Dr. Yousef Bennaji

Research Article

# A Gramscian Analysis of the Role of the Maw [l\ during Umayyad Rule

Dr. Yousef Bennaji

## Abstract

This study analyses the *maw[l\s'* role through the lens of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. The *maw[l\s'* role in anti-Umayyad rebellion movements is illustrated in the modern and pre-Modern sources. The division of the pre-modern sources is into two categories – historiographical and literary. Each presents the role of the *maw[l\s* differently. Modern sources also interpret the *maw[l\s'* role in various ways. Examining the viewpoints of pre-modern and modern scholars on the *maw[l\s'* role helps to construct a more nuanced picture of the *maw[l\s'* situation. It further enable us to conduct a comprehensive study of the *maw[l\*'s socio-political role during the Umayyad period, which in turn facilitates a Gramscian-style analysis, employing the theory of cultural hegemony. Specifically it asks: how a Gramsican view locates the *maw[l\s* within a subordinate class; how this assists understandings of the maw[l\s' developing class consciousness; how the Ibn Ash<ath movement provides context for an analysis of this class consciousness, and how <Umar b. <Abd <Az\z's reforms for elevating the status of the maw[l\ and addressing their resentments are interpreted according to a Gramscian understanding? Were these reforms introduced to bring change in the political structure or to pacify the anger and bitterness of the anti-Umayyad forces?

This study also considers whether it is possible to say that <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z's reforms represent, in Gramscian term, an attempt to stage passive revolution? It further considers how the reforms introduced by Ashras and Na~r b. Sayy[r in his last days may be interpreted in the light of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. The presence of maw[l\ in all anti- and pro-Umayyad socio-political movements displays all the characteristics of what Grasmci termed contradictory 'common sense'. The role of Shu<]b\ya is also evaluated with reference to Gramsci's concept of folklore. Finally this section assesses the maw[l\s' role in the Umayyad decline through application of Gramsci's cultural hegemony theory, since this highly influential social theory can shed light on the reality of maw[l\ contributions to the dynasty's eventual decline.

## I- Maw[l\ as a Subordinate Class and Gramsci

Modern and pre-modern sources alike portray the maw[l\ as a class subordinate to the Arab rulers. The early Umayyads successfully established their authority over the non-Arab maw[l\ without conferring equal rights on them; the maw[l\ in turn accepted Arab hegemony without

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[1]Assistant Professor in Islamic, History The Public Authority For Applied Education & Training Education college-Social studies department

significant protest. The question as to why the maw[l\ extended their consent and willingness to the Umayyads and Arab aristocracy remains to be answered, as does that of the nature of the socio-political conditions which compelled them to accept the Arab hegemony. In Gramscian theory, certain conditions are necessary for one class to acquire hegemony over the other. Gramsci identifies three conditions as necessary for the establishment of hegemony. First, the hegemonic class must have the potential to transform the economic base. Change at the level of production, the point at which hegemony first develops, brings a new development which shapes future developments in a particular direction. Secondly, the hegemonic class attempts to acquire control over the institutions of the state. In so doing, the hegemonic class uses the state apparatuses to extend its control over the society. These shape the political structure in the manner best suited to their own interests. At this stage the hegemonic class acquires authority by maintaining "equilibrium between its own fundamental interests which must prevail, and that of secondary social groups which must not be sacrificed",[2] and the political structure in the existing economic conditions unites the subordinate groups under the rule of the dominant class or group.

Thirdly, the hegemonic class presents its ideology through intellectuals who present the ideology and worldview of the dominant class in a manner acceptable to the subordinate class. Scholars diffuse the 'dominant class' ideology throughout society, developing an ideological organic link through which to integrate the various sections of society. Woolcock asserts that, in Gramscian understanding, a class is able to reinforce its authority over society by virtue of its capacity to control the society's economic activities. At this point, the ideas of a ruling class become the ruling ideas and by virtue of these dominant ideas, the ruled class extends its active consent to the ruling class.[3]

The chief economic resources were in the hands of the Arabs, who fulfilled all of these conditions during the Umayyad period and consequently had the potential to transform the economic base to their desired direction. Meanwhile, the position of the maw[l\ was secondary, since they were workers under their Arab masters and lacked the authority to move the economic base in a particular direction. Only Arabs had the capacity to shape people's future in a specific direction. The ruling party of the Umayyads was Arab, as were all leading oppositional parties who claimed Arab supremacy. In theory, the Khaw[rij argued for the equality of all Muslims but in practice they were also centred around the Arab identity. This too put the Arabs in a position to assert their authority over the maw[l\ who undertook to work as a subordinate class. Further, the Umayyads were the dominant hegemon among the Arabs because of their successful control over the institutions of the state. The early Umayyads, in contrast to their oppositional forces, controlled the state apparatuses in order to extend control over society. They successfully maintained an equilibrium between their own fundamental interests and those of the maw[l\, and while the non-Arabs might not have been satisfied with their subordinate status, the existing economic conditions forced them to accept Umayyad hegemony.

The Umayyads also fulfilled Gramsci's third condition, according to which the dominant class mobilises the intellectual to present the ideology of the dominant class in a manner acceptable to the subordinate class. The intellectuals disseminated an Umayyad worldview and developed an

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[2] Texier, Jacques, "Gramsci, Theoretician of the Superstructures" in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, Chantal. Mouffe (ed.), (London: Routledge and Kegn Paul Ltd), 49-79.

[3] Woolcock, Joseph A., Politics, Ideology and Hegemony in Gramsci's Theory, *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 34, No. 3 (September 1985), 199-210 at 205.

ideological organic link for uniting various social strata. By obtaining the consent of the maw[l\, the early Umayyads became the hegemonic class. As Gramsci explains, hegemony is "the spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group."[4] Al-@al[b\ classified maw[l\ into three categories: (i) the maw[l\ who had been slaves and later freed by their Arab lords; (ii) the maw[l\ who were leading Islamic scholars; and (iii) the maw[l\ who accepted Islam without associating themselves with any Arab tribe.[5]

The first two categories accepted Arab hegemony. Those maw[l\ who were religious scholars occupied the role of intellectuals and 'deputies' of the ruling class. For instance, when <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z offered Mak+]l the office of judge, the latter refused to accept, remarking: "The Prophet said: 'only a man respected by his own people is to judge men' but I am a mawl[."[6] This clearly demonstrates the non-Arab intellectuals' acceptance of Arab authority. This study does not claim that both of these categories accepted Umayyad hegemony. Rather, it suggests that they accepted Arab hegemony and extended their consent to accept Arab authority. In the early Marw[nid period, the maw[l\ worked under the authority of different Arab groups to whom they were affiliated. The third category of maw[l\ meanwhile was characterised by class consciousness and social dissatisfaction over the issue of equal rights and assimilation into Muslim society. They stood for their rights throughout Umayyad rule, participating in several anti-Umayyad Arab movements. Perhaps because they realised that Arab authority was well established, they did not separately initiate any resistance movement; consequently they worked as a class that was subordinate to the Arabs during the entire period. The emergence of the Shu<]b\ya movement occurred later, during the <Abb[sid era.

Belyaev, as a modern revisionist scholar, applies the Marxist approach to interpreting Umayyad history.[7] The Marxist approach observes how society evolves through the relationship of different classes in social stages, from primitive to communal, to slave, to feudal society. Belyaev asserts that the Byzantine society was a slave society moving towards the formation of a proto-feudal society, while the Arabs were at the primitive communal stage moving to a slave society when Islam appeared in the Arabian Peninsula. He studies early Islamic history from the perspective of social development and observes a shift in the social order of the tribal Arab aristocracy that emerged as a class of feudal landlords. The Umayyads are presented as tyrants whereas the Khaw[rij were the militant working class, dissatisfied with their social and economic status. Belyaev criticises Hish[m's fiscal policies, including his imposition of heavy taxes which lost society's support and engendered widespread unrest and in turn resulted in the emergence of factionalism which Hish[m's successors could not manage. As Belyaev notes,

> ...the active discontent of the working masses in all the lands of the
> Caliphate resulted in the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty for it had lost
> all social support. The vast resources accumulated by Hish[m in the state

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[4] Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12, 123-205.

[5] Al-@al[b\, *al-Dawlah al-Umw\ya*, 689-690¦2.

[6] Goldziher, Ignaz., *Muhammedanische Studien*, Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1889-90, trans. S. M. Stern and C.R. Barber as *Muslim Studies*, (London: George Allen, Unwin, 1967-71), 105, Note: Mak+]l was a Nubian slave and a leading scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence. He was the teacher of al-Awz[<\.

[7] For instance the relationships between different social classes and the relations of the oppressed and oppressors.

> treasury were dissipated under his politically inept and inactive successors, and his fiscal administration, consider excellent and his well-organised army were soon out of order.[8]

Belyaev considers Marw[n b. Mu+ammad an excellent military leader who nevertheless failed to restore Umayyad political authority due to factionalism and to conflict within the royal family. From this perspective, the Khaw[rij mobilised the dissatisfied masses in Iraq while the <Abb[sids attracted the local dihq[n and peasant working class of Khur[s[n and Transoxiana. Their rebellion against the Umayyads is categorically viewed as the struggle of a deprived working class which resulted in the fall of a regime.[9] Belyaev clearly saw the maw[l\ as working class. All socio-political and religious parties took advantage of the social unrest in order to motivate the working classes to eventually terminating Umayyad rule. Analysing the causes of the Umayyads' decline through the application of Marxist theory is undoubtedly a novel approach. However, the construction of the Kh[w[rij and the maw[l\ as working class seems somewhat misleading. Belyaev argues that increasing fiscal exploitation, harsh punishment, and executions of defaulters generated unrest and hostility against the rule of Hish[m b. <Abd al-Malik, until the masses rose up against the rule in almost all of the provinces of the caliphate.

Contrary to Marx's historical materialism, Gramsci focused on analysis of the impact of the socio-cultural and ideological in the formation of hegemony. His hegemony concept refreshed Marxist approaches to the analysis of revolutionary process. As Femia explains,

> Gramsci's description of popular consciousness in modern bourgeois society is, in principle, empirically testable; and it is also evaluated in the light of recent survey studies. The major premise of Gramsci's theory of revolution is that objective material interests are not automatically or inevitably translated into class consciousness.'[10]

## II- Gramsci's Theory of Cultural Hegemony and the Maw[l\s' Role in Ibn Ash<ath's Movement

Arab hegemony was primarily established during the early Umayyad period. It seems that the non-Arabs accepted their position as a subordinate class, and remained untroubled by class consciousness or struggle. The maw[l\, as common men, did not have any coherent thinking about their identity and social status, and this too is consistent with Gramsci's elaboration. To Gramsci, common men often hold a contradictory position on a particular topic, due to what he terms their 'disjointed and episodic' consciousness. Contradiction is one of the most important characteristics of common sense.[11] In Gramscian terms, the maw[l\ possessed common sense. Therefore, they joined various socio-political movements during the Umayyad period without

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[8] B elyaev, E. A., *Arabs, Islam and the Arab Caliphate in the early Middle Ages*, trans. Adolphe Gourevitch, (London: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 187.

[9] Ibid., 188-190.

[10] Femia, Joseph, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 24.

[11] Saldanha, Denzil, "Antonio Gramsci and the Analysis of Class Consciousness: Some Methodological Considerations", *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Vol. 23, No. 5. Jan 30, 1988), 11-18 at 14.

realising their own identity. Their participation in Ibn Ash<ath's movement also reveals their contradictory thinking.

Why did the maw[l\ support Ibn Ash<ath particularly when they knew that both Ibn Ash<ath and |ajj[j b. Y]suf were Arabs? Ibn Ash<ath did not initiate his movement for the maw[l\ cause. Similarly, there is no reference in historical sources to Ibn Ash<ath's criticism of the Umayyads for their discriminatory policies regarding the maw[l\. Ibn Ash<ath's movement, as discussed above, was not initiated in response to hostilities between the maw[l\ of Iraq and the Syrian regime.  Rather, it responded to the conflict that emerged between Ibn Ash<ath and Hajj[j b. Y]suf, when the latter appointed the former as leader of the Peacock Army, directing him towards Sijist[n in 80AH. The army was successful but Ibn Ash<ath later rejected |ajj[j's orders. Al-^abar\ noted that Ibn Ash<ath's army consisted of one hundred thousand soldiers, gathered from Kufa, Basra, the frontier regions of the state and Dayr Jam[jim. They were not only maw[l\ but also Arabs, and all demanded |ajj[j b. Y]suf's dismissal from power.[12]

Maw[l\ participation in the Ibn Ash<ath movement reveals their contradictory position. They supported an Arab against an Arab without realising that neither had any agenda to strengthen or elevate the maw[l\s' position. The absence of coherence in their thinking gave the anti-Umayyad resistance movement the chance to use them for their own gain. Moreover, their struggle was disjointed and episodic, due to the lack of class consciousness and coherent identity. Thus, both Umayyad and anti-Umayyad groups utilised the force of maw[l\  for their own ends.

### III- The Maw[l\ and Umayyad Reforms- A Passive Revolution

The third category of the maw[l\, as noted above, is that of the non-Arabs who accepted Islam. Class consciousness emerged primarily from within this category of non-Arabs and in particular among the people of Khur[s[n. These converted non-Arabs included both poor artisans and the landlords and aristocrats of previous regimes. Furthermore, the Arab settlers were in a close relationship with these converted non-Arabs. Another element of their class consciousness was the active work of anti-Umayyad groups in the region. Such groups initiated their political movements on the slogan of equality for all Muslims, and advocated the assimilation of Arabs with non-Arabs while condemning discriminatory socio-economic policies. All these elements contributed to the development of class consciousness among the people of Khur[s[n. In a Gramscian perspective, a society characterised by strong class consciousness is a society that is difficult to control. Therefore, the ruling class has to devise suitable and acceptable policies in order to maintain its hegemony. Without such measures, great leeway exists for flourishing rebellious movements to end the authority of the ruling class. In order to pacify people's rebellious tendencies the ruling class has to introduce reforms in the existing system.

Historical sources give great importance to the rule of <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z for his socio-economic and political reforms. He presented a worldview different from his predecessors, for instance exempting converted non-Arabs from the poll-tax and introducing a policy of agreements and reconciliation with anti-Umayyad Khaw[rij and <Alids. A Gramscian view would interpret all such reforms as attempts to appease the oppositional forces without changing the original structure of the ruling class.  Gramsci considers that the ruling class introduces such

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[12] Al--^abar\, Ab] Ja<far Mu+ammad b. Jar\r (d. 310⁄923), *T[r\kh al-Umam wa-al-Mul]k*, (Beirut: D[r al-Kutub al-<Arab\yah, 1971), 156¦5.

steps as a way through which an organic crisis may be diffused. They reorganise the structure and pattern of the government without changing the dominance of the ruling class. These reforms are launched to delay the organic crisis and to prevent "the development of a revolutionary adversary by 'decapitating' its revolutionary potential."[13] As Fatton explains, "Society had to change if it were to preserve its most fundamental structures",[14] and a passive revolution represents the pre-emptive response of the ruling class to a dissatisfied and disorganised subordinate class containing the potential and threat eventually to challenge their authority. In this situation, Gramsci notes: "the traditional ruling class, which has numerous trained cadres, changes men and programmes and with greater speed than is achieved by the subordinate classes, re-absorbs the control that was slipping from its grip."[15]

Muslim historians and Islamists tend to eulogise <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z for his reforms, which were focused towards organic crisis and its potential to challenge the authority of the ruling class. His reforms were an attempt to restore the hegemony of the ruling class. While he initiated dialogue with the Khaw[rij, he did not accept their real demands. Meanwhile the Khaw[rij accepted his authority and demanded changes in the criteria for caliphal selection. They asked him to change the will of Sulaym[n b. <Abd al-Malik, according to which Yaz\d b. <Abd al-Malik would be the ruler after <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z. They realised him that Yaz\d b. <Abd al-Malik was not a pious person and that consequently he was ineligible for this post. <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z accepted their notion in theory but in practice did not change the will of Sulaym[n regarding Yaz\d b. <Abd al-Malik. In fact, <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z's reformation was a successful attempt to bring about passive revolution. He successfully restored the hegemony of the ruling class by re-arranging and re-deploying political forms of governance and representation. As noted earlier, a passive revolution is a peaceful survival of a ruling class in conditions of organic crisis.[16]

Passive revolution thus signifies revolution without revolution. It constitutes a peaceful restoration of ruling class power, characterised by a constrained type of hegemony which touches only the cadres and leaders of the subaltern classes, but not the subaltern classes themselves. The result, concludes Gramsci, is "the formation of an ever more extensive ruling class."[17] In this perspective, the organic crisis is resolved almost exclusively "from above".[18] The reformative movement of <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z indeed constitutes an effort to resolve the crisis 'from above', since he mobilised the leading religious scholars and intellectuals (who in Gramscian terms occupy the role of civil society) to present the state's world-view adequately. Gramsci asserts that civil society and political society "correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society, and on the other hand to

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[13] Sassoon, Anne Showstack, "Passive Revolution and the Politics of Reform," in Anne Showstack Sassoon (ed.) *Approaches to Gramsci* (London: Writers and Readers, 1982). 133.

[14] Fatton, Robert Jr,. "Gramsci and the Legitimization of the State: The Case of the Senegalese Passive Revolution", Canadian Journal of Political Science ¦ Revue canadienne de science politique, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Canadian Political Science Association, Dec., 1986), pp. 729-750 at 731.

[15] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 201.

[16] Fatton, "Gramsci and Legitimization of State" 371.

[17] Gramsci, Selection from the Prison Notebooks, 58.

[18] Fatton, "Gramsci and Legitimization of State" 372.

that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the State and 'juridical government'."[19]

In hegemony, according to Gramscian thought, a certain way of life and thought is dominant, and is diffused throughout society to inform norms, values and tastes, political practices, and social relations. This diffusion is based on a specific organisation of consent, which has, but is not limited to, an economic base, and results from a combination of such coercion and consent, the latter achieved through the hegemonic cooptation of groups in civil society, resulting in "coercive orthodoxy".[20] Elements of civil society are co-opted by the state and used to secure the acquiescence of the dominated classes and to ensure their identification with the hegemonic world order. In this state of affairs, civil society becomes part of an extended state, utilised by the ruling class to form and maintain its hegemony by cooptation, through which the ruling class assimilates ideas that it sees as potentially dangerous, and creates cultural and political consensus. This process becomes an instrument of passive revolution, through which hegemonic forces allow limited (and to an extent false) freedom of self-expression for hegemonic groups, thereby maintaining the continued consent to the current relations of force.[21]

The intellectuals of a given society present the ruling class's worldview in a manner acceptable to the ruled class. This process may be seen as their creation of a space in which the ruled class feels inspired to offer its consent to the ruling class, who determine and define the law and order of the land. The extent to which intellectuals fail in securing the free consent of the subordinate class is the extent to which the state has to use 'coercive apparatus'[22] to discipline those who do not accept hegemony by consent. In the case of failure, an organic crisis develops, jeopardising the state's future. Perhaps the reforms of <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z prolonged Umayyad hegemony because he successfully mobilised the intellectuals of his era to diffuse the state's worldview among the masses. The above discussion endorses the suggestion by this thesis that the reformative movement of <Umar b. <Abd al-<Az\z was actually a successful effort for passive revolution. However, the crux of the problem between subordinate and ruling classes remained unresolved and reappeared during the last eight years of Umayyad rule. While Na~r b. Sayy[r also attempted in his last days to eliminate the grievances of the people of Khur[s[n, it was too late to appease them in a long term and appropriate manner. Moreover, Na~r could not successfully mobilise civil society to acquire the consent of the common people.

## IV- A Critical Study of the Shu<]b\ya in the Context of Class Consciousness and Identity in Gramscian Perspective

The Shu<]b\ya movement emerged to blunt the sharp boundaries of the racial legacy that had segregated the Muslim community into Arabs and non-Arabs. Their approach was more holistically based and focused on the elements of Muslim nationalistic identity. The Shu<]b\ya movement, which had attracted many maw[l\, took their name from the words in the Qur[nic verses, which reveal that Allah created male and female and made the people into shu<]b (races)

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[19] Gramsci, Antonio, "Letter to Tatania Schucht", January 30, 1933, in *Lettere dal carcere*, eds. Sergio Caprioglio and Elsa Fubini, Turin: Einaudi, 1972, 736-37.

[20] Gramsci, Selection from the Prison Notebooks, 831.

[21] Hagai Katz, "Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks", *International Journal of Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (December 2006), 333-348 at p. 335.

[22] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 209, 536.

and qab[>il (tribes) for mutual recognition, and continue to declare that the person who is most pious amongst the people is the most noble.[23] The qab[<il were taken to signify the Arab tribes while the shu<]b denoted the non-Arab maw[l\. These non-Arab maw[l\ were of different categories, e.g., those who were under the Sassanid Kingdom, and can be divided into two groups. The dihq[ns or feudal lords owned property and interests under Sassanid rule and functioned as a bridge between the King and the masses. Most of these nobles saved their prestige by accepting Islam and retaining their previous position while the masses, treated as slaves, only managed, after their acceptance of Islam to secure their freedom by attaching themselves to some Arab tribe. Thus they gained the status of maw[l\ or client to their masters. While the second group maw[l\ were from the lower classes, they were inspired by Islamic ideas of equality, justice and Muslim identity.[24] However, in practice, they could not secure equal positions to those occupied by Arabs.

Various factors were involved in the development of class consciousness and identity among the people of Khur[s[n. Consequently such class consciousness appeared to differing degrees among the maw[l\ of Khur[s[n. Gramsci suggests that there are three different levels of consciousness of various social groups: (i) the class consciousness of the masses of a class; (ii) the ideology of 'organic party intellectuals'; and (iii) the science of the philosophers. Socio-economic aspirations are expressed in the class consciousness of the masses by developing a 'common sense' understanding of the class situation, while the ideology of 'organic party intellectuals' attempts to mobilise the masses and present an ideology based on popular aspirations; whereas the science of the philosophers or the specialised workers attempts to understand a social reality. Class consciousness, ideology and science therefore all hold hegemonic significance. In the case of Khur[s[n, the maw[l\ of Khur[s[n by virtue of their high socio-economic position, argued for equal rights. Secondly, because of their distinctive socio-economic position, the realisation of class identity appeared among the masses. Thirdly, the intellectuals of the Shu<]b\ya worked actively to inspire class consciousness among the people. Fourthly, the <Abb[sid movement helped them to develop class consciousness among the masses because this, too, was a group oriented towards the equality and assimilation of all human beings on the basis of religious ideology. Lastly, the Shu<]b\ya movement flourished not only in Khur[s[n but across the <Abb[sid caliphate when the non-Arabs successfully acquired a central position in the <Abb[sid court.

As discussed earlier, the development of Shu<b\ya reached its climax during the <Abb[sid period, while the Umayyad period provided the starting point for the development of class-consciousness among the non-Arabs. According to Gramsci's theory, common sense philosophy provides fertile ground for the development of class consciousness and the reinforcement of ethnic identity. He identifies sources of the common sense philosophy or 'spontaneous philosophy' of the masses, theorising that the former may be found in language, as it may be found "in popular religion and therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of 'folklore'."[25] The stories of al-Agh[n\ and al-<Iqd al-Far\d, as some of them revealed

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[23] Qur[n, (49) al-|ujr[t, Verse No. 13.
[24] I bn <Abd Rabbih, A+mad b. Mu+ammad (d. 328⁄940), al-<Iqd al-Far\d, ed. A. Am\n et al., (Cairo: Lajnat al-T[>l\f wa-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1949-1965), 30¦2.
[25] Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, 323

above, in the context of the Umayyad era are by far the best example of 'spontaneous philosophy' and 'folklore'. Many of the stories of al-Agh[n\ and al-<Iqd are not considered authentic and are usually criticised for their fabrications, even though these stories had greatly assisted the construction of class consciousness and ethnic identity.

The maw[l\ slowly gathered enough strength to take opportunities to elevate themselves to the Arabs' level. According to tradition, the Arabs incorporated the maw[l\ into the Arabian tribal system and the maw[l\ fought side by side with the Arabs. However, the Arabs did not accept the non-Arab Muslims as equal members of their socio-religious life. The maw[l\ gradually grew in number and their importance increased, particularly the Persian and Christian maw[l\ who were well-read and highly-educated. Because of their increasing importance, they gained a higher position in Muslim society. Furthermore, the Muslim identity of the maw[l\s became evident when the state compelled the distinguishing of non-Muslims from Muslims. Hakim argues that, "both became merged in the term 'Muslim' which even to this day represents for many people, their nationality. The politico-religious movement then swept away the dominion of the Umayyad and thereby the International Empire of the Abbasids supplemented nationalistic Islam."[26] Arab hegemony came to end and a mixed official aristocracy came into being. Thus the element of Persian civilisation became a permanent feature of Muslim society. Similarly, the infiltration of Hellenism and the Greek norm became evident with the conquest of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt.

## V-Conclusion

The traditional authority patterns of the early Umayyad were challenged. Both the Arab settlers in Khur[s[n and their subjects posed many questions concerning the rationality of the traditional state of affairs. The Khaw[rij, <Abb[sids, and Qadar\s were the most important intellectual movements to question the established authority of the Umayyads. Attracting the masses in large numbers, their teachings played a vital role in the shaping of Arab political history. Gramsci views this "faith in a certain rationality of history" as mixed with superstitious and religious elements, giving the masses reliance in time of defeat, but leading to passivity if not subjected to critical pedagogy.[27] Even if the dominant hegemony attempts to bring about homogeneity in religious belief, in practice, even within a single religion, there are number of contradictory religions that are practised. Common sense is "influenced by the crudest and least elaborated forms" of these religions and even previous religions.[28] In this context, it may plausibly be argued that pre-Islamic Persian vanity helped the people of Khur[s[n to construct their distinctive identity in the changing milieu of Arab domination.

The socio-religious movements of the late Umayyad period were agreed on one point, namely that they rejected all kinds of discrimination, particularly on a racial basis. They were critical of any distinction between Muslims. For this reason, they rejected the Umayyad policies that centred on the superiority of Arabs and the inferiority of non-Arabs. Consequently, a significant number of the maw[l\ were present in these movements and participated in the rebellions against Umayyad rule. Similarly the Shi<\s gathered great support from the maw[l\s of Marv.

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[26] Hakim, Yorguy, *Predestination in Islam: The Qadarite Doctrine*, (Hakim Enterprises Inc. 2001), 199.

[27] Gramsci, Selection From the Prison Notebooks, 336-337, 420.

[28] Denzil Saldanha, "Antonio Gramsci and the Analysis of Class Consciousness" PE-14; Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, 420.

Documentary evidence indicates that the maw[l\ joined all movements that validated their privileges. This situation, according to Gramscian theory, indicates that class consciousness was not established among the maw[l\. Accordingly, their role in the revolutionary process may be viewed with some confidence as secondary and marginal. Furthermore, since they did not have a coherent ideology which could help them to secure their rights, they joined different oppositional forces who assured their wellbeing.

In the light of Gramscian understandings of the modern bourgeoisie, the present study finds that class consciousness did not emerge among the people of Khur[s[n on the basis of objective material interests; rather, it was the <Abb[sid ideology that inspired and encouraged its development. Different sections of society united themselves against the Umayyads under the <Abb[sids who presented a solid alternative and counter-hegemonic ideology. Thus, the maw[l\ and Arab settlers supported the <Abb[sids to overthrow the Umayyads. However, given their lack of clear corporate identity as well as of critical self-awareness, the role of the maw[l\ in achieving this dramatic and lasting change was in all likelihood quite marginal.