

SEDENTARIZATION OF THE NOMADS  
IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST

By  
LEO NEUBART

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts

The Dropsie College  
for Hebrew and Cognate Learning

1 9 5 2



A P P R O V A L

This dissertation, entitled  
SEDENTARIZATION OF THE NOMADS  
IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST

by

LEO NEUBART

Candidate for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
has been read and approved by

Raphael Patai

J.C. Humeitz

Date April 28, 1952



# SEDENTARIZATION OF THE NOMADS IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The Role of Pastoralism and Agriculturalism	3
The Bedouin Problem	6
The Crisis in the Bedouin World	6
I Definition of the Area under Consideration	8
Desert and Sown	8
Social Characteristics of the People	10
Changes in the Landscape	10
Prosperity and Decline in the Individual Countries	13
II Nomadic Society	
Nomadization of Settled Peoples	17
Classification of Nomads	18
Demographic Facts and Figures	21
III Migrations	
The Annual Cycle	24
Historical Migrations	25
IV Tribal Society and the Modern Arab State	27
V The Conflicting Attitudes Towards the Bedouin Problem	29
VI The Camel Economy of the Nomads and Recent Changes	33
Changes Within the Pastoral Economy	35
VII The Boundary Lines and their Bearing on Bedouin Migration	38
VIII The Transition of the Nomad to Agriculture	42
Sedentarization of the Tribes --	
Spontaneous Socio-Economic Change	42
Stages of Sedentarization	44



1X	Survey of Recent Developments that Affected Bedouin Society	47
	Saudi Arabia	47
	Iraq (Mesopotamia)	49
	Syria	57
	Mandatory Palestine	65
	Settlement Policy of the Government of Israel	68
	Transjordan (Jordan)	70
	The Bedouin Policy of the Transjordan Government	74
	Summary of the Bedouin Settlement Movement in the Area	75
X	Tribal Land and the Role of the Sheikh in Bedouin Settlement since the 19th Century	76
	Transformation of the Sheikh	78
XI	Attitude of the Tribesmen towards Settlement	80
	Social Transformation of the Bedouin	82
XII	The Bedouin Problem on the Agenda of the 1949 and 1950 United Nations Social Welfare Seminars for the Arab States	83
XIII	Conclusions and Summary of the Settlement Problems	85
Appendix	Recommendations for the Formulation of Settlement Policies	89
	Bibliography	93



## Sedentarization of the Nomads in the Arab Middle East

### Introduction

In spite of the importance and magnitude of the issue, the problem of sedentarization has largely been neglected by experts on Middle Eastern affairs, and no comprehensive study has yet been made on the subject.

The chief obstacle to an exhaustive treatment of the subject is the meagerness of reliable data. Trustworthy statistical information is generally not available for the countries of the Middle East, with the exception of Egypt and the Arab population of Palestine (Israel). The Bedouin, more than the settled people, have a deep-rooted aversion to any type of enumeration.

The writer has endeavored to consult the obtainable written literature, statistical, analytical and descriptive. While the material may be adequate for a discussion of sedentarization in general terms, a more detailed study must wait for additional factual data to become available.

### The Role of Pastoralism and Agriculturalism

As this dissertation is concerned with the transition of societies, nomadic to sedentary, it is in place to sketch briefly the role of pastoralism and agriculturalism in the growth of human civilization.

Modern society derives its sustenance from farming, or stock-breeding, or both. Simpler people are sustained by hunting,  
fishing and the collecting of wild roots and seeds.<sup>1)</sup> There is

---

1. Boas, 1938, p. 282



a chronological sequence in this division as the simpler economic activities of food-gathering and hunting invariably precede the more advanced pursuits of tillage and animal husbandry.

1)  
While for a long time the theory was upheld, that human civilization developed in three stages; hunting, breeding and farming, a number of students of human culture have pointed out 2)  
that stock-breeding does not necessarily precede agriculture, as there have been primitive peoples who began cultivation without ever passing through the pastoral stage. A more suitable gradation of human society was introduced by its dichotomy according to the economic activities of food-gathering and food-producing. This classification distinguishes the parasitic existence of the collectors from the productive life of the breeders and farmers. The pastoral nomad shares with the primitive food-gatherer the constant need for wandering, while as breeder of animals his economy is productive.

Nomadism cannot be regarded as a primitive stage of human civilization, but must be viewed as a mode of life which developed in response to certain geographical conditions. In the final analysis it is not the people, but the natural conditions of soil, climate and water which will determine the forms of existence, pastoral or settled agrarian.

3)  
Pastoralism in the Middle East has been regarded as an unsatisfactory alternative to agriculture. Considering the

- 
1. Boas, 1938, p. 283
  2. Edward Hahn; Alexander von Humboldt and others
  3. Fisher, 1950, p. 119



desert with its limited opportunities for finding means of sustenance<sup>it</sup> has been held the only possible answer to the rigors of the geographical environment.

This view, however, can be challenged. In the Arabian peninsula nomadism may be inevitable, but with regards to the potentially cultivable areas of Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Trans-jordan, for centuries used by the tribes as grazing grounds for their flocks, the situation is different. The land was not always barren, vast stretches of fertile soil turned into desert because of the nomads whose destructive way of living was victorious, where settled society was not powerful enough to check Bedouin incursions.

While the nomads contribute their share to the general economy, it cannot be maintained that the roving existence is a geographical necessity. The nomad in general responds and adapts himself to the desert, but sometimes he actually creates it. Only on a higher level of civilization is the attempt made by people to liberate themselves from the limitations of the environment. In the past and at present settlers have often displayed the tendency to condition the land to suit them. The relationship of man towards the land and the amount of care he gives the soil that sustains him can serve as a measuring rod for the standards of his civilization.

Prosperity in the Middle East of antiquity was the result of intelligent utilization of land and water resources. Present day devastation is to a great extent the outcome of Bedouin economy and neglect.

---



### The Bedouin Problem

The Bedouin cannot live in the desert without maintaining regular contact with the domain of settled society where he trades the surplus products of his economy for essential provisions.

In the past, the Bedouin have entered the cultivated zone either as conquerors, reducing the peasants to a state of semi-slavery and transforming fertile land into pastures for their herds, or as peaceful guests.<sup>1)</sup>

The conduct of the Bedouin on the outskirts of the settled region is determined by the ability of the government to defend the country and impose restrictive measures on the nomads. Once they accept the idea of compliance with certain conditions, they will soon become semi-nomadic and evolve towards sedentarization.

The substance of Bedouin policy in all the countries of the Middle East is the attempt by the political authorities to subject the nomads to a restrictive code of behavior calculated to protect the settled population, and to organize, facilitate, direct and accelerate their sedentarization.

### The Crisis in the Bedouin World

In modern times the settlement of the nomads has been regarded as one of the outstanding domestic problems in Arabia and the countries of the Fertile Crescent. The issue has been forced to a head by the crisis which the Bedouin world is under-

---

1. Muller, 1931, pp. 18 - 19



going in the wake of profound political, economic and social changes:

a. political

The national governments of the Bedouin-inhabited countries, unwilling to have the tribes under their territorial jurisdiction remain as a separate social unit outside the national community, consider their permanent settlement on land absolutely essential to insure stability and progress. They are aware that, once the nomads become tied to the soil, the tribal system will begin to disintegrate and cease being a "state within a state." By controlling the Bedouin and encouraging their settlement, the administrations are putting an end to the special political status which the tribes enjoyed on the borders of the desert.

b. economic

With the conquest of the desert by modern means of transportation the camel-breeding industry of the true Bedouin has been severely hit. Enforcement of public security destroyed additional sources of livelihood, such as the plunder of caravans, inter-tribal raiding and the extortion of khuwwa from village communities and weaker semi-nomadic tribes. Extension of cultivation in the area is rapidly limiting the wandering territory of the tribes and thus adversely affecting their traditional pastoral economy.

1. Bedouin raids are usually directed against other tribes or caravans which are attacked and plundered. The toll which is frequently levied on the agricultural settlements on the fringe of the desert is called by the name khuwwa, protection money.



c. social

With the improvements of communication and construction of pipelines there has been an ever-increasing ~~mutual~~ contact between the nomads and the settled people of village and town. While tribal sheikhs are the first to come under the influence of modernization, the tribesmen are also gradually adopting the mode of existence of settled society.

C H A P T E R 1

Definition of the Area under Consideration

This paper will limit itself primarily to the problem of sedentarization of the nomadic populations in the countries of the Fertile Crescent, that is: Iraq, Syria, Jordan (Transjordan) and Israel (Palestine), an area which distinguishes itself by its<sup>1)</sup> Moslem Arab majority, its striking similarities of natural environment and social organization. Saudi Arabia was included in this study because of the inter-relations which exist between the Bedouin of the Arabian and Syrian deserts. Tribes of the Anezeh Confederation wander from Saudi Arabia through Jordan into Syria and back and sections of the Shammar migrate back and forth between Arabia and Iraq.

Desert and Sown

The chief common natural feature of the area is of a geo-

---

1. With the exception of the Kurdish language used by the Kurds in Syria and Iraq, Aramaic spoken by the Nestorian Christians in Kurdistan and in a few villages in Syria, and Hebrew spoken by the Jewish community of Israel, the area is Arabic in character.



1)  
graphic-climatic character: Regions with hot, rainless summers and cool, wet winters where cultivation is possible and enormous expanses of desert with extremes of high temperatures and almost complete dryness where nothing but rough grasses, and hardier shrubs can grow. The amount of annual precipitation will make the difference between the desert and sown, it is ultimately the climatic conditions which will determine where and when cultivation is possible and what types of crops may be selected. The dividing line between the arid desert and the cultivated land is not a rigidly defined boundary. Generally there is a gradual transition 2) from the sown to the barren desert, steppe land as a rule constituting the intervening belt. The width of the semi-desert or steppe land is not identical in all the regions, and it is not static. Throughout the ages it has varied in response to human 3) factors.

The steppe is the permanent domain of the nomads who breed sheep and goats, and the camping area of the camel Bedouin during the hot summer months when life in the desert is intolerable.

- 
1. For a more detailed description of the common geographic characteristics of the Middle East see: Patai, 1952. As the author deals with the entire area of the Middle East: North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian Plateau and Asia Minor, his numerical percentages of desert and sown as well as settled and nomadic people are not necessarily applicable to the more limited region which is considered in this paper.
  2. Districts receiving 200 - 300 mm. of rain have steppe character, while tracts whose annual precipitation remains below this figure may be regarded as desert. Cf. Bonne, 1948, p. 149.
  3. The shifting boundary line between desert and sown is not the result of changing natural conditions like climatic changes as it has been variously suggested.



### Social characteristics of the people

The population of practically the entire area consists of two distinct social groups, the nomadic and settled elements. Just as the two contrasting physical characteristics of the area, the desert and the sown, cannot be clearly defined, the lines of demarcation between the social groups are fluid as the social structure is constantly in the process of changes. As the transition from the desert to cultivable land is gradual, society can be found in all stages of transformation from purely nomadic to fully settled. The degree of transition varies; in some regions Bedouin society has remained almost unchanged, in others nomadism is practically extinct.

### Changes in the landscape

History of the past and experiences of the present clearly show that the frontiers of the desert fluctuate, at times cultivation being extended into the desert, at times the desert invading the domain of the sown. The ruins which lie in the desert, particularly on its margins, bear witness to the brilliant past of the Fertile Crescent. A richness of culture and an intensity of economic exploitation must have prevailed in localities where today there is no adequate water supply. And yet the remnants of the irrigation works, the multitude of dry wells and cisterns in places which are desert today can be taken as an indication that the area had a much larger population and a more advanced agricultural society in antiquity than at present. The ancient histories of Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Transjordan abound with illustrations

---



of the phenomenon that appreciable prosperity prevailed in areas which now suffer from aridity.

The agricultural civilization of antiquity was able to maintain itself by careful measures of soil conservation and exploitation of available water resources, springs, wells and rain. The remains of many cisterns testify to the care with which the rain-water was preserved and husbanded. The intelligent utilization of land and water made it possible for a considerable population in Transjordan to derive a livelihood from the land.<sup>1)</sup>

What caused the downfall of the rich agricultural civilization of antiquity?

There is the well-known theory, advanced first by Ellsworth Huntington,<sup>2)</sup> that a gradual desiccation as the result of climatic changes occurred in southwest Asia during historic times, from the fourth millenium B. C. onwards. This natural phenomenon is supposed to account for the fact that cultivable land has turned into desert. Ruins of irrigation systems and wells in completely arid areas seem to point to a decreased amount of precipitation and to less surface water with resultant desiccation.

The theory of climatic changes in the Middle East, extensively used by Arnold Toynbee to explain the growth of civilizations in the area,<sup>3)</sup> is challenged by prominent scholars, climatologists and geographers.<sup>4)</sup> Facts are against any significant climatic changes

- 
1. Glueck, 1940 pp. 33-49
  2. Huntington, 1922, pp. 367 seq.
  3. Toynbee, 1934, pp. I-III
  4. Fisher, 1950, p. 52. For Summary of arguments against the theory of climatic changes in the area cf. Semple, 1932, pp. 99-100.



within the last 5 000 - 6 000 years which could explain the retro-grade phenomenon of cultivated land turning into desert. It is true that most of the wells which were cleared in Transjordan in the hope of finding water remained dry. On the other hand, the attempts to repair a number of Roman channels near the Gulf of Aqaba, were more successful. A new flow of water occurred in the same amounts<sup>1)</sup> for which the wells were originally designed. In Syria ancient Roman canals, situated in a region which is today desert have been<sup>2)</sup> likewise successfully restored.

There has been, unquestionably, a loss of sub-surface water in the area, not on account of climatic changes, but as the result of men's acts:

- a. deliberate deforestation, reckless cutting of trees for timber and fuel,
- b. unrestricted grazing.

These abuses, as well as the neglect and the destruction of irrigation systems are responsible for the decline of the prosperous agrarian society.

With the Arab invasion of the 7th century Bedouin from Arabia began to occupy the area bordering the Arabian and Syrian deserts. Where the nomadic hordes were not effectively controlled or rapidly absorbed by the settled population, a gradual deterioration of the flourishing economy occurred. Bedouin mode of living replaced or disturbed the agricultural activities of settled society. Areas

---

1. Fisher, 1950, p. 53  
2. Rapport, 1929, p. 77



which were dotted with villages in ancient times are completely barren at the present. Not natural causes were responsible for the gradual deterioration of conditions in the countries of the Fertile Crescent. Human factors have allowed the desert to encroach upon the cultivated land. Nomadic tribes with their lack of concern for intensive utilization of soil and water and the abuses of their pastoral economy have turned fertile land into steppe.

This recognition is important for present and future plans for developing the area. Man cannot prevent the workings of powerful forces of nature, such as a climatic change, but he can repair the damage he has done and restore the prosperity of ancient days.

#### Prosperity and decline in the individual countries

##### Iraq (Mesopotamia) and Syria

Mesopotamia is renowned for its fertility and productivity in antiquity. It has been estimated <sup>1)</sup> that in Babylonian times the area was inhabited by 17 - 25 million people. <sup>2)</sup> The prosperity continued throughout the greater part of the Abbassid Caliphate. The decline began to set-in in the middle of the 11th century and was the result of social decay and Turkish maladministration. In the beginning of the 13th century the work of destruction was completed by Tartar and Mongol tribes. Cities and villages were sacked, irrigation systems were wrecked or allowed to fall into disrepair. The fertile land of the Euphrates-Tigris valley became

- 
1. For the purpose of this study the accuracy of the population estimates is not as material as the fact that in antiquity the area was more prosperous and more thickly populated than at present.
  2. Lowdermilk, 1944, p. 150



unfit for cultivation and was handed over to the Bedouin flocks for grazing purposes.

Syria enjoyed in Roman times a period of flourishing trade and agriculture. The country was studded with thousands of thriving village communities. The use of irrigation systems, considerably improved during the Roman age, made agricultural prosperity possible. The whole valley of the Orontes, now partly desert, must have been the seat of intensive cultivation. The Deir ez-Zor district was a granary of the Roman Empire. The Hauran, proverbial for its fertility, was transformed under Roman aegis from a country of nomads into one of cities and villages.

Hauran is the first place where a concrete settlement policy converted tribesmen into sedentary cultivators.

1)

According to Hitti the population of Syria reached its peak in the second century C. E., when it amounted to 7 million.

With the Islamic conquest of the seventh century the economic situation of Syria did not change abruptly. The Bedouin Arabs, averse to agriculture, congregated in the cities and did not directly interfere with the economic activities of the countryside. The tribes that entered the settled rural areas of Syria had already been "domesticated" in other regions of the Fertile Crescent and lost much of their nomadic characteristics.

2)

- 
1. Hitti, 1951, p. 292
  2. *ibid.*, p. 483



Thus they were already prepared to become assimilated and absorbed by the sedentary agriculturalists. On the other hand, the nomads who remained on the edge of the Crescent continued their pastoral activities.

While the final doom to Syrian prosperity did not come till the middle of the 10th century, there was an uninterrupted decline<sup>1)</sup> in the agricultural productivity of the country.

The final chapter of Syrian prosperity was written after the mid-tenth century when Fatimide armies from the south, Iraqi-Persian hordes from the north-east and Seljuq and other Turkish tribes from the north began to pour over the country, leaving it in a state of utter desolation.

In Biblical times the Negev was considered unfit for cultivation.<sup>2)</sup> The Nabateans, who in the third century B. C. abandoned their nomadic habits and increasingly engaged in trade, were the first to develop agriculture in the southern desert of Palestine. Their first settlements were desert posts along the caravan trade routes. They engaged in dry farming to support the flourishing trading community.

In the Roman and Byzantine periods the Negev attained the highest point of development.<sup>3)</sup> Thriving settlements sprang up in areas which had never been cultivated before. Natives of Palestine and soldiers who had completed their term of military service in the

- 
1. Hourani, 1946, p. 66
  2. Avi Yonah, 1937, pp. 436 - 440
  3. ibid.
  4. ~~Jarvis, 1938, pp. 245 seq.~~



Roman army settled on the land in the barren areas of Beersheba and Gaza, exploiting the existing water supply to the fullest<sup>1)</sup> and establishing small townships on the cultivated sites. The success of these activities can be attributed to the initiative of the settlers and the influence of a powerful government.

Prosperity in the Negev did not decline suddenly under the impact of the first Bedouin onslaught during the seventh century. The struggle between the nomads and settled cultivators continued for generations. By the 13th century the Negev was in a state of complete desolation.

The archeological findings of Nelson Glueck account<sup>2)</sup> for many more settlements in Transjordan than exist at present. Glueck's study contains many references to cultivable stretches of land, once supporting a settled population and now lying waste.

The Arab Bedouin failed to emulate their Nabatean predecessors. The available rainwater was not preserved and fully utilized, irrigation works were neglected and became gradually useless. Deforestation and unrestricted grazing by herds forced the abandonment of one cultivated site after another. The end result of this process is, that areas which were dotted with villages in Nabatean times are completely barren at the present.

- 
1. Jarvis, 1938, pp. 245 seq.
  2. Glueck, 1940, pp. 33 - 49



## CHAPTER 11

### Nomadic Society

#### Nomadization of Settled Peoples

The biblical figures of Cain the agriculturalist and Abel the shepherd symbolize the two distinct social groups of the Middle East, the settled and the nomadic.

Since the beginning of history the sedentary and roving elements of the population have represented two hostile camps, fighting and despising one another. In spite of frequent warfare, the mutual contact between the two societies resulted in evolutionary processes of transformation, the nomad gradually settling down to an agricultural existence and the cultivator occasionally taking up or resuming nomadic habits.

While at present the transition is as a rule from nomadism to sedentarization, we know of cases in history where settled people have become nomads. This latter point must be emphasized<sup>1)</sup> because the statement has been made that "there does not appear to be a case where a tribe has reversed the process, settled people becoming nomads." This statement is contradicted by several authorities on tribal life in Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan.<sup>2)</sup> Commandant Victor Muller observed that the Jebbour in the Hassetché area in Syria seem to have lost interest in cultivation and reverted back to nomadism. The Mandatory Report of 1937 also states<sup>3)</sup> that certain tribes of the Homs-Hama region,

- 
1. Kirkbride, 1945, March-April
  2. Muller, 1931, p.
  3. Rapport, 1937, p. 106



already settled, have resumed their nomadic mode of existence when<sup>1)</sup>  
 political conditions permitted it. M. F. Jamali mentions a number  
 of instances where fully settled tribes of Iraq turned semi-nomadic.<sup>2)</sup>  
 Joseph Barslavsky concludes that certain families of the Tayaha  
 tribe in the Negev seem to have descended from the settled popula-  
 tion of Zoar. A. Konikoff states<sup>3)</sup> that economic reasons forced  
 settled families of southern Transjordan to form themselves into  
 tribes and adopt the way of life best suited to desert conditions.  
<sup>4)</sup>  
 Max Oppenheim mentions that the powerful Howeitat tribe of Trans-  
 jordan descended from merchants and peasants.

#### Classification of Nomads

The constant changes of the social structure make a proper  
 classification of Bedouin society extremely complicated.

<sup>5)</sup>  
 Bonnè divides the nomadic population into the following groups:

- a. Desert Bedouin who are the genuine nomads roving over the  
 vast areas lying between the Syrian desert in the north  
 and the center of the Arabian peninsula in the south, and  
 who engage in camel-raising exclusively.
- b. Steppe Bedouin who, in addition to camels, also keep large  
 numbers of cows, sheep and goats, and wander in the steppe,  
 nearer the cultivation.

- 
1. Jamali, 1934, p. 67
  2. ברסלבסקי, 1946, pp. 89 - 100
  3. Konikoff, 1946, p. 18
  4. Oppenheim, 1943, p. 291
  5. Bonne, 1948, pp. 362 seq.  
     363



- c. Semi-Bedouin who occupy a position between Bedouin and Fellahin. They are already engaged in agriculture.

While they still live in tents, they ultimately turn to the construction of permanent huts and houses.

1)

Muller introduces the following classification:

1. Nomadic Tribes

- a. Camel tribes, so called because they engage primarily in camel-breeding although they possess flocks of sheep.

They are the true Bedouin of Syria, all belonging to

2)

The Anezeh and Shammar groups. Their mobility enables them to maintain a 600 - 800 kil. radius of migration.

They wander in the desert from September till late in June when they return to the border of the cultivated zone in order to trade their surplus livestock and purchase necessary supplies. They do not display the least interest in sedentarization.

3)

- b. Sheep tribes, so called because they are chiefly pre-occupied with intensive sheep-raising. The need for water for their animals restricts their wandering in time and in space. Early in the spring, before the

- 
1. Muller, 1931, pp. 96 seq.
  2. The study of V. Muller is based on his observations of tribal life in Syria.
  3. This statement was made by V. Muller in 1931. It seems highly questionable that within 18 years the situation among the true Bedouin should have changed so radically to enable Fawaz Sha'lan, Chief of the Rwala, to declare that "all the tribesmen now wanted land" (for settlement) cf. New York Times, September 6, 1949. Even changing circumstances have never had such an effect on the conservative mentality of the Bedouin, and it seems, therefore, that the declaration of Sha'lan, made for political reasons, must be taken with a note of caution.



excessive heat sets in, the sheep tribes come back to the cultivated zone. Frequently their radius of movement does not exceed a dozen of miles. The members of the sheep tribes are in regular contact with the settled population and practically all of them evince more or less an interest in settlement.

## 2. Semi-Sedentary Tribes

While the semi-sedentary tribes continue to breed livestock, they are already attached to the soil which they cultivate.

Part of the tribe engages in cultivation, while the other tends to the flocks. After the season of ploughing and sowing is over, the tribe gets on the move in search of pastures, leaving behind only the necessary number of men for guard and irrigation duties. Early in spring the semi-sedentary come back to their fields. Right after harvesting they begin sowing the summer crops. They spend the winter and spring in tents; during the summer they live in huts which they make out of trunks and branches of trees. Village settlement is a rare exception.

## 3. Sedentary Groups

This group is the least numerous and important. The members live in towns and villages like settled people with the difference that they still retain their tribal character.

---



Whatever categories the various observers introduce for the stratification of Bedouin society, the chief criteria are:

- a. the radius and duration of the annual migrations
- b. the type of livestock on which the pastoral economy of a group is based
- c. the extent of attachment to the soil.

Nomad society in the Arab Middle East includes groups which are separated by centuries of evolutionary development. On the one side we have the true desert Bedouin who breeds camels exclusively, has a wide radius of migration and no attachment to the soil and on the other side we find the almost settled semi-nomad whose regular agricultural activities have led him to cultivation and a subsequent limitation of animal husbandry.

#### Demographic facts and figures

Demographic statistics of the Middle East are available only for Turkey, Egypt and Israel (Palestine). Population figures for Arabia, Iraq, Syria and Jordan are computed on the basis of estimates and cannot be considered reliable. In 1947 censuses were taken for the first time in Iraq and Syria, but the accuracy of these reports may be seriously questioned.

The nomadic element constitutes about one third of the population in the Arabian peninsula and about one tenth in Iraq and

1)  
Syria. This latter estimate must exclude semi-nomads in an

---

1. Review of Economic Conditions, 1951, p. 8



advanced stage of settlement as it seems to be generally agreed<sup>1)</sup> that in Iraq the nomads of all types constitute more than 50 per cent of the total population. The number of nomadic and semi-nomadic inhabitants of Syria is estimated at about 500 000<sup>2)</sup> or about 15 per cent of the population. In Jordan there are about 40 000 true nomads and 120 000 semi-nomads.<sup>3)</sup> In 1931 there were 66 553 nomads in Palestine<sup>4)</sup> of whom 47 981 wandered in the Negev.<sup>5)</sup> Since the establishment of the State of Israel the nomad population of the Negev has been substantially reduced.<sup>6)</sup> Early in 1951 only 17 500 could be counted, the rest had left the Negev during the Arab-Israel war. A small number of Bedouin<sup>7)</sup> were camping in 1949 close to the Syrian and Lebanese borders.

- 
1. Jamali, 1934, introduction  
Jawad, 1945, pp. 14 - 15
  2. Royal Institute, 1950, p. 384
  3. Konikoff, 1946, p. 18
  4. Census Report of 1931
  5. ibid
  6. Elston, 1951, p. 21
  7. Al-Hamishmar, May 25, 1949



Population Table

<u>Country</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Bedouin Population</u>
The Arabian Peninsula		
Aden Colony and Protectorate	732 000 1)	
Bahrein	110 000 1)	
Kuwait	170 000 1)	
Qatar	20 000 1)	
Saudi Arabia	6 000 000 1)	
Trucial Oman	80 000 1)	
Muscat and Oman	830 000 1)	
Yemen	4 500 000 1)	
	<hr/>	
	12 442 000	4 000 000
Iraq	4 799 000 2)	2 500 000
Syria	3 435 000 3)	500 000
Jordan	800 000	160 000
Israel	1 554 000 4)	17 500
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	23 001 000	7 177 500

The Nomads constitute approximately 31 per cent of the population in the area under discussion.

- 
1. Review of Economic Conditions, 1951, p. 43  
There has never been a census in any part of the Arabian peninsula. The total population of Arabia is usually estimated at 6 - 7 000 000, cf. Royal Institute, 1950, p. 81
  2. Census of 1947
  3. Review of Economic Conditions, 1951, p. 43
  4. New York Times, December 1, 1951, quoted from Government of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics.



## CHAPTER 111

### Migrations

#### The Annual Cycle

The outstanding characteristic of nomadic society is the constant wandering in search of water and pasture for the flocks of animals. The movement is never aimless within the wandering territory of the tribe, the directions of the migration are determined by temperature and rainfall. The pastoralists follow the seasonal growth of grass.

During the winter and early spring months the nomads wander in the more arid zones where limited rainfall enables them to find some grazing areas. With the approach of the hot season the Bedouin leave the parched desert region to move nearer to the cultivated area where temperatures are more tolerable and where they can pitch their tents close to the wells. Until recently it was regarded their traditional right to graze their flocks on the harvested fields.<sup>1)</sup> Trekking back and forth in an annual cycle within the area of the dirah, the wandering territory, is the general wandering habit of the Arab nomad.<sup>2)</sup> The wandering territory of the tribe is an area, carefully delimited by practice and tradition. However, conditions of extreme famine in the Arabian and Syrian deserts may force the tribe to cross the limits of its

- 
1. Grazing on harvested fields was the custom established by tradition and sanctioned by Article 15 of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858. This abuse, however, was abolished in mandatory times.
  2. Transhumance, or vertical migration, is practiced by the Kurdish and Persian nomads who live in mountainous regions. They occupy successively different levels of altitude in the same district, winter being spent in the valleys where the weather conditions are not as crude as in the hills where the tribes camp during the summer months.



wandering area. The radius of migration is determined by:

- a. the strength of the tribe
- b. the supply of water and grazing areas within the dirah
- c. the amount and type of livestock reared by the group
- d. the relationship of the tribal unit to the soil

Weaker tribes are not free to move over extended areas for fear of being exposed to attacks by more powerful tribes. Their wandering territory is limited and usually in the vicinity of the cultivated land.

The true desert Bedouin of Arabia, pre-occupied exclusively<sup>1)</sup> with camel-breeding, is in a position to cover great distances due to the mobility of the camel. As sheep and goats enter the economic life of the Bedouin, the radius of migration has to be reduced since the unit has to remain close to watering places.

Further restrictions occur when occasional cultivation forces the nomad to stay in the vicinity of the land which he has tilled.

#### Historical migrations

Besides the wanderings of the nomads in annual cycles to satisfy the grazing needs of their herds and flocks, there were<sup>2)</sup> in history great eruptions which occurred sporadically and

- 
1. The definition of a true Bedouin is according to Touvia Ashkenazi: a nomad who is engaged in camel-breeding exclusively and who traces his descent from certain tribes recognized as true Bedouin (cf. Ashkenazi, 1948, p. 236). The Bedouin looks down on the sheep and goat nomad who is bound to sources of water. The restrictions of migratory radius are according to Bedouin psychology an interference with personal freedom. At present, exclusive camel-breeding is rare except in Arabia.
  2. ~~Arnold Toynbee~~ has set up 600 year cycles for the occasional nomadic eruptions. (cf. Toynbee, 1934, pp. 398 seq.)



swept at times whole continents.

In the Arab world these were the large-scale migrations which occurred under the inspiration of religious founders or reformers such as Muhammad and Abd-el Wahhab. The tribes became the missionaries of great social and political movements.

It seems quite possible that even at the bottom of these widespread migrations and invasions of neighboring countries lay economic factors. A few successive seasons of deficient rainfall and subsequent famine in the Arabian desert will make the ever-precarious existence of the Bedouin impossible and force unusual migrations.

1)  
According to the theory of Caetani followed by modern critical scholars, the Arabian Islamic expansion had underlying economic causes. Arabian Bedouin were summoned to a holy war by arousing their desire for the booty to be taken from the enemies.

Islamic expansion constituted a series of waves of migrations carrying the surplus population of the barren Arabian peninsula to the fertile regions on its borders.

The North has always attracted the ever-hungry Bedouin of the Arabian desert, the movement only gained momentum in the era of early Islamic conquerors.

It is certain that exceptionally inclement weather conditions with subsequent famine in the desert caused in the 18th and beginning of the 19th century the large-scale migrations of the powerful

---

1. Caetani, 1905-26, pp. 831-61



Shammar and Anezeh groups from the Arabian desert into the more fertile steppes of Mesopotamia and Syria.

## CHAPTER IV

### Tribal Society and the Modern Arab State

Nomadic society, characterized by specific social, political and economic concepts, is incompatible, and hence often in conflict with the state and its institutions.

#### Social

Bedouin society is tribal, based on blood relationships, not recognizing any other ties. Its social customs are the result of adaptation to tent life and desert wandering. The concepts of "people" and "nation" are foreign to the nomad whose social outlook is limited to his tribe.

#### Political

"The characteristic socio-political trait of the nomadic tribe is the lack of political organization or political institutions."<sup>1)</sup> The political body is the tribe, control is loosely exercised by the sheikh and the Council of Elders. Unwritten desert law and custom are its judicial authority. The authority of the State is not recognized.

#### Economic

The pastoral economy sets the nomads apart from the majority

---

1. Patai, 1952



1)

of the population engaged in agriculture.

The nomads are only concerned with their social, political and economic order; settled society interests them only negatively, as objects of raid and plunder. The nomads of the Syrian desert have a deeper understanding for the happenings in the far-off Arabian desert than for the life in Damascus in the vicinity of which they may be encamped. Hence the general indifference of the Bedouin to all ideas and movements that originate in the Arab Cities.

The modern Arab states of the Middle East, sensitive about their sovereignty, thus had to come into conflict with the tribal elements within their political boundaries. They felt that the stability of the administration was undermined as long as the tribes could not be reached by tax-collectors, census takers, and could not be subjected to military conscription and state jurisdiction.

Since the political partitioning of the Syrian desert after the First World War it has become increasingly difficult to exercise effective control over the tribes. For four centuries the Syrian desert was continuously in the hands of a single power, the Ottoman Empire. Inefficient as the Turkish administration may have been, its ubiquity placed it in a position to impose its authority on a recalcitrant tribe, which at present can easily escape the jurisdiction of one state simply by slipping across the nearest frontier.

- 
1. In the Middle East livestock-breeding and agriculture are two distinct economies, the former practiced by the nomads, the latter by the fellahin.



The tribesmen pay no attention to political boundary lines. When convenient, however, the Bedouin will take advantage of the frontier. An ambitious government collector of sheep and camel taxes, for example, may make it advisable for the tribes to assume a different nationality merely by shifting their tents into a region where the government authorities may be less  
1)  
exacting.

The nomads thus represent a national problem, and tribal settlement on land has become an important domestic issue in the Bedouin inhabited areas. On the one hand, the governments have checked and tried to eliminate the abuses perpetrated by the nomads, and on the other they have encouraged the process of transition to agriculture. Raiding was stopped, collection of khuwwa outlawed, encroachment on areas of cultivation prohibited.

The positive measures for solving the Bedouin problem were on the whole inadequate, but settlement was given an appreciable impetus by the distribution of land, extension of financial aid, education and technical advice.

## CHAPTER V

### The conflicting attitudes towards the Bedouin problem

There are two, basically opposing attitudes towards the Bedouin problem:

- a. that of the realists who propose settlement of the nomads

---

1. Report, 1923-24, p. 23



whose desert economy and social organization have collapsed;  
and

- b. that of the romanticists who are more interested in saving the "noble" Bedouin society than suggesting alternate means of livelihood for the nomads who have suffered a serious economic crisis.

These two approaches to the Bedouin problem are reflected in and interesting and instructive argument between Eliahu Epstein and Major J. C. Glubb in connection with recent changes among the nomads of Transjordan.<sup>1)</sup> Epstein stated that there has been since the end of World War I a progressive impoverishment among the Bedouin of Transjordan. The pastoral economy, based on camel-breeding and sheep-raising, has according to him undergone a serious crisis because the camel cannot hold its ground in the face of competition with modern means of transportation. Sheep-raising, on the other hand, is more profitable when practiced in permanent settlements which do not have to suffer livestock losses on account of raids. Epstein further points out that Bedouin migrations have become restricted since the boundary lines were drawn in the desert. In times of drought the nomads cannot save their animals any more, simply by moving them into regions where rains are more abundant. Raiding which constituted an additional source of income for the Bedouin has been outlawed. Epstein's

p 29

---

1. Epstein, 1938, pp. 228-236  
Glubb, 1938, pp. 448-454  
Epstein, 1939, pp. 177 seq.



answer to the problems of the Bedouin is their rapid settlement on land.

Glubb stated that the economic condition of the Transjordan tribesmen is not critical. In the old days the Bedouin had to rely on the merchants who used to come into the desert, purchase the camels and take them to the market. The establishment of public security has enabled the Bedouin to take their animals across the territory of hostile tribes and sell them directly, thus cutting out the middle-man's share of the profit. While the demand for camels for long-distance transport has been reduced, the camel market has according to Glubb not been destroyed. There is still a considerable demand for camels to be used in agricultural work. The chief customer, however, is the butcher's shop, particularly in Egypt where camel's meat is consumed in great quantities. Sheep always enjoy a ready market. The tribesmen seem poor to many Europeans, but the Bedouin of Transjordan are financially more prosperous than most Oriental peasants, and they enjoy more material comforts than they did before the First World War.

Glubb is critical of Epstein's view that the drought years of 1931 and 1932 have made the issue of Bedouin settlement in Transjordan urgent. Otherwise the statements of Glubb lack realism. He is gravely concerned about what modern civilization may do to a "simple, smiling people." Glubb represents the view of the British "romanticists" who deplore the vanishing of the "glorious" desert-tent Bedouin society.



Another example of this attitude is the statement of General Sir Percy Cox before a meeting of the Royal Central Asian Society: "The true Bedouin are attractive people, and I hope they will not<sup>1)</sup> be swept away too rapidly with the spread of civilization."

This type of approach has often found its way into official records of the British Colonial Administration. In the Special Report on the Administration of Iraq we find the statement that<sup>2)</sup> "the tribe has little to gain and much to lose by settling." The report becomes slightly ridiculous when it refers to the body-lice<sup>3)</sup> and the unwashed clothes of the Bedouin as "clean dirt."

Epstein's study, however, must be subjected to criticism on several points. He attributes the progressive impoverishment of the desert Bedouin largely to the decline of the camel market and the tracing of the political boundary lines. While recognizing that not all the Bedouin can be reduced to a sedentary life, he maintains that the problems of Transjordan can be solved only by settlement of the nomadic population. There seems to be an exaggeration in the significance which Epstein attaches to an economic crisis among the Bedouin. Developments clearly show that the nomads are quick in making changes within their pastoral economy, from camel-breeding to sheep-raising, but reluctant to take up cultivation. Although camel economy is disintegrating, this phenomenon in itself does not necessarily lead to a permanent impov-

- 
1. Glubb, 1935, p. 31
  2. Special Report, 1932, p. 185
  3. *ibid.*



erishment of the nomads. The economic crisis may be temporary, till adjustments within the nomad economy have been carried out. The need for the camel has declined, but the importance of the sheep and goats has remained unchanged. Sheep and goats supply the people of the area with meat, dairy products and wool.

In fact, the suggestion may be ventured that in the near future the importance of the pastoral economy will considerably increase when the Arab masses will change to a healthier, more balanced diet which presently lacks vital protein elements.

According to Epstein the transition from nomadism to agriculture is made urgent by the unprofitability of camel-breeding, stoppage of raiding (heretofore a source of revenue), and the partitioning of the Syrian Desert. While these phenomena undoubtedly had serious repercussions in the Bedouin world, they do not seem to be chiefly responsible for the disintegration of tribal society and pastoral economy.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Camel Economy of the Nomads and Recent Changes

In the past the economy of the Bedouin was principally based on camel-breeding. With the construction of railways in the Middle East and the introduction of the automobile in the desert, the value of the camel declined rapidly and substantially. Prices



slumped from LP 20 before the First World War to LP 4-5 or even  
1)  
less in the thirties.

"Prior to the war there were good markets for Iraq's camels in Syria, Turkey and Persia, in addition to the large numbers required for transport purposes in Iraq itself. Since the war, many railways have been constructed throughout the Middle East and the road systems of all countries have been greatly extended and improved. These roads are now all served by a large and increasing number of motor cars and lorries which have to a great extent taken the place of camel transport, thus practically removing the income to the Bedouins from their sale of camels." 2)

There was in the past a substantial demand for camel's meat, particularly in Egypt. But figures show that the import of camels into Egypt declined sharply since the end of the First World War. The import of camels into Egypt averaged prior to World War I  
3)  
(1899-1912) 41 137 per year, in the post-war years up till 1937  
3)  
only 28 137. Figures and statements of observers indicate that the Egyptian camel market has contracted considerably since the end of the First World War. Although there has recently been a  
4)  
rise in consumption of camel's meat in Egypt, the camel industry has lost its importance.

A classic Bedouin country such as Transjordan exported in 1929

- 
1. Epstein, 1937, February
  2. Special Report, 1932, p. 185
  3. Epstein, 1939, p. 177
  4. The number of camels slaughtered in public slaughtering houses amounted to:

12 082	in 1944	
22 121	1945	
27 218	1946	cf. Annuaire, 1947, p. 137



1)  
only 3 437 camels, and within a short time this trade became so insignificant that since 1937 camel export figures were no longer listed in official statistical abstracts. Although 40 000 nomads of Transjordan are classified as full Bedouin, they cannot possibly live on camel-breeding. The following figures will show the dwindling camel stock in Transjordan:

1927	13 800	2)
1929	33 500	2)
1935	3 400	2)
1943	6 000	2)
1948	2 500	3)

Figures are probably understated as information on animal holdings was furnished for taxing purposes, but they indicate the trend.

The decline of camel trade and the slump in market prices have severely hit the camel-breeding Bedouin. Transjordan was selected as an example, but the same phenomenon is apparent among the nomads of Syria and Iraq.

#### Changes within the pastoral economy

The camel Bedouin coming from the Arabian desert into the lands of the Fertile Crescent will sooner or later become a sheep nomad. This transformation has been going on for centuries, long before the decline of the camel market made it necessary. The change was in the past an adaptation of the pastoral economy to

- 
1. Epstein, 1939, p. 180
  2. International Yearbooks of Agricultural Statistics for 1931/2 and 1940/41
  3. Final Report, 1949, Part 11, p. 10



the natural conditions of the environment, while in recent years it has also been an adjustment to economic circumstances.

The type of animal industry is determined by geographic factors and climatic conditions. In Iraq "in many parts of the alluvial lowlands, terrain is too soft and swampy, so that these animals (camels) are few outside the steppes." <sup>1)</sup> Syria, especially the northern part, where rigorous winters frequently occur, is not an ideal region for camel-breeding while in parts of the Arabian desert sheep and goats cannot survive.

The profitability and the increase of sheep and goat rearing is apparent from the following Transjordan export-trade figures: <sup>2)</sup>

	1937	1939	1941	1943
goats	6 988	7 637	32 638	31 041
sheep	12 064	37 896	56 735	52 487

While the camel trade declined, the sheep and goat business has been constantly rising.

<sup>3)</sup> Mr. Epstein states that sheep raising is more lucrative when practiced in permanent settlements which do not have to fear losses incurred as result of inter-tribal raiding. With the establishment of Public Security, however, raids have practically ceased, and the desert has been made secure. Today, throughout <sup>4)</sup> the area the animal industry is largely in the hands of the nomads.

- 
1. Fisher, 1950, p. 362
  2. Konikoff, 1946, p. 112 Table 16
  3. Epstein, 1938, p. 228
  4. In Iraq the breeding of sheep is practiced almost exclusively by the nomadic population, cf. Royal Institute, 1950, p. 259



The pastoral people are fulfilling an important economic function by:

- a. supplying the home markets with essential products, and
- b. furnishing valuable export articles.

Iraqi wool is considered of good quality and finds a ready market in the United States of America and in continental Europe for

1) carpet manufacture. In 1947 Iraq exported 2794 tons of wool at I D 372 349.<sup>2)</sup> In 1946 and again in 1948 the wool export was about three times that of 1947.<sup>3)</sup> Syria exports products like wool, butter, hides, etc.

The following statements will illustrate the valuable contribution which the nomads are making to the general economy:

"The Bedouin are experts in the breeding of livestock and form a class who afford a valuable contribution to the economic life of Transjordan." 4) "Their (Bedouin of Iraq) occupation of raising livestock is vital to the economy of the country." 5) "Syria cannot afford to lose the meat, milk and wool which are derived from the harvesting of the desert herbage." 6)

Thus in all the countries of the Fertile Crescent, livestock breeding, the primary occupation of the nomad population, appears to be an essential and lucrative industry.

- 
1. Gamble, 1949, p. 20
  2. ibid. p. 13
  3. Data Book, 1951, p. 40
  4. Report, 1938, p. 318
  5. Jawad, 1945, p. 7
  6. Report of the United States-Syrian Agricultural Mission, 1947, p. 23



## CHAPTER VII

### The Boundary Lines and their Bearing on Bedouin Migration

With the conclusion of the First World War and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire the Syrian Desert was partitioned among four new states: Syria, Iraq, Transjordan and Saudi Arabia.

1)

Epstein states that the political boundary lines impose limitations on the Bedouin who can no longer freely wander over vast areas. In times of severe drought they cannot migrate with their flocks across the border where rains may have been more abundant. As an example he cites the case of a number of large Transjordanian tribes who were accustomed to have their winter quarters in Wadi Sirhan, which is now part of Saudi Arabia. New political conditions force the Bedouin to remain with their herds in the cold plains of Moab and Edom. Epstein, however, fails to explain why the tribes in question could not avail themselves of the provisions made in the Saudi Arabian (Nejd)-Transjordan agreements of 1925 and 1927 for cross-border migrations of the Bedouin. Article 9 of the Treaty of Friendship and Bon Voisinage concluded in 1927 at Jedda between Saudi Arabia and Transjordan reads as follows:

"The tribes of the two parties which habitually frequent both sides of the frontier for purposes of grazing or "musabala" shall be free to move from place to place in

---

1. Epstein, 1938, p. 229



the two countries, unless either of the two governments should find it necessary to restrict this freedom of movement in the interest of public order and for the reasons of economic necessity." 1)

2)

The earlier Hadda agreement of 1925 mentions specifically the

Wadi Sirhan. Artical 4 of the Hadda Agreement reads:

"The government of Nejd undertake to maintain all established rights, that may be enjoyed in the Wadi Sirhan by tribes not under their jurisdiction, whether such rights appertain to grazing or to habitation or to ownership, or the like. The government of Transjordan undertake to extend identical treatment to Nejd subjects who may enjoy similar established rights in Transjordan territory."

Cross-border migration of the Bedouin tribes is similarly regulated by bi-lateral treaty arrangements between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Iraq and Syria, Syria and Turkey and wherever such custom has been established.

In fact, the tribes seem to increase their customary radius of movement whenever necessary. In 1935, for example, a considerable number of the Iraqi Amarat tribe entered Transjordan and even penetrated the Amman region. The Amarat had been at feud with the Transjordanian tribes for centuries, and never before had they been able to cross the frontier unmolested. 3) As recently as 1927 the Amarat raided the Howeitat of Transjordan, whereupon the Howeitat and the Beni Sakhr counter-raided the Amarat. 4)

- 
1. Command Paper 2951
  2. Command Paper 2566
  3. Report, 1935, p. 307
  4. Report, 1927, p. 74



At the beginning of 1929 practically the whole of the powerful Rwala tribe entered Iraqi territory and encamped west of the Wadim area. The Rwala were soon followed by the Sba'a, another great tribe of the Anezeh. These unusual movements were caused<sup>1)</sup> by lack of good grazing in Syria.

Political boundary lines thus do not appear to have seriously affected tribal mobility. On the contrary, public security has enabled tribes to wander beyond their dirah into territories where in the past they would not have dared to camp. The Transjordanian tribes which, according to Epstein, were prevented from migrating to the Wadi Sirhan may have feared to cross the border line. It must be understood that states may sign agreements which the tribes have no intention to observe.

It happened both before and after the establishment of frontiers that Transjordan nomads were attacked and plundered in their Wadi Sirhan grazing areas by hostile tribes of Hejaz. Due to the frequency of such occurrences the tribes customarily moving for the winter to the Wadi Sirhan were not forced by the authorities to disarm because their lives and possessions could not be protected by British and local forces while away from<sup>2)</sup> Transjordan territory.

- 
1. Report, 1929a, pp. 35-36
  2. Report, 1930, p. 135



Political authorities have made no serious efforts to interfere with tribal migrations which follow the law of economic need. The governments stopped raiding, but not grazing.

With the establishment of public security, tribal movements have been facilitated where fears of attack may have prevented<sup>1)</sup> them before.

Stoppage of raiding, plunder and extortion as affecting Bedouin economy

Raids fulfilled a definite economic function in Bedouin society. Especially in times of drought, the booty taken in raids constituted, according to the Bedouin way of thinking a welcome means of income. In reality, however, the desert people did not suffer a great economic loss from the stoppage of raiding. In speaking of raiding Major Glubb correctly states that "some became<sup>2)</sup> rich, some were ruined; there is a net loss on the whole."

More significant was the economic loss incurred to the Bedouin when imposition of khuwwa was outlawed.

The economic situation of the Bedouin on the whole was not seriously affected by the establishment of political boundary lines and enforcement of public security. Economic adjustments were made within the pastoral economy where the decline of the demand for the camel made this necessary.

- 
1. However, in spite of the vigorous actions of the Saudi regime raiding in the Arabian Desert has not yet been completely stopped.
  2. Glubb, 1935, p. 22



## CHAPTER VIII

### The Transition of the Nomad to Agriculture

Beyond the adjustments which the nomads were forced to make within their pastoral economy, settlement on land was appreciably accelerated during the past few decades.

The transition of pastoral nomads to an agricultural life is an uninterrupted process in the history of the tribes migrating from the Arabian Desert to the fertile areas which border it. But in recent years the pace of Bedouin sedentarization was accelerated under the impact of social, political and economic developments in the Middle East.

#### Sedentarization of the Tribes, the spontaneous socio-economic change

Waves of Bedouin have constantly broken forth from the desert and become ultimately absorbed in the permanent settlement. The process has been slow and gradual. Without the stimulus of powerful external factors, the transformation from the pure desert Bedouin to the fully settled villager may have taken centuries to complete.

Settlement of the nomads may take place either in the wake of great military invasions such as the campaigns of Muhammad and his successors, the invasions of the Wahhabi princes, etc.; or as the result of their contact with settled civilization in the course of their regular wanderings. Actually, also *Sedentarization*



following military invasions is to a considerable extent the outcome of social contact.

In another part of this paper it will be shown how planned, external stimuli such as government interference, are effecting Bedouin settlement, but the following pages will discuss the phenomenon of the spontaneous internal, socio-economic change.

Tribes in the service of the early Islamic conquerors and the Wahhabi princes began to settle down as they became garrison troops in the conquered territories and ultimately the military administrators of the provinces. They established themselves in the vicinity of the villages and cities in order to keep an eye on the subject people. In the great adventure of conquest the Bedouin mode of life went overboard. A different climate may have forced the nomads to change over to breeding other types of livestock. Cruder weather conditions may have obliged them to abandon the tent for more solid living quarters. In spite of the Bedouin's scornful attitude towards the settled people the next step was usually a growing interest in the agricultural society around them and a gradual imitation of its habits and activities.

On the whole it can be observed that while in the Arabian Desert Bedouin society seems incapable of undergoing any change whatsoever, in the steppe near cultivated areas it is destined to decay and disappear.<sup>1)</sup>

---

1. Montagne, 1947, pp.112-113



In our days sedentarization is the product of the nomad's contact with settled society during the regular periods of his encampment on the outskirts of the cultivated land.

At present, the tribal population of Syria, Iraq, Palestine (Israel) and Transjordan (Jordan) is in all stages of transition<sup>1)</sup> to a sedentary existence. A. S. Kirkbridge has outlined the various stages that the Transjordan nomad passes on his journey to the settled life of an agriculturalist. With insignificant changes the description of the steps can be made applicable to the process of sedentarization as a whole.

#### Stages of Sedentarization

1. The true desert Bedouin, raising mainly camels, lives<sup>2)</sup> in a world where nature makes cultivation impossible. He migrates in accordance with the existence of water and grazing and supplements his meager income by raiding if conditions permit. He despises the villagers.
2. In spite of the contempt that the Bedouin have for the settled peasants they come to realize that the fellah lives a more comfortable life and enjoys a better diet, compared to the standards of the nomad.
3. The next step is the occupation of cultivable land by the nomadic tribe. Agriculture is practiced only as a

---

1. Kirkbridge, 1945, March-April

2. Kirkbridge does not discuss the Bedouin that came from Arabia subsisting exclusively on camel-breeding. Since practically all Transjordanian nomads have crossed the first stage, the conversion of exclusive camel economy to mixed pastoral economy of sheep and camel-breeding.



supplemental means of livelihood. The tribesmen stay on their fields only to harvest and then to sow next year's crop. Then they migrate with their flocks in search of pastures. But they soon realize the drawbacks of protracted absence:

- a. the grain will be eaten by birds and insects before it takes root

- b. neighbors will graze their herds on the fields.

Sooner or later the amateur cultivator comes to the conclusion that it will pay him to remain nearer his land.

4. The decision to remain close to the cultivated land implies the first real change in the nomad's mode of living:

- a. the radius of migration must be reduced

- b. the restriction of movement, in turn, makes it mandatory to reduce the amount of livestock in proportion to the grazing areas within the limited wandering orbit.

- c. the fewer the animals, the greater the dependence of the tribe on cultivation.

At this phase the nomads still live in tents. But in raising crops, they adopt more and more the methods of the sedentary neighbors.

In the trading of the surplus grain the behavior of the



nomads is uneconomic. As the tribe is getting set to move right after harvest time, the surplus crop must be sold when the price of grain is at its lowest.

5. The nomads soon realize that it would be more profitable to store the surplus and wait until he can get good prices for it. They hire builders to erect store-houses for them. These are placed in charge of watchmen engaged from the nearest village.

The disadvantages of this procedure become soon apparent:

- a. the hired guards may not be honest
- b. a raid may occur during the absence of the tribe.

The watchmen would not risk their lives to defend somebody else's property.

The nomad reaches the inevitable conclusion that he must keep his tent all the time next to his storehouse in order to protect his possessions.

6. As the nomad remains in the same place all the time, he sees no point in putting up with the discomforts of life in a tent. When he builds and occupies a house, the transition is completed.

The evolutionary process of transformation is not always the same. Kirkbride only describes its external aspects, but it must be realized that the conservative Bedouin clings tenaciously to his tribal traditions which he will not give



up for the sake of economic self-improvement.

The nomad who has settled creates a vacuum on the fringes of the desert which is filled by other desert tribes destined to undergo the same evolution, and thus the process of sedentarization goes on indefinitely.

## CHAPTER IX

### Survey of Recent Developments that Affected Bedouin Society

#### Saudi Arabia

Except for a few fertile oases, the vast area of Saudi Arabia consists entirely of arid desert and steppes which are green only for a short period in the winter. Arabia is the cradle and the classic country of the Bedouin.

The rule of Ibn Saud has been the turning point in the history of Central Arabia. In his drive to found a powerful state, Ibn Saud realized that he must settle the Bedouin within his frontiers if the political structure he created was to last. Citizens, united in purpose and attached to the soil, and not roving nomads, constitute a reliable element which can assure permanency to a state organization.

To overcome the traditional tribal disunity, Ibn Saud inspired the Bedouin with the doctrines of Wahhabi puritanism which gave them a consciousness of unity. The Ikhwan (brethern, Wahhabi con-<sup>1)</sup>fraternity), founded by Ibn Saud in 1912, is the modern revival

- 
1. 1912 is the date usually given for the founding of the Ikhwan. cf. Royal Institute, 1950, p. 85  
According to Arnold Toynbee, however, the Ikhwan was founded in 1910. cf. Royal Institute, 1925, Vol. 1, p. 281



of the Wahhabi movement which originated in the 18th century.

The Bedouin members of the Ikhwan were induced to sell their camels and settle down to an agricultural existence. Settlement was carried out by giving to the tribesmen land, money and technical aid.

Sedentarization has always been an important part of Ibn Saud's domestic policy. In 1928 there were already over 100 Ikhwan settlements in the Nejd. Artawiya, the oldest of the Ikhwan colonies, came into existence in 1912 and had by 1928 a population of about 10 000. In Ameen Rihani's list of 100 odd localities there are mentioned 34 settlements with an approximate population of 6 000 - 12 000. Dukhnah, a colony of the Harb tribe, has about 15 000 people. 1) In a few years Ibn Saud has thus succeeded in converting a great number of Bedouin into settled citizens.

In 1948 the government of Saudi Arabia declared its new national policy of granting state land to any citizen ready and willing to put it under cultivation. 2) In Arabia settlement is an artificial enterprise because it involves Bedouin, who from the economic point of view could continue their pastoral life for centuries yet. Of course, Ibn Saud is guided more by the political problems which the Bedouin present to his state structure than by economic necessity.

- 
1. Rihani's study of Ibn Saud contains a list of new settlements built by the tribes of Nejd under the influence of the Ikhwan. Each colony is given with its quota of fighting men. This figure is one third of the male, or one sixth of the total population. cf. Rihani, 1928, pp. 118-119
  2. Afif I Tannous, 1951, p. 15



The conditions of land tenure in Arabia are obscure. Most of the land is still utilized by the nomadic tribes for grazing their flocks. When the settlers are assigned land, it is not clarified who holds the title, the state, the tribe or the individual cultivator.

Although Arabia is still predominantly pastoral, the nomadic character of the population is being rapidly changed as the result of government action and under the impact of increasing contact with the West.

1)

Iraq (Mesopotamia)

Iraq has a history of sedentarization that goes back to the 19th century when the Turks began to take steps towards reducing the nomads to a sedentary agricultural existence.

Up to 1869 it was the Bedouin policy of the Ottoman authorities to crush or settle the tribes, to break or conciliate their leaders. Government action, however, was not accompanied by any concrete plans of providing for the Bedouin alternate means of sustenance.

Midhat Pasha, who became Wali of Baghdad in 1869, approached the issue more constructively. He viewed tribal settlement as an agrarian problem. Bedouin cultivation was encouraged by the sale of state-land on reasonable terms. Midhat Pasha felt that only settlement can permanently solve the tribal problem. He was con-

- 
1. Certain parts of former Mesopotamie like Deir ex-Zor belong to modern Syria. . When an instance of nomad settlement in the Deir ez-Zor area refers to times previous to the establishment of modern Iraq it was included in this chapter although the locality may be now Syrian territory.
  2. Ireland, 1938, p. 90



vinced that once tied to the soil the Bedouin would change their mode of life and become orderly subjects of the Sultan.

The efforts to effect sedentarization had a certain amount of success in the district south of Baghdad where small tribes began<sup>1)</sup> to till the soil. Progress was also made among the powerful Muntafik tribesmen of whom Lady Blunt tells that they have "recent-<sup>2)</sup>ly become industrious fellahin." If Lady Blunt's account is correct, the Muntafik represent the exception rather than the rule. The other large tribes, particularly the Shammar and Anezeh could in no way be persuaded to engage in the "distasteful" occupation of tillage.

Of the Sba'a (a tribe of the Anezeh confederation) whom<sup>3)</sup> Aslam Pasha, the Mutasarrif of Deir ez-Zor, forced to settle in the Euphrates valley, it is told<sup>4)</sup> that as long as the soldiers kept an eye on the Bedouin, they remained in the villages. When the troops left, the settlements were abandoned and nomadic existence resumed. The Bedouin policy of the Ottoman government during the 19th century consisted of attempts to settle the Bedouin and to detach the sheikhs who were the rallying point of anti-administration forces from an exclusively tribal setting and win them over to the government. Encouragement of settlement did not show an appreciable amount of success. The tribesmen could not be

---

1. Blunt, 1879, pp. 376 seq.

2. *ibid.*

3. In Ottoman times Deir ez-Zor was an independent sanjaq, unattached to any vilayet and hence not accountable to a Wali, the Mutassarif was directly answerable to the Sultan.

4. Blunt, 1879, pp. 376 - 377



induced to take up agriculture, the hard lot of the village cultivator and the traditional attitude of contempt for settled life were the chief drawbacks.

Midhat Pasha had made a constructive approach, but his settlement policy failed because the traditional behavior of the Bedouin was not taken into consideration and the land grants were made to the sheikhs and not to the individual tribesmen,<sup>1)</sup> This became often the cause of much trouble and dissatisfaction. The disturbances which occurred at the turn of the century and after in the Muntafik area, were attributed to the fact that all the arable land of the tribes became concentrated in the hands of a few powerful sheikhs who oppressed their fellow tribesmen.<sup>2)</sup>

On the other hand, the attempt to drive a wedge into the tribal organization by detachment of leadership from the rank and file began slowly to bear fruit during the 19th century. Powerful sheikhs were given land, annual subsidies and honorific titles. It was the hope of the administration that the tribal leaders would become the heads of agricultural communities and loyal supporters of the central government. In the beginning this policy was frustrated by the sheikhs who were not yet willing to abandon tribalism.

But in the latter part of the 19th century tribal leaders in Iraq began to evince a growing interest in cultivation. Grain

- 
1. Ireland, 1938, p. 91
  2. ibid. p. 93



had become a profitable cash crop and many sheikhs were induced to change from stock-breeding to cereal-growing which was more<sup>1)</sup> lucrative. Not a declining desert economy, but the desire for money was the cause of the change.

After the revolution of 1908 the Young Turks re-affirmed the policy of settling the nomads on land. The Wali of Baghdad was instructed to formulate a scheme for the settlement of the tribes.

The sheikhs were divided in their attitudes, a great number definitely hostile to the policy of the government, others, bought by gifts of land and titles, ready to co-operate.

The Young Turks, anxious to assert their exclusive political power and authority, had tried, wherever possible, to crush the influence of the powerful sheikhs. Hence their hostility to government-sponsored settlement schemes.

The British Mandatory Government was not concerned with settling the nomads. When the British came to Iraq, it became their avowed Bedouin policy to rebuild tribal organization under competent sheikhs. They set about to strengthen the power of the sheikhs whose authority over the tribesmen had been partially broken by the Young Turk administration. Landholdings of the tribal leaders were protected, large subsidies and tax exemptions granted.

While British tribal policy was restricted to giving sheikhs

---

1. Warriner, 1948, pp. 103 seq.



unlimited powers abused more often than not, the process of sedentarization took its course.

After the First World War very little of the tribal land was still communally held, its ownership having been claimed by individuals.<sup>1)</sup> Land settlement in Iraq had resulted in the transfer of the tribal semi-collective landholdings to individual holdings of the sheikhs. This increased the inequality of land-ownership in favor of the leaders and at the expense of the members of the tribe.<sup>2)</sup>

connection

Since the early 1920's some of the Iraqi sheikhs have displayed a growing interest in settlement of their tribesmen. The Sheikhs Ali al-Suleiman and Mushin al-Hardan were largely responsible for the restoration on scientific lines of the Saqlawiyah canal and thus making possible the Dulayma development project which provided for the settlement of 2 000 tribesmen.<sup>3)</sup>

*The* new settlement of Dulaymiya developed rapidly and proved a success. An area which had been barren for centuries was reclaimed and returned to cultivation. During the inter-war years the Iraqi local government distributed State land to individuals prepared to irrigate and cultivate it by installation of water pumps. Due to the cost involved, only the wealthy sheikhs could take advantage of the offer.

- 
1. Report, 1928, pp. 152-153
  2. Himadeh, 1950; Himadeh, 1951, p. 275
  3. Report, 1920-22, p. 20



Their already substantial landholdings were thus considerably increased.

Neither the British Mandatory Authorities nor the Iraqi local government had in the 1920's a definite tribal settlement policy. Whatever was undertaken in this direction like the Dulaymiya project is attributable to the initiative of the tribal leaders.

The transformation which the tribal sheikhs have been undergoing during the past few decades can be best illustrated by a concrete case. Ajil el Jawer, the chief sheikh of the Shammar, had by the 1930's a variety of lucrative commercial interests. The government of Iraq and the Oil Companies appointed him to take over the protection of the wells and the pipelines. Besides, Ajil was charged with supplying laborers for railroad construction work. From these sources he received considerable income. The main part of his wealth, however, consists of real estate. Ajil inherited the lands near Kalat Shergat and Takrit which Sultan Abdul Hamid had given to his grandfather Ferhan as presents. In addition he acquired lands in the vicinity of Tell A'far, and also owns property in Baghdad and Mosul,<sup>1)</sup> as well as houses in Tell A'far and in the village Kalat Shergat.

The case of Ajil el Jawer is typical for all the powerful chiefs of Iraq, who have become wealthy landlords whose estates are cultivated by fellahin. Where the tribesmen followed the examples of their sheikhs and settled down, they became the exploited tenants

---

1. Oppenheim, 1939, pp. 150 seq.



and share-croppers on the holdings of the chiefs who rapidly changed from their traditional role of "primus inter pares" to that of a semi-feudal landlord.

In the thirties the administration of Iraq became increasingly aware of the plight of the Bedouin. In 1934 three committees consisting of high government officials and tribal sheikhs were formed for the purpose of studying the problem of land distribution among the tribesmen and of encouraging them to take up agriculture.

A plan was formulated with the aim of settling 40 000 Bedouin<sup>1)</sup> over a period of ten years, at the rate of 4 000 per annum.

Guided by the administration policy of Bedouin settlement, the Minister of the Interior proceeded in 1936 with the assignment of land to the nomadic tribes and landless fellahin. Distribution was made in small plots of about five acres per head. Provision was also made for financial assistance needed to initiate cultivation. Prospective settlers, in turn, were subject to the stipulation that their villages and houses must be constructed along modern lines.<sup>2)</sup>

At the end of 1936 Prime Minister Hikmat Suleiman declared in the outline of his government program that the authorities are vitally concerned with the settlement of the tribes and ready to provide each family with land. He stated that legislation would

- 
- |    |                  |           |           |      |
|----|------------------|-----------|-----------|------|
| 1. | Oriente Moderno, | Vol. XIV, | pp. 483-4 | 1934 |
| 2. | Oriente Moderno, | Vol. XVI, | p. 279    | 1936 |



also be effected to improve lines of communication, so that  
the nomads may be able to benefit from public services.<sup>1)</sup>

Since the end of the Second World War the government of Iraq has begun to put into practice the policy of encouraging small landownership by distributing State Domain lands among landless peasants and tribesmen. The first post-war project was started in 1945 on the Dujaylah lands, south of Baghdad, where 88 000 acres of state land were parcelled out in plots of about 62.5 acres per family. The new settlement which started in 1945 with 85 families has presently about 1 200. The settlers come from neighboring tribes where they and their kin<sup>2)</sup> had worked as share-croppers on the estates of the sheikhs. In 1946 another project, the Hawiyah settlement, was completed. It involved the distribution of approximately 200 000 acres of irrigated state land among the members of the Ubayd tribe.<sup>3)</sup>

The observation has been made that the inequality of land-ownership had a great effect on many of the tribesmen and in the absence of sufficient agricultural projects they began to flock to the citites.<sup>4)</sup> Progressive circles in Iraq have realized for a number of years that settling the nomads must go hand in hand with the creation of suitable land conditions.

- 
1. Oriente Moderno, Vol. XVII, pp. 41-42, 1937
  2. Burns, 1951, p. 362
  3. Tannous, 1951, p. 16
  4. Khayat, 1950, pp. 225-226



agriculture was taking place on a small scale. During the latter part of the century the Wadd Ali tribe began to take up cultivation near Homs and the Hesene in the Hauran.<sup>1)</sup>

The leaders of the Syrian tribes, however, particularly the Anezeh and West Shammar sheikhs, benefited from Sultan Abdul Hamid's policy aiming at winning their support by gifts of land and villages. In 1870 Jed'an of the Fed'an obtained from the government several villages and large tracts of land.<sup>2)</sup> Mejjhem, the grandson of Jed'an, owns two villages on the Euphrates besides the property which he inherited from his grandfather. In the 1930's he acquired additional ground near 'Ain 'Isa where he built a house.<sup>3)</sup> Nuri al-Sha'lan, the sheikh of the Rwala, owned substantial property consisting of vast estates, a house in Damascus and several motor-cars.<sup>4)</sup>

Since the end of the First World War, all the important tribal leaders of Syria have been in possession of extensive land-holdings, and most of them have taken an increasing interest in cultivation. In 1928 Sheikh Salemieh of the Sba'a Gmossa undertook to restore an ancient system of canals and began tillage on land which had been heretofore desert.<sup>5)</sup> In 1935 the sheikh of the Sba'a Bteinat doubled his cultivation in

- 
1. Oppenheim, 1939, p. 73
  2. *ibid.*, p. 79
  3. *ibid.*, p. 81
  4. *ibid.*, pp. 105 seq.
  5. Report, 1935, p. 106



the region south-east of Aleppo. In the Jezirah the sheikh of the Feda'an-Weld increased his tree plantations and experiments<sup>1)</sup> of cotton cultivation.

The estates of the tribal sheikhs are worked by fellahin and settled nomads, but the considerable land-holdings of the powerful Shammar and Anezeh chiefs are predominantly cultivated by fellahin while their tribesmen still continue to subsist on camel and sheep-breeding.<sup>2)</sup>

Most of the tribal leaders have been anxious to obtain for their people some of the amenities enjoyed by the sedentary population. As result of their petitions to the Mandatory Government, ancient wells were restored and new ones created, medical service was extended to Bedouin areas and public education made available to the tribes. The Services Hydrauliques sunk water wells in 1930/31 along the principal routes of Bedouin migration.<sup>3)</sup> This service enabled the exploitation of pastures which had been heretofore out of the Bedouin's reach on account of the lack of water nearby. Infirmaries and dispensaries were established at the edge of the desert and at Palmyre. In 1931 three mobile hospitals were set up in Palmyre, Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo respectively. In 1930 two itinerary schools were added to the four already in existence to serve the

- 
1. <sup>Rapport</sup> Report, 1935, p. 106
  2. Epstein, 1940, p. 77
  3. Rapport, 1931, pp. 99-100



educational needs of the tribes.

This policy aimed at introducing improvements into the Bedouin mode of living without changing it.

Some of the sheikhs made serious attempts to settle the tribesmen on their estates. The Hadidiyin began in the 30's<sup>1)</sup> to cultivate on the estates of their sheikh. Rakan, the sheikh of the Sba'a, has been consistently trying to make the<sup>2)</sup> members of his tribe engage in agriculture.

Apart from minor successes the attempts of sedentarization were largely premature. While economic changes and a taste for modern living induced a great number of the sheikhs to abandon nomadism and settle down, the majority of the tribesmen preferred to continue their pastoral activities and their tradition<sup>al</sup> migrations. Even economic disasters in the desert did not appreciably accelerate the pace of their sedentarization.

In 1931, for example, the Syrian Bedouin lost 30 - 40 per cent of their animals in the wake of inclement weather conditions.<sup>3)</sup> 1931/32 was also a season of exceptional drought when certain tribes lost 50 per cent of their camels and 80 per cent of their<sup>4)</sup> sheep. The desert was strewn with animals that died of hunger. The critical situation among the tribes prompted the French<sup>5)</sup> Mandatory Government to encourage the nomads to settle down to an agricultural life. Fertile land and implements were freely dis-

- 
1. Oppenheim, 1939, p. 298
  2. ibid., p. 85
  3. Rapport, 1931, p. 98
  4. Rapport, 1932, p. 91
  5. The French High Commission maintained a special tribal service



tributed among them, and the construction of houses facilitated.<sup>1)</sup>

In 1934 the tribal office of the High Commissioner prepared a vast program of settlement. The project provided for:

- a. the construction of 500 houses in the Upper Jezirah for those Bedouin ready to settle
- b. the digging of 12 new wells so that the nomads should not be forced to wander in search of water
- c. the assignment of technicians to teach the Bedouin<sup>2)</sup> modern methods of breeding and feeding animals.

In 1935 a program was formulated for the settlement of 500 Bedouin families in the villages on the edge of the desert and supply them with specialists to teach them the techniques of agricultural work.<sup>3)</sup>

All these attempts of the government to induce the nomads to take up agriculture had little success. In spite of the catastrophic livestock losses no unusual or large scale movement towards sedentarization was apparent. More discernible, however, was a change within the pastoral economy itself, camel-breeding having been progressively abandoned in favor of sheep-raising. Also the slow and gradual process of sedentarization, which started long before the modern government measures, continued.

The Weld Ali had already in the 1860's begun cultivation.<sup>4)</sup>

At present part of the tribe is in the process of becoming perma-

- 
1. Oriente Moderno, XIV 1934, p. 286
  2. ibid.
  3. Oriente Moderno, XV 1935, p. 125
  4. Oppenheim, 1939, p. 85



nently settled in the neighborhood of Homs and Hama. The Kemese, (part of the Sba'a) began agriculture after the First World War.<sup>1)</sup> The Hesene who had started cultivation already at the end of the 19th century,<sup>2)</sup> are settling down in the villages which they own east of Homs.<sup>3)</sup> Several thousand tribesmen of the Fed'an work in the fields belonging to the estates of their sheikh Mejhem, although the majority of the tribesmen prefer livestock-breeding to cultivation.<sup>4)</sup> In the Jezirah, in Hauran, in the Homs-Hama-Aleppo region and in other parts of the country tribes are abandoning their nomadic mode of life and begin to engage in agriculture, first as supplementary, then as primary occupation. Ultimately they become fully settled peasants.

This process has been going on ever since the Bedouin have infiltrated into Syria. In recent years the slow pace of transition was somewhat quickened under the impact of rapidly changing conditions in Syria, but not as the result of economic adversities which plagued the nomads for a season or two. A catastrophe in the pastoral economy will not cause the Bedouin to turn to agricultural pursuits. After the drought years of 1931 and 1932 the situation of the Bedouin was desperate, but the abundant season of 1933 made the nomads forget the sufferings of preceding

- 
1. Oppenheim, 1939, p. 85
  2. ibid., p. 84
  3. ibid., p. 85
  4. Raswan, 1930, p. 496



years. There was not much of a response to the efforts of the government during 1934 and 1935 to encourage settlement on land.

Where sedentarization took place it was the social process of assimilation, stimulated by economic, social and political factors. Where societies meet, the phenomenon of assimilation is inevitable; one section of the social group may be more rapidly affected than the other, but even if no extraordinary conditions arise, the evolutionary process of assimilation and subsequent sedentarization will take its course and ultimately embrace all strata of society.

Tribal leadership spearheaded the movement towards sedentarization which by 1935 was sufficiently advanced among the tribal groups of the Aleppo-Homs-Hama region for 14 tribes representing 3 500 tents or 15 000 individuals to be placed by the authorities under a regime of ordinary administration.<sup>1)</sup>

For those nomads who are at present ready to settle down, the greatest problem is that of land-tenure. Bedouin tribes as a whole have more land at their disposal than they can possibly exploit by agricultural cultivation. The area inhabited by the nomads is not less than 10 693 000 hectares.<sup>2)</sup> However, when the tribesmen are willing to take up agriculture, they find that all the tribal land has become the private property of the sheikhs.

- 
1. Rapport, 1936, pp. 26-27
  2. Salem, 1950 p. 355



In 1949, Amir Sha'lan, the chief of the Rwala, went on record with the statement that all his tribesmen now wanted land because<sup>1)</sup> the declining desert economy made settlement inevitable, and recommended to parcel out the newly developed land to the tribesmen in individual holdings instead of allowing it to become the private property of the sheikhs as this was the case in Iraq. Actually, however, there has been in Syria as heavy a concentration of tribal land in the hands of the leaders as in Iraq. The change of tribal society in Syria may lag behind the development in Iraq, but the process of conversion from communally held tribal land to individual property seems to assume the same patterns, the sheikh emerging as the large landlord and the tribesmen as his exploited tenants and share-croppers.

In recent years wealthy families, city notables, leased from the sheikhs large areas of tribal land in the Jezirah and put them under cultivation of grain<sup>2)</sup> and cotton.<sup>3)</sup>

Land reform has become a major domestic issue in Syria in

- 
1. New York Times, September 6, 1949  
It must be understood that the declaration was made for political reasons. The issue was the admission and settlement of Arab refugees from Palestine on newly developed land in Syria, a plan to which Sha'lan violently objected on the ground that the tribesmen needed the land for settlement. The tribes have more land than they can cultivate and, as far as the Rwala are concerned, they belong to the purest of the remaining camel-Bedouin and are not yet ready for agricultural life. Raswan states (1930, p. 497) that the Rwala would resist any attempt to settle them, many preferring to perish in skirmishes or return to Central Arabia than adopt the life of settlers.
  2. Tannous, 1951, p. 11
  3. New York Times, August 13, 1951



general. The idea of encouraging small and medium landholdings was incorporated in the new Syrian Constitution of 1950.

In the summer of 1951 violent clashes occurred in Syria between tenants and the agents of the big landlords, a development which testifies to the tenseness of the situation. Angry complaints were voiced in the Syrian Parliament against the government which does not challenge the encroachment on State Domains by the rich landowning families, and it was alleged that in the Jezirah tribal sheikhs connive with them by leasing away land on<sup>1)</sup> which the tribesmen enjoyed traditional grazing rights.

Failure to make provisions for adequate conditions of land holding tends to retard tribal settlement. The enactment of sweeping land reforms, however, cannot be envisaged as long as the few, but powerful, land-owning families control the administration, and make even the allocation of State lands to small owners difficult.

#### Mandatory Palestine

Since World War 1 there have been no true Bedouin in Palestine, only semi-nomads. In the 1930's 47 981 out of the 66 551 nomads of Palestine<sup>2)</sup> were encamped in the Beersheba district of the Negev, the rest scattered in the other parts of the country.

The tribes of Beersheba are the Terabin, Tayaha, Azazma,

- 
1. New York Times, August 13, 1951
  2. Report of 1931 census of Palestine



Jabarat, Hanajra and the Saidiyin. Until recently these nomads were chiefly engaged in sheep and goat rearing, while camel-breeding has been progressively abandoned.

Already in the 1930's all the Beersheba tribes were in an advanced stage of the process of transition to permanent settlement. While before the First World War the Negev Bedouin depended almost exclusively on stock-breeding, in 1931 42 868 of them claimed cultivation, and only 5 113 animal rearing, as their chief source of livelihood.<sup>1)</sup>

This development was the result of a series of economic factors: the decline of the camel market,<sup>2)</sup> successive years of drought and famine in the Negev,<sup>3)</sup> the increased value attached to land in the wake of Zionist land purchases and the ready market that agricultural produce found in the growing Jewish settlements.

Many Bedouin began to attend to cultivation in a more regular fashion although they remained for the time being semi-nomads wandering with their flocks except for the seasons of sowing and harvesting.

The sheikhs and more prominent members of the tribes began

- 
1. Report of 1931 census of Palestine
  2. This loss was largely compensated by breeding other types of livestock.
  3. More than half of the years 1874 - 1909 were seasons of drought. The war years 1914-18 constituted a continuous period of famine the severity of which the Negev had not experienced prior to the war. cf:

עארף אל-עארף, 1937, ע' 151-150



as early as the 1930's to have stone houses constructed for their  
1)  
private use.

During the years of prosperity in the middle of the 30's a  
number of Bedouin groups in the Negev made use of mechanized har-  
vesters which they borrowed from the Jewish colonists of Gederah.  
2)  
Not all the tribesmen, however, were actively engaged in agricul-  
ture. As late as 1942 the Terabin had their lands cultivated by  
3)  
tenant farmers and day laborers from South Judean villages.

Among the Bedouin of Northern Palestine the trend towards  
sedentarization dates back to the 1860's, when many of the tribes-  
4)  
men began to engage in agriculture. In the 1930's all the nomads  
of the Sharon, Jezreel and the Galilee were in the possession of  
land which was cultivated either by the tribesmen or tenant far-  
5)  
mers. Contrary to the Bedouin of the Beersheba district the  
nomads of Northern Palestine were quick to learn the value of  
6)  
law and order. Under the influence of neighboring fellahin  
the tribesmen have become increasingly attached to the land and  
pre-occupied with agriculture. Although methods of cultivation  
remained very primitive, an improvement of conditions has been  
7)  
observed since the 1930's.

- 
1. Ashkenazi, 1938, p. 17
  2. ibid.
  3. Poliak, 1942
  4. Ashkenazi, 1938, p. 15
  5. ibid., pp. 3-4
  6. ibid., p. 16
  7. ibid., p. 17



The British Mandatory regime had no concrete tribal settlement policy although assistance was rendered to the Bedouin, whenever necessary, by means of relief measures such as employment in public works, monetary gifts, assignment of land, etc.

Six desert schools were founded in the vicinity of Beersheba to serve the educational needs of the southern tribes. No special Bedouin school was established in the North. The nomads who were concerned with the education of their children had to send them to the government school.

#### Settlement Policy of the Government of Israel

Similarly to the policies of Ibn Saud the government of Israel is pursuing a vigorous policy of transforming the remaining 17 500 nomads of the Negev into settled communities of farmers and pastoralists.

The Israeli authorities have closed the southern border to prevent Bedouin infiltration from across the frontier.

After the occupation of Beersheba in 1948, sheikhs representing 16 large and small tribes pledged their loyalty to the State of Israel. In the Arab-Israel war of 1948/49 they were friendly<sup>1)</sup> or at least neutral.

The following extract from a report will clearly illustrate the changes which are taking place among the nomads of the Negev as result of Israel's Bedouin settlement policy:

- 
1. Lourie, Palestine Post, November 24, 1949



"The sixteen tribes recognized as bona fide residents of Israel have all been counted and are now given identity cards. They are being assisted in ploughing and breeding cattle -- three tractors have been recently allotted to them by the Department of Agriculture, and Bedouins have already learned to drive them -- as the beginning of a long term scheme to convert these tribesmen from a nomadic way of life to that of settled cultivators or fellahin. Migration of Bedouins, for centuries the scourge of the country, is being stopped, and the tribes are being settled in certain definite area." 1)

Of course, not all the Bedouin of the Negev are ready to settle down permanently. In the summer of 1950 a number of tribes crossed voluntarily into Jordan because their pastures in the Negev had shrunk to the point of inadequacy on account of a serious drought. Under an agreement of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission the Bedouin were granted the permission to re-enter Israeli territory (not later than July 1951); none of them, however, returned, preferring to stay in Jordan where they could continue 2) their nomadic mode of living.

Practically all the remaining nomads of Israel are by now settled down to a regular agricultural and pastoral existence.

Early in 1951 the Ministry of Agriculture allocated to the Bedouin 1 L 20 000 for the ploughing of about 50 000 dunams of uncultivated land in the Negev, because the Government of Israel was aware of the difficulties which confronted the tribes whose 3) winter crops had been destroyed by the severe drought.

- 
1. Lourie, Palestine Post, November 24, 1949
  2. The Jewish Agency's Digest, 1951 b, p. 1734
  3. The Jewish Agency's Digest, 1951 a, p. 1071



## Transjordan (Jordan)

Since the Bedouin invasions of the seventh century Transjordan has been a country of nomads. According to statistics the majority of the people are settled, but in reality even the sedentary population of Transjordan is to a certain extent tribal-nomadic, and the inhabitants of the towns and villages south of Ajloun <sup>1)</sup> share with the Bedouin their language, customs and tribal organization.

Not all the nomads of Transjordan are of Bedouin origin, many of them having descended from settled fellahin who gradually adopted Bedouin patterns of living. This unique phenomenon, not found to such an extent in any other region of the Middle East, is not limited to the Muslim community. Christians, settled in the towns of Salt, Kerak and Madabah, found it necessary or convenient to form themselves into nomadic tribes and take up a pastoral mode of existence. <sup>2)</sup>

The pages of Transjordan history during the 19th century are filled with the inter-tribal wars which were fought between the Adwan and Beni Sakhr. The Beni Sakhr captured all lands of Eastern Belqa and forced the Adwan back to the Jordan valley. They left the fellahin to continue the cultivation of the land in return for an annual tribute. <sup>3)</sup> The tribesmen returned to

- 
1. With the exception of places like Amman where most inhabitants are newcomers.
  2. Oppenheim, 1943, p. 184
  3. ibid., p. 237



their nomadic life in the desert, raising camels, sheep and goats.

The first to become interested in agriculture was Sheikh Sattan ibn Faiz. Although he personally remained a wandering nomad with his Beni Sakhr tribesmen, he attended to the supervision of his estates at Umm el-'Amad, north east of Madabah.

1)  
Père Jaussen reported in 1908 that already at that time  
2)  
small tribes of Gilead, the Jordan valley, Belqa and northern Moab were engaged in agricultural work.

Most of the cultivable tracts of the tribal land had already prior to the First World War become the private property of the sheikhs who acquired those lands simply by occupying them as  
3)  
they belonged to nobody. Another method of increasing land-holdings was by encroachment on adjacent fields and putting them under cultivation. By this latter system a large territory, originally belonging to the Adwan, was acquired by Sheikh Sattan  
4)  
and his sons. After World War I many sheikhs purchased Giftlik  
5)  
land from the government on favorable terms.

- 
1. Jaussen, 1908, pp. 237-8 and pp. 240-55
  2. All the tribes of Transjordan are small when compared with the powerful Iraqi and Syrian tribes such as the Rwala (4 250 tents) or the Sba'a (3 400 tents) cf. Fisher, 1950, p. 116. The Beni Sakhr, the largest tribe of Transjordan, has about 1 140 tents.
  3. They set foot on a certain terrain, belonging to nobody ( *ارض شمسية* ) and declared it personal property ( *ارض حية* ) by virtue of occupation.
  4. Jauusen, 1908, pp. 136-7
  5. Giftlik is the land which had belonged to the Turkish Sultan and became government property after World War I.



The Mandatory Report of 1929 stated<sup>1)</sup> that there was a marked tendency among the nomads of Transjordan to settle, especially among the Beni Sakhr who owned a considerable area of land.<sup>2)</sup> The same document points out, however, that the tribesmen are not yet engaged in cultivation, but employ fellahin to till the soil for them. A. Konikoff who published a study of the Transjordan economy about fifteen years after the above quoted report has nothing new to add<sup>3)</sup> implying that no material change has taken place.

In spite of substantial land-holdings, most members of the Beni Sakhr seem not yet psychologically prepared to settle down.

The case of the Howeitat, the second most powerful tribe of Transjordan,<sup>4)</sup> is different. Unlike the majority of the Bedouin the Howeitat do not show the traditional contempt for agriculture.<sup>5)</sup> They cultivate all the fertile land in their tribal area. The agricultural activities of the Howeitat increased considerably when they acquired the Sher'ah plain from the Nu'aimat tribe during the latter part of the 19th century. The tribesmen practiced a mixed economy consisting of tillage and livestock-

- 
1. Report, 1929 b, p. 138
  2. They possess about 24 villages, whose land is tilled by fellahin and tenants (cf. Epstein, 1938, p. 233). The tribe is scattered from the hills of Belqa to Wadi Shirhan and from Amman to Madabah.
  3. Konikoff, 1946, p. 50
  4. The Howeitat have about 1 000 tents and dwell in the Maan and Aqaba region.
  5. The Howeitat did not originally come from the Hejaz or the Nejd. It is alleged that the tribe has always been connected with the Transjordan territory. One theory suggests that the Howeitat are the descendents of ancient Nabateans, another considers them the offspring of camel merchants from the Red Sea coast and fellahin from Hesma and Shenah who in the course of time became Bedouin. (cf. Oppenheim, 1943, p. 29)



breeding.

A decisive change in the opposite direction occurred in the economic structure of the Howeitat when their two Sheikhs Abtan ibn-Jazi and Audah abu-Tayy evinced more interest in raiding than in peaceful agricultural pursuits. In a short time the Howeitat became one of the most warlike tribes in North Arabia and the Syrian Desert. Cultivation was discarded, the tribesmen rented their farms to fellahin and tenants, and they themselves roamed the desert.<sup>1)</sup>

Since the end of the First World War the Howeitat have been reverting to the land. The tribesmen again engaged in the agricultural work, and their transition to a completely settled existence should not be difficult to accomplish.

By 1931 all sections of the Beni Hasan were settled on their land, in that year 5 000 title deeds having been issued to the tribal cultivators.<sup>2)</sup> In the drought years of 1932 and 1933 the flocks of the Beni Hasan were severely hit. Like the situation among all the big tribes of Transjordan, the Beni Hasan were economically ruined, but unlike them they were willing to take up cultivation. Government financial assistance was requested to enable the tribe to develop its fertile lands, but no constructive help was forthcoming.<sup>3)</sup>

- 
1. Père Jaussen observed the Howeitat in 1908 after they had resumed their nomadic existence. But his statement that "les Haweitats n'ont jamais touché la charrue" (The Howeitat never touched the plow) (cf. Jaussen, 1908, p. 241) is incorrect.
  2. The Beni Hasan have about 860 tents and dwell in 'Ajloun, one of the most fertile parts of Transjordan. They own about 372 000 dunams of land.
  3. Report, 1931, p. 193



## The Bedouin settlement policy of the Transjordan Government

Since 1931 it has been the policy of the government to create favorable conditions for settlement, rather than to sponsor and carry out definite sedentarization projects. The governmental policy of encouragement was implemented by financial aid and technical assistance to the tribes, and by bringing education to the Bedouin areas.

After the two successive years of severe drought (1931 and 1932) the Beni Sakhr were granted in 1935 a governmental subsidy of LP 250 to encourage cultivation on tribal land.<sup>1)</sup> In 1934 the administration gave the Howeitat LP 1 000 to start agriculture in the area between Ma'an and Shobels.<sup>2)</sup> In 1935 they were granted another LP 900 for the same purpose.<sup>3)</sup>

Besides the meager financial help the tribes were given technical advice and assistance. In 1934 the government planted 1 600 palm suckers in the experimental garden at Bagoora in the Jordan valley and 600 in the oasis at Azraq for the instruction of the Bedouin.<sup>4)</sup> To encourage citriculture 4 500 citrus trees were grafted from the Bagoora station and distributed among the nomads who had evinced an interest in agriculture.<sup>5)</sup> The Department of Agriculture guided and helped the Bedouin to plant these trees. Desert schools were started in 1935, one permanently established at al-Jaffer in the Ma'an district which is the central location

- 
1. Report, 1935, p. 307
  2. Report, 1934, p. 261
  3. Report, 1935, p. 307
  4. Report, 1934, p. 262
  5. Report, 1937, p. 382



for the southern tribes of Transjordan. The second desert school follows the movement of the northern tribes, classes being alternately held at Muagqar and at Azraq, both in the Amman district.<sup>1)</sup>

In general it must be stated that the creation of suitable conditions for tribal settlement was attempted on a scale which was wholly inadequate, the chief obstacles being the lack of a concrete policy and the financial means to implement it. Nevertheless, in Transjordan, the majority of the nomads are actually ready to settle down if the opportunity is given them. Larger tribes such as the Howeitat and Beni Hasan are increasingly practicing agriculture as their main occupation. Smaller tribes, living in northern Kerak, have always held cultivation in high esteem.<sup>2)</sup> Tribesmen from Belqa are engaged as agricultural laborers on the estates of the Beni Sakhr,<sup>3)</sup> although most sheikhs of the Jordan tribes have their lands worked by permanent tenants, fellahin<sup>4)</sup> who come from the Nablus and Hebron areas of Palestine.

#### Summary of the Bedouin settlement movement in the area

##### a. spontaneous socio-economic change

The internal, sociological change among the nomads is the ever-operating phenomenon of assimilation to the settled society which they contact.

How the transition gradually occurs among the tribes

- 
1. Report, 1938, p. 351
  2. Jaussen, 1908, p. 243
  3. Epstein, 1938, p. 233
  4. Poliak, 1942



coming in from the desert and moving northward, can be observed in the geographic distribution of the population of Transjordan. The southern Ma'an district and the parts east of the Hejaz railway are the domains of the Bedouin. Southern Belqa and the entire Kerak district are inhabited by semi-nomads, already settled on the land, but still living in tents and retaining their tribal organization. In Ajloun and the northern part of Belqa the settled villager predominates.

b. external factors and planned change

Bedouin settlement on land considerably progressed under the impact of:

- a. development of the area with subsequent limitation of pasture lands
- b. the measures of the governments
- c. the examples of the sheikhs and their attempts to settle the tribesmen

## CHAPTER X

### Tribal Land and the Role of the Sheikh in Bedouin Settlement

#### Since the 19th Century

With the introduction of the Land Registration Law of 1859 most of the tribal land in the Ottoman Empire became the property of the sheikhs.

The individual tribesmen as well as the settled villagers



considered the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 and the Registration Law of 1859 as governmental measures designed for purposes of taxation and military conscription. They left it to the village notables and tribal sheikhs to enter all the land in their names. During the second part of the 19th century the large landholdings of the powerful sheikhs were substantially increased as the result of the Sultan's policy to win their co-operation by gifts of land. The developments during the 19th century thus laid the foundations for the inequality of land-ownership which has become the scourge of the Middle Eastern agrarian society.

As long as the patriarchal social order was maintained, the economic life of the tribe was not disturbed by the growing concentration of land in the hands of the sheikhs. Part of the land was cultivated by slaves or fellahin tenants, the rest used by the tribesmen as grazing areas for their flocks of animals. But when the tribal leaders began to evince an ever increasing interest in agriculture, the semi-legal transfer of land, formerly the collective property of the tribe, to the private ownership of the sheikhs had the effect that the "primus inter pares" within the democratic tribal society emerged as the big semi-feudal landlord.

The Mandatory authorities further strengthened the power of the landlords by legal recognition of their rights in the lands which they claimed as their own.

Progressive circles in the Arab countries are in favor of

---



land reform on which successful tribal settlement will ultimately depend, but as the land-owning families exercise control over the indigenous administrations, the prospects for sweeping changes do not seem bright.

#### Transformation of the Sheikh

With the process of sedentarization the tribal sheikh undergoes a profound political and social transformation.

In the traditional tribal society inter-tribal political activities were confined to disputes over water and grazing rights. Since the 19th century sheikhs have become involved in big power politics. Bedouin history since the First World War abounds with cases of tribal chiefs being pre-occupied with the political issues of the country. At present the tribal leaders constitute a very active element in the parliamentary life of Syria and Iraq. While the sheikhs of the Transjordanian tribes have in the past not taken a prominent part in the political activities of their country, they have taken sides in the main controversial issue of anglophile government circles versus pan-Arab, anti-foreign Nationalists. Mitkal Pasha, the sheikh of the Beni-Sakhr, was the avowed friend of the Mufti while Hamad el Jazi, the sheikh of the Howeitat was an active supporter of Abdullah.<sup>1)</sup>

The social changes which the sheikh undergoes are considerable. His household becomes substantially enlarged by addition of a great number of slaves, specialists in various tasks. The wives of the sheikh have chamber maids at their disposal.

---

1. Oppenheim, 1943, pp. 182-183



It is not a rarity to see an automobile under the tent of the sheikh, even when he still wanders and camps with his tribe. Gradually the chiefs establish luxurious residences, equipped with all the comforts of modern living. At this stage the sheikh will spend most of the time away from the tribe, favoring the social, economic and political activities of the sedentary population.

An instructive example of the changes in the social status of the powerful sheikh is the case of the Rwala. The Rwala tribesmen still belong to the few remaining true Bedouin. Their former Sheikh, Emir Nuri al-Sha'lan, however, showed already before World War I his preference for a house to a tent. His grandson Fawaz, the present Emir of the tribe, was in his youth a genuine Bedouin, but later his mode of living became thoroughly westernized.<sup>1)</sup>

The tribesmen will not remain unaffected by this development. For a while they try tenaciously to preserve the nomadic mode of existence, but sooner or later they will become the exploited tenants and share-croppers on the estates of their leaders.

During the Mandatory regime the absentee landlords lost much of their grip on the cultivators, but the tenants of the tribal sheikhs are still in a virtual state of serfdom. In some cases the tribal chief still has complete authority over the

---

1. Oppenheim, 1943, p. 108



members of his tribe. Besides collecting the taxes for the central government he imposes and collects his own levies.<sup>1)</sup>

Of course, there are exceptions to the general pattern. There is, for example, the case of the Bedouin tribe Abu Kishk that owned 20 000 dunams of land in the Sharon.<sup>2)</sup> The sheikh's family in whose name the land was registered, sold 10 000 dunams to the Jews. The whole tribe benefited from this transaction. Part of the money was invested in a 145 dunam orange plantation and used to dig new wells, part of it was distributed among the individual members who were thus enabled to exchange their tents for stone houses. Enough cash was left for building a school. The social, economic and sanitary conditions of the entire tribe were thus greatly improved by the actions of the tribal sheikh.

## CHAPTER XI

### Attitude of the Tribesmen towards Settlement

The Bedouin's traditional contempt for agriculture will not be changed, before he is psychologically conditioned for sedentary life. Economic disasters and subsequent starvation will not in themselves materially alter this attitude. After the drought seasons of 1931 and 1932 the situation of the Transjordan Bedouin was desperate; 1946/47 was likewise a year of deficient rainfall in Transjordan when about 50 per cent of the livestock perished.<sup>3)</sup> But still we do not hear of a great number of Beni Sakhr tribesmen

- 
1. Himadeh, 1950, p. 430
  2. Ashkenazi, 1938, pp. 18-19
  3. Losses amounted to: sheep and goats -- 40%, cattle -- 45%, camels -- 50%. cf. Final Report, part 2, 1949, p. 10



that were willing to engage in agriculture after the economic catastrophes of either the early 30's or the late 40's, because this tribal group is not yet ready for settlement. Similarly in Syria, as has been pointed out above, the calamitous season 1931/32 did not appreciably accelerate sedentarization. While the experienced Bedouin will take livestock losses and subsequent starvation in the desert as a matter of course, the novice cultivator will not face a harvest failure with the same equanimity. In 1936 many Transjordan nomads had taken up cultivation for the first time, but the loss of their crops discouraged them so much,<sup>1)</sup> that they returned to the desert.

Profound changes are, nevertheless, taking place in the mentality of the Bedouin. As a result of tribal disintegration many nomads have become increasingly interested in sedentary life. When the nomad sees the sheikh, alienated from the tribe, enjoy luxuries beyond his dreams, he may also want to improve his standard of living and enjoy the "comforts" of the settled villager whose existence is prosperous compared by the Bedouin's standard of life. Pride may keep the nomad from working on the land, but nevertheless there are now hundreds of Iraqi and Syrian villages inhabited by people who were formerly nomads. Some of them still maintain tribal customs although they have been settled for a long time and severed the relations with their original tribes.<sup>2)</sup>

- 
1. Report, 1936, p. 349
  2. El-Shihaby, 1950, pp. 278 seq.



## Social transformation of the Bedouin

When the Bedouin settle down, they gradually adopt the fellah's mode of living. As their contact with village and city increases, they become familiar with modern implements, matches, oil-lamps, etc.

The Ghawarneh of Northern Palestine, for example, live like <sup>1)</sup> peasants engaged in intensive cultivation. They grow rice, maize and peas. The women are occupied with mat weaving, the men join them in this work during the slack season in the fields. They still dress like Bedouin, and most of them live in huts. <sup>2)</sup> There are stone houses in which the family chiefs dwell. After settlement, Bedouin customs and habits give way gradually to those of the fellahin.

In the Khiss-Finn refugee camp (southern Syria) there are Arab refugees who claim to be members of tribes that lived until recently in Upper Galilee, around Lake Tiberias, near Nazareth and Safed. In July 1949, an inquiry was conducted among the <sup>3)</sup> members of the camp concerning tribal habits and health conditions. The members of the tribes were agricultural folk, some small traders and artisans. A part of them used to live permanently in stone houses, others dwelt in houses during the winter months, in tents during the harvesting season. In a number of tribes only the wealthy had houses, the poorer members lived permanently in tents. Most of the tribal people were settled, one group for only 50 to

- 
1. This was the situation prior to the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.
  2. Ashkenazi, 1938, p. 46
  3. Cotwell, 1950



70 years.

The nomad gradually accepts the fellah's mode of living, but for generations after sedentarization he still prides himself of his Bedouin origin. Albert de Boucheman tells of two remarkable instances illustrating this tendency:<sup>1)</sup>

1. The case of a lawyer in Beirut whose family has been settled for centuries. Occasionally he dons Bedouin attire to boast of his origin.
2. The case of the Bedouin emigrants to America who continue to pay the blood money with their brothers who have remained Bedouin.

## CHAPTER XII

### The Bedouin Problem on the Agenda of the 1949 and 1950 United Nations Social Welfare Seminars for Arab States

The Arab world is concerned with the problems of the nomadic population. At the United Nations Social Welfare Seminars conducted in 1949 at Beirut and in 1950 at Cairo, special committees were appointed to study the Bedouin problems and make recommendations for their solution.

Poverty was recognized to be the crux of the Bedouin problem, ignorance, poor health, etc. the results.<sup>2)</sup> The recommendations

- 
1. Boucheman, 1934, pp. 140-143
  2. El-Shihaby, 1950, p. 280



The Committee of the first seminar recognized that, at the present time, the financial provisions for the nomadic tribes are relatively inadequate and submitted the recommendation that a higher percentage of the budget of each State should be allocated for the social and economic needs of the nomadic population.<sup>1)</sup> The same Committee recommended that:

"the policy of the Arab States should aim at the settlement of a number of tribes by distributing them in the arable areas owned by the states and allotting small-holdings to individuals. In this connection the Committee refers to the existence especially in the Syrian Gezirah and Iraq, of extensive areas for the application of agricultural projects which should be based on the most up-to-date techniques of agriculture." 2)

## CHAPTER XIII

### Conclusions and Summary of the Settlement Problems

Nomadism has been chiefly responsible for the decline of agricultural prosperity in the Middle East.

The Bedouin tribes have always, through social and economic assimilation, become absorbed by the settled population. The process of sedentarization, the gradual transition from the nomadic mode of life to a settled existence, is a sociological phenomenon, inseparably connected with the history of Bedouin migrations from the desert into the fertile lands on its borders. In the past few decades the pace of the evolutionary process of transition has been considerably quickened under the impact of economic, social and political stimuli, mutually interlocked and overlapping.

- 
1. UN Social Welfare Seminar, 1950, p. 36
  2. *ibid.*, p. 37



## Economic

1)

The Pastoral economy of the Bedouin has been seriously affected by the rapid development of the area. Former pasture lands are increasingly brought under cultivation with subsequent restriction of tribal grazing areas.

Although an exaggerated significance has been attached to the effects of the declining demand for the camel, this factor has dealt a severe blow to the economy of the true desert Bedouin who subsisted in the past exclusively on camel-breeding.

## Social

Tribal society has progressively disintegrated as the result of the sheikh's emergence as a big landowner. The interest which tribal leadership displays in agricultural life, is bound to influence the thinking and acting of the tribesmen. Sooner or later, they will follow the examples set by their sheikhs and settle down.

- 
1. The statement of Alfred Bonne that "the term Bedouin economy is a contradiction in itself" and that "this economy is no economy in the accepted sense of the word" (Bonne, 1948, p. 346) may be exaggerated because the nomads make a valuable contribution to the economy by:
    - a. profitably utilizing the scanty patches of grass that grow for fleeting moments over widely separated stretches of desert area, a resource which would remain otherwise exploited
    - b. by supplying the people of the area with their needs of meat, wool and dairy products
    - c. producing for local industry and export trade items like wool, skins, hides, and live animals and their edible produce.



As a member of a well-knit patriarchal society the individual nomad enjoyed a relative sense of security, and his precarious existence in the desert was made possible by tribal solidarity and experienced and devoted leadership. With the dissolution of the traditional ties the Bedouin may ultimately come to realize the benefits that will accrue to him as part of a new social order, that of the settled community.

### Political

The administrations of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Israel have been concerned with integrating the nomadic element within their borders in the national community.

Saudi Arabia and Israel have formulated and are carrying out definite settlement policies, while the other governments of the area stimulate sedentarization by the creation of suitable conditions. Inadequate as the measures of the governments may be in themselves, they are bound to show results, once the disintegration of the tribal group is sufficiently advanced.

In order to make Bedouin sedentarization a lasting success, government-sponsored settlement projects must be designed and carried out.

For a long time the issue of "settling the tribes" has been a political slogan in the cities of the Arab countries, but only infrequently have the administrations of Syria, Iraq and Jordan taken concrete steps in direction of Bedouin settlement.



Responsible circles in the Arab world today pay due attention to the problems of the nomad society, and from time to time constructive recommendations are voiced for the solution of the social and economic problems of the Bedouin element. For example, the First and Second United Nations Social Welfare Seminars for Arab States in the Middle East appointed Special Committees to discuss Bedouin problems and needs. The recommendations which were submitted to the plenary sessions aimed at the raising of the Bedouin standard of living by settling on land part of the tribal population and helping the remaining nomads improve their mode of existence in the desert.

During the last twenty years, particularly in the 1930's, programs for Bedouin settlement have been formulated in Iraq and in Syria. But there is no reference as to how much of the plans<sup>1)</sup> was actually carried out. Where settlement has taken place, it was largely the private enterprise of the tribal sheikh. As the tribal land was usually registered in the name of the chief or leased to him by the government, practically all the members of the tribe have become upon settlement, the tenants or share-croppers on the estates of their leaders.

The sheikh-landlord has a personal economic interest in developing his land holdings, but his policies are rarely concerned with the welfare of his tribesmen. This is why the Social

---

1. Since no further reference was made to the plans in the ensuing years, the writer feels justified in assuming that the projects for Bedouin settlement remained on paper.



Bedouin settlement policies should be guided by the following considerations:

1. A government body, consisting of experts on agricultural problems and nomad traditions should be charged with settlement of those tribal groups ready to take up sedentary existence, by assisting them with land, money, educational facilities and technical advice.
2. While integration of the nomads with sedentary rural society and the development of a "mixed economy" consisting of cultivation and livestock breeding are desirable, nomadism and its pastoral economy in themselves are still fulfilling an important function. Due to nomadic animal breeding, the desert is being grazed and advantageously exploited for the production of meat, dairy, wool, etc. The nomads are thus a valuable economic asset.

In fact, there is a definite need for a substantial increase of animal husbandry in the Middle East. At present the population of the area lives largely on a cereal diet. The need for a greater protein content in the daily diet has been recognized and can only be met by increasing productivity of the existing pastoral economy.

Transition to permanent settlement is inevitable, but once the abuses of nomad society have been eliminated, no coercive measures should be adopted to accelerate



the process of sedentarization.

The Bedouin who are not yet ready to settle on land should be encouraged to improve their pastoral activities by teaching them better methods of breeding and feeding. At present the livestock in the area is of poor quality.

3. Where a settlement project is undertaken, satisfactory terms of land tenure should be assured to the prospective nomad-cultivator.

Sweeping land reforms will be frustrated by the property owning class which controls the administrations of all the Arab countries. But there is sufficient State land available for the distribution of small plots among individuals. Tribesmen can thus be safeguarded from becoming the exploited tenants and laborers on the estates of their sheikhs.

4. Bedouin settlement planning should take into consideration the slow psychological adjustment of the nomad to new conditions and the need of enabling him to undergo the change gradually.

The most powerful stimulant to Bedouin sedentarization will be the existence of a nearby prosperous village society. Père  
1)  
Jaussen noted the growing interest in agriculture among the Bedouin who observed the flourishing Christian colony at Madabah, Transjordan. They began to realize the wealth that cultivation

---

1. Jaussen, 1908, p. 243



can extract from the soil. A contented farmer in the neighborhood of the Bedouin camp will contribute more to accelerate the settlement of the nomads than any other factor.

The ultimate objective of settlement must be the raising of the Bedouin standard of living. The prospects of joining the ranks of an exploited and starving peasantry cannot and will not serve as an adequate and satisfactory inducement. The formulation of schemes to settle the tribes must therefore go hand in hand with social reforms in the Arab countries.



# B I B L I O G R A P H Y

## Government Reports

Report to the Council  
of the League of Nations  
on the Administration of  
Iraq

1920/22  
1923/24

His Britannic  
Majesty's Government

1928  
1929 a

His Majesty's Government

Special Report to the  
Council of the League of  
Nations on Progress of  
Iraq during 1920-31 Period 1932

Report to the Council of  
the League of Nations on  
the Administration of  
Palestine and Transjordan

1927  
1929 b  
1930  
1934  
1935  
1937  
1938

Rapport sur la Situation  
de la Syrie et du Liban

1929  
1931  
1932  
1935  
1936  
1937

Ministère des Affaires  
Etrangères

## Other Reports

Data Book, Near East and  
Independent Africa

1951

United States,  
Department of State

Final Report of the  
United Nations Economic  
Survey Mission for the  
Middle East

1949

United Nations Conciliation  
Commission for Palestine

Report of the United States  
Syria Agricultural Mission 1947

Office of Foreign Agricultural  
Relations, Washington



Review of Economic Conditions in the Middle East	1951	United Nations Department of Economic Affairs
United Nations Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States in the Middle East Beirut 1949	1950	United Nations Technical Assistance for Social Progress Lake Success, N.Y.
Second Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States of the Middle East Cairo 1950	1950	Kingdom of Egypt, Ministry of Social Affairs

Statistical Yearbooks

Annuaire Statistique de Poche 1947	1948	Gouvernement Egyptien
Central Bureau of Statistics Bulletin	1951	Government of Israel
Demographic Year Book of 1949-50	1951	United Nations
International Yearbooks of Agricultural Statistics 1931-1945	1932/46	United States, Bureau of Statistics
Palestine Census Report 1931	1932	E. Mills

Books and Articles in Journals

Arif el-Arif	1937	הכרונות במחוז באר שבע (תרגום עברי) Tel Aviv
Ashkenazi, Touvia	1948	"The Anazah Tribes" <u>Southwestern Journal of</u> <u>Anthropology</u> Summer
	1938	<u>Tribus semi-nomades de</u> <u>Palestine du Nord</u> Milwaukee



L'Avenir des Nomades de Desert de Syrie	1934	<u>L'Asie Francaise</u>
Avi Yonah, M	1937	"The Economic Past of the Negev" <u>Palestine and the Middle East</u> pp. 33-49 Tel Aviv
Barslavsky, Joseph	1946	"תערוכת שבטי הנדווים כנגד ומוצאה" <u>עדות</u>
Blunt, Lady Anne	1879	<u>Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates</u> New York
Boas, Franz	1938	<u>General Anthropology</u> New York
Bonne, Alfred	1948	<u>State and Economics of the Middle East</u> London
Boucheman, Albert	1934	"La Sédentarisation des Nomades de Syrie" <u>L'Asie Francaise</u> pp. 140-143
Burns, Norman	1951	"The Dujayla Land Settlement" <u>The Middle East Journal</u> pp. 362-6 Washington, D. C.
Caetani, Leone	1905/26	<u>Annali dell' Islam</u> Vol. 2 Milan
Cotwell, J	1950	"Social Survey of Khiss-Finn Camp" <u>United Nations Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States in the Middle East</u> Lake Success, N. Y.
Elston, D R	1951	"Arabs in Israel" <u>Israel and the Middle East</u> pp. 21-22 Tel Aviv
Epstein, Eliahu	1937 a	"The Transjordan Nomad" <u>Palestine and the Middle East</u> Feb. Tel Aviv
	1937 b	"Bedouin in the Negev" <u>Palestine and the Middle East</u> Nov. pp. 524-30 Tel Aviv



Epstein, Eliahu	1938	"The Bedouin of Transjordan" <u>Royal Central Asian Journal</u> pp. 228-36 London
	1939	"The Economic Situation of the Transjordan Tribes" <u>Royal Central Asian Journal</u> pp. 177-84 London
	1940	"El Jezireh" <u>Royal Central Asian Journal</u> London
Fisher, W B	1950	<u>The Middle East</u> London
Gamble, F H	1949	<u>Overseas Economic Surveys, Iraq</u> London
Glubb, Major J C	1935	"The Bedouin of Northern Iraq" <u>Royal Central Asian Journal</u> London
	1938	"Economic Situation of the Transjordan Tribes" <u>Royal Central Asian Journal</u> pp. 448-54 London
Glueck, Nelson	1940	<u>The Other Side of the Jordan</u> New Haven
Himadeh, Said	1950	"Significant Historical, Econ- omic and Social Factors, Res- ponsible for the Conditions of Rural Communities in Arab Lands" <u>Second Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States of the Middle East</u> pp. 429-32 Cairo
	1951	"Economic Factors Underlying Social Problems in the Arab Middle East" <u>The Middle East Journal</u> pp. 269-83 Washington, D. C.
Hitti, Philip K	1951	<u>History of Syria</u> New York
Hourani, A K	1946	<u>Syria and Lebanon</u> London



Huntington, Ellsworth	1922	<u>The Pulse of Asia</u> New Haven
Ireland, Philip W	1938	<u>Iraq</u> New York
Jamali, M Fadhal	1934	<u>The New Iraq, its Problem of Bedouin Education</u> New York
Jarvis, Major C S	1935	"Sinai" <u>Royal Central Asian Journal</u> London
	1938	<u>Desert and Delta</u> London
Jawad, Hashim	1945	<u>The Social Structure of Iraq</u> Baghdad
Jaussen, Père	1908	<u>Coutumes des Arabes au Pays de Moab</u> Paris
Khayat, Jaefar	1950	"Methods that will Prevent Migration from Village to Cities" <u>Second Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States of the Middle East</u> pp. 225-6 Cairo
Kirkbride, A S	1945	"Changes in Tribal Life in Transjordan" <u>Man</u> March-April
Konikoff, A	1946	<u>Transjordan, Economic Survey</u> Jerusalem
Longrigg, S	1925	<u>Four Centuries of Modern Iraq</u> London
Lowdermilk, Walter C	1944	<u>Palestine, Land of Promise</u> New York
Montagne, Robert	1947	<u>La Civilisation du Desert</u> Paris
Muller, Victor	1931	<u>En Syrie avec les Bedouins</u> Paris



Oppenheim, Max Freiherr von	1939	<u>Die Beduinen</u> Voll. 1 Leipzig
	1943	<u>Die Beduinen</u> Vol. 2 Leipzig
Oriente Moderno	1934	Vol. XIV
	1935	Vol. XV
	1936	Vol. XVI
	1937	Vol. XVII
Patai, Raphael	1952	"The Middle East as a Culture Area" <u>The Middle East Journal</u> Washington, D. C.
Poliak, A N	1942	"Bedouin Settlement in Arab Countries" <u>Jewish Agency for Palestine Bulletin of Economic Research</u> No. 1
Raswan, Carl R	1930	"Tribal Areas and Migration Lines of the North Arabian Bedouin" <u>Geographical Journal</u> Vol. 20
Rihani, Ameen	1928	<u>Ibn Saud of Arabia</u> London
Royal Institute of International Affairs	1925	<u>Survey of International Affairs</u> part 3 London
	1950	<u>The Middle East</u> London
Salem, Jamil	1950	"Mother and Child Care in Syrian Nomadic Tribes" <u>Second Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States of the Middle East</u> pp. 354-8 Cairo
Semple, Ellen C	1932	<u>The Geography of the Mediterranean Region</u> London



Shihabi, Emir Mostafa El	1950	"Bedouin Social Welfare" <u>Second Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States of the Middle East</u> pp. 278-82 Cairo
Tannous, Afif I	1947	"The Arab Tribal Community in a Nationalist State" <u>The Middle East Journal</u> Washington, D. C.
	1951	"Land Reform, Key to the Development and Stability of the Arab World" <u>The Middle East Journal</u> PP. 1-20 Washington, D. C.
Toynbee, Arnold	1934	<u>Study of History</u> Vol. 3 London
Warriner, Doreen	1948	<u>Land and Poverty in the Middle East</u> London
<u>Pamphlets and Newspaper Reports</u>		
Al Hamishmar	May 25, 1949	"Bedouin in Israel"
New York Times	Sept. 6, 1949 Nov. 4, 1950 Aug. 13, 1951 Dec. 1, 1951	
Palestine Post	Nov. 24, 1949	"Report of Ted Lourie"
The Jewish Agency's Digest of Press and Events	Mar. 24, 1951 a July 20, 1951 b	"Aid to Bedouins" "Negev Bedouin Fail to Return from Jordan"