

ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

OLGA BIBIKOVA. ON THE ISSUE OF ANTAGONISM
BETWEEN SUNNIS AND ALAWITES IN SYRIA

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Abstract. In Syria, there was a massacre of Alawites living in coastal areas. The jihadists who have seized power in Syria are introducing Islamic rule in the country, which is going to curb the rights of non-Muslims. The actions of the current government can be described as an act of revenge against the Alawites – the community of the al-Assad family, which ruled the country for over 50 years.

The origins of the Alawite religious movement trace back to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (599–661) – the fourth Caliph, cousin, and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. According to tradition, the ancestors of the Alawites lived on the al-Jazira

* Banned in Russia (hereinafter).

plateau in Northern Mesopotamia even before the Arab conquests began. The dominant tribe there was Taghlib, one of the most powerful and cohesive nomadic tribes of the pre-Islamic era. By the late 9th century, the inhabitants of the region began actively interacting with Arab tribes living on the fringes of the Syrian Desert who practiced Shi'a Islam. At the end of the 9th century, the Hamdanid clan emerged from the tribal elite. As allies of the Kharijites of al-Jazira, they opposed the rule of the Abbasid¹ caliphs.

In the 930s, the Hamdanid leader Nasir al-Dawla established an autonomous emirate in northern Iraq, making the city of Mosul on the Tigris River his residence. In turn, his brother, Sayf al-Dawla², created his own emirate in 945 with its capital in Aleppo. Both emirates lasted until 1002.

Neighboring Byzantium was experiencing an upswing during this period due to the wise rule of the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty (867-1056). The Byzantines periodically seized territories from the Hamdanids and then returned them for ransom. Emir Sayf al-Dawla, who ruled northern Syria from Aleppo between 945 and 967, became Byzantium's most significant opponent. Aleppo was an important point on the Great Silk Road passing through Central Asia and Mesopotamia. Emir Sayf al-Dawla was renowned for his hospitality and patronage of men of letters, as his court in Aleppo was considered a center of science and Arabic literature. It is specifically known that he patronized the poet al-Mutanabbi³.

The Taghlib tribe, not being Muslim at the time, remained aloof from the events that contributed to the formation of early Islam and the Muslim state during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. However, it is known that Taghlib contingents fought as mercenaries against Muslim armies in Iraq and Upper Mesopotamia during the Islamic conquest of Persia (632-637). The daughter of the leader Utba Rabi ibn Bujayr⁴, named Umm Habib, was captured and sent to Medina, where she entered the harem of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin, later venerated by Shi'as as the first Imam. She bore him twins – Umar al-Kabir and Ruqayya. During the First Muslim Civil War