanitarian Field: Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Syria

Narrated Abdullah bin 'Umar: Allah's Apostle said: A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. Whoever fulfilled the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfill his needs; whoever brought his (Muslim) brother out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screened (concealed the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection. (Sahīh Bukhārī Vol.3, Book 43, Number 622)

Introduction

When is an FBO not an FBO? The punchline: when it operates in Syria. Early into my stay in Damascus, a sobering experience with a local charity alerted me to the complexity of the struggles and relationships in the humanitarian field. Having received an introduction through an employee at *Jam'iyat al-Ansār*, a charity based at *Mujamma'a Kaftāro*,[1] an imposing mosque academy complex in Rukn Eddin to the northeast of the old city of Damascus, I went to visit the director of the organization. I introduced myself and outlined the aims and objectives of the research I hoped to carry out. Despite the organization having a name that alludes to ideas of migration and hospitality and the fact that it was located on the premises of a mosque complex, the director confounded all my expectations by categorically rejecting the idea that his organization was a faith-based initiative.

Moreover, he was emphatic in his insistence that it had any dealings what-soever with Iraqi refugees:

> *Director*: So why have you come here?
> *Tahir*: Well, you're based here at *Mujamma'a Kaftāro.*
> *Director*: And…? What does that have to do with anything?
> *Tahir*: Would you not say that you're a faith-based organization?
> *Director*: No.
> *Tahir*: [looking a little bemused] what about the verses of the Qur'an that are on the walls of your office [pointing]?
> *Director*: Nothing to say that we're a faith-based organization.
> *Tahir*: But the name of your organization seems to suggest that there is a faith dimension to your organization. I thought you might work with displaced people.
> *Director*: I can assure you we do not work with any Iraqis; none at all. If you want to meet with organizations that help Iraqi refugees, you're better off visiting Bab Touma. Even if they came here, we wouldn't be able to help them.
> *Tahir*: Why not?
> *Director*: You'll have to ask the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour about that.

A rise in the number of interventions by FBOs in the humanitarian field worldwide has re-ignited debate as to what the role of religion in the public sphere ought to be. Faith-based humanitarianism is increasingly recognized as providing a significant contribution to civil society responses to issues pertaining to dispossession and displacement. In institutional and policy circles, the 2012 UNHCR Dialogue on Faith and Protection acknowledged the vital role FBOs play in the context of complex emergencies. Highly vis-ible initiatives undertaken by faith-based humanitarian actors in opposi-tion to exclusionary migration regimes of states in the Global North focus efforts on re-imagining charity as solidarity with migrants—here organiza-tions such as the Jesuit Refugee Service and the ecumenical organization *Posada sin Fronteras* have been at the forefront of what Hondagneu-Sotelo (2008:168) describes as providing "promising routes both for challenging unilateral nation-state immigration and border policies and for reaffirming unity and diverse identities."

While a religious meta-narrative undoubtedly challenges the meta-narrative of the nation-state, I contend that the two narratives are not mutually exclu-sive and that this is made evident in the humanitarian field where relations of power between secular and nonsecular actors converge on the figure of the

forced migrant. It is in the specific context of the humanitarian order, which arises following crises of conflict-induced mass displacement that religion can "come adrift from […] former points of anchorage" (Beckford 1989:170) and "be mobilized in unexpected places and in ways which may be in tension with 'establishment' practices and public policy" (ibid.). This is particularly the case where sectarianism has been a key trigger and driver of displacement.

This chapter presents a nuanced examination of the role of religious networks and institutions in relation to strategies of forced migrants in urban contexts. It considers how such organizations, in relation to the state and the UNHCR, work to integrate displaced populations into their new surroundings. Here, Iraqi refugees are recognized as active social agents seeking to utilize religious networks and institutions in conjunction with established international humanitarian organizations to produce a distinctive geography of exile. The salience of the Syrian state in this process does not go unnoticed. I illustrate ways in which the state exerts influence over religious actors and how this ultimately affects the decision-making of forced migrants. I contend that partnerships formed between the state, UNHCR, and international NGOs result in a protection impasse for Iraqi refugees in Damascus.

Refugee Agency

As the Global South undergoes intense urbanization it is perhaps unsurprising that a growing number of forcibly displaced people can be found in urban environments. It has been estimated that as many as half of the world's refugee population now reside in towns and cities across the world (UNHCR 2009a:2). It is equally unsurprising that forced migrants originally from urban areas would seek refuge in the familiar landscape of a city rather than rural camps where the rhythm of life and the opportunities available would seem wholly alien. This shift away from refugee camps and toward cities has taken place in spite of the UNHCR and state policies. Moreover, it is indicative of the agency of refugees.

The notion of agency puts individuals at the heart of social inquiry wherein they are understood to be social actors who are continually interpreting, re-interpreting, and internalizing their experiences while simultaneously acting upon those experiences. It embraces the "capability to command relevant skills, access to material and nonmaterial resources and engage in particular organising practices" (Long 2001:49). Conceptualizing refugees as social actors stands in marked contrast to more popular imaginings of refugees wherein displaced people are often typecast as passive victims of circumstance. What is often ignored in such readings is the idea that although refugees have been forcibly displaced, there is a measure of

volition in how they adapt to changing circumstances; lived experiences of refugees and other forcibly displaced people have historically been neglected in the analysis of refugee flows. Only more recently have refugee narratives emerged; highlighting the complexity surrounding debates on identity and what it means to be a refugee (Al-Sharmani 2004, Nassari 2007, McMichael 2002). Recent studies have also shown that despite socioeconomic and political marginalization, self-settled refugees actively participate in the transformation of urban spaces (Grabska 2006, Campbell 2006).

In response to both increasing levels of self-settlement in urban areas by refugees and recognition of the inadequate assistance afforded to them, the UNHCR (2009a:3–4) issued a revised policy statement that considered "urban areas to be legitimate place(s) for refugees to enjoy their rights." This can equally be seen as an admission of an inherent bias toward a "one size fits all" camp solution in its past dealings with refugee populations.

While adhering to a rights-based approach, the new UNHCR policy toward urban refugees was to be predicated on advancing the somewhat ambiguous and nonlegal concept of "protection space."[2] This is defined as being "the extent to which a conducive environment exists for the internationally recognized rights of refugees to be respected and their needs to be met" with the caveat that "protection space is not static, but expands and contracts periodically according to changes in the political, economic, social and security environments" (UNHCR 2009a:4).[3] A key component of securing protection space for urban refugees is the partnership that the UNHCR is able to foster with state institutions and local community-based organizations. It is in this context that refugee service provision and assistance can best be understood in the case of Iraqi refugees in Damascus. In what follows, I consider how FBOs,[4] the state, and the UNHCR interact with refugees and address the latter's welfare and their survival strategies. Before doing so, it is necessary to consider the specific circumstances of the displacement of Iraqis to Damascus.

Iraqi Refugees in Syria

According to Syrian government sources, 79 percent of the Iraqi population in Syria resides in Damascus and its environs (Di Iorio and Zeuthen 2011). This can be largely attributed to three key factors:

- the significance of Sayyida Zayneb;
- the location of institutions central to the strategies of refugees themselves; and
- the cumulative dimensions of refugee flows.

The South Damascus suburb of Sayyida Zayneb is the first port of call for taxis and buses arriving from Iraq. This route was well traversed by Iraqi pilgrims before the current exodus of refugees, connecting the major cities of Iraq including the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala with Damascus. Sayyida Zayneb is unlike any other suburb of Damascus. The golden dome of the shrine at the center of the district dominates the skyline. Shopping avenues and street markets radiate from the shrine in all directions. *Makatib al-wukala* or the offices of representatives for all the leading Shi'i clerics from Iraq are based in close vicinity to the shrine. Here, the *khums* tax is collected from devotees and is used to fund the maintenance of the *ḥawazat* (religious seminaries), stipends for clerics, and, in some cases, welfare. Banners with huge poster portraits of clerics hang across streets. Health clinics associated with the offices of representatives can be found nearby. These offer discounted rudimentary health services. Many of the shops carry names in reference to members of the *ahl al-bayt* (the Prophet's household) and cities from across Iraq. Iraqi bakeries, groceries, and restaurants serving Iraqi cuisine are abundant (see Figure 4.1). Street vendors can be found selling Iraqi flags and portraits of Imam Hussayn. The particularly Iraqi feel to this district is epitomized by the informal naming of a main thoroughfare as "Iraqi street." For refugees arriving from Iraq Sayyida Zayneb seems instantly recognizable.

The Iraqi refugee population is distributed across Damascus along the lines of class and religious affiliation. This is not to say that these groups are guided by sectarian inclination but rather that such an outcome is congruent with the salience of the role of social networks in migratory processes; Iraqi refugees in Damascus settle where relatives can help navigate their arrival in a new city. As such, large number of Iraqi Christians and Mandaeans reside in Jaramana. More prosperous Iraqi Sunnis predominate in the northern suburbs of Masaken Barzeh and Qudsiya. Palestinian Iraqis prefer to settle with other Palestinians in Mukhayim al-Yarmouk. Sayyida Zayneb and its environs, although having a particular Shi'i ambience, are home to many poorer Sunni families that are unable to afford housing elsewhere.

Access to the Iraqi embassy, foreign embassies, and the UNHCR means that many Iraqi forced migrants prefer Damascus to other urban centers. Most importantly, there is a cumulative dimension to refugee flows. It is worth noting here that Iraqi refugees were continuing to arrive in Damascus as late as March 2011. The situation in Iraq is far from stable and sectarian attacks on minority groups and indiscriminate roadside bombings continue unabated.[5] Prior to arriving in Damascus, many Iraqis already have a connection—usually a relative residing in the city. This brings into play a multiplier effect or what the migration theorist Douglas Massey (1990) has

Figure 4.1　A popular Iraqi restaurant in Sayyida Zayneb.

Note: A portrait of Imam Husayn hangs in the foreground. Further back is a portrait photograph of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his father Hafez al-Assad.

Source: Author.

termed "cumulative causation," as earlier acts of migration impact on the social contexts in which later migratory decisions are made, prompting higher levels of migration. As information flows across networks the possibility of migration is re-assessed by those who have remained behind. The ability of those who migrated to find security, shelter and work is relayed back to the country of origin, reducing the risks and costs associated with migration.

　　Recognition of the fact that this is a refugee crisis that stretches back over the past two decades helps one to understand how and why Iraqi refugees in Syria are able to mobilize the few resources they have to begin the process of rebuilding their lives. In short, institutions and networks already exist that Iraqi refugees can interact with on arrival. But these opportunities are not open to all. With regard to Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Chatelard (2008) found that this interaction is predicated on issues of social class and the historical and political contexts surrounding their arrival. She notes that more recent refugee arrivals in Jordan "did not generally seek the patronage of the old elite who were simply not part of their social landscape" (Chatelard 2008).

Similarly, many of the Iraqis who had escaped the Ba'thist regime of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein were affluent and middle class and had little in common with later arrivals who settled in poorer suburbs of Damascus. Prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it was estimated that 70 percent of the Iraqi population in Syria was Shi'i (UNHCR 2003). The majority of Iraqi refugees in Syria today nominally belong to minority sects or are Sunni (UNHCR 2008).

Religious institutions, networks, and traditions have long been overlooked in the literature on the cultural and social realities of recent Iraqi refugee arrivals in Syria. Although not apparent at a cursory glance, a careful examination of the humanitarian field reveals that Iraqi refugees' attitudes toward and relationships with religious networks and traditions have been reconfigured and reinterpreted in Damascus, helping to facilitate their survival strategies.

Religion & Faith-Based Humanitarianism

While much has been written on kin networks and the role they play in the migratory process (Boyd 1989, Massey et al. 1993, Evans 2007), scant attention has been paid by those interested in the sociology of forced migration to the role of religious networks. In discussion of refugee populations, the issue of religion has often been situated within the site of conflict and the attendant mobilization of religious identity for sectarian purposes (Sells 1996, Haddad 2011). More recently, qualitative studies have tended to focus on spirituality and the well-being of refugees from a psychosocial perspective (Gozdziak 2002, Shoeb et al. 2007) or on the extent to which religion can help shape identity formation (Colic-Peisker 2005, McMichael 2002) rather than on the interaction of refugees with religious networks and institutions. Doraï (2011) writing on the role of migratory networks for Iraqi refugees plays down the salience of religious networks. However, this is predicated on a narrow understanding of religious networks as being *traditional* religious networks. In addition, the yardstick by which the importance of religious networks is measured is the value placed on the capacity of religious networks to facilitate onward migration. This study suggests that to assess the importance of religious networks, one must be clear about defining religious practices and the contexts in which they are enacted.

Ferris (2011:609) observes that there has long been disquiet and perhaps even outright suspicion of the role of faith-based humanitarianism in Western societies where a strict separation of church and state is maintained. Ager and Ager (2011) posit that this in fact represents reluctance on the part of states and NGOs based in industrialized countries to engage with the

postsecularism that has accompanied increased globalization. They tell us that while "secularism is in principle 'neutral' to religion, in practice the secular framing of the humanitarian regime marginalizes religious practice and experience in the conceptualization of humanitarian action at both global and local levels" (Ager and Ager 2011:457). This is brought about through thinking of religious practice and experience in limited material terms. For instance, a common trend in understanding the role of religion in the public sphere is the buzz that surrounds religious institutions as sites where social capital can be built and community relations fostered. A corollary is that secular humanitarian responses fail to address potentialities that lie within an engagement with the faiths of displaced groups. Simply put, a prayer meeting or the communal breaking of a fast is more than just an expression of social capital or community cohesion.

Here, I re-assert the importance of insights developed by Thomas Tweed, who defines religion as "confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries" (Tweed 2006:54). This notion of home-making and the crossing of boundaries is imminently useful in interpreting religious practice and belief. It lends itself readily to the study of displaced people, as they are the embodiment of boundary crossing. Here boundaries are geographic, cultural, linguistic, and symbolic, and refugees are compelled to make homes anew, finding both joy and suffering in the process. Moreover, Tweeds' approach captures the notion of agency: home-making is an activity and requires somebody to do it. Thus it does not necessarily privilege religious institutions as the producers of religious goods.

In chapter 1, I noted a shortcoming in Tweed's definition; namely, the omission of institutions and structures that influence the practice and decision-making of refugees. Here, I have in mind primarily the state, UNHCR, and other religious institutions. To help my engagement with Tweed I suggest a Bourdeuian understanding of the humanitarian "field." In light of my earlier discussion on the materialist bent of the discourse on humanitarianism, Bourdieu (1986)—who understands the pursuit of the manifold forms of capital to be the defining characteristic of the human condition—may at first seem an unusual choice of theorist to help expound on the interaction between refugees and FBOs.

Bourdieu's theory of practice offers a means to re-work powerful institutional actors into an analysis of religion as a sociocultural resource in the life-worlds of refugees. This is perhaps best viewed as a methodological statement complete with a conceptual tool-kit, which helps lay bare dominant power relations that lie beneath the surface of things. Put simply it can be summarized thus: the actions of people, *practice*, unfold in a multitude of

interconnected and occasionally coinciding *fields* that in aggregate comprise the multidimensional space that we call society. For Bourdieu, self-interest is characteristic of the human condition and in particular involves the pursuit of the many forms of *capital*. This in turn, is conditioned by *habitus*, which filters perceptions of the world and gives people a sense of taste; a disposition. Life, however, is not a level playing field and through the mechanism of *symbolic violence* distinctions between individuals and groups are maintained, which allow for the domination of one over the other, though this is not always recognized as such.

Bourdieu maintains that we ought to regard a field as "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97). As such, we are all invested in the capital *game*; whether we are producing capital, consuming it, or striving to accumulate it. In the context of faith-based humanitarianism in Syria, the ways and extent to which religious ideas and practices are mobilized are shaped by competing and often conflicting interests of the state, religious institutions, humanitarian organizations, and the refugees themselves. It is precisely this relational aspect that is of special importance in the present context: the relationship between the structure of the situation in which social agents act and their disposition that influences social actors to take certain positions against or with others in the field (Bourdieu 1998).

State, Religion and Iraqi Refugees

The brief exchange with the director of *Jam'iyat al-Ansār* mentioned at the outset of this chapter reveals much concerning the complexities surrounding welfare provision for Iraqi refugees in Damascus. The reticence of the director in describing the works of his organization as faith-based stems from Syrian Law on the formation of NGOs. Under Law No. 93 (1958) amended in 1970, governance and regulation of private institutions and charities is overseen by Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MoSAL). This is widely recognized as one of the most influential ministries operating in Syria. The reach of the state into the activities of charities and local NGOs should not be underestimated; article 26 of the NGO Law demands that a government representative from MoSaL be placed on the board of directors. In addition, under Article 36, MoSAL may dissolve an organization if:

- It conducts *ultra-vires* activities; meaning activities that are not permitted by its founding charter.
- It practices sectarian, racial, or political activity that threatens the well-being of the state.

The statute does not at any point define what is deemed sectarian, racial, or political activity and the ambiguity of the term *salāmat al-dawla* (well-being of the state) leaves the state ample room to manoeuvre and interfere in the activities of local NGOs.

Moreover, mosques are also held answerable to the state through the Ministry of Awqāf (religious endowments). In the 1990s the state sought to assert some measure of control over the financial independence of mosques by separating the charitable activities from matters pertaining to worship. It was argued that this would curtail any improper use of funds collected by religious institutions.[6] By 2008, the state once again re-asserted itself by removing leading clerics from the board of directors of charitable organizations and strengthened control over religious education (Pierret and Selvik 2009:609). The maneuvring between positions should also be viewed in the context of a limited convergence of interests between the state and Islamic organizations—one brought about through a growing realization by the Syrian regime that partnerships were required with private sector welfare providers if it was to pursue a policy of gradually retreating from its welfare obligations. In other words there has been a symbiotic if somewhat uncomfortable relationship between nonstate-sponsored religious actors and the state.

Such a policy is symptomatic of what Stephen Heydemann (2007) has described as "authoritarian upgrading" whereby authoritarian regimes in the Middle East respond to pressures to reform, which have arisen as a consequence of increased globalization and the opening up of economies to neoliberal practices. A key facet of this is the ability to "appropriate and contain civil societies" (ibid.:5). Pierret and Selvik (2009:597) writing on the increased visibility of Sunni welfare organizations, suggest that in the case of Syria the state has only been partially successful. Authoritarian upgrading often involves the emergence of state-sponsored NGOs as risk-free partners for the development of private welfare.[7] Yet in the case of Syria, the links between small- and medium-sized merchants and politically independent clergy (which extend to beyond spiritual concerns and are often kin and neighborhood based ties) marginalizes the influence the state wields over this significant section of private welfare provision (ibid.:605–610).

Despite the limits imposed on Sunni charitable associations, they leave a heavy footprint in the humanitarian field. The Union of Charitable Associations in Damascus, a network of predominantly Sunni organizations, coordinates welfare activities in the city. Three key projects it operates include the *sundūq al-ʿafiyeh* (the health fund); *sundūq al-mawadda wa al-raḥma* (the love and mercy fund) that subsidizes the expenses of getting

married; and the *ḥifz al-ni'ma* (the preservation of grace) project that distributes surplus food, clothing, and medicine to those in need. In recent years, an indication of the growth in private welfare can be given by the rise in contributions to the *sundūq al-'afiyeh* which received contributions of 953 million SYP (20.23 million USD) between 1997 and 2007; enabling it to implement around 60,000 surgical procedures (ibid.:603).

In 2006, the Israeli attack on Beirut saw tens of thousands of displaced Lebanese seek refuge in Damascus. Some had family networks they could rely on,[8] others found refuge in many of the city's mosques.[9] The organizational capabilities of the mosques and the *ḥifz al ni'ma* project were called upon to distribute daily food parcels.[10] These examples demonstrate a reach and organizational capacity of Islamic welfare networks that many of the international humanitarian organizations in Syria have not been able to access in any meaningful way. The restrictions placed on Sunni Islamic networks, particularly in regard to the Iraqi refugee crisis, mean that the state has created conditions of possibility for other faith actors to emerge. The reach of the state also bears upon the lives of Iraqi refugees more directly through dovetailing its security concerns with control over the religious and humanitarian fields.

'In Syria, Everything Is Politics'

The vigilant eye of the Syrian state over the population at large and the humanitarian and religious fields in particular permeated many of the encounters I had in Damascus. An Iraqi Shi'i cleric who I had met a number of times at the Shirāzī Ḥawza in Sayyida Zaynab, eventually conceded it would be too difficult to be involved in my research, expressing concerns of unwanted attention from the Syrian security apparatus. "Maybe if I met you in Europe, we could speak but not here" he told me. I presented the *muwāfaqa* (permission document) I had been given by the Ministry of Culture, clearing me to conduct research in Syria. The cleric took one look at it and said "That won't stop the *mukhabarāt* (security services) from taking me in for questioning. It's too dangerous." The cleric had been a refugee himself and had secured asylum in Europe. He told me that he returned to Damascus to meet with friends at the *hawza*, people he had known during his sojourn in Syria as a refugee. Despite being a European passport holder, he still believed that any engagement with the security apparatus of the regime, however tangential, was a risk too far.

I met a similar rebuttal from the religious bureau of Hamas in Mukhayim Yarmouk. After having examined my credentials and interview schedule, the representatives at the office told me that their work was "educational and

not political." And that they were "not best placed to answer the questions." Perplexed and somewhat aggrieved, I suggested they take a more considered and careful look at my research objectives and line of questioning, insisting that the questions I had in mind were not politically framed. The Imam who had been called into the office smiled at me knowingly and told me "In Syria, everything is politics."

Fear of repercussions from the state did not only color the conversations I had with those operating in the humanitarian and religious fields but also encroached on my discussions with Iraqi forced migrants. Iraq under Saddam Hussein employed a security apparatus not too dissimilar to the Syrian regime. Decades of engagement with an authoritarian state had taught the Iraqis I spoke to in Damascus to be mindful of what they say and who they say it to—including well-meaning foreign researchers. Early into my fieldwork I was alerted to the sensitivities and challenges of discussing a subject as delicate and complex as religion and its relation to other fields, notably that of security. While, I may have a nuanced understanding of the term "religion," it does not necessarily follow that the term "religion" is interpreted similarly by my participants. For some, it may indeed be characterized by complexity and nuance. Yet for others, it may simply be short-hand for institutional religion or a byword for sectarian practice.

The following extract from an interview conducted in the early stages of my fieldwork serves to illustrate both the intersection of the religious field with the security field and the dilemma I, as researcher, was faced with. The interview was with Haidar, a health practitioner working in a clinic in Sayyida Zeinab. We had moved very quickly into the discussion on life in Syria and Haidar had made it clear that Syria was "an excellent country." When asked whether he ever felt like a stranger in Damascus, he replied: "Never, I am pleased with the Syrian government and the people." Shortly after, I asked some questions pointedly on the subject of religion:

Tahir: Would you say that you've learned a lot more about your faith and your religious duties as a consequence of leaving Iraq?

Haidar: I've started praying a lot more, and reading the Qur'an a lot more. Al-hamdulilllah. I hope that I'll be able to continue like this. I don't know if it's because I'm far from home that I'm doing this. Honestly, I can't say. I just hope I'll be able to continue.

Tahir: And the mosque where you [is interrupted]

Haidar: [interrupts] look Tahir, questions like this make me want to not answer. I have all the religious freedom that I could ask for. I pray where I want when I want. Nobody says anything. I can go to a *Husseiniyye* anytime. Nobody stops me.

> *Tahir*: No, what I was going to ask is whether it's an important place for you, personally.
>
> *Haidar*: Tahir, I just use the place which is most practical for me. If I'm close by, I'll pray there. I'll pray at the mosque close to where I live and work. That's normal. Sometimes I might go to the shrine. Most of the time, I'll pray in my home or wherever is nearby.

Haidar's unprompted praise of the Syrian regime is indicative of the anxieties that vulnerable populations such as refugees carry with them. It comes with the knowledge that the state has the power to not renew or even rescind the temporary residency status that Iraqi refugees enjoy. The hospitality of the state is *always* conditional and temporary. In the above extract, Haidar preempts what he thinks the question on the mosque is about revealing security concerns. "Nobody says anything [...] Nobody stops me" for Haidar is both evidence of the hospitality of the Syrian regime and a rebuke of the paramilitary check-points that dominated the neighborhoods of Baghdad. Any question that may potentially jeopardize the hospitality of the state induces hesitation and reluctance in Haidar; it makes him not want to answer.

Despite Haidar consenting to a recorded interview with a foreign researcher, the anxiety provoked by the state causes him to continually signal for reassurances from me, calibrating his expectations and assumptions with mine to "make sense" of the interview. Early in the interview, he positions me as both insider and outsider, drawing attention to the fact that we are both away from our homes and we are both Muslims. Elsewhere he refers to me as *'akhi'* Tahir; we are brothers in faith. Invoking a fictive kin relationship, Haidar is ensuring that his trust would not be compromised. Significantly, he is aware that he is the one who is helping me in carrying out the study. In doing so, he twice reminds me that this would be beneficial for him. He tells me:

> *Haidar*: Your research is something that will be beneficial to me. You're an academic; you're Kashmiri, Muslim more than two thousand kilometres away from your country. You're talking to Iraqis here about the fundamentals of the Islamic faith and their experience of migration from Iraq. This is something that would be most beneficial for me. Being a son of Iraq, being a Muslim, then there's no doubt that I will give you help with the project you are working on.

As the interview comes to a close and I reach to switch off the recording device that is propped up on a stool between us, he jokingly asks, "Is this

going to the *mukhabarāt* (security services) then?" eliciting a final reassurance that the interview will not jeopardize the hospitality of the state. The interview with Haidar was a highly instructive experience for me as a researcher in the field. It compelled me to adopt an approach that did not launch straight into a discussion of religion and made me think more deliberately on how the question of religion is framed throughout the interview. Importantly, it made me consider extensively the ethical ramifications of conducting interviews with refugees. The giving and gaining of consent before a recorded interview does not necessarily equate with participants having fully understood what the interview means for both the researcher and the respondent. Consent is continually negotiated throughout the interview itself to secure assurances that the precarious status of guest would not be put at risk. It is a reminder that Iraqi refugees were permanently in a liminal state—treading water, uncertain of when or by what means the shores of protection could be reached, if at all.

Protection Impasse

Prior to the Iraqi refugee crisis reaching its peak in 2006 following the sectarian attack on the Ali-Al-Askeri shrine in Samar'ā, UNHCR operations had been minimal in Syria.[11] The scale of the displacement and the incentive of aid—dollars to bolster the welfare obligations of the state pressured the government into allowing foreign NGOs to operate on Syrian territory.[12] A framework allowing the monitoring of international NGO activity was put into place. Memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the Syrian state were signed by 14 international NGOs. All accredited organizations liaise and report to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), which coordinates relief assistance for Iraqi refugees.

The MOUs afford SARC considerable oversight over the activities of international NGOs in the areas of local partnerships and recruitment policies. Thus, though it remains common for the UNHCR to partner church and church-affiliated organizations (the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy of Antioch is one such example), there has scarcely been any purposeful collaboration with mosques or Islamic networks.[13] This can also be partly attributed to differing modalities of humanitarian work.[14] International humanitarian organizations including United Nations (UN) agencies simply do not share a common "script" with local Islamic faith-based welfare service providers (Deneulin and Bano 2009). Instead, they find it easier to engage with churches that have transnational connections with other faith-based international NGOs. As such, church organizations are better positioned to articulate and develop their welfare activities in a secular frame

than their Muslim counterparts. Increasingly, in the case of the UNHCR, understandings with local community organizations are mediated through MoSAL (UNHCR 2011b).

Within this framework of cooperation between the state and international humanitarian organizations, Iraqi refugees have been able to access some of the much heralded "protection space" that is the lynchpin of the UNHCR's current strategy for dealing with urban refugees. Food assistance in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the SARC is estimated to reach 87 percent of the registered Iraqi refugee population (UNHCR 2011a). Iraqi refugees are also able to access primary and secondary healthcare through numerous SARC polyclinics in the city, seven of which are situated in districts with high Iraqi refugee population density. In addition, Iraqi children continue to have access to free primary and secondary education. Financial assistance is restricted to those over 60 years of age and to families who have dependants under the age of 18.

Much of this conceals the precariousness of urban life for Iraqi refugees. It also masks the much contested issue of numbers. I met Dina while she was queuing for her appointment at Mḥabba one morning. She had come to Mḥabba along with her sister to see whether the organization could contribute part or full payment toward a surgical operation their father required. Mḥabba, Dina told me "is the one place we know where we can get some assistance." As for the UNHCR, she told me:

> *Dina*: It's not a humanitarian organisation; they just don't care. They invite people from Iraq to come and register for resettlement but care nothing for the likes of us who have been here for more than six years. My husband was threatened and there's no chance we'd go back. I'm not with the UN because a friend told me they may mark my file and close it. If it's closed, they send you back to Iraq. I don't want that. Besides, what help do they give aside from out of date biscuits from India?

Refugees like Dina choose to remain undetected by the UNHCR foregoing the assistance that is offered to them. This may be for reasons of fear and distrust of authorities as well as having imprecise ideas regarding services and protection offered through the UNHCR. This leaves rumor and gossip to fill the gaps in information. This is reflected in Dina's fear of being forcibly returned to Iraq and the lack of re-settlement opportunities for Iraqi refugees who have been resident in Syria for a protracted period. Unlike a camp settlement scenario, the dispersal of refugees over a large urban area means that they are not obliged to interact with the organization. In addition, the UNHCR removes from its registered numbers those who no longer

access food supplies. Similarly files are deemed inactive if there has been no contact with the organization for six months. Many refugees, unfamiliar with UNHCR procedures, often lose hope that their case for re-settlement is under consideration and simply stop communicating with the organization. Farouk, a university lecturer from Baghdad, told me that he had quickly lost any confidence he had in the UNHCR:

> *Farouk*: The UN hasn't provided me with anything. I got here on the 28th of February and the first thing I did—I think it was March 2007—I went to the UN. As soon as I had rented a house to live in and felt safe in it, the next day, straight away, I went to the UN offices. When I got there, they gave me an appointment to come back and see them after six months. Can you imagine? They gave me an appointment for an interview for the 6th of September that year. So you can imagine, how was I supposed to get any support from these people?

It was only a chance encounter with a nun working with Iraqi refugees, which encouraged him to return to the UNHCR to receive psychological counseling for his son one year later. The fall in expectations as to what international humanitarian organizations can do creates a protection impasse. Iraqi refugees find themselves caught between the Syrian state, which has no intention of integrating them into the local community, and international humanitarian organizations that dangle provocatively the "carrot" of third-country re-settlement. The latter option has become increasingly remote as foreign embassies and consulates have withdrawn or scaled down their operations since uprisings began in March 2011. For refugees themselves, repatriation to Iraq is not a possibility. Although some engage in shuttle visits to and from Baghdad to collect income from rental properties or state pensions (UNHCR 2009b), many find it inconceivable to return for any length of time. The Baghdad of their memories is no longer the Baghdad of today. Huge concrete barriers divide communities along sectarian lines as an "un-mixing of populations" took place.

Syrian state policy of denying Iraqi refugees the right to work means that many are pushed into competing with Syria's urban poor in the informal labor market, which constitutes 34 percent of total employment in the country (Aita 2009), for poorly paid jobs in the construction or services sector. Quite clearly, hospitality toward the state's so-called guests in Syria does not extend to helping them secure livelihoods—there are limits. Local integration, for all parties, is off the agenda.

Furthermore, the decision to manage without UNHCR assistance, or to supplement it through other means, can be viewed as an expression of the

agency of refugees. Alternative mechanisms of survival in the city are triggered. Networks that braid together kin, ethnic, and religious ties are mobilized to help deal with the anomie and alienation prompted by prolonged exile. Given this very real prospect of a protracted displacement, refugees from Iraq position themselves between various international humanitarian organizations, the state, and religious networks to produce a particular geography of exile and the meaning they derive from religious traditions.

Widening Horizons

Survival in an urban context means not only surviving materially, but also by means of psychosocial and cultural adjustments. Hala is a 58-year-old Sunni woman from Baghdad. She lives in the middle-class neighborhood of Muhājirīn with her husband Mahmoud, a 65-year-old physician. Following pervasive levels of insecurity, which culminated in an incident between sectarian militias and the security forces outside the clinic where Mahmoud worked, they decided to depart for Damascus in late 2006. Mahmoud has been fortunate to find employment through a Canadian oil company. However, work means staying away from home at a refinery every other month. The financial security afforded to them through Mahmoud's job means that they are not heavily reliant on the welfare mechanisms afforded to them by the state and the UNHCR. For both Hala and Mahmoud, grappling with their psychological and social well-being is a key concern. Here, courses on basic computer literacy and English, organized and held in community centers run by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in partnership with the UNHCR and the SARC, have been instrumental in widening Hala's social circle and introducing her to other Iraqi women. Equally, her faith has engendered resilience and been a critical resource in coping with the trauma of displacement and exile:

> *Hala*: I've always felt, but now [my faith] is stronger. I pray more and read the Qur'an a lot more than before. Whatever you need, God is the only thing that is sure. God is there to help you and nothing bad comes from God. It's either from your own deeds but nothing bad from God. So, I feel I'm closer to God […] everything happens for a reason. God had planned it this way. Even, if you want something so bad and you don't get it, you get so sad then something you never thought about…
>
> *Mahmoud*: When you're upset you read the verse from the Quran: *wa ʿasa an takrahu shayann wa huwa khairun lakum wa ʿasa an thibbu shayann wa huwa sharrun lakum wallah ya'lamu wa entum la ta'lamūn*

(And perhaps you hate something and there is good in it for you, and perhaps you love something and it is evil for you. God alone knows and you—you do not know).

Hala: So, leave it to God. He always gives you something so much better than you could dream of. This helps a lot. It makes everything so much easier.

Tahir: So, you think your faith has helped you in dealing with the situation?

Mahmoud: Definitely.

Hala: Of course, of course. If we didn't believe in all this, we would have destroyed ourselves. Everything would be unbearable—because you won't accept anything [...] so you have to be patient. The more you wish and the more you pray, the more you turn to God. If you want you have an answer in this life, it would be there in the second life—you'll find it. You know, I think all the Prophets suffered more than any other people, right? It's not a punishment. Is it a punishment for those Prophets? No—just to test them. The more you are patient, the more you remember God.

Hala and Mahmoud's appeal to religious moral authority and scripture reveals an alternative framework for understanding their experience of displacement. Hala's suffering, like that of the Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, provides a means for reconciling the disjuncture and loss incurred through the process of displacement with a reliance on a just and merciful God. For Hala and Mahmoud, religion is more than just a personal conversation with God. It is, as Tweed (2006:62) reminds us, about "build(ing) and inhabit(ing) worlds. It is home-making." However, the constraints set by the state outlined earlier means that the construction of such a world takes innovative and unexpected forms. Frustrated at not being able to find an Islamic network or institution that works with Iraqi refugees through the contacts she made at the DRC-operated community centers, Hala began volunteering at the Kanīset al-Salīb (Church of the Cross). The church runs a project headed by an outreach worker from the UNHCR, involving both Syrians and Iraqis. The project aims to train Iraqi volunteers to provide outreach work to elderly Iraqi refugees. I asked Hala what had drawn her to volunteering at the church:

Hala: You see, look, we're sitting here doing nothing, but when you feel you are doing something for somebody else you don't think about yourself any more. You think about others; they're worse off than you are and you are thankful to God for what you have and that you are

blessed with the good health and capacity to help someone else. So, I think it's, I don't know I believe whatever you do now, you'll see a reward in the future. I mean you have to. I don't know; it's a very strong feeling.

Tahir: So taking part in this course, how has it helped you? What does it mean?

Hala: I feel much better; I feel at least I'm doing something even if it's a small thing. You visit a family and they feel that somebody is trying to help them; other people are thinking about them. This is enough, even if it's a small part. I try to find people who can help them financially. I ask friends; I contacted a friend through facebook and told her if she wanted to help these people, she could consider it as *zakāt*. So this helps. You should have seen the families that I visited today. Oh My God. There was one family the conditions they were living in were appalling; the humidity was unbearable [mid-March]. The woman is sick—I think it's a cancer or something. As soon as we went in, we couldn't stay for more than five minutes. All the members of this family were getting more and more sick [*sic*] by the day. I don't know how they could live in such an apartment.

This example serves to illustrate the relative positions refugees, international humanitarian organizations, religious institutions, international agencies, and the state all take up in the humanitarian field. Here, Hala has re-mapped her religious landscape to include church organizations in lieu of any similar such project being available through Islamic networks and institutions. The fact that the project is led by a United Nations outreach worker once again demonstrates the privileged position church organizations enjoy in the humanitarian field in Syria. It is also worth noting that her positioning in relation to the church is for her psychosocial well-being rather than for any access to any material resources. Her allusion to a "future reward" also points to Hala being cognizant of the transtemporal dimension to her actions, which belong as much to another realm as they do to this corporeal world.

Hala's testimony challenges Bourdieu's insistence that social actors and their practice ought to be interpreted as part of an ongoing game to amass capital or more precisely a capital that is only of value in this world. For bodies inscribed with a religious disposition, Bourdieu's field of power omits a very obvious and powerful actor: God. For bodies inscribed with a religious disposition, relationships are cultivated and calibrated with other actors in order to be closer to God. It is not that Bourdieu's use of capital as a metaphor for the structuring of society is problematic; it is the fact that for Bourdieu,

time comes to an abrupt and sudden end with death.[15] For those who believe, time extends beyond death—an afterlife beckons. As such, as the believer strives to acquire or amass a specific volume and structure of capital, she does so with this in mind. Once again, the material/spiritual dichotomy falls woefully short in adequately interpreting the lived-experiences and cultural landscape of religiously oriented Iraqi refugees.

Mahmoud later expressed disappointment tinged with resignation at the lack of involvement on the part of Islamic networks and institutions in humanitarian work with refugees, once again revealing the reach of the state in delineating which activities in both the humanitarian and the religious fields are acceptable. This clearly impacts on which relationships Iraqi refugees (particularly Muslim Iraqi refugees) are able to nurture. Relationships with Syrian co-religionists based on ties of solidarity offered through religion are off-limits. This severely constrains potential for "home-making." He told me:

> *Mahmoud*: Here, you have the support of the UN and they don't care if you are Muslim or not. Anyone can go and register. But, the churches here, they support the Christians—maybe because they are a minority here. Usually in societies where you are in a minority, you have more support from your people [...] Here they collect money in the mosques, but you know it's usually to build another mosque in Syria or for the support of students in Islamic centres. Sometimes, the Imam at the end of the Friday prayer makes an announcement for donations for mosques being built in areas far away like Qamishli or Deir Ezzour. I think they have to get permission from the government for doing that, I mean they can't do it otherwise. If you want to do something similar for Iraqi refugees you have to get permission. I heard there was a group of Iraqis who met with a shaykh who talked publicly about refugee issues and they were told you would need permission from the government—you can't just do it here. Unless it's a personal donation you can't just give your *zakāt* as an organised donation.

Interestingly, *zakāt*, which I had identified in chapter 1 as being a possible resource for forcibly displaced people, is not recognized as such by Hala and Mahmoud. Their own financial circumstances dictate that *they* must pay *zakāt* to those less fortunate than themselves. Thus, *zakāt* is first and foremost for vulnerable populations who are most in need. The eligibility of the category of *'ābir al-sabīl* for receipt of *zakāt* depends on the current financial circumstances she finds herself in.

The following case study reflects on how Palestinian Iraqis from Baghdad, through establishing their own community organization in Damascus, have been able to position themselves between the state and international humanitarian organizations to better access resources.

A Self-Help Initiative

As I have shown, the Syrian state works considerably hard at curbing the influence of Sunni organizations. This can be partly attributed to the fraught relationship between the Ba'thist regime that has permeated Syrian politics and society since Hafez al-Assad launched his war on the Muslim brotherhood in Hama in the early 1980s. Although there has been a détente between the state and less pliant sections of the Sunni religious establishment since, difference remains a potent issue in Syrian politics.[16] This is associated with a policy of the regime, which portrays the latter as a bulwark of Sunni hegemony and protector of minority rights while simultaneously encouraging sectarian politics through the privileging of certain groups. In such an environment some community organizations prefer not to highlight the faith dimension to the work they do. One such organization is the Rābeta al-Falastīniyi al-'Iraq (Palestinian Iraqi Community Association).

Far less has been written on the Palestinian Iraqi community than on other Palestinian populations in the region. This dearth in literature can be attributed to the relatively small number of Palestinian Iraqis and the difficulties associated with doing research during the Ba'thist chapter in Iraq's history. Around 77 percent of the 4,280 individuals who were originally displaced during the 1948 *nakba*, originated from the neighboring villages of Ijzim, 'Ayn Ghazal and Jab'a (Mohammad 2007:23). As such, many of the survivors of the *nakba* and their descendants, who have now sought refuge in Damascus, are tied by bonds of kinship and relationships nd as far back as at least three generations.

The Rābeta is an example of how refugees, as active social agents, are able to establish community structures that promote self-reliance. The organization was founded in May 2006 in response to the needs of Palestinian Iraqis in Syria, in particular the situation of the Palestinian Iraqis who were stranded at the border camps. Its membership reflects the diversity of Palestinian politics in the Diaspora, with members from Hamas, Fatah, PFLP, Ḥizb al-Ba'th, and independents. The premises at which the community center is based is marked by the lack of symbols belonging to political factions. In their stead, the Palestinian flag and a map of historic Palestine hang on the walls.

Over the past three decades religion, identity, and politics have become increasingly entwined in the Palestinian context. The director of the Rābeta is affiliated to Hamas, an Islamist political organization.[17] Some members declare themselves to be staunchly secular, while others tread a more intermediate line, observing religious commitments while maintaining that their religious affiliations have little to do with politics. Many members, who are refugees themselves, line up every day in congregation for prayer in the main reception hall at the center, irrespective of their political affiliations. Weekly seminars on religious instruction are organized for women by female members of the Rābeta. The community center acts as an assembly hall for marriage ceremonies as well as gatherings on the occasion of religious festivities. Communal fasts are broken during Ramadan at the center. Yet, Abu al-Hassan (the director) and other members of the Rābeta are adamant in their refusal to label themselves as an FBO. For them, to label themselves as an FBO is to confess sectarian attitudes. Given that sectarianism was a key trigger in the displacement of Iraqi refugees, it is perhaps unsurprising that they would recognize themselves as such. At the same time, there is a clear acknowledgment that faith is a key motivating factor for those who have built the center. Abu al-Hassan told me:

> *Abu al-Hassan*: Helping people is fundamental to our religion [...] It's something important to us as a charitable organization that we keep ties with people out of duty to our faith and in addition to being Palestinian Iraqi, as well as being Muslims, not to mention from the perspective of being refugees. So, really, it's fundamentally what religion is about; to co-operate with and support people through our good conduct and behaviour, and our customs. This is something that comes about naturally because first of all, you help your brother and don't leave him hungry while you have had your fill. Secondly, you have genuine concern for the welfare of your brother. The metaphor is that of Muslims being one body, if a part hurts, the whole body will feel the pain. Look, if we at the Rābeta see a Palestinian from Iraq suffering, we feel a responsibility towards him.

For Abu al-Hassan, action and not only belief is what lies at the core of being religious. It is about transforming a disposition to believe into a disposition to act: it is a practical understanding of religion. His assertion that religion is about "supporting people through our good conduct and behaviour" is a reference to a *ḥadīth* attributed to Prophet Muhammad. This points to an interpretation of religion that collapses the Durkheimian binary of sacred and profane. If as Abu al-Hassan understands it, religion includes

everyday interactions and relationships with people then the sacred is clearly not "[some]thing set apart." Instead, the ordinary is continually sacralized. What is surprising is that the phrase *al-din al-mu'āmla* (religion is the good treatment of people) was a persistent refrain I heard from Syrians and Iraqis alike from across *all* faiths. This widespread formulation of religion can be attributed to the shared existences of the many different faith communities that live in Damascus; creating a recognition of shared cultural practices, history, memories, and language. Moreover, it is the recognition of "a local cosmopolitanism" (Zubaida 1999, Chatty 2010:295) where "the other" is not strange but familiar—where difference is accommodated.

The collective cultural memories of a number of displacements over the past two centuries mean that in Syria yesterday's guest is readily acknowledged as today's neighbor. This is significant. As discussed earlier, the Islamic cultural tradition recognizes the rights of neighbors and it is in the everyday practices of experiencing neighborliness that the ummah is realized. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "He will not enter Paradise whose neighbour is not secure from his wrongful conduct."[18]

The Rābeta, through the nurturing of collective relations with Palestinian Syrian political actors has been able to successfully negotiate, with both the state and the UNHCR, the closing of the Tanf camp that straddled the Iraqi Syrian border. In addition it has secured fast-track third-country resettlement for Palestinian Iraqis registered at al-Hol camp in Hassake. Importantly, it has also negotiated temporary residency permits for Palestinian Iraqis in Damascus. Although these have been important victories, recent events in Syria have stalled the re-settlement process for many. In light of this, it is perhaps in the psychosocial impact that the Rābeta has had on the lives of Palestinian Iraqi refugees that we can catch a glimpse of the salience of such an organization. Abu Yaseen, a 50-year-old teacher who heads the youth program at the center and often contributes to comment pieces on the Rābeta website told me:

> *Abu Yaseen*: The Rābeta is a home for all Palestinians coming from Iraq because it compensates you for all that you lost in Iraq with moral support. That is what it does fundamentally. Every other week we gather together to go to the Nabulsi mosque in Rukn ed-Din to pray Friday congregation prayers there and listen to the sermon by Muhammad Rātib al Nabulsi. So, we feel this sense of community of going together and of praying together at a mosque. We often meet at the Rābeta to talk with our brothers about our situation in Syria; to hear news about relatives who are abroad—what is happening in their lives. Such and such is ill or such and such is getting married.

> In addition there are sporting activities, cultural activities to keep you occupied; to make you forget this feeling of being away from home and being a refugee.

The ritual of prayer, both on the premises of the Rābeta and organized visits to the mosques of well-known preachers, creates a sense of solidarity and an appreciation of the moral commitments individuals have to one another. In prayer, time moves beyond this world and crosses into expectations of another world. For Abu Yaseen, prayer allows him to re-orient himself following the dislocation of exile; to "forget" he is a refugee. However, the practice of prayer is not continuous. It has its fixed times. To remind oneself of the moral commitments one has to others means to visit the sick and share concern in the well-being of others. "Acts of worship, whatever they might be," Durkheim (2001:171) tells us, "are not futile and meaningless gestures. By seeming to strengthen the ties between the worshipper and his God, they really strengthen the ties that bind individuals to society." The fundamental pillars of Islam: the shahada, prayer, zakāt, fasting in the month of Ramadan, and the hajj, all serve as reminders—attesting to the importance of maintaining ethical relationships with others. The testimony of my participants suggests that the inverse is also true: by attending to relationships with others, the relationship between a devotee and her God is strengthened. This is what the Rābeta enables Palestinian Iraqi refugees in Damascus to do. Abu Yaseen's allusion to Rābeta as being a recognizable domestic space is significant to understanding the Rābeta as an FBO, once we accept that religion is essentially concerned with home-making.

Maysa, a 33-year-old Palestinian Iraqi who had worked as a project coordinator for an American NGO in Baghdad was similarly appreciative of the Rābeta. She told me:

> *Maysa*: Any person who is foreign, a migrant or a refugee needs a place which can be a centre for meeting with other people—just so that they can find out about what happened to other people from their community. How do we find out about others? We turn to the Rābeta. It's like a mother to us; like when you have difficulties you turn to your mother. We're all the same.

The use of the metaphors of "home" and "mother" to describe the relationship with the Rābeta is a telling one. It casts light on how embedded the organization is in the lives of the refugees. The Rābeta does not enjoy the financial assets of international humanitarian organizations, nor is it a preferred partner of international humanitarian organizations in the way

that a church-based organization is. Its strength lies in being a network of self-reliance it allows refugees to be active and purposive decision-makers. Through its ability to position itself among other Palestinian political actors and to mobilize those particular networks to secure further resources it provides a familiar home-like space for Palestinian-Iraqis in Damascus.

Conclusion

Damascus provides an interesting urban setting in which societal relations unfold. For Iraqi forced migrants, a humanitarian space has been established, which effectively governs their lives. The state, international humanitarian organizations, and local faith-based actors all compete in the structuring of the humanitarian field. The state enjoys discriminatory powers through both the Law and MoUs with humanitarian organizations, which delineate the possibilities of action for local faith-based actors.

Owing to the specific sociopolitical context of Syria, mainstream Sunni charitable organizations have been sidelined from attending to the needs of the Iraqi refugee population in Damascus. Moreover, international humanitarian organizations are more likely to engage with church-affiliated organizations (which enjoy a privileged status vis-à-vis the state) as the transnational nature of church affiliated organizations means that they share a closer vernacular of humanitarian action.

A less-informed reading of the humanitarian field in Damascus might suggest that FBOs are marginal to the lives of Iraqi refugees in Damascus. However, to think so would to err on two counts. First, it fails to take into account the specifically authoritarian character of the Syrian regime and the pervasive impact it has on the structuring of the humanitarian field. Secondly, it would overlook the agency of refugees themselves. Iraqi refugees are under immense pressure with the traditional durable solutions to the plight of refugee populations seemingly out of reach. Return to Iraq is highly improbable given the continued sectarian violence there. The Syrian regime has clearly indicated that local integration is off the agenda and resettlement opportunities to a third country are few and far between. This creates a protection impasse for Iraqi forced migrants in Damascus. It is in this context that Iraqi forced migrants are compelled to reflect upon their specific experiences of religion and to mobilize them in novel and unexpected ways. They do so by re-exploring their cultural and religious landscapes to engage with faith actors from outside their own faith group. This has been possible largely because of a recognition of an entwined existence that faith communities have in relation to one another in Damascus—allowing the Other to be framed as familiar rather than strange.

In the case of the Rābeta we saw how refugees create their own vehicles to express faith, allowing them to inhabit a world of their own construction rather than one that is wholly contingent on others. The Rābeta creates and becomes a space for Palestinian-Iraqis to practice their faith through the nurturing of relationships, enabling them to participate in "home-making" despite the constraints set on them by the state and the UNHCR.

CHAPTER 5

Home Sacred Home

'A'isha reported Allah's Messenger as saying: Gabriel impressed upon me [kind treatment] towards the neighbour [so much] that I thought as if he would confer upon him [the right of] inheritance. (Saḥīḥ Muslim Book 032, Number 6354)

Introduction

If we take the process of displacement to mean the loss of capabilities required for an individual to function integrally in an accustomed environment then emplacement ought to be viewed as a strategy to regain such capabilities albeit in changed circumstances. While much has been said about religion driving conflict in the Middle East, less is known about the salience of religion in refugee emplacement strategies in cities across the region. Such sites should be understood as familiar spaces for displaced people, wherein cultural practices including religious ones are sustained and realized through social and kin networks. This chapter emphasizes intersubjective and relational aspects of home-making central to emplacement strategies of Iraqi refugees. In so doing, the lived, everyday experiences of refugee actors and their engagement with religion, re-calibrated as a practice of conviviality, is privileged over formal frameworks of religious authority.

In addition to the sacralization of domestic space, refugees produce and inhabit communal "home-like spaces" thereby aggregating and supplementing existing nonmaterial forms of capital. All three modes of home suggested here: domestic dwellings, community organizations, and the city constitute key spaces inscribed with religious significance helping orient Iraqi refugees in the wake of displacement. This serves to produce a distinct geography

of exile enabling refugee actors to move beyond institutionally sanctioned spaces of care and control.

Broken Homes

Conflict-induced violence and forced migration are key contributors to social transformation; communities are left fragmented; economic resources usurped or destroyed; and traditional ways of life are re-examined and interpreted anew. The loss and attempt to retrieve re-create or perhaps even re-shape the vital cultural resources that constitute the relational home lie at the heart of the decision-making, religious practices, and beliefs of Iraqi refugees in Damascus. And so, with every fragmentation comes a re-imagining of community; with the destruction of economic resources come changes in livelihood strategies; and with the re-examination of traditional social structures are born new perceptions of identity and belonging.

To help understand how refugees straddle this continuum of loss and regeneration, much can be learned from the field of welfare economics, and in particular the work of Amartya Sen (1995) and his notion of "entitlements." Primarily concerned with the political economy of hunger, Sen argues that famines are a construct not only of supply-side problems but more importantly, famines are brought about through a failure of what he terms "entitlements."[1]

For Sen, famine ensues where there is a change to an individual's endowment perhaps through the loss of health or where one becomes alienated from one's land. Alternatively, starvation can be brought about by a change in the exchange entitlement mapping of an individual through a loss in earnings; unemployment or a hike in inflation. Interpreting Sen in light of forced migration studies, the endowment of an Iraqi forced migrant (i.e., to say the cultural, economic, and social resources she has at her disposal) has been severely depleted and is faced with further erosion as she finds her ability to maintain her endowment is diminished through restrictions placed on her in finding work, the rising costs of day-to-day living and the lack of access to social security provisions. The entitlements available to an Iraqi forced migrant are therefore composed of legal, social, and cultural resources, which she can mobilize to maintain a minimum adequate level of subsistence; subsistence here implies not only the material sense, but also social and cultural senses. Bassam's story, outlined below, better illustrates how Sen's entitlement approach can be understood in the context of diminishing community capabilities.

Bassam is a tailor whose workshop is situated off the narrow and dusty side streets of Sayyida Zayneb. His mannerisms, gait, and appearance belie

a man burdened with anxiety. The cumulative stress of living under a corrosive sanctions regime followed by the American invasion and occupation of Iraq has left Bassam suffering from alopecia; completely bald and with no eyebrows to frame his features he has an almost haunted countenance. A man forever chased by ghosts—past, present, and future. Hunched over his sewing machine, his conversation is punctured with deep contemplative silences, accentuated as the motorized needle from his sewing machine falls silent. His work space is a small cramped room of no more than 80 square feet. For the most part, he works on the loose fitting outer garment worn by women—the *abaya*. On a free-standing clothes rail there are 20 such garments, all in black. The one distinguishing feature is the slight embroidery work on the neck line and the cuffs of the sleeves. A framed picture of Bassam standing outside one of the gates leading to the Kabah at Makkah in *iḥram* adorns the wall to the right of his sewing machine. On the left wall is a large framed calligraphy piece of the *Ayat al-Kursi*.[2] Bassam told me that he had been forced to seek refuge in Syria in the wake of the immense pressures that the occupation brought with it. Here, it is worth quoting extensively from what Bassam told me to better capture a sense of the entitlement failure he experienced. I had begun by asking him what he remembered of the American invasion and occupation:

> *Bassam*: The nightly air raid bombings and the rocket attacks wouldn't let us ever sleep. On top of that the street was terrifying. There was killing and pillaging on the street. You couldn't possibly go out to the market or take your children out [. . .] You had gangs and terrorist groups, al-Qaeda and other criminals killing whoever was different from them. There was killing, pillaging and looting—you couldn't step outside. There were some streets you couldn't go down. They'd call these streets the "street of death" or "the final street" because if you passed through those streets you'd get killed. The markets would close by noon. You couldn't find anyone out on the street [after that]. There were curfews from six in the evening till six o'clock the following morning. There was no money, no work. How were we supposed to get on with our lives? There was a lot of pressure on us. I used to have a store and it was burned down. After, my brothers were killed in the space of six months. One had five children and the other had three. I had started working as a cook for a local Iraqi force called the Iraqi liberation force. They were getting supplies and weapons from the Americans. I only worked with them as a cook on and off for a couple of months—maybe three. I got a threat posted through the door of my store to stop working with them. There were four other stores that got the same threat. The other thing was that we were in a mixed area. We were Shi'i in

a Sunni controlled area. So, the threat was both specific and general. For two of the store-owners it wasn't just a threat. They were killed straight away. I knew I had to leave straight away. Another thing is that my daughter was nearly kidnapped from secondary school. Luckily, she had been inside the school when the bus left. They had stopped the bus and taken whoever was on it. Because of this, I made her leave school—to stop attending. Everything was against us in Baghdad; the threats, the killing of my brothers and [having] nowhere to live. That's why we were forced to seek refuge in Syria. Of course, Syria has been great in embracing Iraqis and treating us well, so much so that we think of this as our second country. But still, we suffer a lot with the difficulties of earning a living and having to pay high rents.

It is clear that in the aftermath of the American invasion the capability of ordinary Iraqis such as Bassam to lead his life culturally, socially, and materially were denuded to such an extent that there was a threat to the integrity of living his life in any meaningful way; the option of staying in Iraq had become, in effect, a Hobson's choice. The coda from the above extract points to the significance of Syria as a familiar and welcoming space. Bassam recognizes that in Syria he does not feel completely alienated. However, he does acknowledge the hardships that accompany displacement even to a recognizable environment. Bassam, like many Iraqi refugees in Damascus, works in the informal sector. The workspace and machine Bassam uses is owned by a Syrian businessman. Bassam manages to earn around 150 SYP (just over $3) per day working as a tailor. On arrival to Damascus, finding work was an imperative. Bassam told me that he had worked at a number of similar workshops often for short periods as the pay was insufficient to cover daily expenditure for food and rent. A working day would usually last 14 hours. To supplement his income and apply for re-settlement to a third country, Bassam registered with the UNHCR from whom he receives much needed food assistance. He told me of his difficulty when he first arrived:

Bassam: I had gone a while without work and we weren't getting any food assistance at the time. There were some families that helped us with some necessities so that we could get on with our lives. I was forced to do any kind of work just to earn 100SYP so that we could get by and have something to eat. I would start one job and then leave and it's only recently that I feel a bit more settled with the job I have now. I'm not shy in doing any kind of work. As far as I'm concerned, work is honourable. I said to myself I had to find work so that I didn't have to ask anyone for anything.

This is a typical scenario for Iraqi refugees in Damascus.[3] Of his two children, one is registered at a Syrian primary school. This facilitates the provision of a temporary residency permit for the family (UNHCR 2010a). His other daughter had to leave midway through secondary school in order to care for her 35-year-old mother who suffers from both polyarthritis and chronic diabetes that has impaired her eyesight. Under such conditions there does not seem to be the prospect of a reasonable future for Bassam and his family. He told me:

> *Bassam*: For five years of my life I've been suffering. We don't have a future and in Iraq our destination is unknown. We don't want anything other than to live in peace and to raise our children in the best way we can. That's it. Everyone tastes death at some point. There's no escaping that. I just want to be settled and not to remain in this situation. We're suspended; not being able to return to our country and not knowing if we can move to another country. For that reason we're suspended between the sky and the earth (*ehna mu'allaqīn bayn al-sama' wal 'ard*). You're not settled either in Iraq or here and you don't know how long you will stay here [. . .] when I say settled, I mean settled at work, as a family, I mean as a human being. I want to be settled so I know where I stand. What will happen to my children? God forbid something happens to me, who will guarantee their future? No-one. It's the one reason keeping me alive.

Bassam's concerns and anxieties are typical of many Iraqi refugees in Damascus. The increased likelihood of protracted exile where the traditional durable solutions of return, local integration, and re-settlement have become less and less available combined with the Syrian state maintaining strict supervision over NGOs means that religion takes on critical significance in the lives of Iraqi refugees. It is in this context that religion as a cultural resource assumes an integral role in the development of social networks and as a means of meeting psychosocial needs at both individual and collective levels. Bassam's emphasis on wanting to be "settled at work, as a family" and "as a human being" draws attention to the intersections between subjective concerns about what it means to be fully human and more prosaic demands. He alludes to his current situation as being akin to purgatory, suspended in a liminal space between this world and the next.

Haidar, a state employee prior to the invasion, now working as a health practitioner at a clinic affiliated to one of the many Shi'i clergy represented in Sayyida Zaynab recalled Bassam's sentiments. The challenges of trying to piece together a new life in Syria, he told me, means that "we [Iraqi refugees]

don't have any choice but to be patient and trust in fate. There is nothing for us but to seek patience and refuge in Allah the most High. There is no alternative." In this chapter I reflect on the ways in which refugees such as Bassam and Haidar "seek refuge and patience in Allah." In particular, I explore articulations of home and family and consider how religion informs these understandings and the degree to which religion plays a role in the process of emplacement.

Home-Making and Half-Built Homes

"Religions," Tweed (2006:54) tells us, "are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries." As can be seen by the use of the plural for religion, the definition aims for universality. To his credit, Tweed (2006:14) reminds us that the word theory is derived from the Greek noun *theōria* to mean sighting and as such is subject to blind-spots (ibid:15). It is therefore a positioned sighting; illuminating specific areas while casting a shadow over others. In the previous chapter we saw one such example of a blind spot in how Tweed neglects to situate religious actors within the field of power. Despite this, a theory of religions such as Tweed's can help us toward understanding the practices of Iraqi forced migrants. In particular, the idea of spatial practices—dwelling and crossing—opens up avenues in understanding how religious resources (both material and spiritual) are mobilized, as he puts it, "to intensify joy and confront suffering."

Earlier, I examined religion diachronically, foregrounding experiences and interactions of participants with other religious actors over time. In this chapter I shift the focus of attention to the spatial and in particular the home, as a site from which to examine religious practices—helping illuminate reciprocal relations and degree of integration between religious, social, political, economical, and cultural fields. Kim Knott (2005:23) in "The Location of Religion" concurs. She makes the point that "the spaces of religion are synchronically dynamic because at any time they are overlapping, co-existent, in parallel with other spaces and because they are internally in tension, being made up of multiple, contested, real and imagined sites and relations." In the previous chapter we saw how, between the actions of the state and international agencies in relation to refugees in the humanitarian field, the potential for "home-making" for the latter is constrained—begging the question: what does it actually mean to "make homes"?

Tweed (2006:97) asserts that those who ascribe to a religious world-view are guided by "autocentric" and "allocentric" reference frames. The former can be equated with a concern for the care of the self, whereas the latter

refers to concern with that which is external of oneself. These reference frames enable those who ascribe to religious beliefs and practices to orient themselves temporally and spatially by placing their bodies within homes, homelands, and the cosmos. He posits:

> Religious women and men construct habitats, intimate spaces for dwelling, and inscribe those homes with religious significance. Moving beyond those intimate spaces and the kin who inhabit them, individuals and groups draw on religion to negotiate collective identity, imagine the group's shared space, and—in the process—establish social hierarchies within the group and generate taxonomies of others beyond it [. . .] Religions also imagine the wider terrestrial landscape and the ultimate horizon of existence—the universe and the beings that inhabit it.

Here, the definition of home offered by Tweed seemingly begins with the bounded notion of a constructed habitat, emphasizing the material importance of home. The phrase "intimate spaces for dwelling" is more promising as it offers a hint at the temporal and relational aspects of home-making. Home can be located beyond the boundaries of domestic space. It can be found in what I call "home-like spaces." Again, emphasizing relational aspects of home, "home-like spaces" are those wherein relations other than family relations are established; they may be community centers, schools, or even mosques.

Students at the Iraqi student Project (ISP) were asked what motivates people to pray. Their answers were recorded in a book produced by the ISP entitled: *The River, the Roof, the Palm Tree: Young Iraqi refugees remember their home*.[4] One of the students, Salim, had written:

> The mosque is prepared in a way that feels like home. The floor is covered with soft carpets and there is a calm peaceful light. The prayer in its essence elicits peace and harmony. A literal connection between us is found during the prayer. We stand in line so close together that the shoulders and the feet (without shoes) of each one willingly touch the ones on either side, not only in the standing position, but also in the postures of bending over, kneeling and the movement of the hands. The inspiring recitations of the Quran [*sic*], the emotive speech of the Imam, the neighbourhood gathering, the congruent and harmonious movement of the prayer and the precise connection of shoulders are all the wonders of the congregational Friday noon prayer. It elicits a sense of devotion and belonging, a feeling of unity and shelter. It's a religious duty yet a personal need. Without the zeal of experiencing it, one feels loneliness and a sense of something missing. It's one great migration to peace. (ISP 2011:40)

The original question had been posed by a visitor to the Ummayad mosque in central Damascus who was struck by the sheer number of people attending Friday prayers. Those familiar with the Ummayad mosque would recognize it as more than merely a place of prayer. The pristine, polished courtyard to the mosque is a haven for working-class families seeking to escape the crowded quarters in which they live. It functions as a family picnic site much like a London park in the height of an English summer. Children run boisterously amok, chasing one another, sliding across the tiled floor mimicking the celebrations of footballing heroes from far way Madrid and Barcelona. Families sit in small circles in whatever shade they can find. Laughter and chatter fills the courtyard. In the mosque, between prayers, small groups of men sit in quiet conversation. Others are simply stretched out on the carpet, catching a quiet afternoon snooze. It has the feel of a lazy Sunday afternoon; as Salim notes, "the mosque is prepared in a way that feels like home." In prayer, it is the neighborhood gathering, which elicits communal feelings: the recognition of familiar everyday faces from the street on which one lives. The unity of movement in prayer where the faithful are physically linked to one another banishes any sense of alienation. In that moment, there is what Tweed sees as the crossing of boundaries as the believer locates herself within wider world[s]. Or as Salim puts it: a "great migration to peace."

Sacralizing the Home

The "spatial turn" in social theory can offer promising insights into the ways in which religion configures relations between social actors. In the geographer Doreen Massey's (1991) sketch of her local neighborhood, she walks us through her local high street in northwest London to conjure a "global sense of place." Here, in contrast to Harvey's (1990) notion of time-space compression, relations of all kinds—be they political, social, cultural, or economic—are stretched out over space. In doing so, Massey (1991:28) proffers an alternative interpretation of place. She argues:

> What gives a place its specifity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus [...] instead of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated movements in networks of social relations and undertakings.

A welcome intervention on the discourse of home has been made by Helen Taylor (2009). Writing on the meaning of home for Cypriot refugees

in London, Taylor takes up Massey's challenge to stop thinking of place as bounded and start thinking of it as centrifugal. In her fourfold analysis of home, Taylor does exactly this. As well as having a spatial, material, and temporal aspect, "home" she observes "is often, in meaningful ways, defined by other people" (2009:216); more precisely, the relational home consists of "social networks, as well as the habitual social practices that make us feel at home and the accumulated resources that arise from social networking" (ibid.:215). The primary relations that center on home are those of the family and it is the family unit through which religious values and knowledge is transmitted.[5]

The restrictions placed upon religious institutions in authoritarian states means that the home rather than the mosque becomes the defining religious space—re-enforcing quotidian family life with the sacred. Bassam's experiences noted earlier in this chapter, remind us that many Iraqis are faced with the prospect of temporary or little work. The domestic home is not an isolated or empty space for much of the day—the binary of sacred and profane fails to capture the fluidity of meaning in home spaces. A discourse binding family to home has long permeated Islamic traditions and can be found in both the Qur'an and aḥadīth literature. The domestic home, in the Islamic tradition, has always been sacred. Domestic metaphors are frequently employed in the Qur'an to describe the after-life (Campo 1991:24–26). Rules governing the etiquette of hospitality and privacy rights become "part of a universal pattern of order and salvation" (ibid.: 27). According to a ḥadīth narrated by Ibn 'Umar, the Prophet declared: "Perform some of your prayers in your houses (*buyūt*) and do not make them graves."[6] Elsewhere, Jabir reported Allah's Messenger as saying: "When any one of you observes prayer in the mosque he should reserve a part of his prayer for his house, for Allah would make the prayer as a means of betterment in his house."[7]

A well-known Arabic proverb reminds us that *kull bayt lu ḥurmithu* or every house has its own *ḥurma* (sanctity or sacredness). Juan Campo (1991:99) observes:

> *Hurma* is a term that can signify the sacred quality of mosque space, from local prayer places to the precincts of the holiest sites in Mecca and Medina. Sacrality thus provides a tacit linkage between the human household, God's house(s), and the Prophet's house-mosque. When sentiments that people associate with their own dwellings are connected with such localities, these sentiments are both affirmed and objectified in terms of translocal Islamic discourse.

Salwa, another student at the ISP affirms that the privacy afforded by domestic space enables her to have a more intimate relationship with God. Women are not traditionally required to attend the mosque, whereas for men it is an obligation. As such, the home attains greater religious significance for women. Her reflection on what drives people to pray, guided her homeward bound. She wrote:

> For me praying is in my house, in my own room, and solitude gives me this significant feeling that I'm not seen, not heard and not judged by any being but my God. Allah can understand the deepest secrets without having me prove anything. How comforting it feels those few moments away from the world of appearances and judgments. (ISP 2011:43)

For Salwa, patriarchal interpretations of religion serve to represent hierarchies of power in which judgments are passed on her commitment to faith based on her not marking her Islamic identity through acts such as the wearing of the hijab. As she points out, God is cognizant of her innermost thoughts and emotions without her having to prove anything. It is a reminder that patriarchal authority is infused with everyday practices such that space is inscribed with gendered relations. Chidester and Linenthal (1995:17) remind us that sacred spaces include within them "hierarchical power relations of domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion, appropriation and dispossession [. . .] sacred space anchors more than merely myth and emotion. It anchors relations of meaning and power that are at stake in the formation of a larger social reality."

In Salwa's testimony we can note the use of the personal pronoun "my house," "my room," and "my God," which alerts us immediately to a non-institutionalized conception of religion; this is a very personal relationship between Salwa and God. However, by placing herself in a very private space, Salwa highlights a dual movement. She seeks to strip bare her chosen sacred space of hierarchical power relations; yet, in doing so, the practices of mosque attendance are also re-affirmed, perpetuating gendered relations in which the visibility of women in institutionally sanctioned sacred space is minimized.

In the homes of many of the Iraqi refugees I visited I noted that cramped living conditions resulted in curtains being put up to screen the female members of the household from male visitors. My own religious habitus served me well in such situations. I would know for instance, that a male member would accompany me to the washbasin as I washed my hands after a meal rather than just point the direction to the washbasin. On another occasion, while visiting Abu Yaseen's cousins for a late breakfast of *pācha*—slowly

boiled sheep's head served with bread soaked in the broth, I would remember to stay waiting a few moments in the stairwell to the apartment, as to give time for the women of the household time to put on the hijab or to retire to another room. At prayer time, some of my interlocutors would stop midway through an interview to reach for a prayer mat and find a space in the corner of the room. In conservative Iraqi Sunni households in particular there would be no portraits or photographs of family members on view. In their place are framed works of calligraphy that are often selected verses from the Qur'an. This can be attributed to the idea that pictorial representations of the human form are said to keep angels away from the home as well as seeking protection and refuge in the words of God. In short, the home becomes mosque (see Figure 5.1).

However, home is not strictly confined to the domestic, it is also relational. Another frequently heard aphorism in Damascus reminds us of this relational aspect: people are advised to choose the neighbor before the house and the friend before the road taken—*al jār qabl al-dār wa al-rafīq qabl al-tarīq*. Neighborly ties are as equally important as domestic dwellings in helping make Damascus home.

Figure 5.1   Mural welcoming back a pilgrim from the Hajj.

Note: On the occasion of someone returning from the Hajj, neighbors festoon the communal stairwell to the apartment block with tinsel, balloons, and decorate the wall with a mural to welcome back the pilgrim and the blessings she has brought back with her.

Source: Author.

Damascus as Home

"Cities" as the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1996:13) reminds us "are good to think with [. . . they are] places with especially intricate internal goings-on" simultaneously "reach[ing] out widely into the world, and toward one another." Damascus is one such place; it has been reaching out and drawing toward it for millennia, occupying an important interstitial space in the region. Damascus and Syria generally are where ideas, people, symbols, language, music, food, and goods criss-cross from across the Middle East. In short, Iraqi refugees on arrival to Damascus already possess an *understanding* of the city; it is a shared cognitive space.

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman proposes that cognition plays a fundamental role in the production of social space. He observes "knowledge picks up from the point of breach, disruption, *mis*-understanding. One may say that once this happens, objects become visible (that is I am aware of seeing them, I see them as definite objects)—since there is now a distance between me and them" (Bauman 1993:148). For Bauman then, social space is constructed through a knowledge of propinquity. The knowledge of the other is charted along a continuum at which one end can be found anonymity, and, at the other, intimacy. Strangers are therefore those of whom we have little knowledge. As such, any interaction or engagement with them is seemingly fleeting and perfunctory. For some of the male participants with whom I spoke limited interaction with their Syrian neighbors was a recurring theme. Mohammad, who lives in an affluent suburb of Damascus where many of the residents have ties to the military officer class, told me:

> *Mohammad*: Relations are good but they're superficial. There's no real depth to the relations I have with them. We don't go to one another's homes. They don't come to us and we don't go to them. There's no such thing. The prospects of this happening are slim. There's one neighbour the one that lives directly opposite us that has visited. His wife has been to visit my wife on numerous occasions over the four years we've been in this building, but the rest of the building—what can I say? We greet one another when we meet on the stairs or outside but that's the limit of it.

Mohammed raises important gendered dimensions to uses of domestic spaces in Damascus. Rather than speak of having Syrian neighbors visiting him, he speaks of a friendship between his wife and a female Syrian neighbor who calls on her from time to time. Similarly, Mu'tasim spoke of "doorstep conversations" he had with male neighbors who arrived unannounced at his

home. In his treatment of religious significance attached to Muslim homes of the urban poor in Cairo, Juan Eduardo Campo (1991:21) argues that specific rules are laid out, in both the Qur'an and the *aḥadīth* literature, governing everyday social practices such that mundane, quotidian interactions including the etiquettes of visiting one anothers' homes, spatial practices that relate to privacy, greetings, and the sharing of food are linked directly with notions of God, what is permissible and forbidden, purity and blessing.[8] The salience of these verses should not be overlooked when considering the gendered spatial practices of Muslims as the verses in the Qur'an are preceded and followed by a discourse on both adultery and virtue. Campo (ibid.) observes that "the very presence of these rules in the Qur'an, together in one place, lends itself to the creation of a perduring linkage between the house, the human—especially female—body, and sexual relations. Following the rules entails purity, goodness and blessing in the eyes of God." Earlier in the chapter we saw the importance of a religious habitus in navigating the role of an invited male guest in someone's family home. The point here is to demonstrate that the dealings male Iraqi forced migrants have with their Syrian neighbors are limited. Below, we consider whether this is also the case beyond the confines of domestic space.

"Knowing how to go on"

Bauman suggests that such fleeting interactions with the stranger induce a battery of ambivalent sentiments within us born out of gaps in our knowledge. For this he coins the term *proteophobia* or "the dislike of situations in which one feels lost, confused, disempowered [...] we *do not know* how to go on in certain situations because the rules of conduct which define for us the meaning of '*knowing* how to go on' do not cover them" (1993:164). However, the rules of conduct or in Bourdeuian terms "habitus" means that the inverse is true; there *is* a coherency for "knowing how to go on." Iraqi refugees have a habitus informed by religion, which is familiar in Syria. The cultural resources that Iraqi refugees bring with them include an embodied religious habitus. This provides them with conformity of practice that allows them to navigate new surroundings so that they do *not* feel lost, confused, or disempowered. In areas such as Jaramana, Masaken Barzeh, or Sayyida Zayneb where there is a high concentration of Iraqis, Damascus is transformed into a yet more familiar space. Simon told me:

> *Simon*: When you look at relations between the people here, you never feel that you are in a foreign country. You have the same traditions and the same customs—it's not like going to another country. It's

not like going to Russia for instance or China and you can visibly see that there are a lot of differences in the traditions. Here, we have the same traditions and customs. So you never feel that you are a stranger here [...] the thing that I like about Jaramana is that there are a lot of Iraqis here. You have Iraqi restaurants and food here. There are people here, who I hadn't seen in over forty years, people I used to be at school with. There's security so you can go out and there is a sociability here that we haven't had in Iraq in recent years. When you go out, everyone is speaking Arabic. You go to the church and you find the service is in 'Ashuri. Families we know come and visit us and we go and visit them. The visiting of one anothers' homes is something that happens here. So you don't get the feeling of being away from home.

Tahir: With regards your neighbours, are they all Iraqis?

Simon: There are Syrians too.

Tahir: How would you describe relations with them?

Simon: Really good. We all get on well with one another. They tell me if you need anything let us know. They helped me get a land line for the telephone and even if I want to use a car, they arrange a car for my family. They invite us to their villages where they are originally from.

Simon's remark: "the visiting of one anothers' homes is something that happens here" is a telling one. It confirms that the family is as much the predominant social unit in Syria as it is in Iraq. The rules pertaining to interactions between families and neighbors are much as they are in Iraq. It draws attention once more to the idea that homes are more than merely a habitat. Habitats are transformed into homes through their connectedness with other families in other habitats; homes are relational spaces. The presence of other families, recognizable faces from Iraq means that the *dhilla* or what the refugee studies literature may term "social disarticulation" (Cernea 1996), which Arab literary tradition has often associated with being forced to leave one's home is less visible. In neighborhoods such as Jaramana, Baghdad neighborhoods are reproduced; people like Simon are not invisible faces lost in thronging crowds but are recognized and welcomed.

Al-Sham refers not only to Damascus, the site of my field research, but is also the historic name for the wider region that comprises modern-day Syria, Lebanon, historic Palestine, and Jordan. In Syria, one can find a religious and ethnic plurality, which has made it possible for groups such as Armenians, Palestinians, Druze, Circassians, and Kurds to establish and maintain cohesive identities while simultaneously being part of the Syrian Arab Republic. For Chatty (2010), this "local cosmopolitanism" is

the lingering trace of several hundred years of Ottoman suzerainty over the region. She writes:

> Al-Sham is a complex association with the imagined past of the Ottoman empire, of belonging to a millet rather than a piece of land…It is a re-affirmation of the commonality of cultural differences in this region, where cultures, languages and religion are not rooted in particular spaces but are carried in kinship and social networks. (Chatty 2010:295).

I am not suggesting a rose-tinted reading of Ottoman history and the millet system they employed to govern their territories but rather any understanding of displacement within this region has to take into account the fluidity of movement of people, commodities, and ideas prior to the existence of the nation-state. Indeed, the pan-Arab Ba'thist ideology that gripped much of this region during the latter half of the last century (and remains the cornerstone of the constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic) is testament to the recognition of the kinship ties and social networks that traverse the boundaries of the nation-state. This was underscored by the readiness of the Syrian Ba'thist regime to host polling stations for the Iraqi parliamentary elections. By coincidence my arrival in Damascus coincided with the final round of the Iraqi parliamentary election. In areas where there is a significant presence of Iraqis such as Jaramana, Sayyida Zayneb, and Massaken Barzeh, election posters of Iraqi candidates festooned both narrow streets and main thoroughfares. On the final day of polling, I watched Iraqis queue at entrances to polling stations manned by Syrian armed forces personnel. A uniformed guard searched would-be voters as they approached the entrance. Outside the polling station, street vendors sell Iraqi flags. Further down the street, mini-buses with posters of candidates pasted onto the passenger windows were parked up waiting to take voters back to outlying neighborhoods. Inside, the walls of the polling station were draped with more Iraqi flags interspersed with portraits of Bashar al-Assad and his deceased father, Hafez al-Assad.[9]

Thus, when we speak of displacement and forced migration, whether it is as a consequence of the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire or from Iraq to Syria, it is more instructive to conceptualize the receiving countries as familiar spaces where one can belong rather than a space of isolation and alienation (Chatelard 2011).

No Home Is an Island

Moving from being "out of place" or displaced to re-orienting oneself and becoming "in place" is a gradual, accumulative process whereby place is

slowly inscribed with meaning through daily practices over time. Everyday knowledge of activities and practices such as the building and maintenance of houses, the tending of gardens, the picking of fruit, shopping in familiar markets, neighborly visits, celebration of holidays, births, weddings, and burials in aggregate comprise what Laura Hammond (2004) in her ethnographic account of refugee repatriation to Ethiopia refers to as "emplacement." For recently arrived Iraqi refugees such as Simon, settling into visibly Iraqi neighborhoods such as Jaramana—where he sees familiar faces from his past—makes the process of emplacement much more straightforward. Other Iraqis arrive in Syria and locate themselves in areas where there are few Iraqis. 'Aref's family had arrived in the city of Hama, situated around 200 km north of Damascus, in August 2006. After having been in the UAE with relatives, 'Aref followed his family to Hama in January 2007. He told me:

> *'Aref*: Hama is, even until today, close to the Arab and Islamic culture. People follow Islam there. I felt like it [Hama] was my place, my country. Sometimes, even when you take a break and think this is not my country, I miss my country, but people there try to show us this is your country, this is your place. You are Muslim and we are Muslim. There's nothing to separate us. Nationality? Forget about it—so what? This area belongs to God and that area belongs to God—we all live on the same land. Yeah. Until now, I have 10 close friends who are like part of my family. They come to dinner and lunch at my home and I go to their house. They know my family. I know their families. On Fridays, we get together as families. I call them and tell them to bring their families to my home. They call me and tell me to bring my family to their homes.

Here, 'Aref is recalling the idea of the imagined community of the Muslim *ummah*—a community of believers often understood in global terms transcending borders and nationalities. 'Aref's assertion that "there is nothing to separate" him from the inhabitants of Hama alerts us to the possibility that being Muslim should be understood as being more than just an identity marker it is a means of configuring and managing relations in social space.

It alludes to a shared habitus that is rooted in a common understanding of religious tradition and duty. Nationality, for 'Aref, is a state-conferred identity. Religion allows him to renegotiate his position within a new environment—ameliorating the anguish that accompanies exile. The state would have him recognized as non-Syrian, although still an Arab. It is God rather than the state that allows him to belong to the land. We are reminded

once again that the meta-narrative of the state can sit uncomfortably with the meta-narrative of religion.

For 'Aref the power to legitimate is given to religion rather than to the state. 'Aref's position taking and that of his neighbors in Hama is done so in relation not only to one another and other material actors but also with their relationship to God in mind. This is far from the misrecognition that Bourdieu (1991:19) contends veils the material roots of a social order in order to "sanction and sanctify" the power and privileges of the dominant classes. The *ummah* manifests itself locally rather than globally—in the establishing of relationships with neighbors. Again the reciprocal visitations to one anothers' homes are integral to the process of creating the *ummah* as a lived practice. For 'Aref, the actions of his neighbors affirm that he is not out of place; they tell him "this is your place." 'Aref need not fear not "knowing how to go on"—to use Bauman's felicitous phrase—as he is reminded by his neighbors that he has a shared cultural capital, a shared world-view that does not make him a stranger: "You are Muslim, we are Muslim. There is nothing to separate us" his neighbors remind him. This religious capital allows people such as 'Aref to *read* the city of Damascus to make it recognizable.

Sacralizing the City

Bauman imagines a cartographic representation of cognitive space to be analogous to an archipelago rather than a single coherent landmass as such. He writes "[f]or every resident of the modern world, social space is splattered over a vast sea of meaninglessness in the form of numerous larger and smaller blots of knowledge: oases of meaning and relevance amidst a featureless desert. Much of daily business is spent in travelling through semiotically empty spaces—moving physically from one island to another" (1993:158). Yet, how true is this? Do such "semiotically empty spaces" exist? Henri Lefebvre (1991) argues they do not. He categorically states: "social space can in no way be compared to a blank page upon which a specific message has been inscribed [. . .] both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, 'over-inscribed'; everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and contradictory" (Lefebvre 1991:42–43). I would agree—to paraphrase John Donne: no home is an island, entire of itself. Let us pursue the example offered by Bauman on the movement to and from the "oases of meaning" we occupy to test his claim of "semiotically empty spaces."

In Damascus, much of the movement across the city is mediated through the *servīs*. These are privately owned mini-buses seating a maximum of 14

passengers that ply fixed routes between Damascus and its suburbs. The cost-effectiveness and the rapid frequency of the *servīs*, means that it is the favored choice of transport in the city for those on low incomes. Contrary to Bauman, the *servīs* is not a space devoid of meaning. In fact, often it is a space heavily inscribed with religious meaning and practice. I am not suggesting that the *servīs* is a wholly sacred space. It quite clearly is not. Rather, I am pointing out that all space is contested. As with the passengers on the *servīs*, religious meaning bumps alongside and jostles next to other nonreligious messages producing a space, which is "jumbled and contradictory" (Lefebvre 1991:42).

Often, the driver of the *servīs* will have a recitation of particular chapters from the Qur'an playing either on the cassette player or from the radio. Sometimes you can hear listeners calling into a radio talk show where the popular Damascene Imam Shaykh Muhammad Ratib al-Nabulsi responds to questions and queries pertaining to religious practice. On numerous occasions I have heard the second chapter of the Qur'an—*Sura al-Baqara* being recited admonishing those listening to be mindful of their relations. Not all drivers listen to recitations of the Qur'an; some favor the doyennes of popular Arab music—Umm Kulthoum or Fairouz. Others may even prefer heavily synthesized, frenetic yet hypnotic, electro-*dabkeh* beats. However, if the call to prayer is heard as the *servīs* passes within earshot of the innumerable mosques that relay the call to prayer over loudspeakers, the driver more often than not reaches for the dial of his radio cassette player to turn the volume down. If the *servīs* stops to pick up a female passenger, and the passenger section at the rear is full, male passengers would offer up their seat in exchange for an empty seat next to the driver. It is rare to find a woman seated at the front with a driver. If seated at the front, an assorted collection of dashboard paraphernalia—stickers and small neon lights can be found plastered onto the dashboard or on the window. Sometimes these contain messages along the lines found in greeting cards. Others are love hearts or simply the word "love." Occasionally, ambiguity is the order of the day with a message in a Halloween type font screaming: "No my friend!" Quite often you would find phrases such as *masha'allah* (lit. whatever God wills), the *shahada* or even a small pocket-sized Qur'an resting on the dashboard. For some, even the passing of money along to the driver from the back of the *servīs* would require a certain etiquette that respects gendered boundaries. As a passenger approaches the point where they would alight, it is fairly common to hear the request for stopping the *servīs* followed by the expression of gratitude "*'a zakātak*," which can be best translated as "may this be your *zakāt*'" (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2   A Damascene *servīs*—a popular mode of transport in the city.
Source: Author.

Thus, it is clearly evident that there are no un-inscribed spaces. In fact, in Damascus, the air is thick with religious significance and practices. For Iraqi refugees this is important as it affirms Damascus as being a familiar space. Often, my discussions with Iraqi refugees would turn to the vexed questions of not being able to work in Syria and re-settlement being a means of overcoming this difficulty. However, the prospect of re-settlement also brings with it an awareness of what could possibly be foregone in exchange. Mu'tasim told me:

> *Mu'tasim*: [If] you speak to someone who is fairly comfortable [in Syria], has work and a home—he doesn't give Europe a second thought. Do you know why? He tells you that he can go to the mosque and pray at his convenience. He can hear the *adhān* (call to prayer) as a Muslim. When it's Ramadan he feels that it actually is Ramadan and the same for 'Eid. In Europe, you can't feel that it's Ramadan, 'Eid or any other occasion. Isn't this something that affects a person? A Muslim is affected by such things.

Mu'tasim's reference to affect and emotion brought on by being located within "Islamic soundscapes" (Hirschkind 2006) is significant. It reminds

us that space is not only produced visually—something which we in Europe privilege—but perhaps just as important is the aural dimension of space. To "feel that it's Ramadan" is to hear the calls of the *msaḥḥar* charged with waking the faithful from their slumber before dawn with the sounds of his drum and the call "*Qum! Ya nāyim, wahhid al-dāyim*" (Get up! O you who sleep, [and remember] the one who is eternal). It is also to hear a hush descend onto the city as the time to break the fast approaches—the silence broken by the call to prayer. Islamic tradition pays high regard to the auricular: the Qur'an literally means that which is recited and therefore requires somebody to listen. The *adhān* (call to prayer) demands the faithful to respond by offering prayers at fixed times throughout the day. Thus, shared cultural and spatial practices, a familiar language and a common cognitive space render Syria more an intimately recognizable backyard than an unwelcoming, unknown, foreign neighborhood. However, not all backyards are well kept. Some can be overgrown and difficult to manage, others may be cramped for space. In the following section, I consider the possibilities of local integration for Iraqi refugees in Damascus.

Whither Integration?

The state exercises great power in organizing and administering social space. In the case of Damascus, one only has to consider how movement across the city is organized. As we have seen the *servīs* is a key mode of transport for much of the population, including Iraqi refugees. Despite Mukhayim al-Yarmouk, Sayyida Zayneb, and Jaramana being the main hubs of commercial activity in South Damascus, there are no *servīs* routes that directly link the districts together. As we saw in the previous chapter, the humanitarian field is mapped such that specialist UN agencies, humanitarian actors, and the state are the main point of contact for Iraqi refugees. The restrictions placed on mosques means that mosque spaces become increasingly peripheral to the material and social well-being of forced migrants. Food supplies are collected from a UN distribution facility in the suburb of Douma. The UNHCR offices are located in a discrete compound in Kafr Sousseh. There are separate queues for Iraqis when they go to renew their temporary residency permits at the passport and immigration offices in central Damascus. Earlier in this chapter, I described the scene at polling stations for the Iraqi parliamentary elections. Those who had registered their vote had left the polling station with their index finger marked with an indelible blue ink. On that particular day, they had been physically marked apart from other Syrians. Health concerns are dealt with primarily through the SARC. All this creates a sense of exceptionalism

around Iraqi refugees serving to keep them apart and distinct from wider Syrian society.[10] This is greatly exacerbated by the prohibition on work for many Iraqi refugees. It is the state that arbitrates where the local population and Iraqis can meet and where not.

Adnan had been fortunate in that his household income is bolstered through personal savings, rental income, and a pension from the state. Professionally, Adnan had worked as an engineer, but his passion lay in craftsmanship. In Damascus, Adnan had found opportunity to craft wooden gift-boxes and decorative pieces inlaid with mother of pearl. The increased tourism to the old city of Damascus had meant that there was no shortage of opportunities to do business with the local arts and crafts workshops. I accompanied Adnan one day to the souq in the old town to visit one such workshop. On the way Adnan joked (or perhaps was warning me what lay in store for us that afternoon) that "Syrians are good people as long as you don't do business with them—just don't get them on the subject of money." Arriving at Abu Anas's workshop, it became clear why Adnan valued this particular part of life that he had carved out for himself. Abu Anas and Adnan were quickly into admiring some of the work the proprietor's sons had been working on. The friendly banter and hospitality is as you would expect from a merchant in the old souq. Yet, the relationship extended beyond this. The conversation flowed as quickly and as smoothly as the tea. Adnan had been back to Iraq recently to check on his property and collect his pension.[11] Abu Anas was keen to learn how things were and what Adnan's plans were. It was this interest in Adnan's life; being afforded respect, rather than being treated as someone perpetually in need, which Adnan later told me was important—the sense of being a person rather than just a case number.

Writing on refugee policy in the Middle East Michael Kagan (2011) draws attention to a "responsibility shift" for the management of refugee populations from sovereign states to international bodies such as UNHCR or UNRWA. In effect, the UNHCR becomes a "surrogate state" (Slaughter and Crisp 2008) filling the void left by a state unwilling or unable to meet obligations as outlined by the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Consequently, a division of labor manifests itself whereby the host government adopts a benign position of upholding negative rights regarding refugees; agreeing to observe the principle of *nonrefoulement* in exchange for international humanitarian assistance organizations assuming the burden of providing direct assistance to refugee populations. Kagan (2011:13) maintains that in the case of the Middle East: "Arab governments are likely to acquiesce to the presence of refugees on their territory only as long as responsibility for their maintenance and ultimate departure from the country is visibly assigned to an international body or other third party."

Syria has not proven to be an exception to this rule. As seen in the previous chapter, MoUs have been signed with 14 international humanitarian assistance organizations, whose activities are coordinated by the SARC. Through these organizations, refugees are able to access support for healthcare, education, and housing. Significantly, the right to employment has been denied to Iraqi refugees, though it is far from uncommon for refugees to find paid employment in the informal sector. As one Palestinian Iraqi refugee put it "we're like the *tartoora* (rickshaw), we're not supposed to be here, but we're everywhere. They turn a blind eye to us."[12]

Consequently, refugee interaction with the wider society is considerably constrained and limited. Work is a key space where refugees can act as agents of social and economic change allowing for greater integration and acceptance of refugee communities to take place. Where the right to employment is withheld, alternative strategies are formed; either in the informal sector or further afield. With established irregular migration routes operating through Turkey and Greece into Europe; many, predominately young male, Palestinian Iraqis have managed to circumvent borders and secure asylum for themselves in countries such as Sweden. Thus, it is unsurprising that for many Iraqi refugees resettlement to a third country is the most preferred choice. Integration does not seem to be on the agenda of the refugees themselves. Here 'Aref sums up the frustration felt by many young Iraqis:

> *'Aref*: This is just a temporary life here—for a limited period, but you don't know how long that period is. So, it's hard to work, it's hard to make decisions because you are still looking for opportunities to leave this place. This place doesn't have any opportunities. I can work for one year, okay, after that—what? What is there? What will happen? I can't study? I can't make money. I can't help my family. I might want to get married in ten years but I can't [afford it]. Here, because I'm not Syrian, I can't get work with the government. I can only work in small shops, factories or restaurants. We don't know what the future can be like here. The government might in one moment say 'okay, all the Iraqi people must leave Syria'. So, it's a temporary life—it's temporary and these are the most important years in my life, I have to take the opportunities that come. So here, we are kind of like refugees, we have a safe place to be; it's a refuge, but also we are kind of like standing on one leg here. We don't know if we will stay here forever or move to another place. We don't have the opportunities here. If you do get an opportunity, it's limited. You can't really study. Okay, the UNHCR might give you training courses, but so what? What happens next? Nothing.

Equally, by consistently refusing refugees the right to work, the Syrian government ensures that the responsibility to provide welfare for refugees rests squarely on the shoulders of international organizations. In addition, refugees come to regard local integration as a dim prospect; buttressing the logic of the host state, which opposes integration in favor of creating a more vulnerable refugee population that is able to induce greater financial resources from the international community to share the cost of hosting refugees. It also marks the refugees as recipients of aid that the local population is not entitled to. Where such entitlements were a point of contention between marginalized communities on the peripheries of Baghdad, it remains to be seen what impact such a policy could have in Syria.[13]

So where does this leave local integration? We have already noted that countries in this region ought to be conceptualized as familiar spaces. Indeed, the Arabic root gh-r-b is used to denote several related ideas: *ghurba*—exile or an absence from home; *tgharrab*—to emigrate, to be far from one's homeland, to assimilate to a Western way of life; and *gharīb*—something that is strange, foreign, or alien. For many Iraqis, Damascus (and in particular districts such as Jaramana, Mukhayim al-Yarmouk, and Sayyida Zayneb) does not represent a foreign space at all. Kinship ties already exist not only with Palestinian Iraqis that had fled Iraq in the earlier phase of the crisis but with relatives that had settled in Damascus following the *nakbah* of 1948. Fatima, a 40-year-old Iraqi Palestinian from Mosul told me:

> *Fatima*: Dealings with Palestinian Syrians are good. They've supported us and I don't feel like a foreigner around them. This is a Muslim Arab country, so I don't have the sense of *ghurba*. It's only that my wider family is far from me that I feel like that I'm away from home. There are so many similarities here and with our lives in Iraq; food, language…yes, there are some differences but it's not great. I feel like that we're all Palestinians together here.

Fatima immediately associates the largely positive interactions she has with Palestinian Syrians with not feeling foreign. Linking the two is the fact that she is in a Muslim Arab country and as such has an understanding of how social relations are conducted. However, one cannot ignore that she refers exclusively to Palestinian Syrians rather than Syrian society at large. For others forcibly displaced from Iraq, the sense of *ghurba* is more tangible. This is particularly the case for men who are expected to be breadwinners in their households. The liminal space that refugees occupy; the ambivalent position of the state toward Iraqi refugees generally, designating them as guests and the issuing of fixed term residency status of 3–12 months, adds

to this sense of *ghurba*. This feeling of alienation may not initially stem from relations with the host population but rather the bureaucracy of state and "surrogate state" that marks them as "other" which in turn creates a distinction for the host population. Here Abu Yaseen recognizes the effect this has on refugee and host community relations, echoing the fears that Bassam had regarding an uncertain future:

> *Abu Yaseen*: It affects [you] even at the level of the people, and not the State. People get to know that this house is not a Syrian or Palestinian Syrian house. So, social interaction isn't entirely harmonious. Some people like Iraqis; I mean I get on well with my neighbours. But, how do they deal with you? You're not an *ibn al-balad* [...] Up 'til now, I consider myself a guest, a visitor here temporarily and then leaving. I don't have any expectation of permanent residence.

The use of the expression *ibn al-balad* is telling. Literally meaning "son of the land," the term belongs to a category of terms used to highlight autochthony and difference between those who belong and those who fall outside the community. Much like the term *ajnabi* discussed in chapter 1, the term *ibn al-balad* fell into popular usage around the nineteenth century at a time in which local populations were coming to terms with the challenges of first having Turco-Circassian and then European colonialists occupying the same social and geographical space (El-Messiri 1978). In contemporary usage the term refers to someone who is legitimately entitled to the resources and welfare of the state and denotes belonging. Rights and citizenship are the bedrock on which the edifice of integration rests. For Abu Yaseen, it is the state that produces the anxiety, creating a sense of alienation. There is also ambivalence in the language that the state employs with respect to Iraqi refugees. At one and the same time, they are *shaqīq* (full brothers) and *ḍayuf* (guests), which points to a more temporal stay. Oscillating between the two categories refugees and host communities struggle to balance unconditional hospitality—as a *shaqīq* the refugee is transformed into *ibn al-balad*. Yet, the interventions of the Syrian state and humanitarian agencies transforms the refugee into a guest constrained by the limits of hospitality. By affirming only negative rights and deflecting the burden of welfare responsibility onto international humanitarian organizations, the Syrian government in tandem with the UNHCR and UNRWA has, to date, established a parallel system of welfare protection that in fact marks refugees as "others." This is contrary to the UNHCR's own guidelines on refugee protection in urban areas, which aims to "reinforce existing fully authorized delivery systems, whether they are public, private or community based" (UNHCR 2009a).

Commendable though this may sound, the UNHCR in Syria falls short of this commitment, particularly with respect to community-based organizations. In the following section, I consider how, through alternative support structures offered by community based organizations, Iraqi refugees in Damascus are able to formulate strategies for dealing with their time in Syria and for onward migration.

Homes Away from Home

The ISP as Home

The ISP is a small volunteer-run initiative that offers an interim education to Iraqi refugees whose education had been disrupted by the conflict. The aim of the project is to provide students with access to scholarships in America where they can complete their undergraduate studies. As we saw in chapter 4, defining faith-based organizations can be a thorny task. Colleges that are or have been related to Church organizations have been quick to recognize and support the ISP. Mennonite colleges have provided tuition waivers to students. The Mennonite Central Committee is the largest single financial donor as well as several Catholic orders, although individual donations continue to be a significant source of funding for the ISP. Church groups including the Dominican Sisters, the Loretto Sisters, the Jesuits, and a Lutheran college have all taken up collections to give to ISP solidarity groups that provide each individual student with a support network during the course of their studies.

Yet, the ISP does not self-identify as an FBO. One of the founders, Gabe Huck, rejects the notion that the organization is based along faith lines. Rather, its motivations lie in a dissatisfaction and frustration with how humanitarian projects often neglect to acknowledge the culpability of a hegemonic United States in the creation of crises in the first instance. Gabe lamented:

> *Gabe*: Churches or other charitable organizations are clean-up organizations so much of the time. The US military or sanctions break something, then depend on organizations like Catholic Relief Services to make everyone [in the US] feel okay about it. It's really wicked [...] I think we're saying that often the US FBOs anyway are used to mopping up—and the US government gives them the money to do this. Probably more money that Catholic Relief Services and the like spend comes from the US government than from individual donors. If it "builds toward something," it is putting a better face on the United States' deeds, but certainly not toward any clarification of what is really going on.

For Gabe and his wife, Theresa, a central tenet of the ISP is to hold the US government responsible for the decimation of Iraqi infrastructure and particularly the Iraqi educational system. The project's objective of attaining scholarships for Iraqi students at American universities provides a platform for the students to articulate the injustice that has been perpetrated upon them. The investment—albeit minimal—in the education of young Iraqis can be considered reparations for American culpability.

On a spring afternoon in Damascus, following the Friday prayer, a fellow research colleague and I had been invited as guests to the ISP writer's workshop. The classes at the ISP take place in Gabe and Theresa's home—a two-bedroom flat in an unassuming residential apartment building. We take off our shoes at the entrance and are given a pair of slippers, as Theresa welcomes us to *Beit* ISP (the ISP home). Low-level bookshelves line the far wall of the living room. The students are sat in an L-shape facing a whiteboard. Theresa asks them to do a "quick write" where the students record their impromptu feelings on an issue that has affected them in the past week. Gabe is quietly sat at his desk at the back of the living room, studiously going over the students' applications for university entrance.

We are invited to take our seats at the front of the class where we introduce ourselves to the students. The students range between 18 and 24 years of age. A question and answer session ensues where the students ask where I am from, what I've been doing, and what brings me to Syria. Midway through recounting a much abridged and censored life history, I realize that my own adult life has been marked by a series of voluntary migrations; to Turkey, Morocco, Kashmir, Egypt, and now Syria. Looking around the room, it dawns on me that the students sat in front of me had only ever traveled out of necessity. I stop a moment as one of the students asks me where this impulse to travel comes from. Another raises questions of identity and belonging; "where do you see home?" "I'm not sure," I reply. Theresa rescues me from my reverie by turning the students' attention onto my research colleague.

Shortly after, the students, led by Theresa, gave a rendition of "Love Thyself" by the American folk musician, Woody Guthrie. Instantly, I conjure an image of a family sing-along at a camp fire. The choice of artist and song reveals much about Gabe and Theresa's politics and disposition toward religion—their understanding of faith. Both Gabe and Theresa have been long-standing committed activists on immigrant rights in the United States. They had also been involved in relief efforts to Iraq when it was heavily under sanctions between the Gulf Wars. Gabe had previously worked as a publisher for a Catholic publishing house that specialized on the rites and rituals of the Catholic Church. The song itself encourages the listener to affirm their self-belief. Guthrie wrote much of his music to relate to the

hardships and social injustices suffered by the working class in dust-bowl, depression-era America. For Guthrie, there was no contradiction in combining Marxist ideas with a reading of Christianity in which a central tenet was Jesus's championing of the poor; it was plain and simple "commonism" (Cray 2004, Briley 2007). Gabe similarly recognizes no incongruence between his faith and the call for social justice. He later told me:

> *Gabe*: I think that gospel and church helped shape a place on which to stand in the world, as did other elements of life—movements we were a part of, individuals, writings—and a sense of needing to stand in contradiction to the political and military and economic identity of the US [...] If tomorrow—and it could happen—I became convinced that the sins of the church are just too overwhelming, I'd probably still cling to the scriptures, the gospels, the poetry as—for me anyway—the best sense I've run into about the world and I'd do what I'm doing now. But that's something I need to think about.

For the students, ISP is central to their experience of life in Syria. Six days of the week are spent at ISP. Some of the students have no family members with them in Damascus. Others share accommodation. This is far from uncharacteristic of the Iraqi refugee crisis. Families employ strategies where one or two members of the family migrate to open up further avenues of migration for other family members later. The expense of living without work or with poorly paid work means that some family members remain behind in Iraq to financially support those who have sought refuge in Syria (Chatelard 2008). The intensity of the ISP experience and the absence of family for some, means that the ISP becomes both surrogate family and home. As with all families, a loss of a family member can be a difficult experience. Jasim, the eldest student in the group, had been told by his father that he could no longer continue with his studies. Instead, he was expected to continue with the family business. Gabe broke the news to Jasim's classmates. A hush descended on the normally boisterous group. The students shifted uncomfortably in their seats; several began to cry. Jasim sat by Gabe's desk at the back of the makeshift class, his brow buried in his hands. One by one the students got up to console one another and Jasim. The episode captured the tight bonds that had developed between the students.

The Rābeta as Home

In chapter 4, we saw how the Rābeta al-Falastīniyi al-'Iraq is a site for Palestinian Iraqis to practice their faith through the nurturing of relationships;

a self-help initiative within a wider network of reliance, which enables them to inhabit a world of their own construction, rather than one determined for them by others. Here I will shed further light on how the Rābeta helps locate Palestinian Iraqis in Damascus. Weddings, burials, neighborly visits, and celebrations all contribute toward the process of emplacement (Hammond 2004). The cramped conditions in which many Iraqis refugees live make difficult the possibility of sanctifying domestic spaces through the enactment of wedding ceremonies (*katab al-kitāb*) or receive those who wish to express condolences at the passing of a loved one (*ta'zīya*).

Ordinarily, such practices, which serve also to sacralize the home, are now relocated in communal spaces such as the Rābeta. In addition, regular *iftār* meals are provided during the month of Ramadan, in which usually male members of the community gather at the center to break their fast. Similarly, on the occasion of 'Eid al-Adha a gathering was organized wherein the use of the community center was divided during the course of the day along gendered lines. Seminars and workshops are given on matters as diverse as religious education, the challenges of re-settlement to Europe and North America, neuro-linguistic programming, and sign language for those with hearing impairments, to name but a few. Tae Kwon Do classes for youth groups and football training is provided for young men. A social committee visits orphans, the elderly, and the infirm. In short, the organization is deeply anchored in the lives of the community.

In using spaces such as community centers as much as possible: as a place to pray, to hold wedding ceremonies, a place to meet friends to eat, drink, and be hospitable, displaced people recognize that Islamic traditions affirm the centrality of relational understandings of home in religious practice and imagination. Religion is fundamentally concerned with the nurturing of relationships. The wide range of the Rābeta's activities highlights something significant: namely, the absence of the community mosque in Syria. Despite the Damascus skyline being peppered with minarets of mosques, the activities of mosques are severely constrained by the state. Farouk, an Iraqi university lecturer who had benefited from Church support was particularly scathing of the situation:

> *Farouk*: I don't know anything that comes from the mosque other than the call to prayer. That's all I know. I don't know about anything else. You tell me why that is [the case…] Why do they leave it to people like Sister Therese to help and the mosques bar their door? Answer that for me.

The director of the Rābeta, Abu al-Hassan, similarly concedes that mosques have been shackled in the potential role they can play in society.

The role the mosque ought to be playing in society is the one that Abu al-Hassan has helped re-create in the form of the Rābeta. In the absence of the community mosque, the United Nations and church-affiliated organizations have taken its place. For Abu al-Hassan, this is a worrying development:

> *Abu al-Hassan*: Syria doesn't allow mosques to play a role, it's restricted. It's not just Syria, other countries also; Jordan, Iraq—they all limit what the mosque can do. You can go and pray and as soon as you're finished. The doors close and that's it. There are centers for the memorizing the Qur'an, the role is limited. If the mosques played the role like the one churches do—for instance, the UN goes and puts people in churches, so there comes about a connection between the people and the churches, there starts to be some dealings between them and this is good from the church's perspective and its image as the people start to say 'you see how good the church is and how they show compassion towards us', so it's a kind of preaching. In my opinion, if the mosque was left to play its true role, then it would make it easier on society. I mean young people nowadays are faced with dangers of drug addiction, there's bad behaviour. I mean there needs to be a fairer distribution [in the humanitarian field].

Proselytization has long been a key concern of those who work in the humanitarian field. Charges of such acts can be extremely damaging and dangerous. In the course of my fieldwork, I saw no evidence of such. The director of the Middle East Council of Churches in Damascus told me that the churches in Syria and Iraq are indigenous to the region and "not a phenomenon of colonial activity like in India or Pakistan" adding that:

> As Syrian citizens, we have a duty to support and help the government indirectly and to alleviate let's say the burden and tensions. Otherwise, we would see people on the street starving and this would affect our society. We are a part of this society and we bear our responsibility. We believe that it is not only the responsibility of humanitarian agencies but rather, the responsibility of the churches [. . .] the church is not just a building, it is a mission. You may not have a building but you have the faith in your heart and really reflect that faith. Maybe other religions believe the same. The problem is we don't want to impose ourselves on the others.

However, as Abu al-Hassan pointed out, the humanitarian field is not a level playing field in Syria. The disparity in being able to "reflect your faith" is significant. Consequently, there is a concern expressed by some

older Sunni Iraqi refugees in particular, that the lack of mosque involvement could serve to disenchant younger, more impressionable segments of society. This may be a projection of fears concerning the assimilation of younger family members in countries of re-settlement where the culture is deemed foreign. In lieu of a role for the mosque where it is at the heart of social relations for the community, it is unsurprising that an alternative space is created wherein relations between members of the community are nurtured and protected. Abu al-Hassan explained:

> *Abu al-Hassan*: The role of the mosque is there to guide, to better help people understand what Islam is. The role of a Muslim is that of reform. According to Islamic precepts, God most High chose us to be representatives on this earth and was commanded to do good and to invent things that are useful to people not things which are harmful. Everything is for the good. That's the idea. To work alongside all men with the end result being the return to the Lord of the worlds and He will take us to account; it's not for us to bring people to account. Islam didn't come to us so that we would kill one another, No—what is it really about? *Al-mu'amla: al-din huwwa al-mu'āmla* (Good treatment: religion is the good treatment of people). Good deeds are like a connection with God, between you and God. When I enter prayer, no one knows what's going through my mind. I could be standing there thinking today I went to the market…no one knows, no one but Allah, so this is between me and God. However, when it comes to how I deal with you—this is what is important, this is the true Islam; *al-din al-mu'āmla*. So people know Islam is about *akhlāq* (ethics) and how you live; how to deal with people, how to conduct business, how to be honest with people. This is what Islam is for the Rābeta and the work we do. So it plays a fundamental role in what we do not in terms of discriminating against people, but in terms of helping people reform themselves. We can see that there is good in this and as Muslims we understand there is well-being in Islam. We formed a charitable organisation so that we can honour the people and help them and take them along the path to well-being in accordance with our faith.

Abu al-Hassan himself is a refugee. As mentioned earlier, 77 percent of Palestinian Iraqis originally hail from three villages in the Haifa region of Palestine. As such, there are multiple, intersecting kin relations, and ties of friendship, which bind the community together. So when Abu al-Hassan talks of Islam as how one lives and as ethics, he privileges it above notions of Islam as merely identity. For Abu al-Hassan, this communal dimension of

Islam is a reference on how to consolidate ties; how he relates to the people who are immediately around him, including friends and family. Abu Fu'ad concurs that the Rābeta is intimately embedded in the day-to-day lives of those who access its services. Protection and security is located in ties of kinship rather than with state organs or humanitarian agencies. The Rābeta is where family ties and protection merge to provide a "home-like space." He told me:

> *Abu Fu'ad*: Every problem that a Palestinian Iraqi is faced with on a daily basis, at the family level, not on the state level or at the level of the UNHCR or UNRWA, but at the level of the family; if there are problems that a family faces, we step in and try to resolve whatever the problem is. We are a community association; we're responsible for the people in our community. We get involved individually and try to reach a suitable conclusion. This is what we do.

Conclusion

Given the widespread consensus on the complexity of social space as demonstrated in this chapter, it becomes incumbent on social scientists to question the relevance of the continual deployment of the religious and secular dichotomy. I stand with James Beckford (1999) in calling for an investigation of the construction, negotiation, and reproduction of boundaries between the religious and the secular and, in particular, secular assumptions underpinning a Eurocentric understanding of humanitarianism. In this chapter I have sought to shift the location of religious practice away from where it is usually perceived to be: that is in religious institutions. By positing the home as sacred, I again privilege the agency of individuals and put Iraqi refugees at the heart of my inquiry. This is simply because the domestic dwellings and "home-like spaces" are particular places that refugees are free to inscribe with religious significance as they see fit. This is particularly relevant in a state such as Syria where the regime places considerable hurdles in the path of those who wish to transpose the relationships integral to home-making to mosques.

A corollary of such intense surveillance of nonstate actors including refugee organizations by the Syrian regime is that expanded notions of home are elaborated upon. This entails what I see as being at the heart of explaining religious behavior: religion is essentially a relational experience. In re-creating neighborly and community ties, Iraqi refugees are making relevant their beliefs. The testimonies of Aref and Fatima illustrate how the *ummah* manifests itself as a lived experience through the nurturing of neighborly relations. This is made possible through having a shared religious

habitus or an embodied religious-cultural capital allows new arrivals to navigate the host society without fear of getting lost.

Whether this religious or relational-self operates in a space that is formally inscribed with religious meaning and significance is beside the point. What is critical is that spaces exist for such relations to be nurtured. Iraqi families have been cleft apart by the experience of displacement. Where people lived close to other family members and close friends, they now find that they live streets apart, in completely different neighborhoods, cities, or perhaps even in different countries. This is where "home-like spaces" take on even greater significance. They are not only spaces in which material resources are accessed but familiar welcoming places wherein refugees are recognized as being more than just a case number—they are friends or part of a larger family. In the examples of the Rābeta and the ISP project, we find examples of such "home-like spaces." Religion thus acts as a cultural resource integral to the development of social networks and as a means of meeting psychosocial need at both the individual and collective levels.

The familiarity of Damascus and Syria at large means that the alienation often expected with the experience of forced displacement—the "social disarticulation" that comes with "not knowing how to go on" is dampened considerably. Any sense of alienation is brought about through the management of refugee lives by the state and humanitarian agencies that contrive to keep the refugees apart and distinct from the host population. In this chapter we may contrast 'Aref's experiences with ordinary Syrians and his interactions with the state. 'Aref is made to feel no different by his neighbors who relate to him through the meta-narrative of religion, which places him as one who belongs. In contrast, his engagements with the state mean that he is marked as non-Syrian. Abu Yaseen similarly identifies state apparatus as mechanisms for denying him the status of an *ibn al-balad*.

Syrian Sanctuary? Finding Continuities between the Iraqi and Syrian Displacement Crises

The Prophet is reported to have said: He who amongst you sees something abominable should modify it with the help of his hand; and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do it, (even) then he should (abhor it) from his heart, and that is the least of faith. (Sahih Muslim Book 001, Hadith No. 0077)

Introduction

Syria, once a site of refuge and sanctuary for many a displaced community, is now a battleground for an unrelenting and intractable conflict, which to date has precipitated the displacement of over ten million people—approximately a third of whom have sought refuge in neighboring countries. While those displaced beyond Syria's territorial borders have fallen under the scrutiny of varying humanitarian regimes—far less is known and understood about the experiences of those who have remained behind in Syria; whose resources would not allow them to go any further or whose ties to community and kin networks have remained sufficiently intact. By shifting our gaze toward those who are displaced within the territorial borders of Syria, we are reminded that conflict zones produce not only debris-ridden neighborhoods, deserted villages, and unimaginable violence but also engender networks of self-reliance, spaces of hospitality, refuge, and sanctuary despite the degradation and erosion of ever-dwindling resources at the disposal of

host communities. It is also important to move beyond methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002) and acknowledge instead that such networks are bound not by rigid understandings of territoriality but are fluid; extending into transnational spaces and maintain a visible presence outside of Syria's borders, most notably in Turkey.

Religion and Revolution

As the promise of the Arab Spring metastasized gradually into a bloody civil war—Syrians caught in the cross-hairs of the conflict have been compelled to confront key ontological and existential questions on a daily basis. It is unsurprising that with the punitive violence perpetrated by the al-Assad regime against protesting neighborhoods, towns, and villages across the country, the Syrian uprising increasingly mobilized a religious vernacular and idiom to express discontent and to express demands for social justice. This is not to say that sectarian motivations were primary triggers of the uprising nor that religious sentiment and ideas were the primary driving force of the uprising, but rather for many of the people who took to the streets using a religious vernacular to articulate their grievances against the al-Assad regime was cognizant with, rather than contrary to, calls for greater freedoms and social justice.

Evidence of this can be seen in the use of Qur'anic verses alongside calls for freedom and dignity for all Syrians. A video posted on youtube shows the former professional footballer and one of the icons of the early phase of the revolution, Abdul Baset Saroot, leading a protest on April 4, 2012 in al-Bayadah district of Homs.[1] The video shows a crowd reciting behind Saroot the al-Nasr chapter of the Qur'an asking God for victory. Led by al-Saroot the crowd shout out in unison the shahada—the Muslim declaration of faith in addition to affirming that Jesus is the messenger of God. The message is unambiguously a pointed reminder to the Christian community in Syria that the revolution is not sectarian. Similarly, among the numerous widely heard slogans used by protesters as the country teetered on the brink of the militarized phase of the conflict we find:

La Iran, wala Hizballah bidna Muslim ykhaf Allah ([we] neither [want] Iran nor Hizballah, we want a Muslim that fears Allah).

La salafiyyeh wala irhab, al-i'lam al-Suri kidhāb ([we are] neither Salafi nor terrorist, the Syrian media is lying).

la ikhwān wala salafiyyeh, bidna hurriyeh ([we are] neither Muslim Brotherhood nor salafi, we want freedom).

Nehna bidna hurriyeh—Islam, Msihiyeh, Druz, wa 'Alawiyeh (we want freedom—Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Alawite [alike]).[2]

Such popular articulations explicating the relationship between religion and the objectives of the uprising of millions of Syrians remind us that a reading of Islam based on rigid politicized identities, which excludes the mutual accommodation of difference cultivated through centuries of coexistence between different faith communities, is not commensurate with understandings of everyday "lived" religion. "A Muslim that fears Allah" is one that respects and fulfils her duties toward neighbors irrespective of their different faiths. Every time *Allahu Akbar!* (God is great!) or *la ilaha ilallah* (there is no deity worthy of worship except the one God) was chanted at a protest it was a riposte to the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad as if to say no human being has the right to treat another in this fashion, rather than a statement of sectarian intent.

There is little doubt that private donor-funding from the Gulf and particularly Kuwait has accentuated the expression of militant Salafism among armed groups allowing them through the provision of services to maneuver into the humanitarian field in a bid to gain legitimacy among local populations and maintain the continuation of conflict if not an economy of war (Dickinson 2013). We are reminded once again of the inherent power relations at the heart of the humanitarian field. The Syrian war has held up a mirror to international humanitarian actors and Western donor agencies; revealing how hamstrung the liberal narrative of humanitarian space is when confronted with financial resources flowing unfettered from the Gulf with little attempt to conceal the political drivers behind humanitarian work. The stability and structure offered by armed Salafist groups to young men who have little opportunity in the way of work has made militant groups such as the so-called Islamic State, the Islamic Front, *Jubhat al-Nusra*, and *Liwa al-Tawhid* an attractive proposition.

Manufacturing Sectarianism

Much ink has been already been spilt on the role of Islamist militias in the conflict and it is beyond the scope of this book to do so. Here, I would only like to remind the reader of how a sectarian narrative is intimately tied to secular practices of an authoritarian state seeking to instrumentalize religion for its own purposes. This "operationalized" approach to religion, Elizabeth Hurd (2012:953) tells us, creates the "potential to harden and reify discrete religious identities and communities, sanctify established authorities, and put pressure on (or close down) spaces in which non-established, unorthodox, and emergent ways of being religious (or not) have room to flourish." With the militarization of the Syrian revolution, as was the case with the Iraqi conflict, sectarian identities have become ossified privileging those best equipped to effectively employ violence.

The framing of the conflict by both regime supporters and those allied against it—both inside and outside of Syria—is often reduced to a grand sectarian narrative that pits the hegemonic ambitions of regional powers against one another. In doing so, sectarianism is presented as foreign intervention eliding the disciplinary power the al-Assad regime has exercised over the Syrian people for the last four decades. In understanding sectarianism as a technology of disciplinary power, it is possible to acknowledge how the al-Assad regime maintained control over the movement and degree of interaction between Syrian people. One only need think of how little movement there was between and within urban centers, thereby entrenching rigidly parochial understandings of identity. The organization of urban publics under the al-Assad regime, colors the everyday question "where are you from?" with sinister undertones of sectarian sentiment. Cities, towns, villages, and even neighborhoods within urban centers become characterized by specific communities along the lines of religious belonging. While it can be argued in urban contexts that such an evolution of neighborhoods is organic, with people tending to inhabit areas where kin and social networks already exist, it remains debatable as to whether the Ba'thist state encouraged otherwise.

For the large part, even within a single city there is little reason for residents of one district to visit another. Spaces in which to have meaningful interaction with the Other have long been few and far between. Where they do exist, here I take the old city of Damascus as an example; they remain under the watchful gaze of the regime. The clearly demarcated and confined quarters of the old city with its distinct gate entrances allows for easy monitoring and surveillance of any signs of dissent by an ever-vigilant security apparatus. The city center is presented by the al-Assad regime as a neutral space shared by all; a symbol of harmonious relations between sects—a celebration of difference and conviviality. In truth, it is a space characterized by a carefully orchestrated mixity, which only ever on the surface of things has a veneer of peaceful coexistence. Elsewhere in the city we find that there is no allure of markets specific to a district, which can act as a magnet to attract people of other faith communities. Similarly, there are very few competitive sporting events that afford participants and supporters opportunities to take journeys to neighboring districts, towns, or cities. Theaters, art galleries, exhibitions, music concerts, cinemas, sporting complexes, restaurants are largely confined to the center.

Even more quotidian journeys are closely managed. Much of the movement across the city is mediated through the servīs—privately owned mini-buses that ply fixed routes between Damascus and its suburbs. The cost-effectiveness and the rapid frequency of the servīs, means it is the

favored choice of transport in the city for those on low incomes. The mapping of routes is far from arbitrary—indicative of where movement to and from is deemed desirable by the regime. There are no direct routes linking Jaramana to Muhajirīn or Mukhayim al-Yarmouk to Sayyida Zayneb; each home to different communities stratified along lines of class and religious belonging. Isolation and distance is re-enforced; and in so doing serves to reproduce the Other.

Alongside this insidious politics of entrenched sectarianism, tensions between different fractions of Syrian society on the eve of the conflict were exacerbated by the caprice of a state serving to defend the interests of those close to its center. The mismanagement of the agricultural sector by the al-Assad regime in tandem with a devastating drought rendered rural livelihoods almost impossible with as many as three million Syrians living in extreme poverty.[3] Decimated communities from the traditional bread-basket regions of Syria: Houran to the south and al-Hassake, Deir Ezzor and Raqqa to the north and east were compelled to move en-masse, as many as 50,000 families,[4] to the fast-expanding poverty belts encircling the key urban centers of Homs, Dara'a, Damascus, and Aleppo. According to a 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction farming communities in the northeast of the country had lost as much as 85 percent of their livestock and as many as one million Syrians had become food insecure as a direct consequence of the drought.[5] As long as this disenfranchised poor Other kept to the margins of already marginalized outlying areas of cities, the al-Assad regime was able to convince itself that they were not there.

Douma, which has been at the heart of the uprising against the al-Assad regime, provides an example where the economic rights of the neighborhood had been sacrificed to make way for a liberalization of the Syrian economy, which privileged the center. Small-to-medium-sized enterprises that comprised the mainstay of the Douma economy were squeezed out by cheaper Turkish goods as the détente between Syria and Turkey reached a peak in 2010. Here, the underbelly of globalization was laid bare for all to see— unemployment, the immiseration of an urban working class and the erosion of community resilience. The call for bread, freedom, and social justice in Douma was born out of recognition of the manifold ways in which local expectations of how an economy should be geared to meet the needs of local residents were being forsaken by the al-Assad regime.

As we saw with the privileging of sectarian narratives in the case of Iraqi displacement in the previous decade, to do so again risks neglecting voices drowned out by the fire of heavy artillery. By illustrating continuities from the experiences of Iraqi refugees, attention has been instead drawn to ways in which religion has been operationalized in the services of an authoritarian

state. In the same vein, the following section explores how understandings of faith have been a significant component of the response to challenges of displacement inside Syria with specific reference to areas from which the al-Assad regime has withdrawn. It is here that the humanitarian field is most contested.

The Humanitarian Conflict

Bound by international humanitarian law, humanitarian agencies and international NGOs are not permitted to operate in nonregime-held areas of Syria without the prior consent and approval of the government of the Syrian Arab Republic. To do otherwise would be to risk facing expulsion from operating in areas that the al-Assad regime has given the go-ahead to do so. It would also preclude any remote possibility of reaching the most in need—the towns and neighborhoods subjected to what has been described as the "starvation until submission campaign."[6] Here, the al-Assad regime has besieged neighborhoods in and around Damascus and Homs where it is believed recalcitrant rebel fighters are based—denying vital medical and food supplies from entering neighborhoods and prohibiting inhabitants from leaving.

Unlike the governance of the humanitarian field in Syria during the height of the Iraqi refugee crisis, the role of faith-based actors in providing support and assistance to displaced Syrians in nonregime-held areas is far more explicit. While SARC continues to be the conduit through which humanitarian agencies and a select number of international NGOs distribute aid in areas remaining under the control of the al-Assad regime,[7] the fragmentation of opposition forces and the multiplication of would-be-state-actors in nonregime-held areas of Syria—particularly to the north of the country—has complicated and significantly hampered the provision of humanitarian assistance.

In the north of Syria the structuring of the humanitarian field is unruly, complex, and highly contested. Towns and cities on the Turkish side of the Syrian border are the final staging post of cross-border humanitarian interventions. In otherwise forgotten border towns such as Kilis and Reyhanlı, where until very recently the mainstay of the local economy had been the movement of contraband—cigarettes and diesel fuel, humanitarian actors have set up operations directing food, clothing, and medical supplies across the border. On the Syrian side of the border, erstwhile smugglers in similar local economies (now re-branded as militias) have trained their attention and focus on imposing and levying control over humanitarian supplies into towns and camps where the internally displaced have gravitated toward.[8]

Conspicuous by their limited presence are the large international NGOs that dominate the humanitarian field in Jordan and Lebanon. Instead, capital flows freely from the Gulf into humanitarian endeavors transforming Turkish-Syrian border towns into "a grocery shop for humanitarian organizations headed by [religious] sheikhs from the Gulf."[9] A cursory glance at the interagency information sharing portal hosted by the UNHCR to better coordinate the Syrian regional refugee response provides a glimpse of the nature of relationships existing in each of the respective humanitarian areas of expertise that are listed. The Turkish page of the website is dominated by Turkish state agencies with very few international NGOs represented.

Any discussion on mass-displacement must acknowledge humanitarianism represents a site of struggle. In demonstrating the ability to regulate and care for populations, displaced or otherwise, the state, surrogate state or would be state actors are pursuing legitimacy. The struggle is not only for the care and control of bodies but for *souls* also. Here we find the intervention of faith-based actors and an overlap between the humanitarian and religious fields. It is here the rules of the game are contested—competing narratives of care and control are mobilized to legitimate actions and justify the presence of humanitarian actors. Faith-based actors are concerned not only with meeting biological and physical needs of displaced populations but also encourage a re-imagining of how best to engage with the world; providing answers to existential and ontological questions confronting people in conflict zones. This leaves the door ajar to charges of proselytization. The degree to which this conversation is managed positions faith-based actors in the humanitarian field.

As was the case with Iraqi refugees in Damascus, the agency and self-organizing activities of Syrian refugees in Turkey must be understood in relation to other actors in the Turkish humanitarian field principally the Turkish state and international NGOs involved in cross-border humanitarian projects inside nonregime-held areas of Syria.

Turkish Asylum Policy

At the time of the Syrian displacement crisis unfolding, Turkey had a somewhat antiquated system in place for dealing with displaced people effectively creating different categories of privileged and lesser-privileged refugees. Despite being signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 protocol, the Turkish state has maintained a peculiar reservation placing a "geographical limitation" on the figure of the refugee. Only asylum-seekers fleeing "events in Europe" are eligible for Convention refugee status in Turkey. Those arriving from outside of

Europe and seeking asylum are only eligible for temporary residency until such time they are re-settled to a third country. Growing numbers of refugees (not including those from Syria) and limited re-settlement opportunities have placed significant strain on the asylum process. Asylum-seekers once registered with the UNHCR are dispersed across Turkey to one of 53 provincial towns where they receive little material assistance and are only permitted to find work once their initial residency period of six months has been renewed—exposing this category of displaced person to a considerable degree of vulnerability and risk.

Over the last 25 years, the Republic of Turkey has also faced the challenges of a number of mass-displacement crises. Each crisis has warranted a differentiated response from the Turkish state indicating its own security concerns and ideas of nationhood. In 1989 the Turkish government embarked on a comprehensive refugee protection policy for over 300,000 Pomaks and Turks fleeing from the persecution of the communist regime in Bulgaria. Recognizing the refugees as being of "Turkish culture and descent," the state legislated policies that established a pathway to citizenship enabling the successful integration of these refugees into Turkish society.[10] In stark contrast, a year earlier, Saddam Hussein's massacre of Kurds in Halabja saw around 60,000 Kurds seek refuge in the South East of Turkey where no legal protection was granted to them and where they were designated as "guests." In containing the refugees to border areas with little opportunity of state-sanctioned integration, the refugees were expected to "return home" in due course. This security-centric approach was consolidated into official Turkish asylum policy following a renewed crisis of over half a million Kurds fleeing from Iraq in 1991. Following the arrival of these unwanted guests, regulations were adopted in 1994 stating that in the case of a mass influx of refugees, authorities were permitted to keep the displaced as close to the border as possible.[11]

This ad hoc approach to displacement issues and understandings of asylum has given way to a more regimented response from the Turkish state and a targeted re-structuring of Turkey's refugee protection regime in light of the Syrian crisis. In April 2014 the *Foreigners and International Protection Law* came into force wherein refugee status determination is now administered by a newly established government body—the General Directorate for Migration Management (GDMM).[12] The law further enshrines the right to access to asylum as well as judicial appeal procedures bringing Turkish asylum policy closer in line with internationally recognized standards.

Article 91 of the law makes specific reference to the idea of temporary protection recognizing the collective character of displacement crises. It also seeks to establish rights that asylum-seekers and recognized refugees can

enjoy with respect to access to the labor market and public services. As Joan Fitzpatrick (2000:280) rightly observes, temporary protection regimes act as both a "magic gift" for its ardent advocates and a "magic mirror of its observer's fears." While it certainly expands the category of forced migrants entitled to a degree of protection and assistance under Turkish law, there remains a significant element of ambiguity particularly in relation to what the defined roles of local and central government are; their obligations to uphold rights relating to access to education and healthcare provision, opportunities to engage in the labor market, and the duration of temporary protection.

Indeed, the temporal nature of such protection in conjunction with locating refugee camps close to the Syrian border serves to highlight that the emphasis for the Turkish authorities is on *managing* displaced people rather than *protecting* them. Temporary protection provides a bulwark against full local integration of the displaced and encourages repatriation to Syria. Following outbreaks of anti-Syrian sentiment and violence in Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, and Istanbul in August 2014, the Turkish state quickly reverted to the default position of states faced with a large displaced population; signaling a preference to house Syrian refugees away from urban centers and in camps. The response also draws attention to the conflicting narrative of a universal hospitality anchored in the ethics of religious traditions and the imposition of conditionalities on hospitality by the Turkish state, which privileges first and foremost a territorialized understanding of rights sanctioned by the nation-state. The contradictions, at the heart of the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) refugee and asylum policy, are laid bare here for all to see as it struggles to balance the exclusionary tendencies of the nation-state with that of the universalizing inclination of Islam. The Mayor of Gaziantep, Fatma Şahin declared:

> People took refuge in our city to protect their lives and their families after the civil war in Syria. It wasn't their choice but an existential necessity. They took refuge with their neighbours they saw as a safe port. *Being neighbours is a sacred relationship according to our beliefs*. We are making massive efforts to *enable them to live on their own land* in peace. We want our Syrian brethren to *have a place where they can live in Syria*.[13] (Emphasis added)

Under both the discourse of host–guest relations and more recently the move toward regulating the presence of Syrians in Turkey through a temporary protection status, can and will Syrians ever be recognized and afforded the rights of neighbors? Furthermore, to what extent is temporary

protection a misnomer? Would it be more precise to speak of a temporary *administration* of a mass-displaced population? Fatma Şahin's statement also reveals the degree to which religious ideas are subordinate to the "national order of things" (Malkki 1995) whereby the only imaginable solution to a displacement crisis of this sort is the commonsensical approach of having the refugees *return home* where they supposedly belong. The ambiguities and contradictions of temporary protection have exposed the arbitrary character of the decision-making process on the part of local authorities as they struggle with the tension between conditional and unconditional hospitality. This in turn engenders growing confusion among displaced Syrians and local host communities as to what rights and opportunities displaced Syrians are and should be entitled to.

The Turkish Humanitarian Field

In Turkey, the context and the structuring of the humanitarian field is markedly different to what can be found elsewhere in Lebanon and Jordan. The presence of international agencies is limited and international NGOs have been severely constrained in the work they are allowed to do on Turkish territory. Here the state is firmly establishing the rules to the humanitarian game. Most Syrians in Turkey came from the northern parts of the country, Aleppo, Raqqa, Hama, and Idlib. They came originally to escape the persecution of the al-Assad regime and the bombing of their areas, and more recently to escape the so-called Islamic State. While a significant number of the displaced are housed in purpose-built camps, with each passing day more and more Syrians are opting to spontaneously self-settle in towns and cities close to the Turkish border and indeed across the country.

As of December 11, 2014, there were 1,115,551 Syrians either officially registered or awaiting registration in Turkey of whom just under 900,000 had self-settled.[14] Figures from Turkish authorities indicate that the number is in excess of one-and-a-half million. The overwhelming majority of displaced Syrians in Turkey are located in the border provinces of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Urfa, and Mardin. A sizable number have also traveled further afield to Istanbul where it is estimated that around 300,000 reside.[15] Syrians residing in 22 camps set up in 10 border cities number approximately 224,000. These camps are managed by a government department: AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) and only a select number of Turkish NGOs are given access to enter and work in partnership with the state for the care and control of refugee populations. The camps have been described as five star—being secure with satellite television, hairdressers and small supermarkets on site.[16] Residents are allotted debit cards

topped up by the state to the tune of $50 per month to meet needs for groceries and sundries. Movement of refugees is limited and those living in the camp are not allowed to seek employment outside.

It is telling that despite the material benefits offered by the Turkish state through camp settlements, growing numbers of Syrians are choosing to spontaneously settle outside of a camp environment. In part this is in recognition of the protracted nature of the displacement crisis and a need to be anchored in home-like spaces—spaces that facilitate the agency of refugee actors rather than constrain them. The lack of employment opportunities within camps also directs displaced Syrians toward cities. The freedom afforded to Syrians in this respect in comparison to other forced migrants means that they self-locate to a number of cities across Turkey. It is also in cities such as Mersin, Adana, and Istanbul that those with the requisite resources are able to tap into the irregular channels for further movement onward into Europe.

Networks of Self-Reliance

The Turkish-Syrian border space has become transformed into a site from which a nascent Syrian civil society, operating in nonregime-held areas of Syria, establishes relationships with international NGOs, agencies, and the wider Syrian diaspora. Syrian self-help initiatives have flourished across border towns and cities in Turkey. Here they function as nodal points tapping into the resources of broader networks of self-reliance; acting as outlets for a "proto-civil society" (Qayyum 2011:9), which span continents to provide material assistance to many of the 7.6 million people displaced inside Syria.

It is important to acknowledge that unlike in cases such as Croatia where diaspora communities had long mobilized in opposition to the political status quo in the country of origin before entering a stage of violent armed conflict (Skrbiš 2007:229), this was not the case in Syria. Indeed, it is the conflict inside Syria, which has produced political and humanitarian mobilizations among Diaspora actors. Much as civil society formations born out of activist networks have been in a state of flux inside Syria since the uprising began, a similar process has been mirrored with respect to Syrians already living in the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States or on the Arabian Peninsula. The early phase of the revolution brought with it expressions of solidarity usually in the form of protests outside Syrian embassies or at organized demonstrations. Forums, and networks, hitherto inaccessible and unimaginable, were opened up to discuss the legitimacy of the Syrian regime and the direction in which the country should move forward. Advances in telecommunications facilitated access to information on what

was happening in Syria in real time through the use of Skype and social media, particularly Facebook, collapsing distances between activists inside Syria and those who supported them abroad—keeping the newly awakened Diaspora abreast of developments.

With the uprising showing little sign of coming to a timely resolution, it soon became evident that a humanitarian crisis was fast unfolding. Attention was quickly switched to meeting the needs of the growing numbers of displaced and wounded. This created what Katrin Radtke (2005) calls a "moral economy of Diaspora" or a solidarity network extending beyond family wherein disaporic actors feel obliged to support those whose circumstances have unraveled in the face of conflict or natural disaster to reduce the effects of insecurity. Here diasporic actors have mobilized personal and professional networks to reach communities close to their hometowns. For some, this included the nascent networks of the local coordinating committees—introducing them to struggles in different parts of the country aside from their own home town. It also established the Turkish-Syrian border towns as an integral space from which a global Syrian diaspora converged to connect with one another and newly displaced Syrians to organize humanitarian aid into Syria. One such example is an NGO platform project comprised of Syrian self-help initiatives that have emerged in the diaspora since the conflict began. The platform provides an opportunity for Syrian-led NGOs to coordinate and build relationships with other key humanitarian actors including the Turkish state, international agencies including United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and UNHCR, international NGOs and foreign development donor agencies such as DfID, GIZ, and USAID. In so doing, they also distance and mark themselves apart from militant armed groups who have staked a presence in the nascent humanitarian field in the north and east of Syria.

Building Relationships

The proximity of the Syrian border means that those with the requisite skills have been able to tap into employment opportunities available through NGOs concerned with the relief effort and with civil society initiatives. With the burgeoning of such initiatives, many of which are based on the Turkish side of the border, Syrians who have sought refuge in the cities of South East Turkey are asserting their agency in meaningful ways. Haitham, a civil society activist who had fled Deir Ezzor in the east of Syria after having been detained a number of times by Syrian security agencies had found work in a local community center in Urfa established by a local Turkish NGO— IMPR (International Middle East Peace Research Centre) in partnership

with the Danish Refugee Council. Echoing the Palestinian-Iraqi refugees I had spoken to in Mukhayim al-Yarmouk, Haitham described the community center as being "like home rather than a place of work." Syrian refugees using the center on a daily basis described it as a refuge from the cramped conditions in which they ordinarily live in—using the space as much as possible; a place to meet friends to eat, drink, and be hospitable. Islamic traditions affirm the centrality of relational understandings of home in religious practice and imagination. Religion is fundamentally concerned with the nurturing of relationships. The interactions individuals and groups have with one another on a day-to-day basis are what constitutes everyday lived religion. It is the attention and care given to what I term the *relational self* that lies at the heart of religious practice and teachings.

The sacrality of home is translocative; it is not fixed in bricks and mortar alone but in relationships. This emphasis on the relational self enables broader understandings of home. Home becomes migratory. The right to home and shelter is therefore closely correlated to a right to migration. The centrifugal capacities of the relational self are reflected in home-like spaces. The community center in Urfa is very much a secular space. However, as we saw in the preceding chapter, even the most profane of spaces can be inscribed with religious significance and meaning. The community center in Urfa, much like the ISP and the Rābeta in Damascus, is an example of the quotidian everyday space in which the potential to facilitate and maintain relationships with the wider community are maintained. As seen in the case of Iraqi refugees in Damascus the theme of neighborliness was integral in their understandings of home-making and religion. It is in the understanding of reciprocal rights and duties pertaining to neighborhood and neighborliness that the *ummah* is realized. Far from political readings of *ummah* as understood by the modernizing efforts of Islamists such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani from the late nineteenth century onward, the lived experiences of displaced people remind us that the *ummah* is found first and foremost in localized contexts. Haitham echoing the experiences of Iraqi refugees in Damascus signals the importance of neighborly visits as a barometer of meaningful relationships:

> *Haitham*: I like it when they (Turks) treat us equally and not as "poor" refugees. When they visit and invite us to their homes—I feel normal and equal to them. I'm not made to feel like a refugee. It's great when people call on you like this. Visiting people's homes like this means we have proper relations.

Yet, the Turkish state has dragged its feet in responding to the needs of self-settled urban refugees. Much of the support has hitherto been provided

to those refugees settled in designated camps. The shift toward a temporary protection status for Syrian refugees has meant that accessing secondary rights to education, healthcare, and the labor market should be theoretically easier. However, to be granted temporary protection status is contingent on Turkish state authorities issuing ID cards to displaced Syrians containing their biometric data. As discussed earlier, implicit within the stated policy of the Turkish state is that the refugees eventually return to Syria and local integration is not a likely solution. The extensive destruction of infrastructure, cities, and the disintegration of communities across Syria means that for many Syrians return is near impossible. Confronted with this reality, it is unsurprising that those with the requisite capital are seeking to make their way to destinations further afield in Europe. For this section of the displaced Syrian population, data from biometric ID cards could easily be shared by Turkish immigration authorities with EU counterparts thereby closing off a potential solution to their plight.

While displaced Syrians have been granted access to primary, secondary, and tertiary education, the Turkish state has failed to provide adequate assistance in helping refugees learn the Turkish language in order to enjoy the benefits of the Turkish educational system and allow for integration with local communities. Syrian refugees registered at university often have access to discounted courses but for the vast majority of Syrians in cities such as Gaziantep, the costs for learning Turkish language are far too prohibitive.[17] Community-led schools organized by Syrians provide Turkish language classes to students; however, both the number and capacity of such schools remains small, particularly outside of camps and are barely adequate for the growing numbers of self-settled refugees.[18]

Faith Based Initiatives from Turkey

A number of organizations selected to work with AFAD are FBOs including *kimse yok mu? Bülbülzade* and *İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı*—the foundation for human rights, freedoms, and humanitarian relief better known by its acronym IHH. The greater part of IHH's work with displaced Syrians is inside Syria—accounting for 80 percent of the organization's work on Syria. The organization also functions as a vector for other smaller faith-based initiatives—channeling aid into Northern Syria on their behalf.

IHH's website shows a poster for its 2013 winterization campaign to raise funds for humanitarian work inside Syria. The caption in a bold font reads: "For the right of neighbourliness! Aid Trucks on the way to Syria." The image shows a veiled mother with a baby in her arms sat down as if

supplicating in prayer over Syria, while a family (minus a mother) standing in Turkey extend an umbrella over her and the child to protect them from the falling snow. The novelty of this campaign can be found not in the use of the "woman-and-child" trope to portray the vulnerability and passivity of forced migrants—one widely used in fund-raising campaigns by humanitarian organizations—but in its call for neighborliness as protection. It is an interesting choice of campaign slogan for IHH. On the one hand it clearly appeals to a religious discourse in which the rights of the neighbor are paramount—love thy neighbor! Proclaims IHH. On their official website, chiming with the religious narrative employed by Prime Minister Recep Tayip Erdoğan, IHH declare:

> It is a humanitarian and moral duty to stand by our neighbors who form our social environment after our families in their good and bad times [...] Adopting the tradition of our Prophet (peace be upon him) as a guide: "He who sleeps on a full stomach whilst his neighbor goes hungry is not one of us," we think that Syrian people need the help of our people whom they know as their neighbors. For the humanitarian conscience and rights of neighbourliness, in order not to be a mere spectator to this destruction which the whole world is just watching, and to be a remedy for Syrian people—we invite you to support our campaign.[19]

On the other hand, it can be argued that the street protest movement, which pitched segments of Turkish society against the government in the summer of 2013, partly arose out of growing disenchantment with urban development policies widely regarded as having consistently eroded the rights of neighborhood. This discontent also conflated the increasingly authoritarian and neoliberal practices of Erdoğan's government with its anti-Assad position.[20] The winterization campaign by the IHH can be seen as a damage limitation response to the growing association between events in Syria and the authoritarian character of the Justice and Development Party's domestic politics—a means of decoupling the situation in Syria from internal Turkish politics. Furthermore, the image used by IHH conforms to sedentary expectations of a statist discourse that demands refugees be relocated to their rightful place—within the borders of the country of origin. The representation of the refugee is squarely located on Syrian territory. Here, IHH are re-affirming the position taken by the Mayor of Gaziantep mentioned earlier.

Implicit in the discourse on the right of neighborliness as articulated by IHH are the unequal power relations often found in humanitarian discourses—between that of beneficiary or person in need and the state

or humanitarian organization. These power relations became even more explicit with the arrival of Syrian Kurdish refugees fleeing from the impending onslaught of the so-called Islamic state. The reticence of the Turkish state to welcome this particular fraction of displaced Syrians as it had done for Sunni Arab Syrians recalls the Turkish state's earlier approaches to instances of displaced Kurds from Iraq in the 1990s. What is required and was alluded to by Haitham is a more reciprocal approach. The right to neighborhood would better encapsulate the intersectional relationships and experiences displaced people are calling attention to rather than the parochial reading suggested by IHH.

Inside Nonregime-controlled Syria

IHH is also unique in that it enjoys sufficient humanitarian capital to directly deliver aid inside Syria—its close relations with the ruling Justice and Development party allows it access to privileges which other organizations simply do not have. For other international NGOs engaged in cross-border delivery of aid, the Turkish state demands Syrian partner organizations meet international NGOs at designated border crossings and take control of logistical operations and distribution of aid inside Syria. Needless to say, militias and other armed actors have been able to divert resources and aid away from intended populations contributing to the flourishing of an economy of war. At the time of my visit to IHH headquarters in Kilis the border crossing at Azaz/Kilis had been closed. Disputes had arisen between the so-called Islamic State[21] and *Asifat al-Shimal* (the Northern Storm Brigade) over wanting to monopolize control over aid convoys and routes.

Smaller organizations also tap into the material, social, and political economies of scale that IHH enjoys. One such organization is a UK-based charity Children in Deen.[22] Working in partnership with IHH has allowed Children in Deen to circumnavigate the complexities of cross-border intervention from Turkey. The logistical capacities made possible through IHH to deliver six tons of flour on a daily basis to reach a bread-making factory established by Children in Deen in a village to the North of Aleppo has been particularly instrumental to the success of the project. The bread-making project currently serves 25 villages to the north of Aleppo, meeting the needs of 40,000 people and producing 240,000 loaves of bread daily. A second bakery is set to open expanding the coverage area to 50 villages. Other projects include a clothing factory employing widows. The clothes are then distributed to children through local schools.

Children in Deen work in partnership with a local self-help initiative based out of a village to the north of Aleppo. Here Shakeel, a British national

of Pakistani origin and the Children in Deen representative, told me how on meeting with representatives of the organization he was struck by the way in which the organization was anchored in the local community. His identification of the community mosque as being a key nodal point of social relations emphasizes the legitimacy of religious institutions and structures in nonregime-held areas. A point buttressed by an aid worker in Aleppo working for a European international NGO that has cooperated in delivering aid and public services with the *Hayy'et al-Shar'ia* [local shar'iah associations] and with *Liwa al-Tawhid*—a powerful battalion in Aleppo, which is part of the Islamic Front:

> *Shakeel*: X is a very organised community. The mosques there are working as proper community mosques. The local clerics go out and deliver—it makes the people's faith stronger. They [the local clerics] have a lot of love and respect. You don't see them imposing themselves on people but being there for them. They're not distant from the people. You see people approaching them freely.

Delivering aid in person is a theme that crops up often in conversation with faith-based actors. Here Shakeel identifies clerics' role in doing so as bolstering the faith of recipients. The limited bureaucratization of humanitarian aid is recognized by faith-based actors engaged in relief work as providing significant value and meaning to their work. The work of such actors is marked as qualitatively different to the work of international NGOs and humanitarian agencies. A small business owner from the Syrian diaspora in London, identifying himself as a believer told me: "Anyone can send blankets or bags of flour—you have the UNHCR who are doing that but when we go ourselves; see with our own eyes and distribute with our own hands it is more than just giving aid it is *shighleh ma'nawiyeh*—something that raises spirits and lifts morale."

When a Label Doesn't Fit

Many of the humanitarian actors I met objected to the use of the faith-based label that conjures up overtones of sectarianism—a narrative widely regarded as being against the spirit of the revolution. The Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA) illustrates the ambiguity of the faith-based label. Established in the wake of the wanton destruction of the country's health infrastructure, SEMA concentrates on medical service provision supplying medicine, equipment, and volunteers to hospitals and clinics inside Syria. The doctors I met at SEMA offices (all men) were clearly devout Muslims.

The long beards with trimmed moustaches and trousers hitched slightly above the ankle gives them away as paying particular attention to the traditions of the Prophet—perhaps Salafist. Everyday language is punctuated with polite set phrases invoking God. Prayers were said at appointed times on the premises with everyone present lining up in congregation. I asked a medic working there about the motivation of faith in humanitarian work:

> *Dr Mohammad*: We can think of Islam as a holistic framework. Within that you have ethical and humanitarian concerns. If you haven't noticed SEMA doesn't carry a religious name. We don't engage in *da'wa* [propagation of Islam] work and concentrate only on medical provision. There isn't any contradiction between the work we do and our Islamic understanding or motivation. You can't separate the two. To be Islamic is to be humanitarian and ethical.

For Dr Mohammad faith is a moral compass. To be considered an FBO would mean to be explicitly propagating his beliefs and perhaps imposing them on others—something he does not do. His faith is something that is embodied and "lived"—a part and parcel of who he is. Religious tradition is used as a prompt to remain ethical at all times. The phrase *al-din al-mu'amla*—religion is the good treatment of people—is one that is constantly heard when the subject of religion is broached with displaced Syrians and Iraqis alike. This sentiment was shared by Shakeel from Children in Deen who told me "we're not necessarily a faith based organization—we're humanitarian. In our religion we are taught to be a service to humanity: show the love bruv [*sic*]."

"Show[ing] the love" while carrying a visibly religious habitus creates certain expectations on the part of the displaced people humanitarian actors engage with. In Shakeel's dealings with displaced Syrians, he identifies fictive kin relationships and the accompanying expectations as marking his religiously inspired work as qualitatively different to that of other NGOs and agencies:

> *Shakeel*: It's like family. You have yours—I have mine. I'll automatically love your family because I have love for the idea of mother, brother, sister. Syrians are our brethren, and you know how it is with family— they always expect more from you. See, that's the difference between us and the big NGOs and agencies: they [Syrians] know that you're coming over here because family is in trouble—they know it's something that you're doing out of love.

Not all organizations reject the faith-based label. *Hayyet al-Sham al-Islami*—The Levantine Islamic Association detail *da'wa* (the propagation of Islam) in addition to relief and development work as an important aspect of their work. A recognized focus on *da'wa* sets them apart from other Islamic initiatives. When questioned about the value of *da'wa*, the director of the organization referred to it as being "pro-active and long term [...] not contingent on other services provided." Furthermore, it supplements psychosocial work that focuses on "specific events, something which is acute and re-active." *Da'wa* is understood as helping build the resilience of displaced people and educating them "against extremism and ignorance [...] to restore a sense of dignity in a way commensurate with the values of the displaced populations."[23]

Should we turn away from the contested nature of *da'wa* work? Even within a tradition such as Sunni Islam there are multiple readings, interpretations, and glosses—would adherents of Sufi traditions not consider the promotion of more literalist readings of religious traditions as coercive? On the other hand, is it also correct to equate *da'wa* with proselytization when the former is in proximate agreement and conformity with the socio-cultural worlds of displaced populations? Is a call to an idea the same as a coercive attempt to convert? The examples of *Hayyet al-Sham al-Islami* and SEMA also illustrate concerns around the utility of FBOs as a concept. Rather than attempt to classify such organizations around a typology (Clarke and Jennings 2008:32–33), perhaps the distinction between secular organizations and FBOs is better understood as a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Benedetti 2006:851). This again raises questions around the euro-centric bias of global humanitarian initiatives or the way in which ideas and concepts anchored in particularly European histories and contexts are transplanted into the social and cultural worlds of others. The secular framing of the modern humanitarian endeavor pushes to the margins any claims to legitimacy of faith-based interventions. This "functional secularism" (Ager and Ager 2011) disciplines some actors to underplay their religious motivations and is blind to the social and cultural lifeworlds of recipients of humanitarian aid.

There is also an unwillingness to assume a faith-based label on the part of some religiously motivated actors as the conflict began to be increasingly reported through a sectarian lens. For many activists inspired by the events of the first year of the uprising, maintaining an anti-sectarian position means to challenge the narrative of the al-Assad regime, which has sought to discredit the movement against the regime by portraying it as sectarian and led by militant extremists.

Other nonprofessional humanitarian aid workers motivated by faith concerns, who have taken time out from their everyday working lives in cities in the United Kingdom, similarly go the extra mile to deliver aid as part of relief convoys to Syria's borders. To be physically involved in the distribution of aid is considered a more pious and meaningful act of worship than simply donating funds to a charitable cause. In fulfilling duties to others in need, the believer's relationship with God is strengthened and fortified. This is a radically different cultural understanding of what charitable work entails. While it is far from uncommon for people in the United Kingdom to raise funds by participating in feats of endurance—swimming the English Channel, climbing peaks, arduously long bicycle rides—to commit oneself to an act that has largely been professionalized (the delivery of humanitarian aid) is not properly understood. A tradition attributed to Prophet Muhammad emphasizing the primacy of praxis as a means of shortening the distance between believer and God was recalled on a number of occasions while speaking to different faith-based humanitarian actors.[24]

Part of a Wider Diaspora

Khagram and Levitt (2007) maintain that in thinking and applying a transnational focus to questions of social change and transformation can help create space to re-imagine and legitimize options for innovative approaches. While some scholars have argued that the term "diaspora" has lost coherency through overuse, stretched "to the point of being lost altogether" (Brubaker 2005:3–4) and amounting to little more than "a massive linguistic weed" (Akenson 1995), others contend that diaspora ought to be used more as a heuristic term, which prompts social scientists to think more carefully about the intersections of relationships and identities among transnational actors. Here, Pnina Werbner's (2010) notion of a "complex" or "segmented diaspora" is useful. Citing the example of a South-Asian diaspora, Werbner observes that shared cultural consumption across a region comprising of more than six nation-states and five world religions facilitates the creation of public arenas and solidarities.

In the case of the Syrian diaspora, solidarities and cross-cutting ties can be found between a vast array of transnational actors—including faith-based actors—nested within and across diasporic communities. FBOs responding to humanitarian crises are arguably part of wider diasporic formations. *Hayyet al-Sham al-Islami* is part of a broader NGO coalition of Syrian diaspora humanitarian inititatives operating from Turkey and serving IDPs in Syria. Applying a transnational lens allows us to move away from methodological constraints that delineate our understanding of complex social relations to

questions of nationalism or ethnicity. Instead we can acknowledge that the construction of identities is a fluid and relational process—one contingent on the social fields transnational actors inhabit (Glick-Schiller and Cağlar 2011). How to be and how to belong is influenced not only by existing connections in home or host country but shaped also by relations—imagined or otherwise—with others around the world who enjoy a shared affiliation along the lines of religion, profession, ethnicity, or language (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Moving beyond the binary of inside and outside, we can begin thinking of a refugee diaspora more fluidly—as a rhizomatic network of self-reliance along which transnational actors engage in self-help initiatives; connecting, building, and strengthening relationships with different actors at multiple nodal points.

The diffuse solidarity offered through a perceived sense of belonging to the *ummah* or the imagined community of Muslims creates intersections among diasporic and religious actors providing them with the broad canvass of a global imaginary from which to work. These intersections allow Syrian transnational agents in the United Kingdom, for instance, to tap into the resources and networks of other diasporic communities to support humanitarian initiatives for refugees and IDPs.

While there is certainly an element of over-reach in broadening the term "diaspora" to include faith communities given that there is no idealized return to a country of origin or homeland, acknowledgment of cultural or deterritorialized dimensions to diaspora opens up "the possibility that spiritual affinity may generate a bond analogous to that of a diaspora" (Cohen 1997:189). A salient example of where diasporic consciousness intersects with religious affinity can be found in the West Yorkshire-based charity SKT welfare whose patron is a Sufi Shaykh originally from Damascus—Muhammad al-Yaqoubi. Mobilizing his growing network of followers in the United Kingdom, predominantly Muslims from the South Asian diaspora, Shaykh al-Yaqoubi has provided SKT welfare with a credible reach into Syria and a network of Syrian aid workers and volunteers that few international humanitarian actors have access to. This has allowed the organization, which prides itself on volunteerism and private donor funding for its activities, to operate in hard to reach areas such as al-Ghouta and Dara'a.[25] The organization also cooperates and partners with the Turkish FBO Yardımeli Derneği.

For many Syrian diasporic actors engaged in self-help initiatives, whether they mobilize religious language or symbolism is contingent on where they are located and who the audience is. This is not to say they are being duplicitous. Rather, it is a recognition of the multiple social fields in which they are situated. Debates on immigration, race relations, terrorism, and Islam in

the United Kingdom in recent years, for instance, have seen the blurring of religious subjectivities with racial identities and questions of legality. This has given rise to an increasingly securitized approach of successive British governments to Muslim populations whose transnational relationships render them increasingly suspect in the eyes of the nation-state. Like a jealous lover it guardedly keeps watch over transnational ties enjoyed by British Muslims; constantly demanding reassurances of loyalty. Close surveillance of transnational activity has particularly affected those engaged in providing humanitarian support and assistance to displaced Syrians. In this atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, Syrian diasporic actors play down their faith credentials and are seeking to establish cross-cutting ties of solidarity beyond those offered by co-religionists. For those actors who are based in the Gulf States ascribing to a faith-based label is less of a problem.

Movements of Internally Displaced People

The conflict in Syria can be read retrospectively as a case where the right to neighborhood had been eroded by decades of subjection to an insidious politics of entrenched sectarianism. In the midst of conflict the rights of neighborliness are upheld on a daily basis across Syria—a reminder that individuals are located relationally both within and outside larger units in social space: family, neighborhood, work place. A right to neighborhood guided by a politics of solidarity anchored in local relations would serve to protect the well-being, dignity, and integrity of all those who form the neighborhood, including those who arrive as strangers. It would protect the neighborhood against the caprice of a state that serves to defend the interests of those close to its center—upholding not only social, cultural, and political rights but economic rights also.

As the delivery of humanitarian aid to nonregime-controlled areas becomes ever more challenging and less frequent, more and more Syrians are forced to migrate where humanitarian aid is more accessible and the threat of aerial bombardment negligible. By November 2013, the al-Assad regime was reporting that around 3 percent of the 6.5 million IDPs were housed in public shelters—mosques, schools, and other public buildings. More than 85 percent of those displaced inside Syria's borders have found refuge in the homes of relatives and extended family according to government statistics.[26] In the north and the east of the country a more conservative figure emerges—reflecting the pressures local communities are under.

A recent needs assessment carried out by humanitarian agencies found 38 percent of IDPs, surveyed across the 7 provinces in Syria where the war has been at its most brutal, were hosted by local families. The relationship

Table E.1   Shelter status of IDPs in high conflict intensity areas

Governorate	Total No. displaced in sub-district	No. displaced hosted by local families	No. displaced in vacated buildings	No. displaced living in collective centers
Hama	198,800	68,500	102,800	26,500
Aleppo	170,900	75,650	57,150	38,100
Idleb	64,900	26,100	26,600	12,200
Deir Ezzor	57,200	22,567	13,614	21,019
Ar-Raqqa	45,000	15,000	7,000	23,000
Al-Hassakeh	6,000	8,000	1,700	3,500
Lattakia	4,800	2,000	3,350	1,250
Total	547,600	208,617	213,214	125,569

Source: Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria II (2013:26).

between host communities and displaced people can be characterized as largely supportive with as many as 53 percent of respondents in the afore-mentioned survey stating they are willing to assist the displaced for a limited time. While 34 percent reported that support was not contingent on the duration of stay (ibid.:27).

In areas to the north and east where the level of conflict had been less intense during the first two years of the conflict an overwhelming picture of hospitality and welcoming the displaced emerges—with as many as 56 percent of displaced people surveyed were found to be living in the homes of other families.[27]

Paradoxically, the conflict in Syria has set conditions for the churning of its population bringing people from different ethnicities and faith communities in close proximity to one another—something which the al-Assad regime of the last 40 years had been assiduously managing. While mass-displacement can be characterized by growing strains and tensions in "host" communities it also presents an opportunity for challenging parochial attitudes and normative accounts of the Other. Here, there are possibilities for social distance between self and Other to be compressed and boundaries to be recognized as spaces to cross rather than bound. This emerging politics of propinquity understands an individual, a neighborhood, or a city to be part of a greater whole. Relationships are nested within a wider set of relationships and configured radially. It is useful here to think of a concentric circle spiralling outward, or of a matryoshka doll—the spaces in between are not void but thick with meaningful relationships.

Cities such as Salamiyeh and Suweida, home to large minority populations of Ismailis and Druze respectively, have welcomed the arrival of

Table E.2 Shelter status of IDPs in low conflict intensity areas

Governorate	Total No. displaced in sub-district	No. displaced hosted by local families	No. displaced in vacated buildings	No. displaced living in collective centres
Idleb	815,150	620,800	87,650	106,700
Aleppo	379,650	197,900	69,500	112,250
Ar-Raqqa	328,700	116,000	53,000	159,700
Deir Ezzor	328,200	219,350	59,250	49,600
Al-Hassakeh	215,900	30,400	60,400	125,100
Lattakia	71,000	20,600	48,400	2,000
Hama	29,000	22,000	6,000	1,000
Total	2,167,600	1,227,050	384,200	556,350

Source: Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria II (2013:30).

significant numbers of displaced Sunnis offering them shelter within their own homes. Saleh, a resident of Suweida, described to me the reception displaced people have been afforded in spite of severe restrictions imposed upon community initiatives by the al-Assad regime:

> The local people were quick to welcome displaced families and even host them in their own homes until they [the displaced families] were able to secure more suitable accommodation. In many cases, rent is initially paid by the people of Suweida; securing even necessities such as mattresses, blankets and basic cooking utensils, as the displaced people arrive with nothing but the shirts on their backs. The people of Suweida have done as much as they can. The thing that stands out the most is the attention and care given to displaced children. [To provide a sense of normality] the local community has established opportunities for children to play— they are given toys and provided a distraction away from the conflict. Educational needs have also been addressed by providing courses to allow the children to catch up on their disrupted education. Again this has been free with teachers and specialists working voluntarily.

The arrival and reception of Sunnis in cities with large minority populations challenges the hegemonic account of the conflict as being one where a dominant faith community is seeking to assert itself over another. Instead, the stranger is welcomed and supported by others. There is no doubt that the strain under which local communities are placed is great: the lack of resources, even fewer employment opportunities, upward spiralling prices of daily necessities, and chronic shortage of space to meet the demand of new

arrivals all contribute to possible flashpoints of tension. Yet, the crisis also brings with it the opportunity for the nurturing of neighborly relations and for demonstrations of hospitality—of knowing how to treat the stranger in our midst in an ethical manner.

Often the crisis in Syria is portrayed as a humanitarian crisis—the faith narrative of displacement goes one step further. It acknowledges that we have a humanitarian crisis on our hands. However, it reminds us through emphasizing ties of neighborliness and family and understandings of hospitality that it is not only a humanitarian crisis but our limited response is a gauge of a wider malaise—*the crisis of our humanity*. The hospitality and refuge provided for displaced people both within Syria and in countries bordering it cannot and must not be taken for granted. The more protracted the crisis becomes the greater the strain put on communities who are doing their utmost to keep alive traditions of welcoming the stranger. Since the crisis began, over 97 percent of all Syrian refugees are located in countries neighboring Syria—a stark indicator of how the responsibility to care and support displaced communities is disproportionately placed on countries neigboring refugee-producing states. The images of hundreds of ghostly figures waiting in line at an UNRWA food distribution point in a desolate, debris-ridden Mukhayim al-Yarmouk, and of migrants drowning in the waters of the Mediterranean are testament to the crisis *we* Europeans are in. The real litmus test of our humanity can be found in whether we choose to welcome or prevent people from moving to access safety, refuge, and sanctuary.

Notes

Introduction   Refuge in Religion and Migration

1. See "Joint Rapid Assessment for Norther Syria: Aleppo Assessment." Available [online] at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Aleppo%20 Assessment%20Report.pdf Accessed May 9, 2014.
2. UNHCR 2014, UNHCR Country Operation Profile—Syrian Arab Republic. Available [online] at: http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486a76.html Accessed May 1, 2014.

1   The Noble Sanctuary: Islamic Traditions of Refuge and Sanctuary

1. Under the Ottoman Empire, people were identified by their religious affiliation or confessional communities rather than by ethnicity. The *millet* system refers to the autonomy of religious communities pertaining to personal law. The term Turkish term *millet* is a loan word from the Arabic *millah* meaning denomination or creed.
2. Saḥīḥ al-Bukhāri Vol. 8, Book 076, No. 0425.
3. Saḥīḥ Muslim Book 1, Chapter 66, No. 0270.
4. In an address to Syrian refugees, Prime Minister Erdoğan describes the struggle as preparation for a "sacred birth" assuring the crowd that God's help was at hand. See "Turkey's Erdoğan tells refugees Syrian rebirth is near" Al-Jazeera: Syria Live Blog December 30, 2012. Available [online] at: http://blogs.aljazeera .com/topic/syria/turkeys-erdogan-tells-refugees-syrian-rebirth-near.
5. "Turkish PM calls on Reyhanlı locals to resist 'provocations'" *Hurriyet Daily News*, May 24, 2013. Available [online] at: http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com /turkish-pm-calls-on-reyhanli-locals-to-resist-provocations.aspx?pageID=238& nID=47526&NewsCatID=341.
6. The Noble Qur'an, 4:100.
7. The Noble Qur'an, 59:9.
8. The Noble Qur'an, 49:10.

9. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri Vol. 1 Book 2, No. 13.
10. Reported by Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri (d. 892) in *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* (The Lineage of Nobles).
11. The Noble Qur'an 9:60.
12. The philosopher and psychologist Willliam James (2008) in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* has done much to foster this view. He terms the attributes of a religious experience as being noetic, ineffable, passive, and transient.

2 Sowing the Seeds of Displacement: Religion and Society in Ba'thist Iraq (1980–2003)

1. Echoing Edward Shils (1971) treatment of tradition, Pierre Bourdieu (1977:82) tells us habitus is the "past which survives in the present" or an "embodied history, internalized as a second nature [...] the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (1990a:56). Elsewhere, he likens habitus to a "conductorless orchestration which gives regularity, unity and systemacity to practices" (1990a:59).
2. To counter the influence and rising popularity of the Communist Party and the secularization trend underway in Iraq, the Hizb al-Dawa was formed. The move of religious figures into political activism was met with derision by the Shi'i clergy (Al-Ruhaimi 2002:152).
3. An article in al-Thawra March 7, 1960 reports an interview with Abd al-Karim Qasim where he defends the progressive elements of the code against religious traditionalists using arguments from the Qur'an (Anderson 1960:562–563).
4. As early as March 1960, the government of President Abd al-Karim Qasim announced the formation of the First Regiment of the Palestinian Liberation Army under direct supervision of the general Iraqi armed forces and financed from the budget of the Ministry of Defence (Mohammad 2007:53–56).
5. As the early Islamic conquests spread beyond the Arab heartlands and came into contact with non-Arabs, new adherents to the faith questioned the privileged position of Arabs within the Empire. This movement came to be known as *al-shu'ubiyah*. With Pan-Arab nationalism re-emerging in the middle of the twentieth century as a powerful political movement, the term shu'ubi was revived by Arab nationalists to denigrate dissenting voices (Hanna and Gardner 1966).
6. Literally, "the standing of the night"; a supererogatory prayer often described as the best of [the noncompulsory] prayers given that it is offered before dawn when most people are asleep.
7. The Noble Qur'an 13:11.
8. For a detailed analysis and account of the war see S. Chubin and C. Tripp (1988) *Iran and Iraq at War* (London: IB Tauris).
9. For more on the role that the *nakba* plays in the collective memories of Palestinians see Abu-Lughod and Sa'di (2007).
10. This number grew to 250,000 by the close of the war (Abdullah 2003:190).

11. Reidar Visser (2008b) has made the compelling argument that methodological nationalism and an insistence that the conflict in Iraq ought to be viewed solely through an ethno-sectarian lens, has in fact obscured the utility of understanding the recent history of Iraq through the notion of regionalism. As such, the Eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia—which have a significant minority population of Shi'i, have traditionally lain within the gravitational pull of Basra as a regional center rather than the Hejaz to the West.

12. *Dhikr* is a devotional act that requires the repetition of the Names of God or verses from the Qur'an. Literally it means remembrance.

13. For a broader discussion on the intersections of race and religious belonging for British Muslims, see: Modood, T. (1990) "Muslims, Race and Equality in Britain: Some Post-Rushdie Affair Reflections", *Third Text*, 4(11): 127–134.

14. Nadje Al-Ali (2007:146–170) provides a riveting account of the lives of Iraqi women during the Iran–Iraq War shedding light on how the state sought control over women's bodies through assigning them the role of "mothers of future soldiers" and issuing a raft of legal decrees regulating the reproductive rights of Iraqi women.

15. United Nations, Security Council Resolution 661 (1990), paragraph 3(c).

16. Casey (2004), writing on the period of public grieving, which followed the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, refers to "public memory" to signal the simultaneity and the repetitiveness of similar yet different accounts of people's experiences.

17. The July 17, 1968 Ba'thist coup was the seventh such attempt to take power in the decade following the 1958 revolution (Dawisha 2009:209).

18. Tribal affilaition is organized on a number of levels. The broadest is Qabila [tribe] followed by 'asheera [clan]. The clan can be divided into subclans [fakhdh or afkhadh]. The fourth level extended family [hamoula] constitutes the real kinship group and can be divided into smaller household [beit] (Abdul-Jabar 2003).

19. The bay'a has considerable religious significance. The tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj gave ba'ya to Prophet Muhammad—inviting him and his companions to Madina.

20. Mandaeaism is a gnostic faith originating out of the Middle East. It shares much with other Abrahamic faiths including belief in the Prophets and an afterlife. The chief Prophet for the Mandaeans is John the Baptist and baptism is a key ritual. They are also commonly referred to as Sabeans and are mentioned as such in the Qur'an. For further reading refer to Buckley (2002).

21. For a more detailed analysis of tribal practices in Iraq see Salim's (1962) account of marsh-dwelling tribes living on the Euphrates Delta.

22. Resolution no. 24 reads: "Any person who advances tribal demands against he who has committed an act upon orders from a higher authority or to enforce the law, shall be imprisoned for a period no less than three years" (cited in Abdul-Jabbar 2003c:99).

3   The Un-mixing of Neighborhoods: Iraq on the Eve of Displacement

1. Charles Glock (1962) identifies five dimensions to religiosity: namely, experiential (emotions and feelings), ritualistic (religious behavior or practice), ideological (beliefs), intellectual (knowledge of religious traditions), and consequential (effects of the former dimensions on the secular world).

2. Fanar Haddad (2011:26) differentiates between aggressive and assertive sectarianism. The former relates to the symbolic or even physical denigration of the "other," whereas the latter is concerned with a highly visible presence of a sect's symbolism and practices in the public space.

3. Max Weiss (2010:15), writing on the Shi'i experience of modernity in Lebanon, reminds us that sectarianism "has depended and continues to depend upon routinized forms of cultural and social practice, and historians and social scientists should more carefully consider how sectarianism is produced, how it evolves, and how it spreads into the nooks and crannies of everyday life."

4. Kaufman (2001:25) contends that the myth-symbol complex lies at the heart of ethnic identities. He tells us it is "the combination of myths, memories, values and symbols that defines not only who is a member of the group but what it means to be a member. The existence, status, and security of the group thus come to be seen to depend on the status of group symbols, which is why people are willing to die for them."

5. Ali Al-Mu'min (2007:128) suggests that this is perhaps a good point of departure to understand the phenomenon of communitarian politics in Iraq; tracing the emergence of a vehemently anti-Shi'i discourse coming out of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf with a view to discredit the nascent Islamic Republic of Iran.

6. The Ba'thist regime considered this to be a necessary measure to deny enemy combatants an accessible route to infiltrate the country. Author's interview with Iraqi refugee, Damascus, March 2011.

7. Muwaffaq al-Rubaie, a spokesperson for Hizb al-Da'wa, sought to downplay such fears. He insisted: "Our message to the whole world is that this is not a Shi'a revolt" cited in Fisk, Robert, "Iraqi Opposition Groups Question US intentions," *The Independent*, May 11, 1991.

8. The Jaysh al-Mahdi militia was not the only militia operating in Iraq at the time. The SCIRI backed Badr Corps had largely infiltrated the Ministry of Interior and was absorbed into local police units, and has been accused of operating "death squads" targeting Sunnis. *Tandhim al-Qa'ida fi Balad al-Rafidayn* or al_Qai'da's Organization in Mesopotamia headed by Abu Musab az-Zarqawi claimed responsibility for a number of attacks on Shi'is (International Crisis Group 2006a:14–18).

9. A point conceded by Colonel Thomas Hammes, who told the flagship PBS documentary series, Frontline: "Now you have a couple of hundred thousand people who are armed—because they took their weapons home with

them—who know how to use the weapons, who have no future [and] have a reason to be angry with you."

10. The naming of Iraqi ballistic missiles at the time further illustrates how the imagery of the Palestinian struggle was appropriated by the regime. One missile was named *al-hijarah al-sarūkh* or the stone that is a missile (Bengio 2002:199).

11. For an account of the events that led to the tragic death of Mohamed Bouazizi, see Sedra, P. (2011) "Manoubia and her Son," *Jadaliyya* [online] October 8, 2011, Available at: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2825/manoubia-and -her-son.

12. For the Jaysh al-Mahdi it is legally permitted in accordance with a fatwa allegedly attributed to Muhammad Sadiq as-Sadr to execute a *nawasib*, or one who hates the Twelver Shi'i Imams. In addition, it is also permissible for the appropriation of property belonging to *takfiriyin*. See International Crisis Group (2006b) *Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?* Middle East report No. 55.

13. Salafism is a particular current in Islam that asserts authenticity of ideas and practice in relation to the *Salaf* (pious predecessors) or the early Muslims. Authenticity is adhered to particularly in matters of creed and performance of religious rituals and everyday behaviors. Men who ascribe to Salafist ideals usually pay particular attention to details such as physical appearance. Thus men will normally have beards, a trimmed moustache, and wear their trousers or robes above ankle length. All of which is in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad as related in ahadīth literature.

14. Father of Muqtada al-Sadr. The Ba'thist regime had sought to capitalize on having an Arab Marja in place following the death of Ayatollah Abu Qasim al-Khoei in 1992. His rise to prominence coincided with the state's decision to pursue a more relaxed policy regarding the role of religion in public life. This allowed for the establishment of charities organized through the offices of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr in deprived areas such as Madinat al-Sadr. In return, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr's public position offered a semblance of legitimacy to the Ba'thist regime.

15. See Saleem, R. (2009) "Al-Ta'alīm fi Mustanqa'a al-Ta'ifiya fil" Iraq (Education in the Quagmire of Sectarianism in Iraq)," *Al-Hewar* [online] August 5, 2009, Available at: http://ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=180286 [Accessed on March 12, 2012].

16. For further details, see Cave, D. (2007) "3 Bombs Kill at Least 70 at University in Baghdad," *The New York Times* [online] January 17, 2007. Available at: http:// www.nytimes.com/2007/01/17/world/middleeast/17baghdad.html [Accessed on March 21, 2012].

17. Williams, T. and Mohammed, R. (2009) "Iraqi Campus is Under Gang's Sway," *New York Times* [online] October 19, 2009. Available at: http://www.nytimes .com/2009/10/20/world/middleeast/20university.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all [Accessed on March 21, 2012].

18. Author's interview with Palestinian-Iraqi Refugee, Mukhayim al-Yarmouk, January 2011.
19. Author's conversation with a resident of Sayyida Zayneb, Damascus, August 28, 2010.
20. Literally: The rightly guided Caliphs. This epithet is given by the Sunna to the first four Caliphs who were chosen to lead after the death of Prophet Muhammad. They are Abu Bakr as-Siddīq, 'Umar bin al-Khattab, 'Uthman bin, 'Affān, and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

4   Jockeying for Positions in the Humanitarian Field: Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Syria

1. The late Shaykh Ahmad Kaftāro, a proponent of the Naqshbandi Sufi Tariqa was appointed Grand Mufti of Syria in 1964. He retained close links with the ruling Ba'th party in Syria and was a favored cleric of Hafez al-Assad. The main foyer of the Kaftāro complex is adorned with photographic portraits of Shaykh Ahmad Kaftāro immersed in deep conversation with Hafez al-Assad and in another portrait with Bashar al-Assad.
2. The availability of protection space is measured by a number of indicators. These include the extent to which refugees: are intimidated by local authorities; have access to health and education provision; have access to the labor market; enjoy freedom of movement; are able to secure residency status; and enjoy adequate living conditions (UNHCR 2009a:5).
3. At the time of carrying out fieldwork, Syria was experiencing tumultuous events that had the potential to obliterate any advances made in establishing protection spaces for vulnerable populations, illustrating the precarious situation urban refugees are faced with. This has unfortunately proven to be the case.
4. Here I take a faith-based organization to be "any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith" (Clarke and Jennings 2008:6).
5. With the anticipated American withdrawal from Iraq, there has been a spike in the frequency of such attacks. See BBC (2011) *Iraq Bomb Blasts: Toll in Baghdad rises to 36*. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15486320 (Accessed November 19, 2011).
6. Author's interview with Human Rights Lawyer in Damascus, December 27, 2010.
7. The First Lady sponsored Syria Trust is one such example. Another is al-Bostan, an NGO with its headquarters in Lattakia. It is the philanthropic project of Syria's richest man and first cousin of Bashar al-Assad, Rami Makhlouf.
8. Author's conversation with resident of the Zayn al-'abidīn neighborhood in Damascus, February 18, 2011.
9. Author's interview with Shaykh al-Afyūni at Mujamma'a Kaftāro, Damascus, August 10, 2010.

10. Author's conversation with trader from the Midan district of Damascus, July 28, 2010.
11. The UNHCR's operational budget jumped nearly sevenfold from $40 million in 2005 to $271 million in 2008 (UNHCR 2009b:3).
12. It has been argued that in fact Syrian state institutions have failed to reap any significant monetary advantage through partnership with international NGOs. See International Crisis Group (2008) *Failed Responsibility: Iraqi refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon*, Middle East Report No. 77.
13. A UNHCR representative told me that although the UNHCR worked with church organizations as implementing partners, there had been "something of a missed opportunity" with Islamic networks and institutions. Interview with UNHCR representative in Damascus, March 27, 2010.
14. Traditionally, welfare activity in Islam has centered on the redistribution of income through *zakat* (alms), *sadaqah* (voluntary charity)*, awqāf* (religious endowments) (Muzaffer 2001) and in the Shi'i tradition—the *Khums* tax.
15. The message of the Islam came first to the people of Makkah who were well-known for being traders. Thus, it is not surprising that the Qur'an continuously refers to commerce and trade as a metaphor for the relationship between God and Mankind. Believers are reminded time and again to "spend in the way of God". See The Noble Qur'an 2:195; 2:261; 2:265.
16. The situation has of course changed since the uprising began on March 15, 2011.
17. Hamas has long enjoyed a positive working relationship with the Syrian regime that has hosted its political bureau in Damascus. This relationship is predicated on both Hamas and Syria being at the forefront of the *muqawama* or resistance against Israeli hegemony in the region. Interview with the director of the Rabeta al-Falastinyi al-'Iraq in Mukhayim Yarmouk, Damascus, July 05, 2010.
18. Saḥīḥ Muslim Book 001, Number 0074.

5 Home Sacred Home

1. "The entitlement of a person" Sen (1995:52–53) tells us "stands for the different set of alternative commodity bundles that the person can acquire through the use of various legal channels of acquirement to someone in his position . . . [and] is determined by his original ownership (what is called his 'endowment') and the various bundles he can acquire starting retrospectively from each initial endowment, through the use of trade and production (what is called his exchange entitlement mapping)."
2. The verse of the Throne. Verse 255 of *Sura al-Baqara* in the Quran. It is widely memorized and is commonly said to protect the one who recites it from the evil eye. The verse is an emphatic expression of God's power and dominion over the universe.
3. In a recent survey of 813 Iraqi refugee households in Syria, Doocy et al. (2011) found that 61 percent of the 366 adults who reported to be employed were

working under short-term contracts. Sixty percent of employed adults also reported working for small businesses with an average working week of 59 hours. Income from all sources including remittances and paid employment averaged at $97 per capita per month (ibid.).

4. Each Friday, Theresa Kubasak, co-founder of the ISP, facilitates a writers' workshop that encourages the craft of creative writing in English. The book contains extracts from essays, poems, and reflections, which were created in response to a prompt. Somewhat fortuitously, I was invited to a writers' workshop the very week they were discussing matters pertaining to faith and belief.

5. The anthropologist Elizabeth Fernea (1985:25) has suggested that "[i]f the Koran (*sic*) is the soul of Islam, then perhaps the institution of the Muslim family might be described as its body."

6. Saḥīḥ Muslim Book 004, Number 1703.

7. Saḥīḥ Muslim Book 004, Number 1705.

8. See The Noble Qur'an 24:27–29 and 24:61.

9. Author's conversation with another Damascus-based researcher, March 8, 2010.

10. A notable exception is in the field of primary and secondary education, where Iraqi refugee children have access to Syrian state schools.

11. This is a common strategy for securing their material existence among Iraqis who often "return" to Iraq on shuttle visits to collect rent on property left behind and collect state pensions and salaries that they are entitled to. See Doocy et al. (2011) for further details.

12. The director of the Rābeta al-Falastīniyi al-'Iraq at an address to the Palestinian-Iraqi community on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, Damascus, November 16, 2010.

13. Discussions with service providers indicate that the Syrian government at the time of my fieldwork was considering a more long-term relationship with some international NGOs and to broaden their remit so that the beneficiaries would include not only refugees but also Syrian Nationals. In addition, the oversight of the implementation of projects would be coordinated through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, rather than the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. This can be seen in the light of a recognition of the Iraqi refugee crisis being a protracted situation, which would entail more long-term planning rather than just the provision of relief assistance.

Epilogue   Syrian Sanctuary? Finding Continuities between the Iraqi and Syrian Displacement Crises

1. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPfshmYux8o

2. http://www.saida7.com/t12436-topic (in Arabic).

3. Worth, R. F. (2010) "Earth is parched where Syrian Farms thrived," *The New York Times*, October 13, 2010. Available [online] http://www.nytimes.com /2010/10/14/world/middleeast/14syria.html?_r=0 [Accessed February 20, 2015].

4. Ibid.

5. Erian, W. et al. (2011) Drought Vulnerability in the Arab region, Special Case Study: Syria, Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, UNISDR. Available [online] at: http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/Erian_Katlan_&_Babah_2010.pdf [Accessed February 20, 2015].

6. See "Starvation in Syria: A war tactic." Available [online] at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/30/us-syria-crisis-hunger-insight-idUSBRE99T07I20131030 [Accessed [online] March 26, 2014].

7. Recent figures from the WFP suggest as much as 92 percent of aid distributed by UN agencies reaches only areas under regime control. Available at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/04/17/exclusive_new_un_documents_expose_assads_starvation_campaign_in_syria [Accessed [online] April 20, 2014].

8. Author's interview with Syrian aid worker based at the Atmeh Camp, November 10, 2013.

9. Author's interview with the founder of Help4Syria an NGO led by Syrian Diaspora working out of London. April 17, 2014.

10. Kirisci, K. (1996) "'Coerced Immigrants': Refugees of Turkish Origins since 1945," *International Migration* 34(3).

11. *Regulation on the Procedures and Principles related to Possible Population Movements and Aliens Arriving in Turkey either as Individuals or in Groups Wishing to Seek Asylum either from Turkey or Requesting Residence Permission in order to Seek Asylum From Another Country*, No.1994/6169, November 30, 1994. Available at http://www.refworld.org/docid/49746cc62.html. [Accessed [online] December 28, 2014].

12. Law No. 6458, Official Gazette, No. 28615, April 11, 2013. Available at: http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/04/20130411-2.htm. [Accessed [online] January 2, 2015].

13. Kutahyali, R. O. (2014) "Syrian refugees under attack in Turkey," Al-Monitor, August 14, 2014. Available at: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/08/kutahyali-syrian-refugees-under-attack-turkey-gaziantep.html# [Accessed [online] February 01, 2015].

14. UNHCR "External update—Turkey," December 11, 2014. Available at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCRTurkeyExternalWeeklyUpdate12December2014.pdf. [Accessed [online] January 02, 2015].

15. Estimate provided by MazlumDer a human rights NGO based in Turkey, cited in Kirişci, K. (2014) *Syrian refugees and Turkey's challenges: going beyond hospitality*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

16. McClelland, M. (2014) "How to Buiild a Perfect Refugee Camp," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2014. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html?_r=0 [Accessed [online] February 20, 2014].

17. Author's interview with Syrian doctor who studied Turkish language through the TÖMER language institute at Gaziantep University. September 13, 2014.

18. For more on the education challenges for Syrian refugees across the region see Ahmadzadeh et al. (2014) "Ensuring quality education for Young Syrians: Mapping exercise on quality education for young refugees from Syria (12–25 years)," Research report, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford. Available at: http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/publications/other/rr-syria-youth-education-2014.pdf [Accessed January 12, 2015].

19. "The Rights of Neighbourhood" IHH campaign page available at: http://suriye-yardim.ihh.org.tr/en/main/news/0/for-the-rights-of-neighborhood/2006 [Accessed March 7, 2014].

20. One Syrian living in Istanbul told me that during the Gezi Park protests he encountered a Turkish leftist Muslim group who were opposed to the war against the Assad regime. (Author's conversation, November 19, 2013).

21. At the time, the so-called Islamic State had not declared itself as a caliphate and was one of a number of competing Islamist military formations operating inside Syria.

22. A pun on Children in Need—the official BBC charity that holds a hugely popular telethon to raise funds for children's charities in the United Kingdom. The word Deen here is taken to mean religion. Children in Deen has since come under intense scrutiny by the voluntary sector regulator in the United Kingdom—the Charities' Commission after allegations that a volunteer who had accompanied an aid convoy organized by Children in Deen had become involved in militancy. Available at: http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/news/children-in-deen-under-inquiry/ [Accessed [online] May 1, 2014].

23. Author's interview with Dr Maen Kousa, Gaziantep, Turkey. October 30, 2013.

24. Sahih Muslim Book 032, Hadith No. 6232, See also Sahih Muslim Book 001, Hadith No. 0056 for the hadith on removing obstacles from the path as a branch of faith.

25. Author's interview with Omar Faruqui, trustee of SKT Welfare. March 5, 2015.

26. See "2014 Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian action Response Plan." Available at: http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/2014-syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-assistance-response-plan-sharp [Accessed May 4, 2014].

27. See "Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II: Final report." Available [online] at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/JRANS%20II%20-%20Final%20Report_0.pdf [Accessed May 9, 2014].

Glossary

ʻābir al sabīl	early Islamic term to refer to migrants. Literally the traverser of the path
ʻashīra (ʻashaʼir)	clan(s)
abaya	loose outer garment worn by women
ahl al-bayt	the Prophet's household
ajnabi	foreigner
akhlāq	ethical behavior
aqīda	creed
awqāf	religious endowments
dahira	religious circle; a gathering
dīn	religion
dishdasha	a long, usually white, collarless shirt that reaches above the ankles and is worn by men from the Gulf countries
ḍayūf	guests
dhikr	a devotional act associated with Sufi religious practices, which requires the repetition of the Names of God or verses from the Qurʼan. Literally it means remembrance
dhilla	humiliation
ʻEid al-Adha	feast to celebrate the end of the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah
gharīb	stranger
ghurba	alienation
Ginza Rabba	Mandaean sacred text
hijra	emigration; also refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad to Yathrib
ḥadīth	narrations of the life of the Prophet and the things approved by him
ḥalal	permissable

ḥamla al-īmāniyeh	faith campaign
ḥaram	forbidden
ḥawza	religious seminary
ḥawazat	plural of ḥawza
ḥusayniyeh	Shi'i Islamic center where devotions in addition to obligatory prayers are offered
ḥizbi	belonging to the Ba'th party
ḥurma	sanctity; sacredness
iltimazat dīniyeh	religious commitment
iftar	the meal at the breaking of the fast during Ramadhan
iḥram	clothing worn by male pilgrims to Makkah
īmān	faith; belief
'izza	prestige; honor
jaḥiliya	literally ignorance; used to refer to the time before the advent of Islam in the Arabian peninsula
jaysh al-sha'bi	popular [territorial] army
jiwār	pre-Islamic tradition of neighborly protection
kāfir	disbeliever
kufār	plural of kāfir
khulufa'a al-rāshidīn	the righteously guided Caliphs
khums	one-fifth of income given as charitable donations in the Shi'i tradition
laṭm	ritual lamentation
madhhab	school of thought in Islamic jurisprudence
ma'ida al-raḥmān	literally the tables of the Merciful, where food is given to those (usually the poor) who fast during Ramadhan
makātib al-wukalā	offices of the representatives of Shi'i jurists
marja'iye al-taqlīd	source of emlation for the lay person in the Shi'i tradition
mu'akhat	brotherhood
mujtahid	Muslim jurist able to interpret Islamic law through independent reasoning
murtazaqa	mercenaries
mutazammit	strict
nakba	literally the catastrophe in reference to the mass-displacement of Palestinians from their ancestral homelands following the creation of Israel
pīr	Sufi religious leader in Kashmir

qiyām al-layl	literally standing of the night in reference to superogatory prayer said in the final third of the night by Muslims
ruḥāniyeh	spirituality
sadaqa	charitable donations: the recipients of *sadaqa* are less-narrowly defined as compared to the recipients of *zakāt*. Moreover it is not an obligation as *zakat* is
saddamiyīn	supporters of Saddam Hussein
servīs	privately owned minibuses operating in Syria
shahāda	declaration of faith; one of the five pillars of Islam, which are mandatory upon Muslims
shrūg	perjorative term used to describe disenfranchised urban poor in Baghdad
ta'ifiyeh	sectarianism
tawṭīn	re-settlement to a third country
ummah	community of Muslims
'ulamā	religious scholars
waṭan	nation; homeland
wāsta	brokerage connections
zakāt	obligatory alms based on 2.5 percent of an individual wealth to be collected for redistribution and is considered one of the five pillars of Islam

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