

Druze Monotheists (Unitarians) – Who Are They?

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The society of the Druze monotheists has remained mysterious to many researchers in the social and historical sciences. Much has been said about them, with some disbelievers and others forming opinions. They have managed to preserve their authentic Arab customs of chivalry, courage, hospitality, dignity, honor, modesty, and more. However, like others, they have been influenced by the openness to Western customs resulting from education, work-related travels, and the challenging living conditions their countries are experiencing.

Historical Overview

The historical sources that dealt with topics related to the Islamic conquest and the peoples and tribes that inhabited the Levant agree, including those known today as the Druze monotheists. These tribes left the Arabian Peninsula to conquer the Levant. Most of them were from the south and were affiliated with the Tanukhs, which are tribes of the south. The Tanukhs are an ancient tribal alliance from the ancient Arab tribes who contributed to the establishment of the Kingdom of Al-Hira in Iraq in the third century AD. Sources confirm the early presence of the Tanukhs in Iraq and the connection that united them with the Arabs of the Levant. The Arabs of the Levant were later invited by the Abbasid state to move towards the coast of the Levant to confront the Byzantine raid. After that, the Ma'an family moved from north Syria to southern Mount Lebanon to

support the Druze against the Crusaders. They settled in the Chouf region and made Baakline their headquarters.

It is clear that the migration of Arab tribes did not occur all at once, but rather in batches and at different times.

Who Are the Druze Monotheists?

The Druze monotheists are affiliated with Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and wife of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib. Ubayd Allah was one of the first founders of the Fatimid state in Morocco. The doctrine of monotheism that arose under the Fatimid state was an Ismaili Shiite doctrine. Under the pressure of political circumstances and the persecution of the Abbasid state, the followers of this doctrine were forced to work in secret. They eliminated the Aghlabid state in North Africa and established the Fatimid state on its ruins in 909 AD.

When the circumstances were right for the collapse of the Abbasid state, especially in Egypt, and the spread of comprehensive social corruption, moral decadence, luxury, and abandonment of religious principles, and following the death of Camphor al-Akshidi, the Fatimids, led by Jawhar al-Siqilli, headed to Egypt and were able to conquer it. They built the Al-Azhar Mosque (973-975). Egypt flourished, corruption increased, and the death of the Caliph Al-Aziz came suddenly. After that, Hakim arrived with his command. He was a stranger in his society, loved knowledge, and was cultured. He built the House of Wisdom and created halls for reading and studying. And he also transformed the Al-Azhar Mosque into a major religious and scientific university.

After the Ottoman conquest, the Sultan appointed Druze princes as princes in their regions, which was recognition of their independence

The call was announced secretly in 408 AH / 1018 AD. From the beginning, the Tanukhs responded to the Fatimid call. The call recommended adhering to its principles and preserving its teachings as a religious sect with its own good customs and honorable traditions. As a result of the resistance it met from its Islamic circle, it announced the closure of its doors, and was able to prove its existence through this distinction.

They refuse to call themselves Druze and have been known as Bani Ma'ruf. In the year 410, a battle called the Ordeal of Antioch took place at the hands of Al-Zahir Ali's followers after he swore not to harm them. Also, the history of the Fatimids was distorted due to their concealment or esoteric mission.

This was not the last ordeal, as they were distinguished by their support for the truth and their defense of it. The region in which they resided was turbulent, so they defended their presence valiantly, and at the same time they proved their openness to others, and supported the Islamic countries, so they remained firm in their areas. After the Ottoman conquest, the Sultan appointed Druze princes as princes in their regions, which was recognition of their independence.

The rule was fragmented after the Shihab family took over. Prince Bashir II al-Shihabi tortured and killed Almohad Druze notables, sowing strife among them and confiscating their lands. He also deliberately harassed Sages, and sources state that some of them abandoned the Druze monotheist religion.

Faith and Religion

The Druze doctrine was built on the essence of the Qur'an, and the essence of their faith is the unity of God. Religion is monotheism, and it is the link between the Creator and the created.

The Druze monotheistic faith was a revolution, prohibiting slavery, which prevailed in different societies with different cultures, and outlawing polygamy. Slavery was not abolished by law in the countries of Western civilization until eight centuries later.

The Druze monotheists believe in Islam as a religion and monotheism as a doctrine, and they are a branch of Islam. It came as a result of intellectual and cultural maturity, which increased in importance with the imams of the Fatimid state, as Cairo became their capital, competing with Baghdad and Cordoba, the capital of Andalusia. The doc-

trine also acknowledges the pillars of Islam: martyrdom, prayer, fasting, zakat, and Hajj.

One of the established principles in the foundations of monotheistic education is that religious etiquette comes before religion, such as modest clothing, good manners, and avoiding drinking alcohol and eating forbidden foods.

With regard to dealing with money, the social behavior of the monotheists is linked to religious behavior: “Religion is a transaction in this world,” and it is related to the way of earning and using lawful money.

As for honesty, its principle is saying the truth and abandoning what is forbidden. It is monotheism, and faith, in its reality, is belief in His existence.

The Society of Druze Monotheists

It is the path of the Unitarian doctrine, an integrated social system, and is evident in social life. The Druze Unitarians have largely maintained the cohesion of their society, despite all the changes and turmoil, to the present day.

One of the conditions for legal marriage is that it must be between members of the Druze monotheists sect in order to preserve the lineage and its authenticity

Religion is the link between its members and the motivation for its establishment, which strengthens the close kinship bond due to marriage within the sect and their rejection of mixed marriage. Some call this social cohesion “fanaticism”, and Kamal Jumblatt considered it a social-moral bond, closer to nationalism or patriotism than to

religious fanaticism. Meanwhile, the Druze mentality is liberal, and their belief is consistent with progress, development and acceptance of others.

The Family

It is sacred for them, and the relationship between family members is based on respect for the elders, love and tolerance. “The family is the foundation stone of human life.” Three successive generations lived in one family home, but over time, with the prosperity of practical life and the disparity in knowledge between generations, each small family began to live in a separate house. However, the children continued to meet in the family home at least once a week, according to their circumstances. This change is due to the nature of practical life. What deepens these family ties is their adherence to customs, traditions, religious and historical heritage, their interest in lineage and the family tree, and their pride in belonging to noble families with a good ancient reputation and authentic Arab roots. One of the conditions for legal marriage is that it must be between members of the Druze monotheists sect in order to preserve the lineage and its authenticity. Monotheist women have gained respect in society and shone in history, for example in religion: Princess Shawana, Princess Sara; and in politics: Princess Nazira Jumblatt.

Customs and Traditions

The Druze build houses of worship and councils, and their lives are linked to specific places where worship is practiced.

They make pilgrimages to these places to express respect and sanctity. Although worship among the Druze is not limited to physical locations, but rather to the heart and thought, they are connected to the land, which they consider part of their identity. They strongly defend it and are proud of their affiliation, considering it as important as honor and religion.

As for Druze weddings, the book or marriage contract should be written on the day of the wedding or two days prior. One of their customs is celebrating for seven nights, spreading joy throughout the village

Marriage and Divorce

Regarding marriage, it must be according to the Sunnah of God, through the union of heart and mind, in order to achieve the honorable goal of forming a family. Marriage among the Druze monotheists has certain conditions. The most important ones include choosing the right spouse, not marrying a minor, obtaining consent from both parties, ensuring there are no health obstacles, conducting the marriage contract in the presence of a judge representing the spiritual authority, making it known to family and relatives, participating in each other's joys, and maintaining respect and modesty.

As for Druze weddings, the book or marriage contract should be written on the day of the wedding or two days prior. One of their customs is celebrating for seven nights, spreading joy throughout the village. The wedding day is like a festival. These habits have undergone some change.

Regarding divorce or the annulment of the marriage contract, it only becomes effective when issued by the ruling of a religious judge. They also forbid a divorced woman from returning to her husband, and the divorce is only valid if both parties sign it before the judge and witnesses.

Ethics of Death: “Death is a Right”

It is essential to participate with the deceased's family community and embrace the virtue of patience: “And be patient for the judgment of your Lord, for you are in Our eyes.” The true believer is satisfied with the judgment of their Lord. When attending funerals, it is important to maintain composure and avoid excessive wailing, hiring poets, or engaging in anything that contradicts God's decree or exaggerates grief. Women who are not religiously committed should show modesty by wearing black and placing a white scarf on their heads, while also remembering God by reciting religious poetry, and these are some of the names, for example in religion: Princess Shawana, Princess Sara; in politics: Princess Nazira Jumblatt.

Their Holidays

Druze Unitarians celebrate Eid al-Adha for 10 nights of worship, preparing by making sweets, sewing new clothes, and setting off fireworks, which can be both common and dangerous. The celebration lasts for three days. Villagers visit each other and religious shrines. They gather in public squares and houses to exchange congratulations and en-

joy blessings, often homemade sweets like cakes and Maamoul.

Religious sheikhs and town elders continue to uphold customs that foster kinship, visiting the sick, and sometimes facilitating reconciliations between quarreling individuals. They believe in the blessings of Eid, which promote tolerance, love, cooperation, and assistance. The well-off provide alms and charity to places of worship and indirectly aid the needy, showing concern for others.

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They also celebrate other Islamic holidays in their own unique way.

The Unitarian Druze Today

Druze monotheists are currently spread across the Levant Island, including Lebanon, Syria, Palestine¹ and Jordan. They have no other affiliations and maintain no relations with countries outside their homeland. They support the truth and resist injustice, whether it affects them or their brethren. They belong to and support the existing ruling system wherever they are. They do not seek to establish their own rule or seek help from external parties; their commitment is to their nation. If they come under attack with the aim of eliminating or displacing them in favor of another group, they resist fiercely.



Funerals in Al Abu Ghannam Hall – Aramoun (Amal Afif Bou Ghannam)

Their motto is: “We do not assault anyone, and we do not accept attacks on us.”

There are numerous examples of their historical struggles, such as the Great Arab Revolt led by Sultan Pasha al-Atrash. Ibrahim Ahmed Khanjar sought refuge with him after being persecuted by French forces during the Mandate. In 1925, the Great Arab Revolt was declared, prompting their Lebanese brethren to provide support and

1. The Druze have a population of between 800,000 and 1,000,000 people, all Arabic speaking, found mainly in Lebanon, Syria and Israel, with small communities in Jordan. The oldest and most densely populated Druze communities are found in Mount Lebanon and southern Syria, around Jabal Al Druze, “Mountain of the Druze.” In Israel this community has about 122,000 inhabitants (Editor’s note).

embarrass France, ultimately leading to the end of military rule.

Today, they live under the protection of the state in which they reside as a minority. They have willingly relinquished their authority in favor of the establishment of the state and its institutions, provided that the state preserves their rights as citizens.

Religiously committed individuals strive to preserve religious customs by adhering

to their origins. Meanwhile, the world is witnessing a decline in moral and religious commitment, which has led to a moral reaction within societies. This reaction highlights the importance of preserving authentic values in the face of corrupt ideas that are currently being presented and imposed on people. Religion and its teachings remain the only constants in a world devoid of commitment.