History and Politics of Nomadism in Modern Palestine (1882-1948)

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History and Politics of Nomadism in Modern Palestine (1882-1948)

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ABSTRACT

My research examines contending visions on nomadism in modern Palestine. It is a comparative study that covers British, Arab and Zionist attitudes to nomadism. By nomadism I refer to a form of territorialist discourse, one which views tribal formations as the antithesis of national and land rights, thus justifying the exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus. Drawing on primary sources in Arabic and Hebrew, I show how local conceptions of nomadism have been reconstructed on new legal taxonomies rooted in modern European theories and praxis. By undertaking a comparative approach, I maintain that the introduction of these taxonomies transformed not only local Palestinian perceptions of nomadism, but perceptions that characterized early Zionist literature. The purpose of my research is not to provide a legal framework for nomadism on the basis of these taxonomies. Quite the contrary, it is to show how nomadism, as a set of official narratives on the Bedouin of Palestine, failed to imagine nationhood and statehood beyond the single apparatus of settlement.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to everyone who helped along the way. Special thanks go to Professors Judith Tucker, Osama Abi-Mershed, Salim Tamari, Emma Gannage, and Zachary Lockman for reading and commentating on my thesis.

Many thanks,
Seraje Assi
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Introduction

My research examines contending visions on nomadism in modern Palestine, with special focus on the British Mandate period. By nomadism I refer to a form of territorialist discourse, one which views tribal formations as the antipode of national and land rights, thus justifying the exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus. Drawing on primary sources in Arabic and Hebrew, I show how local conceptions of nomadism have been reconstructed by an emerging class of Palestinian and Zionist nationalists into new legal taxonomies rooted in modern European theories and praxis. By undertaking a comparative approach, I maintain that the introduction of these taxonomies transformed not only local Palestinian perceptions of nomadism, but perceptions that characterized early Zionist literature. The purpose of my research is not to provide a legal framework for nomadism on the basis of these taxonomies. Quite the contrary, it is to show how nomadism, as a set of official narratives on the Bedouin of Palestine, failed to imagine nationhood, let alone statehood, beyond the single apparatus of settlement.

Three major, intertwined questions run through this study. First, how British, Arab and Jewish perceptions of nomadism have been shaped within the matrix of power relations in Mandate Palestine, one which involved British colonialism, Palestinian nationalism and Labor Zionism. Second, how perceptions of nomadism have been constituted within a web of discursive strands, such as race, nationhood, statehood, autochthony, modernity, settlement, and land rights. Third, how nomadism as a discourse on the Bedouin of Palestine has emerged across fields as diverse as raciology (or scientific racism), ethnography, anthropology, political economy, legal theory, and climatic (declensionist) narratives on tribal invasions. What I am
asking, in short, is: Can we treat nomadism as a field of historical inquiry, a formative discourse by which British officials, Zionist pioneers, and Arab nationalists imagined, managed and governed the Bedouin of Palestine?

One way I approach these questions is by situating my research within recent developments in the field of Palestinian and Zionist historiographies. In what follows I outline the major themes, methods and sources in the field of Israel and Palestine Studies, and, most importantly, the ways in which modern scholarship on Israel/Palestine has recently departed from the nationalist and official narratives, which had dominated the field for half a century.

Over the past three decades, historians of Israel/Palestine have embarked on two agendas of historical revisionism. On one side, the New Historians of Israel, or the Revisionists, from the late 1980s onwards, set out to debunk official narratives on the origins of the State of Israel. This revisionist trend, arguably referred to as post-Zionism, was inaugurated by a new generation of Israeli historians, notably Avi Shlaim, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappe, Tom Segev, Hillel Cohen, and Baruch Kimmerling. Mining newly declassified government documents in Israeli and Zionist archives, these historians brought into question orthodox accounts of Israel's national history, Zionist ideology and the founding myths surrounding the Palestinian Exodus of 1948. Where the Revisionists most remarkably departed from Israel's official story is on the question of nationalism. As Avi Shalim points out, Jewish nationalism, as told by Zionist historians, was a "selective, simplistic, and self-serving" version of history that "served a dual function in instilling a sense of nationhood in Jews from various countries of origin and in enlisting international sympathy and support for the fledgling State of Israel. The one cause it
emphatically did not serve is that of mutual understanding and reconciliation between Jews and the Arabs.\textsuperscript{1}

On the other side, Palestinian revisionists began to raise critical questions about the origins of Palestinian nationalism and national awakening.\textsuperscript{2} These historians have explored myriad aspects of Palestinian nationalism from the late Ottoman to the late Mandate period.\textsuperscript{3} A milestone was set by Rashid Khalid's seminal \textit{Palestinian Identity} (1997). Drawing on local Arabic newspapers from the pre-state period, Khalidi shows how a collective sense of Palestinian identity was woven from diverse narratives on nationhood and peoplehood. His account departed from nationalist narratives on Palestinian identity by exploring multi foci of loyalty that ranged from Arab nationalism to Ottomanism to local patriotism, culminating in a Palestinian identity that was fluid and in flux, but never primordial or coherent.\textsuperscript{4}

While this revisionist literature marked a welcome departure from nationalist orthodoxies, which had denominated both historiographies for the most part of the twentieth century, it still suffers from a host of limitations. One major shortcoming lies in its dualistic approach. In his discussion of the state of historical scholarship on modern Palestine, Zachary Lockman offers a substantial critique of what he refers to as the 'dual-society paradigm', which posits the existence in Mandatory Palestine of two essentially separate societies with distinct and

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-disconnected historical trajectories. According to Lockman, the dominancy of this paradigm had been predicated on two key factors: ideological and methodological. The former concerns the ways in which historians of modern Palestine have worked from within either Zionist or Arab-Palestinian nationalist historical narratives. The latter derives from the fact that only a few historians of modern Palestine have had a knowledge of both Arabic and Hebrew, the most widely spoken languages in Mandatory Palestine. Drawing on what he terms the 'relational paradigm', Lockman convincingly stresses the need for a critical comparative approach to the history of Israel/Palestine, one which extends beyond the exclusive focus in recent scholarship on Zionist or Palestinian narratives, and hence its overreliance on either Hebrew or Arabic sources.5

The relational approach has found expression in a series of recent innovative studies on Mandate Palestine. Drawing on diverse fields of inquiry, these new studies have ushered in a renewed focus on the interplay between local Palestinian organizations, Zionist institutions, and British administrative agencies in the pre-state period. One major field was economics, or, more specifically, political economy.6 This trend was inaugurated by Lockman’s *Comrades and Enemies*, published in 1996. Shifting the scholarly focus from ethnic dualism to class relations, Lockman explores the formative interactions between Arab and Jewish working classes, labor movements, and labor-oriented political parties in Palestine during the Mandate period. Drawing on archival and primary sources in both Arabic and Hebrew, Lockman shows how Arab-Jewish

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relations were "constituted and shaped within a complex matrix of economic, political, social, and cultural interactions." His account presents a narrative of Arab-Jewish relations that extends beyond nationalist methodologies of primordial identities, ethnic separation, and unending conflict.7

Lockman's approach was echoed in Gershon Shafir’s *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*, published in the same year. Set in the Mandate period, the book sets out to debunk a host of founding myths about the founding of Israel by situating the struggle over the control of land and labor within the framework of settler colonialism. Drawing on the same relational approach that guided Lockman, Shafir maintains that the Zionist settler enterprise, which culminated in the economic separatism and a divided Arab and Jewish economy in Mandate Palestine, was not the result of some modern ideals imported by the Zionist pioneers, but was rather born within the local conditions of the unfolding conflict between European settlers (the British), Zionist newcomers, and the native Palestinian population.8

What followed was a surge in historical scholarship on Arab-Jewish economic exchange during the Mandate. Major contributions include Jacob Metzer's comparative study, *The Divided Economy of Mandatory Palestine*, which explores Arab-Jewish relations from the lens of political economy. Metzer shows how the seemingly dualist economy of Mandate Palestine had nonetheless facilitated the integration of the two economies into a larger economic realm, where economic exchanges and convergences often transcended the self-imposed spatial and social

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segregation of the two communities. In a similar fashion, Deborah Bernstein's *Constructing Boundaries* has examined the impact of the divided economy on Arab and Jewish labor relations, but also underlined areas of cooperation and joint class struggle among Jewish and Arab workers. In a recent study, Amos Nadan has highlighted the role played by colonial policies in the decline of Palestine's peasant economy, a failure which he attributes to orientalist biases, misguided paradigms and assumptions about the backwardness of local practices, which ultimately led British officials to impose modernizing policies that proved disastrous to indigenous institutions.

What distinguishes this nascent literature is its greater focus on the colonial paradigm. Following in the footsteps of Lockman and Shafir, and drawing on an interdisciplinary approach that combines recent findings in the fields of history, political economy and culture studies, these scholars have cast critical light on the spectrum of colonial and orientalist narratives underpinning British and Zionist historiography, which tended to read the economy of Palestine through the prism of development and modernization brought about by European settlers and Jewish newcomers. In this reconfiguration, modernization theory was perhaps the first in a long line of colonial theories to be refuted in the modern scholarship on Israel/Palestine.

Another major development in the field of Palestine Studies is its renewed focus on non-elite and minority groups, bringing in hitherto silenced voices of rural and urban subaltern groups. This new approach, dubbed by historians as 'writing history-from-below', allowed

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scholars to further break away with the monolithic and dualistic categories of race and nationality that had permeated nationalist and official narratives. Set in late Ottoman Palestine, Beshara Doumani’s *Rediscovering Palestine* attempted to ‘write into history’ the Palestinian merchants and peasants of Jabal Nablus, whereas Rashid Khalidi's *Palestinian Identity* brought to the fore local resistance among Palestinian peasants to both Zionism and British colonialism.\(^{12}\) Other scholars, such as Ted Swedenburg, focused on Palestinian peasants and rebels during the Great Revolt of 1936-9.\(^{13}\) Lockman and Shafir's seminal works on Arab and Jewish workers during the Mandate falls under this category.\(^{14}\)

Besides its thematic and methodological complexity, this new trend is also distinguished by the breadth and diversity of its sources. These range from official archives to court documents, family papers, and oral histories. Mining hitherto neglected primary sources, such as personal memoirs and diaries, Salim Tamari and Glenda Abramson devoted greater attention to the lives of ordinary Ottoman soldiers, both Arabs and Jews.\(^{15}\) Drawing on *Sharia* court records, Judith Tucker and Iris Agmon examined how ordinary women, by defending their legal rights in local Islamic courts, helped reshape the legal system of Ottoman Palestine.\(^{16}\) Ellen Fleischmann

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\(^{13}\) Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1995)


\(^{16}\) Judith Tucker, *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Iris Agmon, *Family and Court: Legal Culture And Modernity in Late Ottoman Palestine* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2006.)
drew on a large body of oral history, family papers, and government documents to examine the role of Palestinian women in the unfolding national struggle under the British Mandate.\textsuperscript{17}

More recently, scholarship on Israel/Palestine has brought renewed focus on urban centers, such as Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa. Rather than ethnic separatism, far more attention has been paid to social and cultural interactions among local Arabs and Jews in the pre-state period. Michelle Campos and Jonathan Marc Gribetz examined Ottoman Palestine as a meeting place for Arab and Jewish urbanites,\textsuperscript{18} whereas Tom Segev and Salim Tamari focused on Arab and Jewish urbanites under the British Mandate.\textsuperscript{19} Other scholars still focused on religious minorities in urban centers, such as Christians.\textsuperscript{20} Another area where the shift to urban centers was largely manifest is popular culture, a trend most especially evident in the works of Mark Levine, Salim Tamari and Ted Swedenberg.\textsuperscript{21} While still set in urban centers, this revisionist literature reveals far more complex layers of national formations, shifting scholarly interests away from the bounds of founding texts and elitist canons that had characterized early scholarship.

My approach is inspired by recent methodological developments in the field of Palestine Studies, largely manifest in the introduction of the new historical paradigms outlined above. Grounded in wider scholarly trends across academic disciplines and historical settings, these

\textsuperscript{19} Tom Segev, \textit{One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the Mandate}; Salim Tamari, \textit{Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture}.
paradigms have shifted scholarly focus in the field well beyond the dominant dualistic approach described by Lockman. Drawing on this revisionist scholarship, I employ a relational approach that extends beyond the limits of racial binaries to the larger matrix of cross-cultural relations shaping the discourse on nomadism in modern Palestine. My relational approach stems from the very nature of my topic. For the most part, it permits the historian of modern Palestine to go beyond the Jewish/Arab divide and show more internal conflicts, thus challenging prevalent perceptions of Zionist and Palestinian national histories as monolithic entities. In the specific context of nomadism, it allows for a better understanding of how certain perceptions of the Palestinian Bedouin have been shaped within the complex web of social and cultural interactions, rather than racial separatism. More importantly, the introduction of nomadism into the national history of Palestine allows for a critical departure from teleological descriptions of this history as a linear and evolutionary progression from two singular events, namely, Jewish immigration and native Palestinian resistance.

In resituating the question of nomadism into the national history of Israel/Palestine, I follow in the footsteps of revisionist historians whose works show a keen interest in the early stages of national and state formations. Focused on the relationship of nomadism and nationhood, my study benefits from a wide array of revisionist accounts on the question of national identity in Palestinian historiography, the question of land and identity in Zionist historiography, and the question of ethnocracy and the making of territorial identities in

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These scholars and others have brought into sharp focus the nexus of land, settlement and territorially reshaping Palestinian and Zionist national formations. Their research informs my thesis that nomadism, as a set of contending visions on land rights and ownership in Mandate Palestine, is at the root of these national formations.

My research, however, seeks to depart from three prevalent tendencies in the current scholarship on Palestine. The first concerns its increasing focus on the question of periodization. In a broad spectrum of opinions spanning over a century, scholars have traced the emergence of a Palestinian identity to events that extended from the early nineteenth through late twentieth century, ranging from the peasant revolt of 1834, to the establishment of the PLO during the 1960s. Most historians, however, tend to agree that a regional form of Palestinian national identity emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century, and crystallized during the Mandate period in the wake of the 1936-39 Arab Revolt in Palestine. Referring to the period of 1914-1923 as the "critical years," Rashid Khalid has apparently built a consensus around the dating of Palestinian national consciousness.

Despite its appeal, this consensus is seemingly predicated on a geographical bias, enabled in large part by the exclusive focus in Palestinian historiography on the urban centers of Mandate

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Palestine, where the national conflict was most acute. It says little about the Bedouin population of southern Palestine—did they, too, imagine themselves as Palestinians during those "critical years"? Which brings me to the second problematic in this historiography, namely, its prevailing tendency to focus on urban centers, such as Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, and Nablus. Nowhere is this urban bias more clearly felt than in the neglect of the desert regions of southern Palestine, where the Bedouin communities have historically lived. This neglect can be attributed to various factors, such as the dearth of primary sources available in rural and desert areas, and the relative novelty of the scholarship on subaltern groups in Palestine, and in former colonial settings in general. Not that the neglect of such groups, such as nomads and tribesmen, is unique to southern Palestine. Indeed, one major question raised by historians and scholars of subaltern studies was, and remains, how to write the histories of marginalized groups, especially those who have scarcely kept a record of their own histories? I will come back to this point shortly.

The third shortcoming in the historical scholarship on Palestine is its greater focus on the Zionist and the Palestinian sides of the conflict, which meant paying little scholarly attention to British rule, despite the fact that the bulk of this scholarship has been set in the British Mandate period. What follows is that the British administration in Palestine has not undergone the sort of critical reappraisal applied to the history of Zionist settler colonialism and Palestinian nationalism. This thematic omission has resulted in missed methodological, theoretical, and most importantly, comparative opportunities. For one thing, British rule in Palestine provides a

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fertile ground for postcolonial and subaltern theories that have been applied to Indian history. For another, Mandate Palestine is ripe for comparative history of empire and nationalism in the broader context of British and French mandates.  

My research seeks to resist these three tendencies. First, while it seemingly fits into the scholarly consensus on the emergence of Palestinian nationhood, the history of nomadism defies linear classification. Tribal loyalty is a complex issue. Defined as it was by the unsteady alteration between assimilation and resistance to national and state formations, it poses a challenge to the notion that there emerged under the Mandate a unified and stable form of national identity, traceable to a specific, 'big-bang' historical event. Moreover, the complex history of nomadism, as both discourse and praxis, in modern Palestine defies the existence of historical or discursive ruptures in official perceptions and attitudes to the local Bedouin population. My research shows that the British Mandate marked anything but a radical break in the history of imperial policies and state attitudes to nomadism. Extending from the late Ottoman period to the founding of the State of Israel, it seeks to highlight both ruptures and continuities with the Ottoman past and the Israeli present, a broad periodization that bodes well for my argument that nomadism— again, as both discourse and praxis— was not invented by the British or the Zionists, but is the shared legacy of Ottoman, British, Zionist, Palestinian, and most recently, Israeli attitudes to the Bedouin of Palestine. This division also suggests that the British Mandate, though it offers an ideal context for nation and state-building efforts, marked anything but a radical break in the history of imperial and state policies on nomadism.

32 There are few exceptions, notably Zeina B. Ghandour, A Discourse on Domination in Mandate Palestine: Imperialism, Property and Insurgency (London: Routledge, 2010), and Rashid Khalidi, The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).
Second, my research rests on the conviction that Bedouin voices in southern Palestine can be partly recovered, if not from original Bedouin sources, which are virtually nonexistent, then by a careful analysis of the vast primary literature available on the Bedouin, left by British desert administrators, Zionist urban planners, and Arab mandatory officials in southern Palestine. I do not pretend, however, to have provided convincing and satisfactory answers to the question of how the Bedouin have perceived themselves or demarcated their identity, for the same methodological reasons described above, namely, the lack of sufficient historical evidence to draw a fair picture of identity formations among the Bedouin tribes, let alone an academic consensus about the emergence of a collective Palestinian identity amidst this population. Still, by shifting the historical focus to southern Palestine and its Bedouin population, my study seeks to extend to provinces and non-elite groups questions of national identity and state formations, without losing sight of its methodological limitations.

Third, my research seeks to break away from the Arab/Jewish duality by offering a comparative and relational study of the major narratives operating under the Mandate: British colonialism, Labor Zionism, and Arab nationalism. A special attention is paid to the British side, which covers the first three chapters, beginning with the ethnographic legacy of the British-sponsored Palestine Exploration Fund Society, to the Palestine-oriented geographical publications of the British Naval Intelligence Division, up to the tribal legacy of British desert administrators in southern Palestine. Each chapter represents a formative stage of British colonial enterprise in Palestine, extending from the late Ottoman down to the postwar and the Mandate periods. A major theme running through these chapters is the nexus of race and ethnography reshaping British perceptions of the Bedouin of Palestine before and during the early phases of
the Mandate, and the ways these perceptions guided the administrative division of the country along newly demarcated racial boundaries.

Finally, by undertaking the relational approach described above, my study seeks to show how colonial and national narratives converge, rather than diverge, on the question of nomadism, thus breaking away from prevailing perceptions of the two forces as binary opposites. This approach is by no means an innovation. A similar course of study has been pursued by Partha Chatterjee in the context of British India, and James McDougall in the French Algeria. These scholars, among others, have challenged prevailing notions that nationalism emancipated native histories, thus portraying nationalism as yet a new form of domination and hegemony in which native histories are reconstructed, re-imagined, even invented, before being integrated into the broader structure of national history. Mandate Palestine, as a contested site of domination involving the three major forces of British imperialism, Zionist settler colonialism and Arab nationalism, provides a breeding ground for exploring the ways in which nationalism and colonialism are equally involved in a dual process of denial and invention, erasure and redemption, association and assimilation in the perceptions and attitudes to nomadism.

Despite the thematic and methodological developments described above, secondary literature on the history and politics of nomadism in modern Palestine is relatively scant. The bulk of this literature is devoted to anthropological research on the structures of tribal and nomadic societies, socioeconomic research on politics of sedentarization and urbanization, and

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33 Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); James McDougall, History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
political research on legal rights and land disputes in contemporary contexts.\(^{34}\) The study of nomadism as a cultural discourse and a particular form of representation remains largely absent from this literature. Equally absent is the role of nomadism in shaping national narratives and identity formations in modern Palestine. There is no comparative research on the perceptions of nomadism in Zionist and Palestinian historiographies, and the ways Arab and Jewish historians attempted to incorporate the history of nomadism into the broader framework of national history. Moreover, scholarship on the question of nomadism in modern Palestine is largely focused on the context of contemporary Israel, in which nomadism continues to be viewed from the single prism of conflict between the state and its Bedouin minority. The genealogy of this conflict, meanwhile, is pushed to the margin of academic inquiry. By resituating the question of nomadism in the context of post-Ottoman Palestine, I seek to avoid the tendency to reduce it to state/frontier conflicts, thus focusing on its role in the early stages of nation-building.

Among scholars of the Middle East, there has been greater attention to British tribal discourse and policy in the context of Transjordan. Joseph Massad's *Colonial Effects* offers a pioneering inquiry into the role of tribal law and military institutions in the construction of modern Jordanian identity, whereas Yoav Alon explores the ways in which British desert administrators sought to integrate the disparate tribes and clans of Transjordan into the fabric of the nascent Jordanian state. Drawing on oral Bedouin sources, Andrew Shryock examines the emergence of a unique form of "genealogical nationalism" in tribal Jordan.\(^{35}\) A recent study by


Robert Fletcher examines the development of the 'Tribal Question' into an empire-wide discourse that helped reshape British frontier policies and attitudes to nomadism.\textsuperscript{36} There is, however, little discussion in these works of the implications of such policies and attitudes for Palestine and its people. Mandate Palestine in particular offers a curious case study of tribal administration because, unlike Transjordan, British (and Zionist) tribal policies in southern Palestine, thanks in large part to the ethnic character of the conflict, have largely culminated in the exclusion, rather than inclusion, of the Bedouin from state and national formations.

Other scholars, notably Karen Barkey and Resat Kasaba, have devoted more attention to Ottoman perceptions of nomadism, casting critical light on tribal and frontier policies under Ottoman rule, and the ways these policies, paradoxically, had diverged from what they describe as the formative role of nomadism in shaping Ottoman imperial statecraft, governance apparatus and nation-state institutions.\textsuperscript{37} Yet only a few scholars have ventured into the study of tribal policies in the context of Ottoman Palestine, including Ottoman policies and attitudes to the Bedouin tribes of the Negev,\textsuperscript{38} and the impact of the Ottoman Tanizmat on the Bedouin of Southern Palestine and the building of the town of Beersheba.\textsuperscript{39} Still, these studies have largely


\textsuperscript{38} Clinton Bailey, "The Ottomans and the Bedouin Tribes of the Negev", in Gad G. Gilbar (ed.), \textit{Ottoman Palestine: Studies in Economic and Social History 1800-1914} (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990.)

\textsuperscript{39} Y. Avci, "The Application of Tanizmat in the Desert: The Bedouins and the Creation of a New Town in Southern Palestine (1860-1914)". \textit{Middle Eastern Studies}. 45 (6).
focused on state tribal policies and practices, rather than the question of discursive formations, which is the primary focus of this study.

More recently, scholars have taken an interest in tribal discourse and praxis in the context of Mandate Palestine. In a recent study, Assaf Likhovski devotes a chapter to the administrative career of Palestinian historian Aref al-Aref, who also served as the District Officer of Beersheba under the Mandate, and his legacy among the Bedouin of southern Palestine from the perspective of legal thought. In a seminal work on the politics of land and identity in Israel/Palestine, Oren Yiftachel offers a brief discussion on new forms of tribal doctrines and strategies implemented in the Beersheba region, such as fractured regionalism and urban ethnocracy. This was joined by two edited volumes on the Palestinian Bedouin, which examine the Bedouin population of the Negev from the perspective of settler colonialism and international law.

These studies are advanced in both narrative and method, drawing on interdisciplinary approaches that combine history with subaltern studies, postcolonial theories, and discourse analysis. Yet, they still fall short of providing a fair picture of the spectrum of policies and attitudes reshaping the history of nomadism in modern Palestine, a gap which this study seeks to bridge by, first, tracing the origins and genealogy of nomadism in the pre-state period; second, offering a comparative and relational perspective to the legacy of British, Jewish, and Arab narratives on nomadism; third, treating nomadism as an official discourse that involves national and colonial institutions alike, not as a sporadic set of state policies and hostile representations;

and, finally, situating my research into the broader context of settler-colonialism in Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.

Meanwhile, historians of the Jewish yishuv began to recognize nomadism as a defining feature in the early stages of Labor Zionism in Palestine. Studies ranged from historical inquiry to discourse analysis. Whereas some chose to examine the integration of nomadic and tribal aspects into the formation of a new Jewish identity in Palestine, such as Oz Almog’s seminal work on the Sabra generation, others chose to demonstrate how these aspects provided early Zionist pioneers with a radical notions of otherness. Others, like Gil Eyal, still ventured to show how orientalist memes in Zionist literature transformed its perceptions of the Arabs and Jews alike. This revisionist literature offers an alternative narrative to official Zionist historiography, where nomadism is pushed to the margin of the historical survey of early Arab-Jewish interactions in Palestine. Despite its valuable contribution, this nascent literature suffers from the same methodological limits that characterized the early revisionist literature on Palestine. For the most part, it falls short of providing a comparative and relational perspective on Zionist and Palestinian narratives on nomadism. As we shall see, there has been little attempt in this literature to account for the dual suppression in both national narratives of those nomadic aspects that had shaped early Arab and Jewish histories, a suppression which, in the Zionist case, involved the unspoken erasure of Jewish nomadic identity.

45 See, most notably, Gil Eyal. The Disenchantment with the Orient (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).
Theory and Method

My research focuses on the nexus of knowledge and power underpinning colonial and national narratives. It examines how a particular form of knowledge (nomadism), produced in specific historical context (Mandate Palestine), is woven into the deeper structures of power relations (colonialism/nationalism/statehood). This involves the redistribution of historical, geographical and ethnographic imagination into new forms of knowledge and representation, discourse and praxis, political expedience and social organization. To this end, I draw on an interdisciplinary approach that combines recent findings in the fields of history, environmental studies, political anthropology, and postcolonial theory. By undertaking this approach, I explore the complex history of nomadism in Palestine as a dynamic exchange between individuals, institutions, and the broader framework of cultural discourse on nomadism. My research rests on the assumption that nomadism can indeed serve as interpretative taxonomy for historical inquiry.

One significant area on which this research draws is postcolonial theory.47 Postcolonialism asks how colonial power and hegemony both shape and are shaped by Western forms of knowledge, and how certain representations of colonial subjects and native populations have served as a legal and moral justification for European domination overseas.48 In its origin, the field of postcolonial and subaltern studies flourished in South Asia, and British India in particular, where members of the so-called Subaltern Studies Group have embarked on studying myriad aspects of Indian colonial and postcolonial reality, showing how British imperial policies have culminated in the production of specific forms of knowledge of the local Indian population,

48 A milestone in this critique was Edward Said’s Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.)
ranging from racial classifications, ethnographic theories and sweeping anthropological assumptions about native primitiveness and noble savagery.\textsuperscript{49} Mandate Palestine, as we shall see, is ripe for this kind of postcolonial inquiry, especially with regard to British tribal policies and attitudes to the local Bedouin population. Robert Young’s definition of postcolonialism is largely fit for the Palestinian Bedouin community:

> Postcolonialism’s concerns are centered on geographic zones of intensity that have remained largely invisible, but which prompt or involve questions of history, ethnicity, complex cultural identities and questions of representation, of refugees, emigration and immigration, of poverty and wealth—but also, importantly, the energy, vibrancy and creative cultural dynamics that emerge in very positive ways from such demanding circumstances. Postcolonialism offers a language of and for those who have no place, who seem not to belong, of those whose knowledges and histories are not allowed to count. It is above all this preoccupation with the oppressed, with the subaltern classes, with minorities in any society, with the concerns of those who live or come from elsewhere, that constitutes the basis of postcolonial politics and remains the core that generates its continuing power.\textsuperscript{50}

From India postcolonialism moved to North Africa. One main contribution of the postcolonial theory in the North African context lay in its refutation of the dichotomous worldview that permeated colonial and national narratives. Historians of French Algeria, such as James McDougall, have questioned prevailing notions that nationalism emancipated native

\textsuperscript{49} For a recent analysis of this trend, See Gayatri Spivak: \textit{Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason} (Malden, MA: Polity, 2007).

\textsuperscript{50} Robert Young, ‘What is the Postcolonial?’, \textit{Ariel} 40:1 (2009) 13–25.
histories, thus portraying nationalism as yet a new form of domination in which native histories are constantly reconstructed. Drawing on local histories, McDougall explores the struggle to define the Algerian past and Algerian nationhood within the complex matrix of colonial history, Islamic culture and secular nationalism in modern Algeria.\textsuperscript{51} Others, like Benjamin Brower, have explored the Algerian desert as a space of colonial violence, while still calling into question the dichotomous framework that pits European states as agents of colonial oppression and colonial subjects as agents of anticolonial resistance.\textsuperscript{52} Like McDougall, Brower's thesis clusters around his attempt "to rethink the national-resistance model of popular movements in the Middle East and to seek new ways to explain the dynamics of their violence."\textsuperscript{53} Others, like Osama Abi-Mershed, have explored the hegemonic rationalities guiding the twin doctrines of assimilation and association in French colonial discourse in Algeria, challenging the conventional view of the two policies as representing essentially separate ideological tenets of French colonization, another dichotomous view that characterized a generation of French colonial historiographers.\textsuperscript{54}

Another significant source for my research is environmental studies. Over the past two decades, the field of Middle East studies has witnessed a surge in environmental research linking climatic narratives to imperial and state policies. This scholarship has largely focused on Ottoman Egypt,\textsuperscript{55} and the Ottoman empire in general.\textsuperscript{56} Others, notably Diana Davis, have

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{51} James McDougall, \textit{History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
\item\textsuperscript{52} Benjamin Brower, \textit{A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844-1902} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
\item\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 93
\item\textsuperscript{54} Osama Abi-mershed, \textit{Apostles of Modernity: Saint-simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria} (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010).
\end{itemize}
focused on colonial North Africa. Her *Resurrecting Empire*, which examines colonial environmental policy in French Algeria, is perhaps the most relevant to my research. The book offers interesting insights on French colonial representations of the tribal populations of the Algerian Sahara, casting critical light on the pseudo-scientific taxonomies depicting nomadic societies as destructive races in the region, blamed for the desertification and deforestation of what was once the 'fertile granary of Roman North Africa.' My research uncovers a similar declensionist narrative in British colonial discourse in Mandate Palestine, one which portrayed the Bedouin population as a destructive race in the country, responsible for the climatic devastation of what British officials, too, believed was the fertile granary of Roman Palestine.

Despite these theoretical and methodological developments, nomadism remains a curiously undertheorized phenomenon. Few scholars have contemplated its exclusion from state and national formations. James Scott once wondered "why the states are the enemy of the people who move around?". Little effort has been made since to explore the rationalities underpinning this enmity. One significant area where the question of nomadism has been closely investigated, at least in theory, is political anthropology. A curious theoretical exercise was pursued by a new generation of French anthropologists who ventured into this kind of inquiry during the eighties, notably Pierre Clastres, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Ironically, though, these scholars ended up reproducing the very assumptions which they sought to refute in official narratives. Clastres cultivated a romanticized image of the nomads as 'a society against the state' employed,

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almost inherently, in a constant struggle against modern forms of settlement, progress and economics.\textsuperscript{59} His intellectual successors in France, Deleuze and Guattari, embarked on an ambitious philosophical exercise to explore the 'exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus', but ended up declaring the nomads a 'war machine' employed against the sedentary power of the state.\textsuperscript{60}

To bridge this theoretical gap, I employ Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality, which represents his interest in the role of political rationalities in shaping the genealogy of the modern state.\textsuperscript{61} In Foucault, governmentality is “at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not." In this view, "the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality."\textsuperscript{62} To translate Foucault's theoretical notion into the reality of Mandate Palestine is to see how colonial and national attempts to incorporate nomadism into state and national formations culminated in a complex process of exclusion and inclusion, assimilation and association. For example, how British attitudes to the Bedouin allowed for both the exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus, and the demarcation of statehood onto this exteriority. This is to see, for example, how for Zionist pioneers nomadism demarcated both the territorial boundary of the Jewish yishuv and a coveted space of land redemption and desert reclamation. Or how British attitudes to the Bedouin rendered nomadism at once exterior to the state and a sphere of colonial

\textsuperscript{60} Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, \textit{Anti-oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
\textsuperscript{61} Michel Foucault, et al. \textit{The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality : With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, 103
domination and governance. Or how the Bedouin were treated by the British as a martial race suited for security services on the one hand, and a destructive race of foreign invaders and illegal intruders, one the other. Or how, for Arab nationalists, the Bedouin were both celebrated as the nucleus of the modern Arab nation, and a primitive society to be modernized and settled after the fashion of the sedentary population.

It is my contention that without situating the question of nomadism in this state genealogy, one cannot adequately understand the technologies of power underpinning its representations. For example, I show that one way to explain the exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus in Palestine is by tracing its origin in John Locke's labor theory of property, dubbed by some scholars 'the agriculturalist argument'. I maintain that Locke's theoretical legacy, which had been adopted in the course of British colonization of the Americas to justify its land appropriation and conversion of Amerindians to agrarian labor, could as well explain British land and tribal policies in Mandate Palestine. This is not merely to show how European conceptions were imported into Palestine by British officials or Zionist pioneers, but how they often clashed with indigenous definitions of ownership, land rights, and nationhood.

This, of course, is not to suggest that native Palestinian conceptions of nationhood were immune to European influences. On the contrary, one chief purpose of this research is to show how native conceptions of nationhood were transformed by a class of Arab and Jewish nationalists, whose seemingly 'autochthonous' models of nation-building often revolved in the same orbit of European nationalism. Not that native Palestinian or Zionist nationalism was a

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64 For the implementation of Locke's theory in the American context, see Barbara Arneil, John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1996)
mere mimicry of its European counterpart, but as Partha Chatterjee points out, "nationalism sets out to asset its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its object, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashions."\textsuperscript{65}

It has become customary to describe nationalism as a modern construct. What seemed revolutionary thirty years ago has now become a common, if not fashionable, intellectual and academic exercise. Over the past decades, an impressive array of historians has ventured into tracing the 'invention' of peoples and nations in time and space.\textsuperscript{66} This trend would not have been imaginable had it not been for the publication of two groundbreaking books: Eric Hobsbawm's \textit{Invention of Tradition} and Benedict Anderson's \textit{Imagined Communities} (both appeared in 1983).\textsuperscript{67} Since then, historians have shown that not only were traditions and communities 'invented' or 'imagined', but such was the entire conceptual apparatus of 'people', 'race', 'ethnicity', 'nation', and, above all, 'nationalism': all are the product of the nineteenth century. Grounded in the debate over the origins of modern nationalism, my research draws on a vast body of literature on the threefold relationship of nationalism, colonialism and modernity, a literature informed by a lively academic exchange among historians of nationalism, notably Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, Partha Chatterjee, and Frederick Cooper.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{65} Partha Chatterjee, \textit{Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 10.

\textsuperscript{66} These include, most recently, Shlomo Sand, \textit{The Invention of the Jewish People} (London: Verso, 2009).


Perhaps it would be useful to conclude with what this study is not about. First, it is not an anthropological research, but rather a critique of the anthropological outlook embedded in the study of nomadism, that is, the reduction of nomadism to the realm of anthropological, if not folkloric, investigation, which constantly keeps it outside the broader scope of historical inquiry.⁶⁹ One area where historical research and traditional anthropology have clearly diverged is on the validity of the desert/sown binary. Over the past decades, modern scholarship has questioned the nomad/settler divide in the Middle East, along with the traditional image of nomadic hordes pillaging the fertile granaries of the region.⁷⁰ A close historical inquiry into the genesis of this divide reveals more complex patterns. As Jan Retso points out, this traditional view of the nomads reflects the imperial ideology of the time, inherited by ancient urban societies who waged long and constant wars against the desert-dweller nomads, not out of defense, but out of purely imperialistic ambitions covered with claims of external threat to peace, law and order.⁷¹ In a similar fashion, Pierre Briant maintains that the traditional concept of the hostile nomadic hordes threatening the peaceful city has its roots in antiquity, where it was clearly stated by none other than Aristotle.⁷² An earlier refutation of the settled/nomadic binary had been pioneered by Wolf Hütteroth and Kamal Abdulfattah in their study of rural Palestine and the symbiotic relationship shaping Bedouin/peasant interactions.⁷³

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⁷² Quoted in Jan Retso, *Arabs in Antiquity*, 114.

In Palestine, the boundaries are even murkier. For one thing, the desert/sown binary obscures the fact that thousands of Arab Bedouin had lived in the heart of the fertile regions of the country, and hence engaged in agriculture and land cultivation. Ironically, the traditional portrayal of the Bedouin as nomadic conquerors, a view so prevalent in Zionist historiography, was originally derived from the knowledge of two major historical events: the ancient Israelite conquest of Palestine, and the Islamic conquests. Both events, however, have been recently challenged by the introduction of more peaceful patterns, culminating in the abolition of the desert/sown conflict as the main factor in the social and political development of the region. An earlier refutation of the settled/nomadic binary had been pioneered by Wolf Hütteroth and Kamal Abdulfattah in their study of rural Palestine and the symbiotic relationship shaping Bedouin/peasant interactions, despite traditional hostilities.

Second, this is not a study of tribal policies in Palestine. Rather, it touches on these policies only insofar as they reflect the discursive metamorphoses in the perceptions of nomadism in Palestine. Steeped in the academic tradition of discourse analysis, my study is concerned with the symbiotic relationship of knowledge and power reshaping national and colonial narratives on nomadism. Knowledge and power, as defined by Michel Foucault, are not independent entities, but inextricably connected, rendering knowledge an exercise of power and power as a function of knowledge. Simply put, power concerns the translation of discourse into policy. Knowledge/power, in this sense, are both productive constrictive, equally shaping and obscuring the reality of its object. Thus nomadism, as a unique discourse on the Bedouin that

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74 For a historiographical review on the debate see Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 113-6.

embodies the strong nexus of knowledge and power, is not merely a discursive reflection of the Bedouin reality, but its creation.⁷⁶

Based on the brief review above, three definitions of nomadism can be sorted out: (1) **Anthropological**: nomadism as a particular way of living, as opposed to sedentary and settled ways. This basic definition sorts out nomadism as a set of social, economic and cultural traits, characterized by seasonal mobility, pastoralism, desert and steppe dwelling, tribal customs, etc. (2) **Ethnographic**: nomadism as a particular mode of living identified, almost exclusively, with a specific racial group. Nomadism, by this definition, serves as a racial taxonomy that rests on the tendency to translate spatial categories into racial ones. In our case, for example, Arabs, let alone Bedouin, are classified as inherently nomadic, and vice versa. (3) **Discursive**: nomadism as a discourse, a particular form of representation that involves both inclusion and exclusion, but mainly exclusion. This definition, which underlines a strong nexus of knowledge and power (in the Foucauldian sense), has its origin in colonial and national narratives, in which nomadism is often defined by its exteriority to national and state formations. The three definitions, as we shall see, are not only interdependent, but complementary. They constitute the nucleus of my study.

Perhaps one way to define nomadism is by comparing it to what I term *agronationalism*. That is, the shift from nomadic to sedentary sectors of society as the locus of national revival. In Mandate Palestine, agronationalism can serve as an analytical framework for discursive representation in three key aspects. First, I ask how British administrators, Zionist pioneers, and Arab nationalists have facilitated the shift from the Bedouin to the fellah (peasant) as the prototype of the new nation. Second, I explore how a new set of legal epistemes, such as labor,

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⁷⁶ See Michel Foucault, and Alan Sheridan, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.)
property, and cultivation, came to constitute the national ethos in modern Palestine, linking national redemption to the single apparatus of land settlement. Third, I trace how the shift from nomadism to agronationalism culminated in rewriting national history into the ancient system of agricultural settlement in Palestine, and how in this spatial reconfiguration, nomadism demarcated both a territorial and national boundary. In short, I am interested in how modernizing schemes to settle the Bedouin after the fashion of the sedentary fellahin were vested in the nation-building enterprise in pre-state Palestine, and how this enterprise has evolved across a wide spectrum of intellectual fields, such as ethnography, genealogy, anthropology, legal theory, economics and political geography.

Agronationalism, in this view, applies to both colonial (British and Zionist) and nationalist (Arab/Palestinian) attitudes to nomadism. Since it rests on the tendency to infuse agrarian elements into the very fabric of nationhood, agronationalism marks a transitional stage at which tribal and nomadic elements become no longer imaginable under colonial and national institutions, but are either erased (in the Zionist case), largely excluded (in the British case), or modified and integrated (in the Arab/Palestinian case) into the nation-state apparatus. This is not to classify national and colonial tribal legacies into a hierarchy of integrative and separatist attitudes, but to see how agronationalism, emerging from the uneasy combination of the agrarian and the national, operates in the broader dispute over land and national rights, how Arab and Jewish nationalists variably deploy, wittingly or unwittingly, elements of the agriculturalist argument (in the Lockean sense described above) to bestow these rights on their respective national groups; in short, how agronationalism acts as a meta-narrative for national rights in Mandate Palestine.
Since agrarianism is employed here in a wider sense that cuts across geographical, historical and cultural spaces (e.g. agrarian reading of the Bible), agronationalism marks not only the exteriority of nomadism to national and state formations, but a radical reconfiguration of the concept of agrarianism itself, which is no longer taken to mean simply a demographic or socioeconomic delineation, but a loaded ideological designation that serves broader colonial and national interests, allowing governing elites on both sides of the aisle to equally justify and translate these interests into concrete policies (e.g. sedentarization, pacification, assimilation, modernization, desert reclamation, land redemption, and nation-building). Agriculturalism, in this sense, acts as a defining feature in the creation of a conception of national identity that is largely and exclusively agrarianist (in the Lockean sense), and it is on this ideological demarcation where colonial and national narratives on nomadism ultimately converge.

Another related concept is autochthony. Autochthony, which literally means "to be born from the soil", describes land-based attempts to establish an authentic, primordial right to belong, while denying this right to outsiders. A politically and ideologically charged notion, it also describes how various groups tend to defend their claims to belonging by deploying a host of discursive tools, which not infrequently involve historical imagination, mythmaking and invention. Yet autochthony remains a largely academic term, a rather descriptive concept that is rarely used by those groups who employ it. Its epistemic merit lies in its breadth and complexity. Perhaps one way to understand the term is to compare it with another related term: indigeneity. "While indigenous became increasingly centered in its meaning—roughly referring to the 'tribal other'—autochthonous became employed in much more variable ways. Its use is no longer restricted to marginal areas, since even majority groups within the West came to defend their
position in the name of their 'autochthony'. It is the free-floating profile of this term, combing apparent self-evidence with great ambiguity and variation in its meaning, that makes it of popular interest for unraveling the conundrum of belonging in our globalizing world.\textsuperscript{77} Thus, one way to understand the notion of autochthony in the Palestinian context is to see how it was deployed by various groups to advance contending claims to belonging, rootedness and land and national rights, and how autochthony, as a marker of land-based group identity, was employed by national elites to facilitate the transition from the Bedouin to the peasant as the locus of this identity.

As we shall see, the shift from nomadism to agronationalism was neither linear nor smooth. The heterogeneous corpora of textual evidence show a complex process of transformation, characterized by a series of ruptures and continuities, internal conflicts and compromises, assimilation and disintegration. In order to fully account for these unsteady metamorphoses, chapters are divided chronologically, while generally arranged into British, Arab and Zionist attitudes to nomadism.

Three first chapters deal with British perceptions of nomadism. Chapter One explores the ethnographic legacy of the Palestine Exploration Fund Society in the late nineteenth century. It focuses on the works of a new breed of desert explorers whose views on nomadism would reshape British policies and attitudes to the Bedouin into the Mandate period. I show how this legacy, steeped in the scientific racism of the nineteenth century, helped reinforce the image of the Bedouin as a race of foreign conquerors in Palestine, blamed for the decay of agriculture and the destruction of the 'fertile granary of Roman Palestine'. The second chapter examines British

perceptions of nomadism on the eve of the Mandate by drawing on the burgeoning ethnographic literature of country handbooks that flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century. Sponsored by the British Naval Intelligence Division, this literature sheds critical light on British official discourse on the Bedouin in a period of mounting Arab nationalism. The third chapter examines the legacy of British desert administrators in southern Palestine during the Mandate. I look at how this legacy, rooted as it was in English legal theories of land rights and ownership, helped reinforce the time-honored opposition between nomadism and nationhood in British colonial discourse. The chapter is concluded with a comparative perspective situating British tribal policies in Mandate Palestine against the backdrop of French colonial policies in Algeria and British own policies in India, which I believe offers a better understanding of British colonial discourse in Palestine within the broader context of European colonialism.

A major theme running through these chapters is the nexus of race and ethnography reshaping British perceptions of the Bedouin of Palestine. This involves the classification of the local Arab population into a hierarchy of settled and nomadic races, a typology mediated by the dominant tendency to translate spatial categories into racial ones. I show how this racial taxonomy was vested in Britain's attempts to come to terms with the embryonic Arab movement in Palatine, how it was employed by colonial officials to explain the limits of Arab nationalism vis-à-vis its Jewish counterpart, and, ultimately, how it guided the administrative division of Palestine along newly demarcated racial boundaries.

Chapter four explores Arab perceptions of nomadism, with special focus on the legacy of Aref al-Aref, who served as the District Officer of Beersheba under the Mandate. Aref was an exemplary figure whose life and legacy betray multiple foci of national loyalty, ranging from
Ottomanism to Arabism, and from Arabism to Palestinian nationalism. Drawing on a vast body of historical and ethnographic literature by the Palestinian historian, I show how his tribal policies in southern Palestine were invested in a broader nation-building enterprise, one which involves settling, mapping, enumerating, and rewriting the Bedouin tribes into a territorialist past.

I chose to focus on Aref as an exemplary figure of national Palestinian discourse on nomadism because his large corpus, both published and unpublished, offers an alternative story to Zionist and British narratives, especially his legal and ethnographic treatises on the Negev Bedouin. Aref is also exemplary in the sense that his tribal legacy—that is, the double legacy of his national enterprise and colonial service among the Bedouin—offers a perfect example of how colonial and national narratives converge on the question of nomadism and its complex relation to national and state-building, which is one of the major themes of this study.

Chapter five examines perceptions of nomadism in Zionist historiography, with special focus on Second Aliyah Zionist pioneers, notably A.D. Gordon, Moshe Smilansky, David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. I locate Zionist attitudes to nomadism into two formative stages in the development of the Jewish Yishuv. The first is characterized by the emergence of autochthonous movements with unmistakably Bedouin character, notably Hashomer (the Watchman), Haroeh (the Shepherd), and the Sabra. The second is marked by the founding in the Jewish yishuv of new forms of political expedience and social organization with a distinctly and increasingly territorialist character, such as the kibbutz, Hebrew Labor, and Canaanism.

A comparative historiographical observation is in order. In Palestinian historiography, Aref's legacy is treated as a historical source on the Bedouin, not as a particular form of cultural
and national discourse. His works on the Bedouin are mined as ethnographic and anthropological evidence, not as a nation-building exercise. In Zionist historiography, men like Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi are treated as political leaders and founder fathers of political Zionism, not as historians and ethnographers who wrote extensively on the Arabs. My aim is to turn this approach around and treat these figures for what they were: founders of a new and unique discourse on the Bedouin, which I term nomadism. Curiously, these men were not writing in a contextual vacuum, but in a constant debate and argument with one another: Aref read in Hebrew, his tribal accounts were translated into Hebrew, and he was widely read in Zionist circles.

While at first glance the (ethnic) division of my chapters seems superficial, it allows me to better articulate one of the major themes of this study, namely, how colonial and national narratives converge on the question of nomadism and its complex relation to race, nationhood, and statehood. In other words, this division is not completely nominal; rather, it bodes well for my conclusion that if settler colonialism denies nomadism a national history, nationalism reinvents it, thus representing yet another form of official discourse in which this history is reconstructed to fit into the deeper structures of power relations. More important still, this division, by virtue of its relative simplicity, is intended to show how in the struggle over the meaning of nomadism, national and colonial narratives tend also to part ways, not only coalesce.
Chapter One

The Original Arabs: British Perceptions of the Bedouin before the Mandate

This chapter examines the symbiotic relationship of race and nomadism in British ethnographic discourse on the Arabs of Palestine. Drawing on the legacy of British explorers in late Ottoman Palestine, I show how the Bedouin came to be viewed as a separate race within a hierarchy of Arab races. Not only did the Bedouin present British ethnographers with an ideal model of racial purity, but they also represented a racial archetype on which Arabness itself was measured, codified, and reproduced. The explorers were a new breed of British Arabists whose interest in the Bedouin went far beyond the romantic legacy of the eighteenth century. These include, most notably, Richard Burton, C.T. Drake, Edward Palmer, C.R. Conder, and Charles Clermont-Ganneau. These men were writing at a time when scientific racism came to predominance in England, when British nationalism attempted to bind disparate parts of the British Isles under its umbrella, and when the British empire reached its zenith overseas. Working under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund Society, their imperial careers reflected the strong nexus of knowledge and power underpinning British policy in Palestine. Their legacy would color the ethnographic discourse on the Arabs into the Mandate period.

British explorers in Ottoman Palestine were guided by three ethnographic axioms. The first rests on the primacy of racial classification— a new scientific dogma necessitated by the need to manage differences overseas. This reconfiguration of human relations culminated in a new racial taxonomy which, by simply sorting out the physical and social peculiarities of the local population, insisted on viewing its demographic strata as a race apart. As a result, three "Arab
races” were sorted out: The Bedouin, the fellaheen, and the townspeople. Only the Bedouin, however, were true Arabs.

The second axiom maintains a dialectical relationship between race and nomadism. In this teleological view, the Bedouin are singled out as a pure race because they are Bedouin: Thanks to a unique value system and mode of life, the Bedouin managed to survive the vicissitudes of time, preserve their racial purity throughout the ages, and survive as the "original Arab race". The Bedouin are also mobile, evasive and fugitive people who have yet unfolded under the protective shadow of civilization. They live deeper in the desert, on the frontier and the fringe of the country, where the tempo of life is kept unchangeable. They are a homogenous, archaic, and primordial people living in a state of pristine existence free of foreign influence. They maintain a strict system of intermarriage, and a deep-rooted tradition of blood relation and noble descent. They descend from the cradle of the Arab race, the Arabian Peninsula, and they speak pure Arabic. In short, if there existed an Arab race, then, inherently, it must be Bedouin—nomadic.

The third axiom establishes an inherent opposition between nomadism and autochthony. Locked into a state of perpetual mobility, the Bedouin are a race of stateless, unsettled and rootless nomads. As the descendants of the original Arab tribes who invaded Palestine in the seventh century, they represent a foreign race who, immune as it was to racial assimilation, remade the country in its image. They are a race of conquerors responsible for the destruction of the fertile granary of ancient Palestine. They are lawless intruders, enemies of the state, and barbarians at the gate. They are anathema to history, progress and nation-building. The live on primitive modes of production devoid of labor, private property, and land cultivation. The
Bedouin, in short, stand at the opposite end of European conceptions of autochthony and national affiliation.

As we shall see, it is the well-established link between race and nomadism, embodied in the identification of Arabness with tribalism and conquest, which ultimately enabled British ethnographers to reinforce the image of the Arabs as a foreign race in Palestine. Not that the Bedouin of Palestine were inherently nomadic, but it suited British observers to treat them as such. This fits into my broader definition of nomadism: a form of territorialist discourse that views tribal formations as the antithesis of rootedness, belonging and, most importantly, nation-building. Nomadism, in other words, is defined by its opposites. It is a discourse that fails to imagine autochthony and nationality beyond the single apparatus of settlement. This should explain the shift in this discourse from the model of the Bedouin to that of the fellah as the locus of national revival in Palestine, a shift largely enabled by the interplay between the spatial (territoriality) and the temporal (autochthony).78 This shift was not immediately obvious, as it signified a total reversal of early British ethnography in Palestine, where the Bedouin had been portrayed as a pure racial prototype and a model for national revival at home.

Historians of the British empire tend to agree that racial thinking emerged in British literature and popular imagination in the later part of eighteenth century.79 These historians have explored myriad aspects of race in British colonial discourse, ranging from gender and sexuality

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to class and nationality. Their scholarship, however, tends to accept at face value the existence of racial thinking in this discourse, while paying little attention to its colonial origins. As Brett Linsley points out, "these kinds of studies have done a great deal to detail the duration and nature of certain epochs in racial thinking. They have, unfortunately, not sufficiently addressed the origins of racial thinking. Too often they focus on describing the manifestations of certain mindsets without adequately explaining the origins of these attitudes."  

There is sufficient textual evidence to suggest that British racial thinking was born in the encounter with the natives, namely, from the uneasy marriage between race and ethnography. Scholars of the British Empire have already discussed the rise of scientific racism in colonial India, and how modern theories of racial hierarchy guided British encounters with Indian society in the nineteenth century. Ottoman Palestine provided yet another stage for this kind of exchange. By the close of the nineteenth century, men like Burton and Drake had already turned Syria into a laboratory for their experiments in scientific racism. In a process which culminated in a new taxonomy of racial classification, it was left to their successors at the P.E.F. society to test their doctrine on the population of Palestine. To show that the Bedouin served as a passive agent of a new 'scientific' revolution is to place nomadism at the genealogy of British racial thinking. This chapter begins and ends with this unorthodox thesis that nomadism can serve as an analytical framework for British general attitudes to the Arabs.

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80 See, for example, Levine Philippa, Gender and Empire (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Antoinette Burton (ed.), Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities (New York: Routledge, 1999).
82 See, for example, Chandra Mallampalli, Race, Religion, and Law in Colonial India: Trials of an Interracial Family (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
The Discovery of the 'Bedouin Race'

In 1869, after a long journey that took him from West Africa to the Americas, Richard Burton landed in Syria to assume his new post as the British consul in Damascus, a position he would hold until 1871. Official duty did not end his passion for exploration in a country which he still regarded as terra incognita. As he recalled upon his return to London, "newly transferred to Syria and Palestine, I imagined– and many would do the same– my occupation as an explorer clean gone. The first few months, however, proved to me that although certain lines of transit have been well trodden, yet few travelers and tourists have ever ridden ten miles away from the high roads. No one, for instance, would suspect that so many patches of unvisited, and possibly at the time unvisitatable country, lie within a day or two's rise of great citifies and towns."83

Sponsored by the newly-founded Palestine Exploration Fund, Burton's explorations in Syria and Palestine were documented in detail in his largely unexplored collection Unexplored Syria (1872), written jointly with his fellow-traveler Charles Tyrwhitt Drake.84 Part of their findings in Palestine was presented in a separate paper at the meeting of the Anthropological Institute on November 20, 1871.85 The paper, entitled "The Anthropological Collection from the Holy Land," examines an exhausting list of skeletons, fossils, skulls, bones and other human remains gathered by the two explorers during their expedition in the country. A large collection of contemporary and ancient specimens is examined, compared, and classified into distinct racial

84 Richard Burton, and Charles Drake. Unexplored Syria: Visits to the Libanus, the Tulúl El Safá, the Anti-Libanus, the Northern Libanus, and the 'alāh I (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872)
types, origins, and survival capacities. In one instance, members of the Institution were asked to
determine whether the extreme length of a given skull typified a race or an individual character.
Since each skull had to correspond to a specific racial type, however peculiar it might have
seemed, the skull examined was finally labeled "Syrian." In another instance, a large jaw is
classified as corresponding to racial characters of "the Badawi Arabs."86

Unexplored Syria marks Burton's interest in phrenology as the locus of racial
classification. It was the culmination of two decades of radicalization in his racial thinking
following the scientific revolution wrought by the publication of Charles Darwin's Origins of
Species in 1859, described by Burton as "the best and wisest book of this, or perhaps, of any
age."87 That year also witnessed the publication of Burton's Lake Region of Central Africa,
which ventured to establish the inherent inferiority of the African race.88 This was followed by
his Wanderings in West Africa in 1863, which marks his attempt to establish the inferiority of the
African race vis-à-vis the European races.89

The same year, Burton collaborated with James Hunt in founding the Anthropological
Society of London as a breakaway from the London Ethnological Society. Although skeptical of
the scientific neutrality of Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection, the new society
listed him as a honorary fellow.90 The Anthropological Society distinguished itself from the
Ethnological Society by advocating the doctrine of polygenesis as the basis of racial hierarchy,

86 Burton and Drake, Unexplored Syria II, 254
87 Randolph Marcy. The Prairie Traveler: A Hand-Book for Overland Expeditions (London: Trübner and co, 1863), 140
90 See Memoirs Read Before the Anthropological Society of London: Vol. 2; 1863/64-1867/69 (London: The Society, 1865), 8
abandoning the philological approach to ethnographic research, and denying the influence of climate on physical appearances. Emerging as the beacon of scientific racism in Britain, it embraced a strict biological approach to racial classification, one which involved the application of phrenological and craniological anatomy of the human body, such as skull size, body shape, skin texture and color. The founding of the new society marked the beginning of a long collaboration between the two men. That year, Hunt dedicated his notorious treatise *On the Negro Place's in Nature* (1863) to Burton, who in turn went on at length in defending Hunt's racist views in his *Mission to Gelele*, published the following year.91 Within a few years of its inception, the Anthropological Society sponsored numerous publications that advocated the doctrine of scientific racism and championed the hierarchy of human races.92

Burton, who served as the first vice president of the new society and chaired its inaugural meeting in London, embodied the scientific dogmatism that characterized its racial doctrine. He advocated slavery as a "great civilizing agent of primitive races."93 He found the West Africans "impossible to understand" because they "go back to the childhood of our races."94 He also championed British imperial paternalism over the "lower races" of Africa and Asia. His racial thinking was so radicalized that it even failed to recognize the existence of ethnic diversity within the societies he studied. He equally failed to reconcile his theoretical convictions with the empirical evidence before his eyes, a failure which resulted in a series of eccentric

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92 See for example Theodor Waitz's *Anthropology of Primitive Peoples* (1864), and John Blumenbach's *Anthropological Treatise* (1865).

93 See Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man*, 140

classifications. Thus, for example, he describes the local population of Zanzibar as Semitic in the
upper, and African in the lower part. This same pattern is repeated in his description of the
black population of West Africa, who are portrayed as "Arab in the upper, and African in the
lower half." Burton's scientific dogma was taken to an extreme level in his next travelogue,
Etruscan Bologna (1876), where even the slightest minuscule craniolegal differences were
rearranged into distinct racial categories. His phrenological description of the "Bedouin race" is
quite telling: "The bones vary from the very massive to the remarkably thin, and the first points
which struck me were the shortness of the lower bi-temporal diameter, the long square face, and
the flatness or compression of the parietes, which every traveler remarks in the Badwain, the
flower of the Semitic race."

Burton was far ahead of his Victorian contemporaries. His racial legacy helped
revolutionize the ethnographic thinking of his time and reshape it for decades to come. With him
anthropology was no longer concerned with societies, but with races. Travel literature was
equally racialized. Whereas for early European travelers exploration was primarily associated
with the discovery of hitherto uncharted lands, with Burton it became linked with the discovery,
if not the invention, of human races. His passion for race knew no limits, and it was embodied by
both the scientist and the man. His ethnographic descriptions often bordered on exotic
admiration. Indeed, Burton was so fascinated with the Arabs that not only did he order his tomb
to be built in the shape of a Bedouin tent, but suspected that he had Arab blood in his veins. An
obituary reprinted by his wife, Isabel Burton, even suggested that there might have been "a tinge

95 Burton, Zanzibar: City, Island, and Coast I (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872) 414-415
96 Burton, Wandering in West Africa I, 188
97 Ibid, 188
of Arab, or, perhaps, of gypsy blood in Burton's race." Writing within the fast growing tradition of raciology, and at a time when Englishness itself was being restructured into new racial taxonomies, Burton sought to create the Bedouin after his own image: An ideal archetype of racial purity.

To be sure, Burton did share with his Victorian contemporaries, notably his fellow traveler in Palestine Edward Palmer, their view of the Bedouin as a noble savage, even, as he puts it, "a nuisance to be abated by civilization." Yet he diverges from his fellow Englishmen by maintaining that the Bedouin could be managed, if not sorted out for genetic replication: "The race has high and noble qualities which, as the old phrase is, the world would not willing to see die; and perhaps the pure blood of the wilderness may be infused to good purpose into burgher-men, as into their horses." Where Burton's views also diverge is on the racial superiority of the Bedouin, which he links to their survival quality characteristic to life in the desert. In his early travelogue Personal Narrative (1855), he even anticipates Darwin by viewing Bedouin society in purely Darwinian terms, that is, as a society in which only the fittest could survive and flourish. "In the first place, it is a kind of 'societe leonine' in which the fiercest, the strongest, and the craftiest obtains complete mastery over his fellows." For Burton the ethnologist, it is this racial quality which ultimately enabled the Bedouin to survive as the pure Arab race.

Burton's interest in the Arabs began early in his career. As a young student at Oxford, he called upon England to study the Arabs in order to cultivate "means of dispelling her ignorance

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98 Isabel Burton. The Life of Captain Sir Richd F. Burton (London: Chapman & Hall, 1893), 251
100 Burton, Personal Narrative II (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), 86
concerning the Eastern races with whom she is constantly in contact." He then withdrew from Oxford and sailed to India, where he served as a cadet in the East India Company. There he published a military manual that was adopted by the British army in India. In return for his services, his early travels in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire were financed by the British Royal Geographical Society and the East India Company. Arabia presented the young Burton with a mirror image of his native England, where "there has been such a mixture of blood and breed that now an almost infinite variety of features and complexions, shapes and forms, has been grafted upon the original stock which each region grew."

Burton divides the Arabs into three racial stocks—Caucasian, sub-Caucasian, and pure Arabian— a classification "which agrees with observations of modern physiologists." The Arabs are viewed as a mixture of races whose racial disparity is attested by the Bedouin, who demonstrate "a strong evidence in favor of a variety in the Arabian family." The Bedouin serve for a measure of racial purity because they live in a state of being where physical and social differences are assumed to be absolute. Three axioms appear to have guided this conclusion. First, unlike the settled population, the Bedouin exhibit unchangeable, homogenous expressions: "There is not much difference in this point between men of the same tribes, who have similar pursuits which engender similar passions. Expression is the grand diversifier of appearance among civilized people: in the desert it knows few varieties." Second, the Bedouin inhabit the desert, "and they who know how immutable is race in the desert, will scarcely doubt that the

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104 Burton, *Scinde, Or, the Unhappy Valley* I (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1998), 271
105 Burton, *Personal Narrative* II, 76-9
Bedouin preserves in purity the blood transmitted to him by his ancestors. Third, tribal society is adverse to interracial marriage, and hence condemned to absolute racial purity: "Such is the Badawi, and such he has been preserved by systematic intermarriage." It should come as no surprise, then, that the later Burton would view the racial disparity between the Bedouin and the settled fellahin as unbridgeable.

Like many of his contemporaries, Burton offered his service to the empire. He advised the British Foreign Office on how to effectively subdue the unruly Bedouin if it were to annex the Arabian Peninsula to its imperial domains: "By a proper use of the blood feud; by vigorously supporting the weaker against the stronger classes; by regularly defeating every Badawi who earns a name for himself; and, above all, by the exercise of unsparing, unflinching justice, the few thousands of half-naked bandits, who now make the land a fighting field, would soon sink into utter insignificance." In anticipation of the 'martial race' doctrine, he found tribal qualities especially manageable and useful in wartime, for "should we find it necessary to raise regiments of these men, nothing would be easier." He advised his fellow Englishmen to "pay them regularly, arm them well, work them hard, and treat them with evenhanded justice– there is nothing else to do." He even took pains to enumerate those tribal qualities which he deemed vital to British takeover of Palestine. Thus, for example, he describes the Bedouin as "a gentleman in his native wilds. Easy and quiet, courteous and mild-mannered, he expects you to respect him, and upon that condition he respects you– still without a shade of obsequiousness or servility. I presume that this was the Roman system of garrisoning the forts and outposts to the east and

106 Ibid, 84
108 Burton, Personal Narrative II, 285
south of Syria."\textsuperscript{109} His writings are replete with suggestions on how to manage the Arabs the way the British had been managing Indians in the Sind, where "military government is the only form of legislative precisely adapted to these countries."\textsuperscript{110}

In Palestine, Burton developed his racial doctrine into a full-fledged divide-and-conquer scheme. He viewed the Turks as "a nation more hated and suspected that any Europeans, without our prestige."\textsuperscript{111} He attributed the near decline in Ottoman rule in Palestine to Turkish bureaucracy and centralization, and to the effect of "the Tanzimat, the silliest copy of Europe's folly."\textsuperscript{112} He exaggerated the enmity between the Arabs and the Turks, while reassuring his fellow Englishmen that the Arabs regarded both the Turks and the Egyptians as a more serious threat to their interests than the British.\textsuperscript{113} He praised the way the Arab spirit of independence and rebelliousness upset the Ottoman authority, and constantly urged the Arabs to revolt against their Turkish rulers. He championed Arab independence from the Turks, the annexation of Syria to Egypt, and, ultimately, British rule over Egypt, "the most tempting prize which the East holds out to be the ambition of Europe."\textsuperscript{114}

Burton left his imprint on British attitudes to the Arabs. One could detect the burden of his racial legacy in the works of his contemporaries. Gertrude Bell, the famous Arabist who visited Palestine in 1900, describes the settled Arabs of Jericho as "a base-born stock, half bred with negro slaves."\textsuperscript{115} Her travel account of Syria and Palestine is concluded, in a manner reminiscent of Burton, with a sweeping statement on the racial disparity of the Arabs: "There is

\textsuperscript{109} Burton, \textit{Gold Mines}, 154-5 [italics are added]  
\textsuperscript{110} Burton, \textit{Scinde II}, p. 92  
\textsuperscript{111} Burton, \textit{First Footsteps}, 285  
\textsuperscript{113} See Burton, \textit{Scinde II}, 25, 192  
\textsuperscript{114} Burton, \textit{Personal Narrative I}, 114  
\textsuperscript{115} Gertrude Lowthian Bell. \textit{The Desert and the Sown} (New York : E.P. Dutton and Co., 1907), 10
no nation of the Arabs, the Syrian merchant is separated by a wider gulf from the Bedouin than he is from the Ottoman, the Syrian country is inhabited by Arab speaking races all eager to be at each other's throat. Bell also inherited the phrenological approach established by Burton. In one of the secret dispatches she wrote for the Arab Bulletin in 1917, she views the racial purity of the Bedouin as a fact reflected in the physical features of Ibn Saud who, by exhibiting the "characteristics of the well-bred Arab," and physical traits "almost universal among the tribes of pure Arab blood... conveys the impression, common enough in the desert, of an indefinable lassitude, not individual but racial.\textsuperscript{117}

Lady Anne Blunt, whose \textit{Pilgrimage to Nejd} (1881) is clearly fashioned after Burton's \textit{Personal Pilgrimage},\textsuperscript{118} describes Arabia as "the cradle of the Arab race," where "Bedouin blood is still accounted the purest."\textsuperscript{119} Blunt viewed the purity of the Bedouin as reflected in the purebred Arabian horse— a view which not only inspired her co-founding of the famous Crabbet Arabian Stud breeding farm in England, but her physical description of the typical Arab race as well:

In appearance he shows all the characteristics of good Bedouin blood. \textit{He is short and slight in stature, with exceedingly small hands and feet}, a dark olive complexion, beard originally black, but now turning grey, and dark eyes and eyebrows. It is a mistake to suppose that true Arabs are ever fair or red-haired. Men may occasionally be seen in the desert of comparatively fair complexion, but these always

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, 140
\textsuperscript{117} Gertrude Bell. \textit{The Arab War: Confidential Information for General Headquarters from Gertrude Bell} (London: Golden Cockerel Press, 1940) 30-31
\textsuperscript{118} Anne Blunt, and Wilfrid S. Blunt. \textit{A Pilgrimage to Nejd, the Cradle of the Arab Race} (London: J. Murray, 1881)
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid, 261
(as far as my experience goes) have features of a correspondingly foreign type, showing a mixture of race. No Bedouin of true blood was ever seen with hair or eyes not black, nor perhaps with a nose not aquiline.\textsuperscript{120}

As we shall see shortly, Burton's impact on British attitudes and policies in Palestine was remarkable. By the time of his death in 1890, England had already occupied Egypt, while further extending its influence to the Levant. Further east, the Ottoman Empire was fast receding, desperately forging alliances with rising European powers, while struggling to come to terms with growing ethnic and national sentiments in its Serbian, Greek, and Arab provinces. By the close of the century, England had been battling imperialist rivals like France and Tsarist Russia over gaining a permanent toehold in the Levant. British officials began to recognize the political importance of Palestine, its strategic location as a major juncture between competing empires, and the benefits of integrating it into the world market. It was also a time of growing religious and ethnic activity in Palestine. Biblical interests in exploring the Holy Land were revived, British missionaries joined American missions in Jerusalem, and the idea of Jewish return to Palestine began to gain currency in Britain, where imperial policy joined forces with Christian evangelism in championing England's paternalistic claims to protect religious minorities abroad.\textsuperscript{121} British fascination with the 'Arab race' lost none of its force in this period. On the contrary, the British realized that in order to hasten the end of the Ottoman Empire, England had to ally itself with, mobilize, and, most importantly, gain knowledge of the local Arab population by studying its racial and ethnic composition.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 8-9 (italics are added)

\textsuperscript{121} For a historical background of British interests in Palestine, see William Louis, \textit{Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization: Collected Essays} (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 381-419.
Exploring the Arabs: The P.E.F. Ethnographic Legacy

In 1865, nearly two years after the establishment of the Anthropological Society, the Society of Palestine Exploration Fund was founded in London with the aim of carrying out surveys on the topography, ethnography and anthropology of Ottoman Palestine. At the first official meeting, held at the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey, William Thompson, the Archbishop of York, summed up the scholarly objectives outlined in the original prospectus of the new society as follows: "Our object is strictly an inductive inquiry. We are not to be a religious society; we are not about to launch controversy; we are about to apply the rules of science, which are so well understood by us in our branches, to an investigation into the facts concerning the Holy Land." One of these objectives also involved "bringing to light the remains of so many races and generations which must lie concealed under the accumulation of rubbish and ruins on which those villages stand."¹²²

Yet, as we shall see, this seemingly uncompromisingly scientific vision of the new society was challenged by two factors: First, the inherent tension between the Biblical source and the findings of modern sciences, which was often resolved in favor of the Biblical interpretation. Second, the uneasy ties between the P.E.F. Society and the British imperial enterprise in Palestine. The latter became all the more apparent as the new society, owing in part to its complex relationship with the Corps of Royal Engineers, rapidly abandoned its original objectives and fell to military intelligence gathering and conducting reports on how to effectively manage the local population. This strong nexus between knowledge and empire was also largely

¹²² Kathleen Howe, *Revealing the Holy Land: The Photographic Exploration of Palestine* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1997), 37
embodied in the imperial careers of prominent P.E.F. personages, such as Edward Palmer, Charles Warren, Horatio Kitchener, Charles Wilson, T.E. Lawrence, and C.R. Conder.

British explorers who visited Palestine on behalf of the P.E.F. Society fell under the same racial spell that had attracted Richard Burton and Charles Drake. Nowhere was the influence of these two men more manifest than in the writing and activity of Colonel F.R. Conder, the British explorer whose legacy would color the ethnographic debate in Palestine for decades to come. Conder completed his education at University College London, followed by a degree from the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, and a commission in the Royal Engineers in 1870. Two years later, he was selected by the Royal Engineers to undertake a grand survey in Western Palestine, where he joined Drake and his team in mapping the topography of the land, exploring its archaeological sites, and studying the ethnography of its population. He had completed the greater part of his survey in 1875, before he fell ill and was taken back to London. The expedition resulted in a landmark topographical survey of Western Palestine, from the Litany River in the north to Beersheba in the south and the publication of the monumental *Survey of Western Palestine* in 1881, including a map of Western Palestine on a scale one inch to the mile (published in 26 sheets in 1880). The project had sparked flames of anticipation in England. As a review dated July 1878 put it: "For the first time then, and as a reward of these efforts, Palestine is brought home to England." Conder was celebrated in London as the man who "placed Palestine vividly before the reader." 

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125 Published in the *University Magazine* (London: Hurst & Blackett, July-December 1878), Vol. II, 116-118.
A year later, in 1882, Conder returned to Palestine to supervise a new grand survey in the eastern part of the country (Jordan today), before the project was temporally halted within a year by the Turkish authorities. The results of this expedition appeared in his second landmark survey, *The Survey of Eastern Palestine*, published in 1889. Both expeditions were taken under the auspices of the P.E.F. Society, and in the words of David Jacobson, the current P.E.F. Honorary Secretary, "this substantial legacy provided the foundations for the survey work done during the period of the British Mandate."

Like Burton, Conder found in Palestine the kind of intellectual freedom cherished by European explorers and travelers abroad. For the most part, the country remained largely a *terra incognita* to him, and "it was possible to visit villages where the face of a Frank had never been seen." Palestine also presented Conder with "a chance of studying the archaic manners of the peasantry and the natural condition of the nomadic Arab." The two groups, by virtue of being largely untouched by foreign influence, gave him carte blanche to conduct his ethnographic research: "I have attempted to give some idea of the country Oriental condition, with a peasantry as yet hardly quite tamed by the Turk, and regions as yet hardly traversed by the European explorer."

Conder's ethnographic corpus includes two volumes on Palestine, *Tent Work in Palestine* (1878) and *Palestine* (1889). *Palestine*, fashioned after *Unexplored Syria*, clearly attests to his intellectual devotion to Burton and Drake. It is a classic example of the tendency, established by

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126 See "Obituary: Colonel Reignier Conder", 456-8
129 Conder. *Palestine*, 21
Burton, to group ethnography and raciology into a single taxonomy, and to read ethnography through the lens of race by restructuring physical and social differences into distinct racial categories. *Tent Work* follows the same methodological pattern. The book, which sums up his first ethnographic survey in the country, dwells on the tendency to smuggle race into ethnography by viewing Arab Palestine as a mishmash of pure and mixed races.

Initially, Conder divides the "present races of Palestine" into three original stocks: Semitic, Turanian, and Aryan. Like Burton, he employs phrenology as a key criterion for matching each of these stocks with its respective race within the present population: "If, therefore, ethnology is to be studied in Palestine, it must be with these facts kept steadily before us. If the peasants are to be asked to have their heads measured, we must know something of their genealogies also. If skulls are to be collected, we must find out what skulls they are."

Conder, who appears to have examined the skulls gathered and brought in to London by Burton and Drake, further remarks: "I have known the skulls of peasants recently murdered to be sent home as types of the ancient population of the country. I have read the blue eyes attributed to Amorites, when probably a much more recent admixture of Aryan blood might account for this most abnormal occurrence."

Cultural traits provide Conder with another key criterion for racial classification. Thus, for example, the Semitic origin of the Arabs and the Jews is attested by their common distaste for the arts: "The distinction is, however, one of race, for the Arab hates carved images as much as did the Jew, while the Turanian Canaanites were fond of such arts, just as the Turnanians of other parts of Western Asia were the first to adorn temples and houses with sculpture and

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131 Conder, *Palestine*, 230-1

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This is followed by a warning: "In considering the character and manners of the natives of Palestine, there is one circumstance which must always be kept in sight— we are dealing with a Semite, not with an Aryan, people, and they must be judged from a Semitic point of view." And what exactly does this "Semitic point of view" entail? It is "the faults and virtues of the Semitics race [which] are so distinct and peculiar, that is not easy for a European to judge of them fairly." In other words, the Semitic race is not merely the sum of its physical and phrenological traits, but also the product of cultural and social peculiarities that include "ideas of right and wrong, of the beautiful and the praiseworthy, of religion and morality"— in short, ideas which had ultimately rendered the Semites "essentially different from us." Thus, for example, "the Semitic character is eminently conservative, while the Aryan is liberal; hence authority is to the Semitic people the foundation of faiths, while reason claims to have its voice heard among the Aryan."  

Having established its Semitic origin, Conder divides the local Arab population of Palestine into three distinct races: the Bedouin, the Fellaheen, and the townspeople. The distinction between the Bedouin and the fellaheen is quite telling: "the peasantry must not be confused with the Badwain or nomadic tribes, living in the uncultivated districts; for the two nations are quite separate branches of the Semitic people, and they themselves acknowledge the distinction." To Conder, the racial disparity between the Bedouin and the fellaheen owes largely to their common aversion to "interracial" marriages: "The Badawi speaks with the greatest contempt of the Fellah, and rarely, if ever, do intermarriages occur, as both sides would

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132 Ibid, 110  
133 Conder, *Tent Work*, 206  
134 Ibid, 336 [Italics are added]
consider themselves degraded by the alliance." This has become a governing theme in British ethnographic literature on Palestine, where the presumed, if not projected, traditional hostility among the local population is almost habitually reconstructed into well-defined racial strata. Ultimately, and upon consulting a set of Biblical passages, Conder declares "the time-honored conflict between the two races" as a matter of well-established historical fact.\footnote{Ibid, 270-271}

On the townsmen Arabs Conder has little to say. Instead, he refers the reader to the work of his fellow British orientalist Edward Lane, whose "wonderful account on the life of townsmen of Egypt would apply almost equally well to the middle classes in Damascus and Jerusalem."\footnote{Ibid, 315} The reason for Conder's omission of this "third race" from his ethnographic narrative, we are told, is to draw more attention to the life and manners of the Bedouin and the fellaheen, who are "far more valuable in illustration of the Bible narrative than those of the townsmen."\footnote{Ibid, 236-7} Unlike the townspeople, the other two races are more ancient, archaic and pristine. Not only do they serve as human relics of a sacred history, but as agents of historical return to a lost Biblical time. The Bedouin in particular are "most interesting to the student of the earlier Jewish history, before the consolidation of the nation in Samuel's time, for if among the peasantry we find a vivid picture of the life and customs of the later period, it is from the Bedouin that we learn most that can throw light on the Patriarchal times, and the life of Abraham and his immediate descendants."\footnote{Ibid, 272}

Not that the fellaheen are less of Biblical value than the Bedouin to the Christian explorer. On the contrary, "it appears in short that in the Fellaheen, as descendants of the old
inhabitants of Palestine, we find a people whose habits and customs are well worthy of study, because we should naturally expect them to throw much light on the Bible narrative.\textsuperscript{139} The fellaheen, in fact, represent a race by many centuries more ancient than the Bedouin, who are viewed by Conder as "a horde of recent invaders." This is attested by a host of linguistic and cultural differences, which "confirm the views already expressed as to the antiquity of the Fellah race, contrasted with the more modern settlers who have encroached on their territory.\textsuperscript{140}

The perception of the Bedouin as a foreign race is constantly juxtaposed with the autochthony of the fellaheen, and by introducing the conquest paradigm, the racial disparity between the two "races" is rendered absolute. This perhaps explains Conder's main conclusion that the present fellaheen of Palestine are none but the descendants of the ancient Canaanites. "When compared to the earlier inhabitants of the land, from the days of Samuel downwards, the parallel is so remarkable that it seems justifiable to dub the fellahin the ‘modern Canaanites’.\textsuperscript{141}"

As the descendants of the old inhabitants of Palestine, and hence the true sons of the land, the fellahin are labelled "Syrians, for want of a better title."\textsuperscript{142} They form along with the Arabs (Bedouin) and the Jews the fabric of the Semitic race in Palestine, joined by an admixture of foreign races, such as the Germans, the Turks, and the mongrel Levantines. The fellahin, therefore, constitute a single nation by virtue of their "character, language and religion, which are the three fundamental questions regarding any nation."\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid, 235
\item \textsuperscript{140} Ibid, 240
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid, 269
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid, 208
\item \textsuperscript{143} Ibid, 208-9
\end{itemize}
By arguing for the Canaanite origin of the fellaheen, Conder was echoing a narrative that came to predominance during his lifetime, and would color the ethnographic debate on the Arabs of Palestine for decades to come. The debate was sparked by the French ethnographer Charles Clermont-Ganneau following his archaeological expedition to Palestine, which he undertook on behalf of the British government in 1874. The next year, Ganneau presented his findings in a lengthy paper on the "Arabs of Palestine," in which he declared the fellaheen of modern Palestine as the direct descendants of the ancient Canaanites: "I, therefore, arrived at the conclusion that the fellaheen of Palestine, taken as a whole, are the modern representatives of those old tribes which the Israelites found settled in the country, such as the Canaanites."  

The question that preoccupied Ganneau was not whether the fellahin and the Bedouin belonged to the same racial stock, but who were those peasants whom the Arab conquerors had found in the country, and who have become the fellahin of our time? "The peasants were neither Jews nor Greek," contested Ganneau. They were not Greek because they still retained a host of observable Semitic traces. They certainly were not Jews because the Jewish race was "forever lost in Palestine," where the successive persecutions by Christian emperors "left no one stone upon another of either political or ethnic Judaism; they made it a tabula rasa, and cast the debris to the four winds of heaven." Finally, the fellahin were most certainly not Arabs. They were

145 Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "The Arabs of Palestine", reprinted from *Macmillan's Magazine* in the *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund (October 1875), 208
146 Ibid, 205
Arabs only in the sense that they spoke Arabic, a rather "vague and deceptive term which is applied to so many distinct races and the heterogeneous remains of so many peoples."\textsuperscript{147}

With Genneau, the Bedouin were no longer seen as an archaic race towering over a linear hierarchy of Arab races, but as a foreign race whose presence in Palestine represented a sad chapter of racial assimilation in the unfolding history of conquests. "Since the predominance of Islam, the whole system of Semitic nationalities has followed the irresistible tendency to unity resulting from the pressure of linguistic conformity and political necessity, and all its numerous divisions, small and great, have poured their waters into this Arab lake, and have converted it into an ocean, in which every confluent loses its name." Yet racial domination, we are warned, when related to the Arab conquest of Palestine, should not be mistaken for racial superiority. For unlike the Christian crusaders, Genneau reminds us, the Arabs were merely a conquering, and by no means civilizing, force. That is because civilizations "cannot be produced spontaneously, or improvised, any more than can a patrimony, it is the hereditary accumulation of living forces- a treasure formed by the hoarding of ages, which a robber may take in a moment and dissipate in a day, but which his whole life would be insufficient to create."\textsuperscript{148}

For Ganneau, the civilizational chasm separating the two conquering races was best reflected in the Arab attitudes to cultivation, a new taxonomy which enabled the French ethnographer to draw a sharp line between nomadism and civilization: "The basis of all finance being the revenue of the soil, it is the first business of a conqueror to reassure the vanquished by allowing those who have always cultivated the ground to continue doing so. And this the Muslim conquerors, who, as regards agriculture, knew no soil but the sand of the desert, and no tools but

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, 203
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid, 203
the point of the lance, with rare good sense did."\footnote{Ibid, 204} The fellahin also embodied the true Biblical spirit by preserving the "Mosaic legislation [which] was founded on agriculture."\footnote{Ibid, 205}

It should become obvious that Ganneau had little sympathy for Arab civilization, which he viewed as "a mere deception [which] no more exists than in the horrors of Arab conquest." If anything, Arab civilization was "but the last gleam of Greek and Roman civilization gradually dying out in the powerless but respectful hands of Islam." The "horrors of Arab conquest" only amplified his lamentation over the fall of Christian rule in Palestine, whose sole remnants were now reflected in the "anthropological trace of its passage, and the yellow hair and blue eyes which sometimes even at the present day the astonished traveler may see beneath a Bedouin kufiya or a fellah turban."\footnote{Ibid, 208}

For the French ethnographer, race alone can explain the present ethnographic reality of Palestine. That Arab rule had a more lasting impact on the local population than the Christian rule is attributed to the racial affinity between the conqueror and the conquered in the former. As a result, "the whole population accepted by a large majority, not only the language of their conquerors, which was somewhat akin to their Semitic dialect, but also their religion, in which they saw a slight but attractive resemblance to their own vague Christianity."\footnote{Ibid, 204}

What is perhaps unique about Ganneau's ethnographic narrative is his classification of the Bedouin and the town Arabs into a common racial origin. This leaves Palestine with two major racial stocks, thereby pitting the 'aboriginal' fellahin against their new masters. The Arabized race of the sedentary fellahin is distinguished both by its customs and linguistic peculiarities, and
from "that of the nomad hordes who came from Arabia with the Caliph Omar, and who are for
the most part settled in the town." Ganneau thus follows Burton and Conder in exaggerating
the racial disparity between the Bedouin and the fellahin by drawing on the same conquest
paradigm. Yet it is the conquered fellahin, not the conquering Bedouin, who embodied, by virtue
of labor and cultivation, the prototype of national revival in Palestine.

This period was thus marked by a growing disenchantment with the Bedouin as a model
of autochthony in Palestine. Edward Palmer, Ganneau's peer at the P.E.F. Society and one of
Conder's associates in the survey of western Palestine, began to entertain the hypotheses that the
Bedouin of Palestine were not indigenous to the country, but descendants of the Arab conquerors
of the seventh century. Palmer, who had collaborated with Drake and his P.E.F. team in
producing the first comprehensive map of the Negev region, argued that "Sinai was peopled
formerly by other than a pure Arab race, and the present Bedouin came over with the (Arab)
Conquest." For the British explorer, the Bedouin represent a "pure race" precisely because
they are a conquering race in whose blood "there are still traces of a primeval race of
inhabitants." Despite his evident hostility towards the Bedouin, Palmer could hardly hide his
obsession with the kind of racial purity which they typified. In a 1871 book on Jerusalem, which
he co-authored with Walter Besant for the popular market, he laments the fact that a great many
Christians who settled in Palestine during the Crusades, and who, "marrying either with native

153 Ibid, 203
154 Edward Palmer. The Desert of the Exodus (Cambridge: Deighton, 1871), 265
155 Ibid, 103
Christians or others, produced a race of semi-Asiatics called *pullani* [fulani in Arabic] who seem to have united the vices of their descent, and to have inherited none of the virtues.\(^{156}\)

With Palmer we also find precursors of a declensionist discourse that increasingly viewed Biblical Palestine as a fertile granary turned into ruins by the Arab conquests. As he writes in his well-known *Desert of Exodus* (1871), "At the time of the Exodus it must have borne a similar relation to the then fertile region of the Negev which that now barren tract at the present day bears to Palestine."\(^{157}\) Palmer, who edited with Walter Besant thousands of Arabic place names for the P.E.F. survey of Palestine, notices with disapproval how "villages [were] deserted in consequence of the encroachment of the Arabs into the country of the fellahin."\(^{158}\) The Bedouin are ultimately regarded, not only as the lowest race in Palestine, but as an inherently destructive race untouched by civilization. "Whenever he goes, he brings with him ruin, violence and neglect." Drawing a familiar comparison between the Bedouin and the Native Americans, he writes, echoing Burton: "The sympathy already wasted on the Red man of North America warns me that I am treading on delicate ground, but I must nevertheless state my belief that the 'noble savage' is a simple and unmitigated nuisance. To the Bedawi this applies even more forcibly."\(^{159}\)

Not only did the Bedouin present Palmer with the antitype of autochthony and civilization, but of national affiliation: They lacked not only the European characteristics essential for national affiliation, but even the noble qualities bestowed on them by earlier British explorers. Here Palmer clearly distinguishes himself from his contemporaries, notably Burton,\(^{156}\)

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\(^{156}\)Edward Palmer, and Walter Besant. *Jerusalem, the City of Herod and Saladin* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1871), 204

\(^{157}\)Ibid

\(^{158}\)Conder, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 204

\(^{159}\)Palmer, *Desert of Exodus*, 241
with whom he had close personal and intellectual ties, by protesting their romantic views on the racial quality of the Bedouin, especially when contrasted with that of the Europeans. "Although romance and war are intimately associated with our ideas of Arab character," he writes, "we shall look in vain among the inhabitants of the desert for any such annals as the chivalry of Europe has produced."^{160}

Palmer's observations on the Bedouin were largely drawn from his expedition in the Negev desert, which he undertook as part of the P.E.F. survey of Sinai in 1869. This was followed by his famous explorations in the el-Tih desert, which, in company with Drake, he completed on foot and without escort, while making acquaintances with the local tribes, to whom he became known as Abdallah Effendi. This journey, we are told, only sharpened his sense of disillusion with the Bedouin as a model of national revival in Palestine. For the most part, "they have no history, because they have no nationality. Their country, their mode of life, produce a kind of clanship among the members of individual tribes, and perhaps of sympathy with the rest of the race, but here these ties end." The Bedouin lacked a national character especially because "they have not even a social, much less a political, organization", and because the "Arab of the desert submits himself to no one, and owns no earthly lord or master but his own sovereign will."^{161}

In 1871, the same year his Desert of Exodus was published, Palmer became Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, where his writing about the Arabs assumed an air of academic authority. His ethnographic legacy on Syria and Palestine has

^{160} Ibid, 76
^{161} Ibid, 76
loomed large over the P.E.F. Society. It helped resituate the fellah, not the Bedouin, as the locus of national recovery in Palestine, first by reinforcing the dual racial paradigm created by his predecessors, and second, by implicating it with a declensionist narrative on the Arabs as an inherently destructive race. Ironically, this did not prevent Palmer from returning to Sinai in 1881 on behalf of the British government, where he apparently managed to mobilize the Arab tribes against the Urabi Pasha's revolution in Egypt, before he was led into an ambush and murdered with his companions on their way to Gaza in August 1882.

Conder, who had collaborated with Palmer in the survey of western Palestine, joins the burgeoning declensionist discourse on the Bedouin in a special paper in the PEF Quarterly, tellingly entitled "The Fertility of Ancient Palestine" (1876). Drawing equally on Biblical sources and the findings of his survey, Conder argues that deforestation, desertification and the decay of cultivation should not be attributed to climatic causes as much as to the destructive quality of the Arab race in Palestine. "The curse of the country is bad government and oppression," he protests. "Justice and security of person and property once established, Palestine would become once more a land of corn, vines, and olives, rivaling in fertility and in wealth its ancient condition." His conclusion about the fertility of ancient Palestine, we are told, is "deduced from careful study of such notices as remain to us in the Bible and in the later Jewish

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162 For Palmer's writing on Palestine see his reports in the PEF *Quarterly Statement* (1780). For his ethnographic writing on Syria see his article on "The Secret Sects of Syria" published in the *British Quarterly Review* (1873).  
163 For more on this form of environmentalist discourse in Palestine, see David Scorr, "Forest Law in Mandate Palestine," in Frank Uekötter and Owe Lubken. *Managing the Unknown: Essays on Environmental Ignorance* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2014)  
Conder believed, following Burton and Palmer, that the mission of restoring Palestine to its biblical condition should rest upon England's shoulders. This is attested by his frequent allusions to the fertility of the country under the Romans and the Christians, from whom England was already claiming a natural and legitimate descent.

What is novel about this discourse is the interplay between the spatial (territoriality) and the temporal (autochthony) in the reinstitution of the fellah as the model of national revival in Palestine. A review of *Tent Work* in the Dublin University Magazine (dated July 1878), sums up Conder's views with regard to the fellahin of Palestine as follows: "We think he has quite established his position that the fellahin of today are the actual descendants and the real representatives of the ancient inhabitants of the land, and that they carry with them evidence of this in their character, their language, and their religion, the three fundamental characteristics of nationality from which their origin may be rightly conjectured."  

Conder thus inherited the double tendency embedded in the genesis of the P.E.F. Society: the subjugation of modern science to the Biblical text, and of knowledge to the service of the empire. The two tendencies are greatly intertwined. Thus, for example, his explorations in the ancient Biblical sites of Palestine serve as a reminder of why the country should be reclaimed by the British. "That the Christians are bent on the reconquest of the land, which— as every ruin in Palestine witnesses— was once under their rule, is devoutly believed by the Fellaheen and the Arabs."  

That the local population is rendered a mere witness to Conder's cyclical, if not deterministic, view of history clearly testifies to the tendency among imperial agents to project

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166 Ibid, 132
168 Conder, *Tent Work*, 376
their wishes onto their subjects. So forcibly woven into the imperial realities of Palestine, his evangelical vision leaves nothing for the native population but silent consent. In his approach to Biblical narratives, Conder also embodied what Eric Auerbach refers to as the "claim of absolute authority" and the tendency "to overcome reality" in Western interpretations of the Bible.¹⁶⁹ Not the present condition of the country, we are constantly told, but the distant memory of the Crusades should serve as a model for effective governance of Palestine should it fall under British rule. That is because "we have historical evidence of the possibility of Western rule becoming consolidated and prosperous and the history of the Crusading kingdom is remarkably suggestive of the true principles on which such government should be framed."¹⁷⁰ One detects a curious parallel here with Burton's proposal to restore "the Roman system of garrisoning the forts and outposts to the east and south of Syria." For Conder, however, the restoration of Palestine to its ancient condition rested on virtues which the Bedouin were inherently lacking, namely, land settlement and cultivation.

Conder also inherited the strong nexus of race and ethnography underpinning British colonial discourse. He finds in the history of the Crusades a rare example of how race could function in the process of empire-building. He attributes the fall of the Frankish kingdom in Palestine to the lack of racial purity among the later generations of the original Latin conquerors. In the early period of the Crusades, we are told, "the forces of the Christian conquerors were constantly recruited with fresh blood from the Europe." Up to the thirteen century, and for more than 150 years, the Arabs of Syria and Palestine were content to be ruled by a master Latin race

¹⁷⁰ Conder, *Tent Work*, 376
whose racial unity also testified to its supremacy. This came to unhappy end as the Frankish kingdom fast receded into a process of racial assimilation. For unlike the eagerness with which the first conquerors had colonized the country, the subsequent intermarriages with the local races—Armenians, Greeks, and Syrians—reproduced in the Latin race the vices and weaknesses of each of those races, which ultimately endangered its vigor, energy and survival capacity. This interracial phase led to an unfortunate sequence of events which, according to Conder, culminated in the fall of the Frankish Empire and the reconquest of the country by the Arabs. Eventually, the Franks were defeated precisely because they lacked the kind of racial purity enjoyed by the new conquerors, "the free Arabs who had never been conquered."\footnote{171}

Like Burton and Palmer before him, Conder put his expertise in the service of the empire. His imperial scheme for Syria and Palestine was outlined in a lecture delivered for the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1892, and reprinted in the sixth edition of Tent Work (1895).\footnote{172} The lecture, aptly entitled "The Future of Palestine", reads rather like an imperialistic manifesto than ethnographic research. It addresses, with an air of urgency, questions of a political nature, notably "the colonization of Palestine, and the acceleration of Jewish return to it." Most importantly, it attempts to account for the emergence of Palestine on British imperial stage as a strategic juncture in the Levant. Palestine is no longer seen as merely the locus of biblical revival, and Conder makes sure to underline its geopolitical importance and "immense military value to England." For example, he was quick to realize the centrality of Palestine to British imperial interests following the acquisition of Cyprus in 1878, which enabled England to secure...
a military base for future operations on the Levantine coast, and in the event of any struggle on
the Indian borders.\footnote{Conder, \textit{Tent Work} (1895), 377}

Where Conder proves most valuable to empire-building efforts is in the area of his
expertise—race. In 1882, he joined the British expedition to Egypt as a general officer in the
intelligence department, where he collaborated with Palmer in mobilizing the Bedouin tribes
against the Urabi revolution. He would make his name in happier times as a leading expert on
Palestine, where his ethnographic surveys on the local population, along with his topographical
mappings of the country, would offer a recipe for effective British administration. In his lecture
to the P.E.F. Society, he already presents himself as an astute observer of the racial dynamics in
the country. Like Burton, he advises his government to follow the example of India, where "we
have a living witness to the fact, that to some Western nations, and to England pre-eminently, is
given the capability of governing the Oriental races with benefit to both the ruler and the
subject."\footnote{Ibid, 278-9}

Echoing his British predecessors, Conder exaggerated the enmity between the Arabs and
the Turks. A paternalistic terminology creeps in with his constant claims of speaking on behalf of
the local population. Thus, for example, he informs his fellow Englishmen that "the native
population lay the blame of their misery on the shoulders of their rulers, and are too anxious to
pass into other hands." Conder, who spent the bulk of his survey in Palestine among the peasant
population, further asserts that "there is a very general belief that the land is destined to become
once more the property of the Christians, and the Fellahin often inquire of visitors when this time
is to come." That the fellahin "declare a preference of an English occupation of the country" is

\footnote{173 Conder, \textit{Tent Work} (1895), 377
174 Ibid, 278-9}
not a matter of dispute for Conder. Rather, it "shows clearly the high esteem in which our Englishmen stand, and reflects the highest credit on our Consuls, and on others, who, by their probity and energy, have created this high public opinion of a nation which is represented by so few individuals." In a revealing statement that meshes his strategic vision with a grandiose rhetoric of civilizing mission, he reassures his audience that "the happiest future which could befall Palestine seems to me to be its occupation by some strong European power, which might recognize the value of [its] natural resources." \(^{175}\) He concludes by advising "to deck the figure of Oriental despotism with the garb of Western constitutional government, to impose the ideas, the laws, the customs and the government of European Christianity on people to whom the motives and methods of such a condition of society were naturally repugnant."\(^{176}\)

Conder had a canny talent for imperial governance. His corpus is permeated by a tendency to weave his racial dogma into the fabric of the empire. In both his lectures and articles, he underscores the benefits of Arab unity against the Turks, which perhaps explains why his interracial divisions of the Arab population rapidly recedes into the broader division of Semites versus Turanians. Oftentimes, the racial disparity of the Arabs gets lost in an imperialist propaganda that swirls around his hostility to the Turks on the one hand, and his blind devotion to the British Empire on the other. When contrasted with the Turks, the Arab race emerges superior: "The history of the Turks has been that of an uncivilized, a cruel, and a rapacious race, whose transitory conquests were due to the decay of a superior civilization whose literature, religion, and law have all been stolen from the conquered Arabs. The history of the Arab race

\(^{175}\) Ibid, 332
\(^{176}\) Ibid, 237
has been that of a progressive and intelligent people of peculiar genius, whose civilization is founded on the most ancient civilization of Asia.\footnote{177}

To the British ethnographer, race explains everything. It is rather unfair, he grumbles, that "more than half of the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan are inhabited by a race not of common stock with the Turks." In his view, the idea that Islam can serve as a unifying bond of the scattered races of the Ottoman Empire is nothing short of a myth. After all, "can the Turkish Sultan claim to be representative of the Arabic Prophet?" The answer is definitely in the negative, because it is only in the British Empire that the connecting bond could be found and used to knit the disparate Arab races into a single nation. That Conder praises "the great Wahabi revival" is only a reminder that British fascination with the Arab race never lost its glamour.\footnote{178}

Despite the irreversible line of racial discontinuity which he draws among the Arab population, Conder makes sure to outline his ultimate goal within the higher scheme of the British empire: These disparate Arab races, scattered throughout Syria and Palestine, await be unified into a single nation, both by a great nation (the British) and against a common enemy (the Turks).

Race is at roots of Conder's vision for the future of Palestine. The only conceivable policy for the British in the country, he concludes his P.E.F. lecture, is to forge alliances along existing racial lines, and to utilize the innate qualities of each race in a way that helps realize its best potential. "Among the sturdy peasantry and the warlike nomads of Palestine and the desert, she [England] might find allies of extreme values," he affirms, drawing on a common binary. Finally, the audience is given, with an air of obligation that both echoes Rudyard Kipling and anticipates T.E. Lawrence, a picture of what rests on England's shoulders in the Near East: Since

\footnote{177}{Ibid, 387}
\footnote{178}{Ibid, 384-7}
"the nationalities once conquered by the Turks are recovering their freedom and the right of self-government," England should lead "the emancipation of the Semitic nationalities" by helping "the Arab and the Syrian alike to shake the hated yoke of their Turanian masters." 179

In his racial views of the Arabs, Conder inherited the tension between knowledge and power underpinning British colonial discourse, which had characterized the imperial legacy of his predecessors. From his new post at the Colonial Office, he, too, struggled to reconcile the twin doctrine of racial demarcation and imperial integration: On the one hand, the Arabs represented a race that was pure and singular, primordial and unchangeable. On the other, they were to be ruled by a superior power bent on managing, if not civilizing, the backward races under its dominion. Like Burton and Palmer before him, he seemed little troubled by the internal contradiction in his scheme to manage what he himself deemed an inherently unruly race.

With Conder we conclude two decades of British ethnographic writing on the Arabs. For the British ethnographer, as for other British ethnographers and explorers of his time, late Ottoman Palestine provided a fertile ground for racial thinking and imagination. In both discourse and praxis, race and ethnography went hand in hand, recasting British perceptions of the Arabs into new ethnographic configurations. In the second part of the nineteenth century, men like Conder, Burton, and Drake turned Ottoman Palestine into a laboratory for their experiments in scientific racism. Theories on racial purity and hybridity shaped, and were shaped by, their uneasy encounters with the native Arab population. This culminated in a new taxonomy of racial classification, mediated by the growing tendency to translate spatial categories into fixed racial hierarchies. For members of the P.E.F. Society, the Bedouin served as a passive

179 Ibid, 383-4
agent of this 'scientific revolution.' Nomadism no longer simply marked a demographic or socioeconomic category, but one which now generated a set of racial, ethnographic, and anthropological assumptions on the Arabs.

Towards the end of the century, the discourse on the racial purity of the Bedouin continued unabated. The Bedouin continued to perform, not only as the pure Arab race, but as a racial archetype on which Arabness itself is measured and codified. As we shall see in the next chapters, the perception of the Bedouin as the "original Arabs" would continue to dominate the ethnographic discourse in Palestine into the Mandate period. It is around this perception that the ethnographic views of Arab nationalists, Zionist pioneers and British administrators would ultimately converge: the Arabs because they sought to integrate the Bedouin into the fabric of the Arab nation, the Zionists because it suited their scheme to identity the Arabs with nomadism and conquest, and the British because it fit into their divide-and-conquer policy, but also their attempts to redraw the boundaries of Palestine along newly demarcated racial lines, and, ultimately, to explain away the prospect of Arab nationhood in Palatine.
Chapter Two

The British in Palestine: The Rediscovery of the 'Arab Race'

This chapter examines British perceptions of nomadism on the eve of the Mandate. Drawing on British official literature form this period, it seeks to show how British ethnographic discourse on the Bedouin of Palestine was woven into the imperial visions of the immediate postwar reality. I am especially interested in the nexus of knowledge and power reshaping British visions on nomadism, and how these visions were constituted within the broader matrix of its colonial narratives on nationhood and statehood in postwar Palestine.

To this end, I focus on the burgeoning literature of country handbooks that flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century. Sponsored by the British Naval Intelligence Division, this literature sheds critical light on British official discourse on the Arabs in a period of mounting Arab nationalism. The culmination of half a century of British ethnographic interest in the Arabs, it also offers a fresh glimpse into the nexus of race and nationhood in British colonial discourse on Palestine. I show how during this period, mapping out the Arab races became increasingly implicated in Britain's attempts to come to terms with the nascent Arab movement in Palestine. This involves the ways in which interracial divisions among the local Arab population were employed to explain what British officials believed were the limits of Arab national unity in Palestine, ultimately guiding the mandatory division of the country along newly demarcated racial lines. I pay special attention to the rationalities unpinning the exclusion of the Bedouin from British conceptions of nationhood in Palestine, in spite of lingering perceptions of the Bedouin as the 'original Arab race.'
The Palestine Handbooks: The Making of 'Racial Character'

On the eve of British occupation of Palestine, as the Great War had expanded into the Levant through the Sinai and Palestine Campaign of the Middle East theatre, a military handbook was circulating in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire. In what strikes us today as a classic definition of the 'nation', its authors declared that:

Syria is a land geographically distinct which has never achieved national or political unity. Left to itself, it has always been a land of city states, with hill and border tribes interspersed. Its settled population is substantially one people, in spite of the admixture of many conquerors. A specific Syrian character has been maintained by the reinforcements from the Arabs of the desert, who have always hovered on the borders and supplied additions to the population. The Arab conquest of the seventh century made a step towards the creation of a Syrian nation by giving the people a common language and religion.\(^\text{180}\)

The Handbook of Syria Including Palestine (henceforth Handbook of Syria and Palestine) was first issued in 1915, and then reissued periodically throughout the Mandate period.\(^\text{181}\) The 750-page book was prepared by the Geographical Section of the Naval Intelligence Division (the Naval Staff), established by the British admiralty in 1915 to compose a series of intelligence reports on countries of special interest to England. Syria and Palestine were


\(^{181}\) The British were not alone in issuing this kind of military handbooks during the war. For an Ottoman equivalent, see Salim Tamari's essay on Filistin Risalesi, a 1915 soldier's manual issued for Turkish special forces in Palestine for similar purposes, "Shifting Ottoman Conceptions of Palestine: Part 1, Filistin Risalesi and the Two Jamals," Jerusalem Quarterly no. 47 (2011), 28-38.
the sixtieth (Handbook–No.60) in a series of more than 160 country manuals, including special editions on the Arabian Peninsula, Zionism, Anatolia, Turkey, the Levant, the Persian Gulf, and Mesopotamia. The *Handbook of Syria and Palestine*, prepared in cooperation with the Foreign and War Offices, was initially intended to serve British soldiers as a wartime guide in the two Ottoman provinces, and, following Armistice of Mudros in 1918, which formally ended the hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies and *de facto* placed Palestine under British rule, as a peace guide to the British Delegates to the Paris Peace Conference.  

Soon after the conference had concluded, the Foreign Office, apparently in response to numerous requests, decided to issue the handbooks, including the *Handbook of Syria and Palestine*, for public use, "believing that they will be useful to students of history, politics, economics and foreign affairs, to publicists generally and to businessmen and travellers." The books did prove useful. As a bibliographical survey of the conference-related publications put it: "These handbooks, by British scholars, deal with practically every disputed area in the world. They present a historical survey and statistical and descriptive information of each territory covered."  

The Peace Handbooks, as they were now called, appeared in their original forms. According to an editorial Note by G.W. Prothero, who served as the general editor and director of the Historical Section, the books were published "substantially as they were issued for the use

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183 *Handbook of Syria and Palestine*, Editorial Note by G. W. Prothero, dated January 1920.
of the Delegates."\textsuperscript{185} This perhaps explains why the Foreign Office did not issue a separate handbook to Palestine at the time of the conference. The \textit{Handbook of Palestine} did not appear until 1922, when, as a result of the Treaty of Sèvres, the Eastern Mediterranean land was divided into the British Mandate of Palestine and the French Mandate of Syria. This was followed by the publication of the \textit{Handbook of Palestine and Transjordan} in 1930,\textsuperscript{186} which reflected the newly demarcated political boundaries of Palestine, as clearly evidenced by the revised map of the country annexed to the book. According to the editors, "the map given in this edition, though on the same scale (I: 750,000) as in the last edition, is much smaller, because it is confined to Palestine of the mandate (the political boundaries of which are shown in a small inset) and to Trans-Jordan as far as 10 miles south of the Dead Sea."\textsuperscript{187}

The publication of the confidential documents offers a rare glimpse into how official and public narratives converge in shaping British perceptions of the Arabs. This largely concerns the scope of circulation and distribution of the handbooks, whose numerous editions clearly testify to their popularity. The \textit{Handbook of Palestine} reached a third edition in 1934. In his introduction to it, Arthur Wauchope, who served as High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief for Palestine and Trans-Jordan in 1931, writes: "The \textit{Handbook} has proved by its popularity the need for such a work, giving in easily accessible form and in the smallest compass accurate information of all sides of Palestinian culture."\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{185} The \textit{Handbook of Syria and Palestine} (London: Published by H.M. Stationery Office, 1920), Editorial Note.
Following the Paris Conference, the *Handbook of Syria and Palestine* was modified to account for the events leading to the declaration of the British Mandate for Palestine. The book underwent a series of revisions, shifting its focus from topography to ethnography, that is, from themes of occupation to those of governance. According to an introductory Note to the 1921 edition, "it was originally intended to issue a volume of Routes and Communications with a Gazetteer of Towns, but, in view of the occupation of the country and the signing of the Armistice, is has been thought undesirable for the present to proceed with this." This included detailed descriptions of the geographic, demographic, ethnographic, and 'racial' conditions of the countries in question.

The *Handbook of Syria and Palestine* treats the two countries as one geographical unit. "It deals with Syria (including Palestine) to as far north as the River Orontes and a line Antioch-Aleppo-Meskeneh." For the British authors, "Syria, in its broadest acceptation, is the country that lies between the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and the desert of Arabia." This definition, we are told, goes far beyond the "regular French usage" of the term, where "in a narrower sense the name denotes that part of Syria which is not included in Palestine." It also extends beyond the geographical delineation of the country under the Ottoman government, when 'Syria' served as the official name for the vilayet of Damascus.

Curiously, the eastern boundary of Syria is defined by its relative resistance to nomadism: "Its frontier on that side is the limit of cultivation, which fluctuates according as the Bedouin or the sedentary population is the stronger." Thanks to its conflicted frontier, Syria had become a country in flux whose geographical boundary is never fixed. Nomadism, whose inherently close

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190 Ibid, 108
association with conquest had been already established by the authors, is viewed as a permanent obstacle to nation-building in Syria. "Especially after the [Arab] conquest a national state might have been established in Syria but for its geographical position, which has made its history one long record of invasion and conquest." This perhaps explains why, despite their hostile attitude towards the Turks, the authors view with approval "the policy of the Turkish government and the advance of the sedentary population [which] have extended the limits of Syria to the eastward and south-eastward."\(^\text{191}\)

The *Handbook of Syria and Palestine* is a classic example of the interplay of race and nationhood in British discourse on the Arabs in an age of colonial expansion. Written in the context of mounting ethnic sentiments across the disparate Ottoman provinces—accompanied by the rise of Arab nationalism, Palestinian separatism, political Zionism and Turkification—it offers a curious glimpse into the ways British officials attempted to come to terms with the embryonic Arab movement in Syria and Palestine. To be sure, the *Handbook* is not a treatise on the origin of Arab nationalism in Syria and Palestine. Yet the more we read into the context in which it was written, the better we grasp its intention. The book was originally a confidential document on a country long coveted by Britain, and it was composed at a time when the British began to recognize nationalism as a rising political force in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. By the time of its publication, the British had been already negotiating with Sharif

\(^{191}\) Ibid, 108-9
Hussein of Mecca over the prospect of Arab separation from an increasingly nationalistic Turkish administration.192

Back in England, British nationalism had been a century in the making. By the early nineteenth century, a sense of Britishness had served to unite the disparate parts of the British Isles as Scots, Welsh, English and Irish came to imagine themselves, or rather were imagined, as Britons.193 Englishness became the Isles race, that is, the race of the British nation. Eventually, "the ethnic English, as the core nation of the British Isles and the dominant group of what became the leading industrial and imperial power in the world", was inexorably linked to the "English national character."194

On the eve of WWI, the British Empire controlled over one-fifth of the world population and a quarter of its total land area. Because the fortunes of nationalism were closely linked to those of the empire, nationalism appeared triumphant. It was only natural to assume that nationalism, in its British version, had a force of universality. Not that an Arab nation was seen as equal to its British counterpart. As we shall see, colonial officials were not in favor of such formations within their imperial domain, and clearly preferred a divide-and-conquer policy. An Arab nationalism was favored only insofar as it served Britain's interests during the war. In the interwar period, as it turned out, demands for Arab independence within former Ottoman provinces were constantly frustrated by Great Britain, a process nowhere more apparent than in the subsequent declaration of its mandate over Palestine.

The authors of the *Handbook* were thus under the sway of what appeared to be the rising tide of nationalism in Europe and beyond. This perhaps explains why in many of its parts, the *Handbook* becomes a mere enumeration of the factors which historians recognize today as the ethnic roots of nationalism.\(^{195}\) These are summed up in what the authors refer to as the 'racial conditions' in Syria and Palestine brought about by the Arab conquest, an event which ultimately gave the country its present "racial character."

In Palestine, this racial character is attributed to two factors. The first is language, a key factor in shaping the 'racial conditions' of the country. As the original Arabs, the Bedouin had transplanted in Palestine the seeds of a vernacular language whose basic morphology set the stage for its linguistic unity to the effect that "even Jews and Christians speak Arabic today."\(^{196}\) The Arabs thus succeeded where the Turks failed. While Turkish had been for centuries the language of the rulers of Palestine, it was limited to official circles, and never evolved into a vernacular or a *lingua franca* for the country. The Young Turks even "aroused opposition by endeavoring to make it the language of the whole Ottoman Empire." Instead, Arabic remained the "general literary language" of the country. It became a language "which Christians, Jews, and Samaritans even write in their own scripts." Thanks to this linguistic unity, a sense of Arabism ultimately prevailed over that of Ottomanism in Palestine, where a close link had been maintained between language and national character: "Probably the

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\(^{195}\) See, for example, Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

\(^{196}\) Great Britain, *Handbook of Syria*, 109
secular literature of the Moslem Arabs is regarded as the national possession of all those whose native language is Arabic, whatever their religion.”\(^{197}\)

Next comes religion, a rather secondary factor which, by aligning itself with language, set the stage for the creation of a distinct 'racial character' in Palestine. The *Handbook* clings to a secularized view of religion. It rejects the popular view, prevalent in Islamic tradition, that the Arab conquests were driven by faith. According to the authors, the new religion acted merely as a catalyst for what had been originally an Arab awakening, and "it was only later, perhaps, that Islam supplied such a sense of confidence and superiority as to become an appreciable source of military strength."\(^{198}\) And yet they concede that Islam still played a considerable role in maintaining a sense of national unity among the Arabs through a host of collective rituals, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca.\(^ {199}\)

In exploring the relationship of religion and nationhood, the authors also take notice of a recent development, when "the pan-Islamic movement has tried with some success to foster amongst Moslems all over the world the idea that they should regard the Ottoman Sultan as in some sense their representative and head." This success had been minimal because, unlike language, religion had limited impact on national unity. Thus, for example, we are told that "the right of the Ottoman sultans to style themselves khalifs [Caliphs] has always been denied not only by the Shiites but also by most Sunnites not subjects of the Turkish empire."\(^{200}\)

The national story of Palestine, as told by the *Handbook* authors, is yet predicated on the paradoxical detachment of the Bedouin from their own creation. While the pure

\(^{197}\) Ibid, 197-8  
\(^{198}\) Handbook of Syria, 128  
\(^{199}\) Ibid, 227  
\(^{200}\) Ibid, 212
descendants of the original Arab conquerors in whose image the 'racial character' of the country was made, the Bedouin are cast out as outsiders, a group of "hill and border tribes." While the Arab conquest "made a step towards the creation of a Syrian nation by giving the people a common language and religion", the Bedouin are sharply distinguished from the "settled population [which] is substantially one people, in spite of the admixture of many conquerors." 201

In what follows, I focus on the rationalities unpinning this double perception of the Bedouin in British ethnographic discourse on Palestine. Drawing on postwar editions of the Handbook, the exclusion of the Bedouin from British conceptions of nationhood was further enabled by the demarcation of new racial boundaries in Palestine, notably the Arab/Syrian binary, which largely fit into postwar imperial divisions. Not that the Arab/Syrian binary was an entirely colonial invention, but it is with the British that it was ultimately racialized. This racial demarcation was taken to explain what British officials viewed as the 'limits of Arab unity' in Palestine, the divergent national trajectories of Syria and Palestine, and, ultimately, the 'predominantly non-Arab' character of Palestine.

201 Ibid, 109, my emphasis.
The Peace Handbooks: The Racial Demarcation of Palestine

The British Mandate of Palestine was carved out of the Ottoman Empire in 1917, before a civil administration, headed by the High Commissioner Herbert Samuel, replaced a brief military rule in 1920. The Mandate, which was formally granted to Britain by the League of Nations in 1922, was yet another blow to Arab dreams of independence as envisioned in the Hussein–McMahon Correspondence of 1915-16. By the time it was founded, it had become clear to many Arabs that an "independent Arab state in the lands between Egypt, Iran and Turkey" was nothing but a distant mirage. Even during the secret correspondence, the British were already negotiating with the French a postwar division of the Ottoman Empire into imperial "spheres of influence", which culminated in the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916. The agreement was to grant the British a control over Iraq and the region surrounding the Persian Gulf, while the French were to rule over Syria and Lebanon, leaving part of Palestine under a joint Allied government. This was followed by the revelation of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised to establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people. In the words of Tom Segev, "The Promised Land had, by the stroke of a pen, become twice-promised".

This was hardly surprising. As it turned out, the British had never actually recognized Palestine as an Arab country. A letter from Henry McMahon to Sharif Hussein (dated October 24, 1915) proclaimed Britain's willingness to recognize Arab independence within the territories proposed by Hussein, except for those regions where the 'Arab race' was not predominantly present: "The districts of Mersina and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria

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lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed limits and boundaries. A British committee, set up in 1939 to consider the implications of the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, concluded that "the United Kingdom representatives also contend that Palestine was not a purely Arab country." This conclusion not only reflected British racial perceptions of 'Arabness' in Palestine, but also, as the committee put it, "a factor which must be taken into account in assessing the surrounding circumstances." 204

In 1922, the Government of Palestine issued the Handbook of Palestine as a separate manual on a country that had become formally under British rule. 205 By the time of its publication, the Mandate of Palestine had been divided into four administrative districts and eighteen sub-districts. These were the Southern District, which included the Beersheba and Gaza sub-districts; the Jerusalem-Jaffa District; the Samaria District, and the Northern District. Modeled after the newly demarcated 'racial boundaries of Palestine', the new division replaced the Ottoman districts of Acre and Nablus, and the subdistrict of Jerusalem. 206

Perhaps more than their Ottoman forebears, British administrators in Palestine showed a greater tendency to divide the country along ethnic lines. 207 In the late Ottoman period, Arabs and Jews in Palestine were rarely identified in racial or ethnic terms. Instead, local

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203 From the English version quoted in "Palestine: Legal Arguments Likely to be Advanced by Arab Representatives", Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs [Lord Halifax], printed for the Cabinet, January 1939, UK National Archives, CAB 24/282, CP 19 (39), my emphasis.
204 Report of a Committee Set Up to Consider Certain Correspondence: Between Sir Henry McMahon (his Majesty's High Commissioner in Egypt) and the Sharif of Mecca in 1915 and 1916 (London: Printed and published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1939), my emphasis.
identities were largely distributed along the millet system, by which the Ottomans classified their subjects into relatively flexible, loose religious categories.\textsuperscript{208} Not that the British invented race \textit{ex nihilo}. As Jonathan Gribetz points out, "race-thinking was part of the Ottoman discourse, especially in the years surrounding the Young Turk Revolution."\textsuperscript{209} In fact, one defining feature of the 1908 Revolution was the secularization of Ottoman identity by substituting religion with racial affinity, hence Turkification and Turanianism.

The British, however, made ethnic division their official policy to the effect that traditional religious categories were equally racialized. Thus, for example, the first Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, submitted by Herbert Samuel in 1921, describes the Arabs as a mishmash of races, divided into pure and mixed races. "Four-fifths of the whole population are Moslems. A small proportion of these are Bedouin Arabs; the remainder, although they speak Arabic and are termed Arabs, are largely of mixed race."\textsuperscript{210}

The French followed a similar scheme in Syria, now placed under the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon, and headed by High Commissioner General Henri Gouraud. The country was subdivided into six states, shrewdly carved up along ethno-religious lines. These were the State of Damascus, the State of Aleppo, the Alawite State, Jabal Druze, the autonomous Sanjak of Alexandretta, and the State of Greater Lebanon (today's Lebanon). The plan to divide Syria into client states began well before the formal Mandate, when Robert de Caix, who served as the first secretary of the High Commissioner, had championed the creation of small states that would reinforce the ethnic and sectarian divisions of the country, and hence hamper the prospect of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{209} Gribetz, \textit{Defining Neighbors}, 25
\item \textsuperscript{210} Samuel, \textit{An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine}, (London: H.M.S.O, 1921)
\end{itemize}
national unity. Both de Caix and Gouraud advocated the plan to break up Syria into local and communal particularisms in the peripheral regions, with the aim of confining the national movement to its urban centers. This policy of fostering minority consciousness, reinforced by a combination of ethnic and religious division, communal segregation and regional separatism, had a lasting impact on the ethnic and sectarian dynamics of the country.

The Handbook of Palestine (1922) thus embodied the postwar division of Syria and Palestine between the two imperial superpowers. This new edition was modified and edited by Harry Charles Luke and Edward Keith-Roach, with an introduction by Herbert Samuel. Keith-Roach, aka Pasha of Jerusalem—a nickname which he chose for the title of his memoir of his years in Palestine—was then the assistant chief secretary to the Government of Palestine. He held the office of governor of Jerusalem from 1926 through 1945, while serving briefly as the governor of the Galilee during the 1930s. Keith-Roach is the author of several books on Palestine, including a memoir on his life and service in Jerusalem. He also co-edited with Luke The Handbook of Palestine and Trans-Jordan, first published in 1930.

Harry Luke began his career in Palestine as the assistant governor of Jerusalem in 1921. He was appointed a member of the Haycraft Commission, established by Herbert Samuel to

\[\text{211 Itamar Rabinovich, The View from Damascus: State, Political Community and Foreign Relations in Twentieth-Century Syria (Valentine Mitchell Press, 2008), 13.}\]
\[\text{215 Pasha of Jerusalem: Memoirs of a District Commissioner Under the British mandate (Palgrave Macmillan, 1994).}\]
investigate the riots which broke out in Jaffa in May 1921.218 That year he was also commissioned to investigate the affairs of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.219 In 1928, he was briefly appointed the acting High Commissioner to the Government of Palestine. The following year, in 1929, he acted as a deputy to Sir John Robert Chancellor, then the High Commissioner of Palestine, in an attempt to mediate a peace agreement between the Jews and the Arabs in the country.220 Luke was a prolific writer whose corpus included handbooks to the countries where he served, inducing Turkey, Anatolia, Cyprus, Malta, as well as a traveler's handbook to Palestine and Syria. 221 He left a two-volume autobiography, which offers firsthand documentation of his service years in Palestine (1914-1924).222 He also authored a tract on the races and sects of Palestine and Syria.223

Herbert Samuel we have already met. He was the first High Commissioner for Palestine, a position which he held for nearly five years (1920-1925).224 His engagement in the political affairs of the country began a few years earlier. Two months after Britain had declared war on the Ottoman Empire in November 1914, he presented British cabinet members with a

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memorandum on the *Future of Palestine*, which proposed to make Palestine a national home for
the Jewish people under a British protectorate. The document had partisans among members of
the British Cabinet, notably the would-be Prime Minister David Lloyd George. It is said to have
influenced British officials in the course of the negotiations leading to the Sykes–Picot
Agreement and the Balfour Declaration.\(^{225}\)

Samuel repeated his proposal in the High Commissioner's Interim Report on the Civil
Administration of Palestine, which he submitted to the League of Nations on July 30, 1921.\(^{226}\)
Reaffirming the racial unity of the Jewish people, he writes, "they [the Jews] ask for the
opportunity to establish a 'home' in the land which was the political, and has always been the
religious, centre of their race. They ask that this home should possess national characteristics— in
language and customs, in intellectual interests, in religious and political institutions." Samuel,
himself a Jew, could hardly hide his emotional tone when he declared that
everywhere great numbers of Jews, whose religion causes them to live,
spiritually, largely in the past, began to take an active interest in those passages of their
ritual, that dwelt, with constant emphasis, upon the connection of their race with
Palestine; passages which they had hitherto read day by day and week by week, with the
lax attention that is given to contingency that is possible but remote.\(^{227}\)

Despite its attempt to distinguish Judaism from political Zionism, Samuel's report bursts
out with racial descriptions that fit into Zionist definitions of Jewishness. This is how he sums up
Zionist demands in Palestine: "Many looked forward to a steady process of Jewish immigration,

\(^{227}\) Ibid, I.
of Jewish land colonization and industrial development, until at last the Jews throughout the world would be able to see one country in which their race had a political and a spiritual home, in which, perhaps, the Jewish genius might repeat the services it had rendered to mankind from the same soil long ago." The document also speaks in favor of a 'practical Zionism' which accords with British policy in Palestine. This policy, Samuel confirms, "contemplates the satisfaction of the legitimate aspirations of the Jewish race throughout the world in relation to Palestine, combined with a full protection of the rights of the existing population." 228

Not all Cabinet members were convinced. Prime Minister Henry Asquith, in a letter to Venetia Stanley Montagu, expressed his views on the memo with a bit of cynicism towards Samuel's playing upon race: "I confess that I am not attracted by the proposed addition to our responsibilities, but it is a curious illustration of Dissy's (Disraeli) favorite maxim that race is everything to find this almost lyrical outburst proceeding from the well-ordered and methodical brain of H.S. [Herbert Samuel]." 229 Ironically, it was Disraeli who famously stated that "the Arabs are only Jews upon horseback," and that the Jews were "Mosaic Arabs" who, as descendants of the most ancient "Arabian tribe", preserved their race "pure and unmixed." 230

Because of his Jewish origin, Samuel's appointment sparked a controversy both in London and Palestine. Some British officials suspected he had strong Zionist leanings, citing his close ties with Zionist leaders, notably Chaim Weizmann, the president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), and later the first President of the State of Israel. 231 The military government in Palestine, headed by General Allenby and Louis Jean Bols, dismissed the

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228 Ibid, II.
231 Segev, One Palestine Complete, 10
appointment as "highly dangerous." Bols warned that the appointment had been received with "consternation, despondency and exasperation" by both Muslims and Christians, who viewed Samuel as "a partisan Zionist" representing "a Jewish and not a British Government." Allenby predicted violent reactions, adding that the Arabs would see the appointment "as handing the country over at once to a permanent Zionist Administration." In June 23, one week before Samuel's arrival in Palestine, the Muslim-Christian Association sent a telegram to General Bols, warning that "Sir Herbert Samuel regarded as a Zionist leader, and his appointment as first step in formation of Zionist national home in the midst of Arab people contrary to their wishes." The letter added that "inhabitants [of Palestine] cannot recognise him, and Muslim-Christian Society cannot accept responsibility for riots or other disturbances of peace."

One day before he arrived in Palestine, Samuel's appointment sparked a debate in the House of Lords. Lord Curzon said that "very grave doubts have been expressed as to the wisdom of sending a Jewish Administrator to the country at this moment." He presented Samuel with Allenby's message and asked him to reconsider his decision to accept the post. Lord Sheffield added that "there is no doubt that the people of the country, when you select a man of the religion and race of only one-tenth of the inhabitants and send him to rule the whole country, must feel suspicious. I hope that Sir Herbert Samuel will disappoint the hopes of his co-nationalists and co-religionists." The House of Commons showed similar concerns about the

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233 Ibid, 106
236 Samuel, *Memoirs*, 152
appointment. Brigadier-General Surtees wondered "what action has been taken to placate the Arab population, which is greater than the Jewish, and thereby put an end to racial tension."238 British press followed suit. Three months after he assumed his new position, the British daily Morning Post wrote that "Sir Herbert Samuel's appointment as High Commissioner was regarded by everyone, except Jews, as a serious mistake."239

In his introduction, Samuel hails the Handbook as "accurate and readable", and "of service" to the British reader. He praises the British Mandate as "an era of new development [that] opens widely before Palestine."240 He repeats his advocacy for Jewish settlement in Palestine. A sense of civilizing mission runs through his descriptions of Jewish massive immigration to Palestine. "The new arrivals from Eastern and Central Europe, and from America", he writes, "bring with them the activities of the twentieth century, and sometimes, perhaps, ideas of the twenty-first."241 The Arab population, in contrast, is viewed as a mishmash of races, both archaic and stagnant, despite the fact that "Palestine has witnessed many and great changes in the four thousand years of her recorded history." The Arabs are also portrayed as passive agents to British national redemption and Jewish return to history. Drawing on the romantic image of the Bedouin as a living witness of lost Biblical and Christian times, Samuel notes that the reader "may find among the Bedouin of Beersheba precisely the conditions that prevailed in the time of Abraham," whereas "at Bethlehem he may see the women's costumes, and, in some respects, the mode of living of the period of the crusades." This image also fits into

239 "The Ferment in Palestine—Angry Moslems," The Morning Post (September 13, 1920)
240 Ibid, xi-xii
his perception of Arabic-speaking fellahin. "The Arab villages are, for the most part, still under medieval conditions; the towns present many of the problems of the nineteenth century." 242

The Handbook of Palestine is the culmination of a century of British ethnographic literature on Syria and Palestine. It draws heavily on the P.E.F. surveys in Palestine and Transjordan, conducted by C.R. Conder and his team towards the end of the century. The names of Richard Burton and Edward Palmer are frequently brought up, with recurrent references to Burton's Unexplored Syria. Another major source is George Robinson Lees, whose ethnographic account on the fellaheen of Palestine is largely influenced by Conder. 243 We also come across European ethnographers who lived and worked among the Bedouin of Palestine, notably John Lewis Burckhardt, Max Von Oppenheim, and Alois Musil. 244 There are also references to the burgeoning literature on the 'English race' published in that period. 245 The Handbook also comes on the heels of fast-growing travel literature on Palestine, which consisted of numerous guide books to the ancient sites and races of the country. 246 It joins a rich corpus of country handbooks published by the Arab Bureau in Cairo prior to the war, including handbooks to Arabia, the Mediterranean and Asia Minor, 247 along

247 For more information on this literature, see Edmund Bosworth, "The Land of Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period as Mirrored in Western Guide Books", British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.1, No. 1, (1986), 36-44.
with special handbooks to the tribes of Syria, and to northern Palestine and southern Syria.\textsuperscript{248}

It also joins a host of country handbooks published by individual publishers, such as John Murray's and Karl Baedeker's famous travel handbooks to Syria and Palestine.\textsuperscript{249}

One notices the remarkable intertextuality between these texts, largely enabled by what Michel Foucault terms "discursive formations."\textsuperscript{250} One of such formations is the "useful information convened on the ethnic and religious groups which were likely to be encountered by the traveller."\textsuperscript{251} This perhaps explains why in each of the handbooks there is devoted a special section to the racial distribution of its subjects. Another common feature is the strict geographical division of the handbooks. Bound up with their designated geographical boundaries, these texts reflected the postwar demarcation of the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and its racial configuration in British colonial discourse.

One of the main sources mined by the authors is the \textit{Handbook of Asia Minor}, first published in 1918.\textsuperscript{252} Like the \textit{Handbook of Syria and Palestine}, this handbook was originally a secret document compiled by the Intelligence Department of the Naval Staff. While initially intended for the exclusive use of British imperial officers during the war, it was made available to the public in four volumes in July 1919. The book is a classic example of the tendency to view ethnography from the single prism of race. It devotes an entire section to "Turkish Ethnology", enumerates the "pure and mixed races" of Asia Minor, and explores "the racial effects of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{248} \textit{A Tribal Handbook of Syria} (published by the Arab Bureau in Cairo, 1918); \textit{Handbook on Northern Palestine and Southern Syria} (Cairo : Government Press, 1918).
\item \textsuperscript{249} See, for example, A. Socin and I Benzinger, \textit{Palestine and Syria: Handbook for Travellers} (Leipsic: K. Baedeker, 1898); and J. L. Porter, \textit{A Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine} (London: J. Murray, 1858)
\item \textsuperscript{250} See Michel Foucault, \textit{The Archaeology of Knowledge} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).
\item \textsuperscript{251} Bosworth, "The Land of Palestine," 42
\item \textsuperscript{252} \textit{A Handbook of Asia Minor} (London: Naval Staff, Intelligence Department, 1919).
\end{itemize}
Turkish conquest." It also contains a detailed map of the "racial distribution" of the country, which demarcates its geographic boundaries by its "ethnical dividing line."\textsuperscript{253}

The *Handbook of Asia Minor* distinguishes four racial groups which constitute "the ethnic boundary on the east of Asia Minor." These are the Turks, the Arabs, the Kurds and the Armenians. Whereas the Turks include the various Turkish-speaking groups, such as Turkmens and Circassians, the Arabs are divided into the Arabic-speaking townspeople, the fellahin, and the Bedouin. The ethnic lines dividing Turks from Arabs, we are told, transcend geographical boundaries "so that, in respect of language and ethnical affinity, part of northern Syria has to be assigned to Asia Minor."\textsuperscript{254}

Where the *Handbook of Asia Minor* proves most attentive to the method of racial classification is in its definition of Turkishness. Drawing on the etymological distinction between 'Ottoman' and 'Turk', the authors ask to contrast the political connotation of the one with the ethnic designation of the other. Unlike Turkishness, they remind us, Ottomanism "has no racial character." Thanks to its origin in the empire, the term "Osmanli" became a sort of imperial designation. All Muslim subjects who felt loyalty to the Osmanli Sultans called themselves Osmanli. The title implies adherence to the governing religion and loyalty to the Ottoman Empire among those who claim it. It thus acquires true political application and force. It expresses and sums up all that exists in the way of political and social unity and of loyalty to the dynasty among the separate

\textsuperscript{253} Ibid, 11-12
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid, 12
Muslim races in Turkey. In theory, all Turkish subjects are Osmanlis. Thus a Kurd or a Circassian subject of the Empire may call himself Osmanli, but not Turk.\textsuperscript{255}

Turkishness is also defined by its distance from nomadism. According to the authors, "the restriction of the name Turk to the settled population probably explains the 'contemptuous' use of the name, common in the country. 'Turk' has long been used as a term of abuse." Its narrow usage and prerogative overtone, we are told, "are probably an echo of the nomad's contempt for his settled neighbor, which is characteristic of Turkestan or Arabia."

Nomadism should also explain why the distinction between Turks and Turkmens is often juxtaposed with an Arab/Arabian divide, that is, the settled and nomadic Arabs.\textsuperscript{256}

The recent history of Asia Minor is rendered the locus of inquisitive racial interpretation by the British authors. The term 'Turk', they contend, had undergone a semantic metamorphosis as a result of the political transformations brought about by the Young Turks, many of whom, ironically, were not 'Turks.' This culminated in the tendency "to give dignity to the name Turk, and to regard the empire as cemented and represented by the governing Turkish race rather than by the Muslim religion– in other words, to establish a political and racial ideal in opposition to the Pan-Islamic ideal of Abdul-Hamid." In this view, "the name Turk forms the basis of Pan-Turanian racial claims, in so far as these urged from the Ottoman side."\textsuperscript{257}

The authors of the \textit{Handbook} of Asia Minor view with suspicion this new configuration of Turkishness. This form of ethnic affiliation, they protest, is foreign to the

\textsuperscript{255} Ibid
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid, 169
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid, 169
local population. "It should be noted that the people themselves are quite unconscious of a racial identity. Their entire history, and the relief of the soil, which breaks the population up into isolated groups, have tended to accentuate differences rather than to promote unity."

Turkishness, in this view, was put forward by a class of Ottoman subjects who were anything but 'Turks'. It was later applied to "the thin upper class in the Ottoman State, the effendis of the large towns and the Turkish official class generally," that is, to a group of people who were "racially and physically" diverse, and who represented "a mixture of elements" that included Turks, Albanians, Circassians, Armenians, Arabs, Greeks and Poles— in short, a new breed of Ottomans whose common bond was tied by religion, culture and political pride, but never by race.\textsuperscript{258}

Perhaps more telling is the distinction between 'Muslims' and 'Greeks'. The two groups, and the Muslims especially, are viewed in largely ethnic terms. "The majority of the present-day Greeks are of the same racial stock as the Moslems, the two are distinguished mainly by their religious profession, as well as by the mental and moral qualities engendered by Christianity and Islam respectively." While the Greeks are described as Anatolians who retained their Christian faith, "the Moslems comprise Anatolians whose ancestors embraced Islam, blended with a Turkish element the strength of which varies in different regions—it is especially strong in the centre and south-east— and a sprinkling of races of pure blood, Turkish, Kurdish, Circassian."\textsuperscript{259}

The theme of racial hybridity runs through the \textit{Handbook}. Like the sedentary Arabs of Syria and Palestine, "the Anatolian Turks are of mixed race, springing from a union between a

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid, 170-1
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid, 168-9
section of the Turkish invaders and the older population, and they are more Anatolian than Turkish." The Anatolian Turks are also sharply distinguished from "the nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes of pure Turkish blood who are found in relatively small numbers in parts of Anatolia." This race of 'pure Turks' includes the Turkmens and the Yuruks, although "the Yuruks are more truly nomadic than the Turkmens." Compared to the settled Turkish population, these nomadic groups are "closer in character to the original Turkish invaders, for they are more distinctly central-Asiatic in physical type and in occupation. The Turks of the towns and settled villages approximate more in social type, and in their peaceful and law-abiding character, to a European population." In a manner which anticipates British perceptions of the Arab Bedouin of Palestine, the nomadic Turks are singled out as people who "retain the physical characters of the true Turk in a purer form than their sedentary neighbours." 260

The Handbook of Asia Minor is thus steeped in the Victorian tradition of racial classification. Having examined the 'racial conditions' of the country, it concludes that "the political and social relations in Asia Minor lie embedded in its racial and religious history." 261

This early handbook—perhaps the first in a series of country handbooks to be published on the provinces of the Ottoman Empire—helped reinforce the tendency of blending race and ethnography in a single taxonomy. Nowhere is this tendency more evident than in the Handbook on Palestine, which appears to be written by the same author(s). 262

260 Ibid, 176-8
261 Ibid, 162
262 See Handbook of Palestine, Note
What distinguishes the *Handbook of Palestine*, however, is the tendency to speak with greater ease of racial divisions. This is largely enabled by the substitution of religion by race: "Palestine, the land which has given to the world Judaism and Christianity and has played an important part in the early development of Islam, is now inhabited by representatives of many races." Mapping out the 'racial elements' of Palestine is a thematic obsession in the book. The local population is classified into a hierarchy of pure and mixed, foreign and native, settled and nomadic races. The Arabs are then subdivided into two racial groups that correspond to these binaries. "The Arab population falls naturally into two categories, the nomads (bedawi), and the settled Arabs (hadari). The former are the *purser in blood*, being the direct descendants of the half savage nomadic tribes who from time immemorial have inhabited the Arabian peninsula, and who to this day dwell in portable tents of black goats' hair." The settled Arabs, in contrast, "are of more mixed descent than the Beduin." The Bedouin are sorted out as the original Arabs because, unlike the settled population, they "preserve more purely than most the blood and the customs of an early period."

The authors then move to examine "the most obvious foreign elements in the population of Syria and Palestine." These include immigrant Jews, Circassians, Turks, Turkmens, Kurds, Armenians, Persians, and a mixture of Europeans. Like the Arabs above, these elements are classified by their relative degrees of racial purity. Thus, for example, "such elements of the population as the Ansariyeh [Nusayris, or Nusseiris] and the Druses may preserve more purely

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264 Ibid, 34-5, my emphasis.
265 Ibid, 193
than most the blood and the customs of an early period". The Druze resemble the Bedouin in that "the special Druse type is quite explicable on the ground of their lengthy isolation in the mountains." Not that the Druze are truly Arabs. It has been established that the only true Arabs live in the desert. Thus the Druze are not Arabs even when they identify themselves as such, and because "traditions about the immigration of ancestors at the period of the Arab conquest are not to be relied on. The Druses profess to be able to name the Arabian families whence they are descended, but their tables inspire no confidence."

As far as the relationship of race and nationhood is concerned, the Handbook of Palestine is more thematically developed than the Handbook of Asia Minor. It includes a special section on the 'Popular Opinion and Nation Sentiment' among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Like the distinction between Greeks and Muslims above, the three religious groups are treated in largely racial terms. This perhaps explains why the term 'Arab' is almost exclusively used in reference to Muslims. Not that all Muslims are classified as Arabs, to be sure. "The majority of the population of Syria is Moslem; but it is by no means homogenous in race, mentality, or organization, even in Palestine."

A major theme in the Palestine Handbook is the classification of 'Arabs' and 'Syrians' as racially apart. "The distinction between the Arabs and the Syrians, although important, is now cultural rather than racial," write the authors, implying that racial disparity had been overshadowed by cultural differences. The racial distinction between the two groups is justified by the nomad/settler divide. Unlike the Arabs, "the Syrian people are cultivators of the soil and

266 Ibid, 193
267 Ibid
268 Ibid
269 Ibid
270 Ibid, 56

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dwellers in towns. They have native industries and, generally speaking, a civilization and a history that sharply mark them off from the Arabs. The latter, on the Syrian border, are a pastoral people organized in tribes and always disposed to war at the expense of their neighbors." 270

Arabs and Syrians are thus viewed as archetypes of pure and mixed races. The Syrians are not truly Arabs because the only pure Arab type is to be found in the "great tableland known as the Syrian Desert," which "both physically and ethnographically" belonged to Arabia. "Although it is convenient and necessary to treat the Bedouin as a part of the population of Syria," the authors insist, "they belong really to the desert that lies beyond the borders of Syria proper. The Syrians, as contrasted with the Bedouin, or Arabs, are the inhabitants of the cultivated land and the large towns." 271

The racial schism between 'Arabs' and 'Syrians' is facilitated by the tendency to translate spatial divisions into fixed racial categories. Thus, for example, the authors dispute that "in and about Damascus you may see the finest Arab population that can be found anywhere and that they are the descendants of the original invaders, who came up on the first great wave of the conquest, and have kept their stock almost pure." That is because, unlike the desert and the frontier steppe where racial purity is presumed to be best preserved, cities like Damascus had for centuries endured extreme political changes and catastrophes, "accompanied by some shifting in the constituents of the population." 272

It should become obvious that the term 'Arabs' is used here to refer exclusively to the Bedouin— the nomads— while 'Syrians' denotes the settled population in general. This form of

270 *Handbook of Syria*, 193
271 Ibid, 231
272 Ibid, 195
nomenclative distinction, which clearly rests on the dominant image of the Bedouin as the pure
Arabs, locks 'Arabs' in a process of linear progression towards 'Syrians'. Syria is viewed as a
nation in flux, where "examples of the transition from the nomad Bedouin to the Syrian fellahin,
or peasants, may, accordingly, be seen at any time all along the eastern border." Ultimately, and
by drawing on the conquest paradigm, the Arab/Syrian binary is shifted from the taxonomy of
race to that of autochthony. "Thus, the Arab conquest of the eighth century was only the flood
tide of a never-ceasing overflow from the desert into the cultivated lands of Syria."273

Steeped in the ethnographic legacy of the P.E.F Society, the Handbook reinforces the
time-honored racial division between the Bedouin and the fellahin. The fellahin are described as
the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of Palestine, while the Bedouin are linked to the Arab
conquerors of the seventh century. The "infiltration of the fellahin by the Arab element" is
portrayed as a modern replica of the old conquest pattern, when the Canaanites were conquered
by the ancient Egyptians and the Israelites afterwards. What followed, we are told, was an ever-
growing process of racial assimilation imposed on the fellahin by their new masters. "In the
different parts of the country," claim the authors, "they have been racially affected in various
degrees by immigrations." These racial metamorphoses, ancient and recent, are observable today
in the physical traits of the local population. For example, "the population of Gaza is said to be
distinguished by darkness of complexion due to the presence of Philistine and Egyptian
elements. The Inhabitants of Ludd [Lydda] are fairer and more like those of Hebron."274

Because of their presumed racial hybridity, the fellahin are said to embody the ethnic
history of Palestine by representing its complex amalgam of nations. Unlike the Bedouin of pure

273 Ibid
274 Ibid, 194
Arab stock, the fellahin exhibit an admixture of racial elements inherited from the ancient Canaanites, the Israelites, the Philistines, the Egyptians, the Aramaïtes and Christians. That the fellahin are the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of Palestine is best attested by their linguistic peculiarity. According to the authors, while "it does not appear that the fellahin throughout the country retain any recollection of earlier nationalities which they constituted in historical and pre-historic time," they still exhibit "numerous local varieties of dialect whose difference may, in fact, be due to the influence of earlier languages." Traces of the ancient elements among the fellahin are also attested by "the survival of the Christian religion in some places and the Aramaic vernacular of the villages." What is striking here is not the assumption that the fellahin of Palestine are of Christian origin, but that Christianity itself is treated as a racial category.

The Handbook also introduces a sharp racial dichotomy between 'Arab' and 'Arab-speaking' populations, presented as pure and mixed races, respectively. Referring to the fellahin of Palestine, the authors write: "The people West of the Jordan are not Arabs, but only Arab-speaking... in the Gaza district there are mostly of Egyptian origin; elsewhere they are of the most mixed race." By excluding from its definition of the 'Arabs' every Arab-speaking population in the settled regions of the country, the authors seem to have conceded to the conclusion that only the Bedouin are true Arabs, thus identifying Arabness with nomadism.

Excluded from the authors' definition of Arabness are the Arab Christians "who are partly Arab in race and speech." Equally excluded are the Yemeni Jews, "who speak a pure Hebrew

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275 Ibid
276 Ibid
277 Ibid, 58
and a very pure Arabic," and who "have been cut off from the rest of the world since the rise of Islam in the seventh century of our era. [They are] remnant of the large Jewish communities, many autonomous, which existed in all the cities of Arabia in the time of Mohammed." The exclusion of Christian and Jewish Arabs from British conceptions of Arabness is a classic example of the pervasive tendency to restructure religious categories into new racial taxonomies. The exclusion of the Yemeni Jews in particular should come as no surprise when read in the context of the Mandate period, where Arab/Jewish enmity reached its zenith.

In mapping out the 'pure' and 'mixed' elements of the Arab race, nomadism serves as a key factor. Unlike Syria and Palestine, the authors tell us, "Trans-Jordania is an Arab country" because it is predominately inhabited by Bedouin tribes. "A satisfactory solution of the West Syria problem," they continue, "is a matter for arrangement, now that Syria is definitely cleared of the Turks. One goes from eastward from the watershed which divides the Mediterranean from the Jordan valley, there is an increasing population of Arabs; and trans-Jordania is an Arab country." In the *Handbook*, race and nationhood are locked together in an uneasy marriage. For the authors, the interracial divisions among the Arab-speaking population, most evident in the Arab/Syrian divide, renders it impossible to speak of national unity in Palestine. "It is impossible to speak of any common national sentiment in Palestine, since its population consists of so many diverse elements, often with conflicting interests and ideals." Racial division is also taken by the British authors to justify the postwar partition of the country between the imperial superpowers
of Great Britain and France. Referring to the nascent Arab movement in Syria and Palestine, they write, with an air of disapproval:

Some West Syrians, who advocate the doctrine of 'la Syrie integrale' preach that Palestine is part of Syria, and that all the land from Alexandria to Jaffa and from Aleppo to Ma'an is one country that can become a homogenous state or nation. But such policy could hardly be realized, even if there were no such things as the Arab and Zionist movements.²⁸⁰

The Handbook is a classic example of how the presumed nexus of race and nationhood function in British colonial discourse. Writing with an eye to the Paris Peace Conference, the authors take pains to reassure their intended audience about the 'limits of Arab unity in Palestine.' The lack of national unity in Palestine is attributed to its racial disparity. Unlike the Syrians and the Turks and the Jews, the mixed Arabs of Palestine, and the peasant population in particular, "have little, if any, national sentiment, and would probably welcome any stable form of government which would guarantee to them reasonable security and enjoyment of the fruits of their labour."²⁸¹

The Arab movement in Palestine is thus defined by its limits. For the authors, the Arab population of Palestine is too racially diverse to marshal the country into the kind of national unity which they had witnessed in Syria. Whereas the Bedouin population presents a racial homogeneity unscathed by civilization, "the population of Samaria and the districts north of it, presents much racial, religious, and political variety."²⁸² Racial diversity, we are warned, is

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 56
²⁸¹ Ibid, 57
²⁸² Ibid, 497
also a double-edged factor. "Of the local conditions which affect the military history of Palestine," one could hardly ignore the "frequency with which religious and racial divisions bred 'traitors' who betrayed otherwise impregnable towns into the hands of the besiegers."283

The presumed nexus of race and nationhood is thus employed to explain away the prospects of Arab nationalism in Palestine. For the British authors, it is on this nexus where the national trajectories of Syria and Palestine ultimately diverged. This is especially evident in the way the notion of 'racial disparity' is taken to explain why 'the appeal of the Arab movement was stronger in Syria than in Palestine'. Unlike Palestine, Syria found it easy to act upon the idea of nationalism "since she had no such notoriously subversive elements in her population as existed, for example, in European Turkey and in some parts of Asia Minor; and, even in Damascus, there was not much bitterness between races and creeds."284

The racial disparity of the Arabs is also taken by the authors to justify the expansion of the Zionist movement in Palestine: "With the Arab movement centered at Damascus," we are told, "Zionism in Palestine would be help rather than a hindrance to it; for that movement would only suffer from the attempt to absorb a distinct ethnologically and otherwise so different from countries in which the Arab element stands alone or is distinctly predominant." In a similar fashion, the lack of national unity among the Arabs is constantly juxtaposed with the ethnic and national unity of the Jews. One key factor is the existence in the Jewish yishuv of a unified mode of production. Unlike the Arabs, the Jewish population is free from the desert/sown divide, and hence more racially homogenous. The new Hebrew nation, we are told, depends entirely on

283 Ibid, 112
284 Ibid, 46
cultivation: "The essence of the Zionist ideal is the desire to found upon the soil of Palestine a revived Hebrew nation based on an agricultural life."²⁸⁵

In the *Handbook*, Zionism is described as the legitimate expression of Jewish national aspirations, where "Jewish national development, cultural, agricultural, and economic, is inevitable and natural in Palestine after the war." The Arab movement, on the other hand, is defined by its limits. Its rising tide is played down as "a nebulous sentimentalism" nurtured by a class of urbanites "with no civilisation of their own," and who are "demoralised by 500 years of Turkish misrule." Unlike its Jewish counterpart, "the Arab movement has no real political cohesion, and, above all, no power of organization."²⁸⁶

The chasm separating the two national movements is nowhere more forcibly enforced than in the realm of language. Where Arabic is depicted as a mishmash of peculiar dialects, the authors speak of modern Hebrew as a unifying force among the Jews of Palestine. More than merely a cultural revival, they contend, "there were strong national reasons for making it the language of the Jews restored to Palestine." In this view, European Jewish reformists and Zionist nationalists were quick to recognize the national value in reviving the vernacular and esoteric aspects of the language. In what Benedict Anderson a half century later would term the 'national print language', the revival of modern Hebrew into a national vernacular is attributed to the fast-growing literary activity in the Jewish community, and most notably, to "the translation into Hebrew of modern novels and by the establishment of a periodical press."²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 57-63.
²⁸⁶ Ibid, 57-63.
²⁸⁷ Ibid, 197-8
It was a self-fulfilling prophecy. In 1920, and thanks to Herbert Samuel's efforts, the civil administration of Palestine recognized Hebrew, along with Arabic and English, as an official language. In his Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, Samuel writes: "In conformity with one of the articles in the draft Mandate for Palestine, the Hebrew language has been recognized, with English and Arabic, as one of the official languages of the country. It is employed in all the notices and publications of the Central Government, and for local purposes in those districts where the Jews form a considerable element in the population." Samuel goes to great lengths to celebrate the revival of Hebrew as the language of the modern Jewish nation:

The Hebrew language, which, except for purposes of ritual, had been dead for many centuries, was revived as a vernacular. A new vocabulary, to meet the needs of modern life, was welded into it. Hebrew is now the language spoken by almost all the younger generation of the Jews of Palestine and by a large proportion of their elders. The Jewish newspapers are published in it. It is the language of instruction in the schools and colleges, the language used for sermons in the synagogues, for political speeches and for scientific lectures.  

One could compare this passionate description with the way Arabic is described by the Handbook authors. Despite exhibiting the same vernacular characteristics described above, Arabic is viewed as a dividing element in Syria and Palestine. Paradoxically, the Bedouin are cast out as a group of sub-national outsiders because of their linguistic peculiarity. "Only the Bedouin, on the borders, speak an Arabic so peculiar that almost intelligible to the Syrians proper." This is despite the authors' early contention that it is the Bedouin, the pure descendants

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of the original Arabs, who originally transplanted in Palestine the seeds of linguistic unity to the effect that "even Jews and Christians speak Arabic today."\(^{289}\)

Having underlined the limits of the Arab movement vis-à-vis its Zionist counterpart, the authors nevertheless advise their British peers to reconsider British policy in Palestine in light of the spread of nationalism as a rising force whose phrases "rang out from Salonika and Constantinople." Drawing on 'popular opinions' in the country, they write:

With ideas of nationality, home rule, and representative institutions in the air, no wonder the Arabs thought of managing their own domestic affairs in their own language, of developing their own country, and of themselves enjoying the responsibilities and emoluments of its administration.\(^{290}\)

This unorthodox recognition of the Arab national awakening in Palestine is followed by a warning: "The Arab movement is becoming increasingly national, its goal is Arab independence, free from British or French protections. It has as its aim the rehabilitation of the Arab nation, and the restoration of Damascus as a center of Arab learning and culture and an independent Arab capital.\(^{291}\) It is on this recognition that the authors ask to measure the success of British policy in Palestine. "The whole secret of British popularity in Palestine", they write, "depends upon our willingness to give the people freedom to develop their own national consciousness in their own way."\(^{292}\)

However, as we have seen, this 'willingness' was largely constrained by what the authors themselves constantly viewed as the 'limits of Arab unity' in Palestine, enabled by the

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290 *Handbook of Palestine*, 46-7
291 Ibid, 57
292 Ibid, 63
sharply demarcated racial boundaries which they so systematically drew between their subjects. This racial demarcation made it easy, even inevitable, for the British officials to speak of the 'different national trajectories' of Syria and Palestine. Eventually, the presumed interracial disparity among the Arab population enabled those officials to explain not only why an Arab national unity was unfeasible in Palestine, but why Palestine could not fit into British conception of what constitutes a 'purely Arab country.'

In nutshell, the Handbooks literature reflected British official views of the Arabs of Palestine in a period of rising Arab nationalism. What distinguishes this nascent literature is its greater preoccupation with racial classification, mediated by the imperatives of scientific racism and the ethnographic legacy of the nineteenth century. In it, nomadism continues to perform as the locus of British racial perceptions of the Arabs. Permeated with notions of racial purity, this literature served as a discourse of exclusion that tolerates no difference: Only the Bedouin are true Arabs; the rest are either half-Arabs or mixed Arabs, but never true Arabs. The settled fellahin, the Christian Arabs, the Jewish Arabs and the Syrians are only Arabs by name—again, \textit{because} they are not Bedouin. It is by demarcating these new racial boundaries that the identification of Arabs with Bedouin, and Arabness with nomadism, becomes complete.

In the Palestine Handbooks, nomadism is also defined by its opposites. In trying to understand how the Bedouin of Palestine figure in this literature, we can identify three ethnographic assumptions guiding its authors. The first rests on the desert/sown binary, which involves the tendency to translate spatial divisions into racial ones. As a result, the Arabs are divided into settled and nomadic groups, who are further subdivided into a hierarchy of pure races (the Bedouin) and mixed races (the fellahin and the urbanite Arabs). The second maintains
a racial division between 'Arab' and 'Syrian'. The Syrians are portrayed as settled, civilized, industrial, and peaceful. The Arabs are viewed as their opposite. Unlike the Syrians, or the Turks or the Jews, the Arabs are viewed as a mishmash of races who find it impossible to act upon the idea of nationalism. This reconfiguration of racial relations made it easy, if not inevitable, to exclude the Bedouin from British perceptions of nationhood in Palestine. The third rests on the conquest paradigm, where the foreignness of the Bedouin is juxtaposed with the autochthony of fellahin. The former are depicted as the pure descendants of the original Arab invaders of the seventh century, whereas the latter are seen as the descendants of the ancient Canaanites.

Finally, the national story of Palestine, as told by the Handbook literature, rests on a paradoxical perception of the Bedouin. While the pure descendants of the original Arab conquerors in whose image the 'racial character' of the country was made, the Bedouin are cast out as outsiders, a race of foreign intruders. While the Arab conquest is said to have formed the nucleus of an Arab nation in Palestine "by giving its people a common language, ethnicity and religion", the Bedouin are cast out as anathema to modern national formations. In this sense, the Bedouin are viewed as the sum of their contradictions, captured permanently in a game that involves both inclusion and exclusion: On the one hand, they represent an ideal model of racial purity, a proto-national archetype for the Arab nation, and the nucleus of national revival in Syria and Palestine. On the other, they are living relics of the past, the remnants of primitive tribalism whose loyalty is limited to the tribe, the custodians of a sub-national prototype whose social and cultural institutions are inherently opposed to state and national formations. Ultimately, the exclusion of the Bedouin from British conceptions of nationhood in Palestine was enabled by the introduction of the three binary paradigms fleshed out above: nomadism versus settlement,
conquest versus autochthony, and racial purity versus racial hybridity. This exclusion, as we shall see shortly, continued well into the Mandate period.
Chapter Three
Nomadism as a Racial Domain: The Legacy of Desert Administrators in Palestine

This chapter examines British perceptions of nomadism during the Mandate. Drawing on British tribal discourse and land practices in southern Palestine, it seeks to show how British views of the Bedouin enforced the exteriority of nomadism to national and state formations, and how this exteriority informed official debates over broader colonial doctrines, such as tribal pacification, assimilation and association. I pay special attention to the introduction in Mandate Palestine of new legal taxonomies linking national rights to land settlement and ownership, and the way these taxonomies were woven into the fabric of colonial administration and governance of the Bedouin population.

To this end, I draw on the legacy of British desert administrators in Palestine, Sinai and Transjordan. These include, most notably, Claude Scudamore Jarvis, the legendary governor of Sinai (1922-36); Frederick Gerard Peake, known as Peake Pasha, founder and commander of the Arab Legion in Transjordan (1923-39); and the famous John Bagot Glubb, aka Glubb Pasha, Peake's successor as the commander of the Arab Legion (1939-1956).

These men were not mere bureaucrats. They belonged to a new class of 'desert experts' whose views on nomadism helped reshape British policies and attitudes to the Bedouin during the Mandate. Not that the Bedouin of Palestine were inherently nomadic, but it served the British officials to treat them as such. Inspired by the P.E.F. legacy, their desert policies and doctrines reproduced the century-old ethnographic myths on the Bedouin, which had permeated the works of early British explorers in Palestine, notably Richard Burton, Edward Palmer and C.F. Conder.
Working in the service of the Mandate, their legacy embodies the growing nexus of knowledge and power underpinning British colonial discourse on the Arabs.

Of the three Jarvis was the most receptive to the racial legacy of his predecessors. His ethnographic corpus betrays an unending preoccupation with the 'Bedouin race' in British colonial discourse. Glubb's racial views on the Arabs were crystallized in his post-retirement writings, but are the product of his service years in Transjordan. Peake summed up his contribution to the debate in a major work on the tribes of Transjordan, which he drafted during his service there. During the 1930s, the three also published numerous articles and policy reports on the Bedouin. In this particular period, they also regularly exchanged their opinions on nomadism in a series of official correspondence and monthly reports on desert administration.

The three British Arabists had more in common than a romantic fascination with the desert. They all lived and worked among the Bedouin in the service of the Mandate. They were ambitious statesmen, avid modernizers, and active proponents of sedentarization and settlement policies among the Bedouin tribes. In their writings, schemes and political expediencies, they all held the view that the future of nations depended entirely on land settlement and cultivation, labor and progress. Their conceptions of nomadism were systematically reconstructed on new

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296 See the volumes of the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (JRCAS), and the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* (PEFQ), published between 1935 and 1939.
legal taxonomies rooted in modern European theories and praxes: land ownership, property, surplus and other capitalist modes of production.

The introduction of these taxonomies into British conceptions of statehood was not the ingenious innovation of the three men. It has its origins in a centuries-old tradition of English legal theory, whose roots can be traced back to the political teachings of John Locke. According to Locke's labor theory of property, land ownership followed from cultivation and productivity, and the right to property was vested in labor.\footnote{John Locke, \textit{The Second Treatise on Civil Government}.} Locke also believed that "the state did not create property, but was itself created in order to protect it."\footnote{J. W. Gough, \textit{John Locke's Political Philosophy: Eight Studies} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 81} These ideas, dubbed by some scholars "the agriculturalist argument",\footnote{Thomas Flanagan, "The Agricultural Argument and Original Appropriation: Indian Lands and Political Philosophy," \textit{Canadian Journal of Political Science} (Vol. 22, No. 3, September, 1989), 589-602.} had been adopted by the English in the course of their colonization of the Americas.\footnote{For the implementation of Locke's theory in the American context, see Barbara Arneil, \textit{John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism} (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1996)} This concerns the ways in which native conceptions of ownership were translated into modern English taxonomies. To take the example of New England,

It is assumed that the words "property," "sovereignty," "ownership," and "possession" can be used to describe Indian as well as English conceptions of land in seventeenth-century New England, when in fact these are English terms whose relationship to each other within a discourse about the use of land cannot be separated from the legal system of English common law, within which the English idea of land is bounded by such terms.\footnote{Eric Cheyfitz, \textit{The Poetics of Imperialism} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 46}
Centuries later, these ideas would serve to justify British land practices and tribal policies in Palestine. Under the Mandate, they constituted what Michel Foucault refers to as 'governmentality', which reflects his interest in the role of such legal rationalities in shaping the genealogy of the modern state. In Foucault, governmentality is “at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not.” In this sense, "the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.”

To translate Foucault's theoretical notion into the reality of Mandate Palestine, British attitudes to the Bedouin allowed for both the exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus, and the demarcation of statehood onto this exteriority. To the British desert administrators, nomadism demarcated both the territorial limits of legal ownership and a sphere of colonial domination and governance. In this legal reconfiguration, land ownership, property and cultivation constituted those 'tactics' employed by the Mandate government to explain and further enforce the exteriority of nomadism to national and state formations. I maintain that the imposition in Palestine of English conceptions of ownership allowed British officials not only to reconfigure native Palestinian conceptions into new legal taxonomies inherited from colonial theory and praxis, but to integrate these into the fabric of para-state institutions and their legal apparatus. Today, for example, the thrust of Israel's legal code of land ownership is based on land and tribal enactments inherited from the British Mandate, known as Ordinances.

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304 Ibid, 103
The three British officials were not inflexible doctrinaires, to be sure. In their visions for the future of nomadism, they represented a spectrum of opinions that ranged from assimilation to association. Jarvis treaded a delicate line between the two doctrines. Drawing on French colonial policies in North Africa, he entertained the unorthodox view that the Bedouin of Sinai and southern Palestine should be assimilated to British ways. Glubb, on the other hand, believed that "Arabs should remain basically Arabs", and that Beersheba should be treated as a tribal area. Adamant about maintaining the racial divisions he drew between tribal and settled populations in Palestine, he even opposed a proposal by his British peer to allow for the 'redemption' of the Negev desert by European Jewish newcomers.

Where their opinions converged, however, is on the nexus of nomadism and nationhood. They all viewed with suspicion the applicability of nationality to the Bedouin. Nationalism, they believed, was anathema to nomadic and tribal formations, where loyalty was limited to the tribe, not to the nation. Drawing a sharp line between tribal loyalty and national affiliations, they maintained an inherent opposition between nomadism and nationhood, a duality which was ultimately taken by the three to explain the 'non-complicity' of the Bedouin tribes of Palestine and Transjordan with the Palestinian national cause.

Where the three British officials also agree is on the primacy of racial classification. Drawing on the age-old desert/sown binary, they inherited the tendency to classify the local Arab population into a mixture of settled and nomadic races. Indeed, the desert/sown duality "went largely unquestioned at the time, a universal, secular framework for approaching world history, and a compelling factor in planning for the future. It was only on its implications that the opinions of Peake, Jarvis, and Glubb– and those of many other colleagues– so dramatically
diverged." What follows is that the three officials "were not inflexible doctrinaires, but in this particular period they could be said to occupy both ends of a spectrum of opinions on nomads and nomadism. That meant holding at least one conviction in common: that nomads and settlers formed discrete elements of any given population."

This redemarcation of racial relations in Palestine was largely mediated by the tendency to translate spatial categories into racial ones. It rested on the easy assumption that divergent modes of life and production were emblematic to racial disparity. This perhaps explains why the three officials denied the existence of any 'ethnic kinship' between the Bedouin and the fellahin of Palestine. To them, it was the fellahin, not the Bedouin, who embodied, by virtue of settlement and labor and cultivation, the prototype of national revival in Palestine.

That the three British administrators favored the fellahin over their subjects should come as no surprise. After all, part of their mission in Jordan and Palestine was to settle the Bedouin after the fashion of their sedentary neighbors, which perhaps explains their unorthodox approval of Ottoman desert policies. But it also explains why to the three men British colonial rule represented a transformative stage, a rupture from a fragile Ottoman rule which they believed failed to tame, settle and modernize its tribal subjects. The three British officials liked to think of themselves as the 'new Romans', and hence constantly distinguished themselves from their Ottoman predecessors by billing their modernizing scheme as a restoration of a lost Roman paradise. This was accompanied by a 'declensionist' narrative on nomadism, one which portrayed the Bedouin as a race of foreign conquerors responsible for the destruction of what had been the

306 Fletcher, *British Imperialism*, 190
307 Ibid, 189
'fertile granary' of Roman Transjordan and Palestine.\textsuperscript{308} In line with early British ethnographers in Palestine, this narrative, on which the three firmly agreed, culminated in yet another 'inherit opposition' in British colonial discourse on the Bedouin, pitting nomadism against autochthony.

And yet, disagreements among the three men abounded. As the ethnic conflict in Palestine reached its peak in the late 1930s, their opinions about the future of Palestine, and the fate of its Bedouin population in particular, would ultimately diverge, with varying schemes ranging from tribal preservation (Glubb) to the allocation of the Negev region to Jewish European newcomers (Jarvis). But, as we shall see shortly, this mattered little to their core view of nomadism as the antipode of national and state formations, a view which set their tribal legacy in Palestine in evident contrast with that they had pursued in Transjordan—again, thanks to the ethnic character of the conflict.

\textsuperscript{308} On this theme, see David Scorr, "Forest Law in Mandate Palestine," in Frank Uekötter and Owe Lubken, \textit{Managing the Unknown: Essays on Environmental Ignorance} (Oxford: Berghahn, 2014).
Major C. S. Jarvis: The Limits of 'Tribal Nationalism' in Palestine

In 1942, three years after British forces managed to crush the Great Arab Revolt in Palestine, Major Jarvis, the former Governor of Sinai, set out to write a biography of his British colleague F.G. Peake, who had by the time retired from his command of the Arab Legion in Transjordan. Reflecting on the Palestine uprising, Jarvis wrote: "The rebellion in Palestine, which broke out in 1936 and lasted for three years, constituted one of the severest tests of its loyalty and disciple to which the Arab Legion was subjected during the whole of its service under Peake."309

Jarvis was referring to Peake's role in keeping the Bedouin tribes of Transjordan out of the ethnic conflict across the border. Peake had a legendary reputation in British imperial circles as 'the Second Lawrence of Arabia', and "founder of the strangest police force in the world."310 His 150-men Reserve Mobile Force, which he managed to organize in 1921 to guard the Palestine-Amman road, formed the nucleus of the Arab Legion in Transjordan. His service in Transjordan, which spanned over twenty years, earned him the fame of a founder, not only of the Arab Legion, but, as his biographer puts it, "of a newly created Arab state."311 In 1940, one year after his retirement from the command of the Legion, Peake would follow Jarvis and Glubb in receiving the Lawrence of Arabia Memorial Medal 'for his services in Transjordan.'312

Peake provided his British friend and biographer with examples of his 'services' west of the River Jordan. One involves the integration of Bedouin forces into the Arab Legion, a process

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311 Jarvis, Arab Command, 6
312 Awarded by the Royal Central Asian Society
which began with the arrival of Major Glubb in 1930 to act as second-in-command of the Legion. Under Peake's command, Glubb assumed the special task of checking the Wahhabi raids and maintaining peace and order among the frontier tribes east of the Hedjaz railway. He managed to recruit one hundred and sixty men, all of whom were Bedouin from the nomadic tribes of Transjordan. Until this special reinforcement, most of the Arab Legion were men enlisted from nearby towns and villages, with few nomadic Bedouin in the force. These included a considerable number of Circassians and Turkmen recruited from the neighboring village settlements, which the Turks had instituted with the aim of building small colonies of mountain people to act as a barrier against the Arabs. Officers of Arab origin were for the most part former officers in the Turkish regular army, and later on, recruits from the educated youth of Transjordan.\textsuperscript{313}

During the years of the Palestinian Revolt (1936-39), a further six hundred men were enlisted in the Legion "to cope with the situation that had arisen owing to the state of rebellion in Palestine." Like the special contingent of 1930, these new recruits were enlisted from the local Bedouin tribes of Transjordan. Thanks to Peake's "Arab command", Jarvis writes, "the inhabitants of Trans-Jordan remained loyal throughout this protracted struggle, [despite] insidious attempts made by the Arab party in Palestine to spread the rising across the Jordan, and bands of rebels [who] frequently crossed over the frontier when pursued by Palestine police and British troops."\textsuperscript{314} Now that the uprising east of the river had receded into near oblivion, Jarvis had more to say about his 'old friend' and 'next-door neighbor' for fourteen years:

\textsuperscript{313} Jarvis, \textit{Arab Command}, 70
\textsuperscript{314} Ibid
Peake Pasha built slowly, but he built well and on a solid foundation, and the administration and the Legion he evolved have stood the test not only of time, but of war and open rebellion in all the neighboring countries. The fact the Trans-Jordan remained peaceful and loyal during the recent revolt in Iraq, and earlier whilst the whole of Palestine blazed up in the stark rebellion, is a remarkable testimonial to the work performed by a great man.\textsuperscript{315}

Yet apart from Peake's shrewd efforts in 'taming' his subjects, the Bedouin's detachment from the Arab/Jewish conflict was rooted, in Jarvis' view, in their inherent character as people whose loyalty was limited to the tribe, not to the nation. For Jarvis, the Bedouin's ethos, by its very nature, was completely foreign to the modern notion of national affiliation, and Peake was simply capitalizing on this fact.

Reporting on the 'Revolt in Palestine,' Jarvis takes notice of a considerable number of young Arab men from the border villages, who flocked to the major cities of Palestine to join the Arab forces, returning from time to time to persuade the Bedouin tribes to enlist in the uprising. While back in the villages they were regarded as national heroes, their attempt to mobilize the Bedouin proved futile. The reason for this, we are told, had to do with the 'normal attitude' of the Bedouin to the settled population in general. Jarvis continues:

On the whole the Bedouin nomad tribes of the desert were not enthusiastic and, although a few of the younger men went over to Palestine for the sake of the excitement and the possibility of loot, the normal attitude of the tribesmen was that this trouble

\textsuperscript{315} Jarvis, \textit{Arab Command}, 6
between cultivators and townsmen, whether they were Arabs or Jews, was not their immediate concern.

For the British Arabist, this 'normal attitude' has to do with the nature of tribal society, whose 'Bedouin mind', we are told, is anathema not only to national conflicts, but to conflicts of sedentary nature in general. Writing with the authority of the 'desert expert' who claims to understand his subjects more than their sedentary neighbors, Jarvis concludes:

It is almost impossible for the camels, sheep and goats, who measures his wealth and social position by the size of his herds, to realize there is anything to quarrel about in despised houses, orchards of tree and corps. The whole business struck their nomad minds as not worth while, though if the disagreement had been caused by Jewish interference with sacred grazing rights, raiding of animals, or taking over wells and water supplies, they might have been seen the matter in a different light.\(^{316}\)

Jarvis was clearly echoing a dominant narrative on the Bedouin in British colonial discourse, one which increasingly viewed tribal formations as the antithesis of modern national structures. Peake himself would agree with Jarvis that nomadism was inherently abhorrent to state and national formations, noting that "the danger of the nomad incursion into the fertile fringe surrounding the north of Arabia has been a problem which has confronted every government responsible for the welfare of those parts."\(^{317}\) In an official report, which he drafted in 1932 to discuss the applicability of nationality to the Bedouin tribes, Peake only reluctantly

\(^{316}\) Ibid, 144

accepts the notion that "nationality in its European sense" could be applied to tribal societies.318 However, Peake appears to hold a somewhat dissenting, if apologetic, view on 'tribal nationalism' when he later attributes the dismissal of his successor in the Arab Legion, Major Glubb, not to anti-British sentiments as much as to the "development of Arab nationalism" among the tribes of Trans-Jordan.319

Not that Peake was in favor of such 'development' among his subjects. His History of Transjordan and Its Tribes, which first appeared in an Arabized edition in 1935, reads like a quasi-anthropological exercise in tribal genealogy, which underlies a shrewd attempt to keep the tribes of Transjordan out of the 'development of Arab nationalism' in Syria and Palestine. While seemingly predicated on Peake's venture into writing the tribes of Transjordan into history, the book culminates in delinking the Jordanian tribes from the broader history of the Arab movement. Its 'Tribal Maps' show Transjordan as a mishmash of tribes and clans whose history is locked into a chain of tribal lineages. It thus reflects a canny attempt to view the Bedouin of Transjordan as detached, not only from the sedentary Arabs of Palestine, but from its tribal population, thus confining their 'history' to the newly demarcated boundaries of Transjordan.320

For the commander of the Arab Legion, the path to statehood begins with the end of nomadism: Transjordan could embark on the path of national revival only when it ceases to be nomadic. Like Jarvis, he believed that "the future of this small State [Transjordan] depended

318 Peake, "Suggestions for Determining the Nationality of Bedwin Tribes", encl. in High Commissioner, Palestine to Cunliffe-Lister (10 Sep. 1932). Quoted in Fletcher, British Imperialism, 174.
319 Peake, History of Trans-Jordan, 110
320 For a different view on Peake's History of Trans-Jordan, see Andrew Shryock, Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 221-5.
entirely on the cultivator, who must be protected from his desert neighbour."^321 Writing from his retirement in a Scottish border village, he draws a somewhat eccentric analogy between the Bedouin and the Celts of Europe, arguing that the latter "behaved towards the natives very much in the same way as the Arab nomads, up to recent times, did to the people they found living in the settled areas, which they, from time immemorial, were wont to seize and occupy."^322 Echoing early British explorers in Palestine, Peake also conceded to the old-age narrative that Roman Transjordan was a fertile granary densely populated and prosperous, thus blaming "its desiccation ever since not on a change in climate or rainfall... but on the indolence, ignorance, and prejudice of the Bedouin themselves."^323

Like his biographee, Jarvis regarded tribal formation as a permanent hindrance to national unity. It is the Bedouin, he believed, who had aborted the 'natural development' of Arab nationalism in the interwar period. For the author of *Three Deserts* (1936), tribalism was not only hostile to nationalism, but its very opposite. That the Bedouin were inherently opposed to the idea of nationalism was reflected, in his view, in their conflicting loyalties to the Arabs, the Turks, and the British. That is because the Bedouin's allegiance is forever to his masters, for sale to the highest bidder, to those in power, regardless of their nationality. The Bedouin are unreceptive to national slogans also because they are permanently locked in a vicious circle of 'intertribal disputes'. There is little surprise, then, that the British "failed to arouse any real

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^321 Quoted in Jarvis, *Arab Command*, 83.
^323 Quoted in Fletcher, *British Imperialism*, 194.
national spirit in the tribes," concludes Jarvis, referring to Britain's efforts to mobilize the Bedouin tribes against the Ottomans during WWI.\textsuperscript{324}

Jarvis' opinion on the inherent opposition between nomadism and nationhood was not limited to the Bedouin of Transjordan. With the same ferocity he had reassured his fellow Englishmen of the Bedouin's detachment from national struggle in Egypt.\textsuperscript{325} "The normal attractions of this world leave him cold," he wrote in 1931, reflecting on the Egyptian Revolution of 1919. "He does not read newspapers, and so is not interested in Egypt's struggle for independence any more than the partition of Hungary or Poland's corridor to the Baltic."\textsuperscript{326} His description of the Great Arab Revolt in the Hejaz is most revealing:

The truth of the matter is that national desire for independence was confined solely to the few educated Arabs in the cause... and that among the fighting men and the sheikhs of tribes who led them this feeling was conspicuous by its absence. The Bedouin Arab... who fought the campaign disliked the Turks and wished to be rid of him--a feeling that he entrains for everybody that who is not of true Bedouin stock-- but it was quite beyond his understanding to envisage the campaign as a whole or to think as a nation. His petty jealousies and his blood feuds against other tribes were always of far greater importance to him than striking a blow against a common enemy. Moreover, the Turks, having cleared out of his own particular area he took no further interest in the War--it was no concern of his if the enemy was still occupying the country of an adjoining tribe; that was entirely their affairs. His old tribal hatreds caused him to resent

\textsuperscript{324} C. S. Jarvis, \textit{Three Deserts} (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1937), 27-8
\textsuperscript{325} Jarvis, \textit{Yesterday and Today in Sinai}, 24
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid, 24
the passage of other Arabs through his country and his outlook from the beginning of the campaign was definitely parochial and opposed to national.\textsuperscript{327}

For Jarvis, these 'normal attractions', which set the Bedouin apart from the Arab nation, consist of the very practices which define modern European conceptions of nationhood, such as settlement, labor and progress. His Bedouin are defined by their opposition to these modern epistemes. A notable example is tribal abhorrence to labor. "Perhaps the most marked characteristic of the Sinai Arab is his absolute loathing of work in any form," writes Jarvis. The Bedouin's aversion to labor is linked to his distaste for progress, most evident in his unfavorable attitude to modern economics. For the British administrator, tribal economics is characterized by a struggle to survive, and hence devoid of capitalist modes of production which one witnesses among the settled population. These include surplus, accumulation and growth. "To keep body and soil together he [the Bedouin] must perforce cultivate the soil and produce sufficient barely to provide for himself, his family and camels, but it is a most distasteful business."\textsuperscript{328}

Tribal economics, as seen by Jarvis, is a primitive economy of poverty, a substance economy that lacks the kind of economics that exists among the settled population. Primitive economics thus explains the exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus. For Jarvis, the basic opposition between nomads and sedentary people, and between nomadism and statehood, originates in the accumulation of capital, that is, in the conflict between those who engage in the production of surplus and those who lack it. In other words, economics, rather than residence, should establish one's right to land, and people's right to statehood. What is needed, ultimately, is an economy of settlement, the very economy that exists in the Jewish yishuv. "Exploitation of

\textsuperscript{327} Jarvis, \textit{Three Deserts}, 229-30; my emphasis
\textsuperscript{328} Jarvis, \textit{Yesterday and Today}, 24
the desert means capital, and this the Arab lack", he wrote in 1937, urging for Jewish reclamation of the Negev.\textsuperscript{329}

Nowhere is the exteriority of nomadism to the state apparatus more forcibly asserted than in the realm of cultivation. That Jarvis devotes an entire chapter of his account on the Bedouin of Sinai to the 'Agricultural Show' testifies to his systematic tendency to define nomadism by its 'opposites'. For the British governor, cultivation also means settlement. "It was by no means a simple task to persuade the Arab [i.e. Bedouin] to settle down again to the humdrum simple existence of the nomad," he grumbles. That is because for him the Bedouin is forever doomed to a state of mobility, and abhorrent as he is to land settlement and cultivation, "he regards a garden as a bond that ties a man down to one spot."\textsuperscript{330} Unlike the cultivators of the Sinai towns, we are told, the Bedouin "is so thoroughly satisfied with the system employed by his ancestors a thousand years ago that it is absolutely hopeless to try to get him interested in a new vegetable or seed, or any change that savours on modernity."\textsuperscript{331}

What also determines the exteriority of the Bedouin to national and state formations is his inherent inclination to warfare. Drawing on an eccentric analogy, Jarvis writes: "There is a tendency in England to become far more concerned than is necessary over the Arab raids, and to regard them as serious hostilities. Normally, raiding is much the same to an Arab as association football is to the Englishmen."\textsuperscript{332} The Bedouin is averse to national unity also because his tribal ethos, his clannish mind and spirit, is defined by a natural penchant for quarrels and disputes.

\textsuperscript{329} Jarvis, "Empty Quarter," 663.
\textsuperscript{330} Jarvis, Yesterday and Today, 268
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid, 265-8
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid, 26-7
"The conclusion I have come to is that litigation is the Arab pastime and sport, into which he enters with his whole heart and with the true sporting spirit."[333]

Jarvis was an eager proponent of desert pacification, a policy which he constantly pursued in Sinai. For him, permanent warfare has rendered the Bedouin a stateless people whose mode of existence rests entirely on the 'absence of government'. "The war in Sinai left the Arab population in a very aggressive and excited frame of mind," he writes. "For three years they had experienced what the nomad Arab considers the ideal condition – i.e., a state of no Government." The Bedouin, in other words, are a society against the state. Drawing once again on the desert/sown binary, Jarvis concludes that it is the Bedouin’s conceptions of independence that set them apart from the sedentary population, and, ultimately, from modern formations of statehood. "It never occurred to them that the fellah of the towns of Sinai, Palestine and Syria might hold entirely different views as to what independence meant."[334].

This did not prevent Jarvis, whose service in the Frontiers Administration involved securing the Eastern border with the Suez Canal, from recruiting local Bedouin and tribesmen in military and police services for maintaining law and order in the Peninsula.[335] As a frontier administrator whose fourteen years in Sinai were invested in 'desert reclamation', Jarvis regarded the Bedouin as a 'martial race' to be goaded into the service of the empire. He frequently boasted of 'taming' his subjects, despite the fact that "in action, they were entirely without discipline."[336] Indeed, Jarvis was frequently praised by his colleagues and superiors for his impressive record in settling intertribal disputes among the Bedouin of Sinai. In 1933, he was awarded by the King of

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333 Ibid, 25-6
334 Ibid, 79
336 Jarvis, Three Deserts, 300
Egypt the Insignia of the Third Class of the Order of the Nile. In 1938, the Royal Central Asian Society awarded him the Lawrence Memorial Medal "for the development of Sinai."  

For Jarvis, the Bedouin's ethos is foreign to modern notions of nationhood, let alone statehood, because it is inherently opposed to the idea of progress. His Bedouin live out of history, out of time. "The great difference between the Arab and the European," he writes, "is that to the Arab time means absolutely nothing– to the European it is a most precious thing which one cannot afford to waste. Time with us is a very important factor in our lives, and we are more or less ruled by it." What distinguishes the Bedouin from his settled neighbors, he concludes, is that "his life is absolutely futureless." It should come as no surprise, then, that "the march of time has affected the Arab less than any race in the world".

The exteriority of the Bedouin to national formations is thus enabled by the presumed opposition between nomadism and modernity. For Jarvis, the Bedouin stands on the opposite end of civilization. "Civilization in his eye is a form of serfdom," he contends. "This is not by any means because he is too ignorant to accept what we call civilization, but because he is thoroughly satisfied with the simple life and simple ideals of his forefathers and sees no necessity for change." Moreover, the Bedouin regards modernity "with indifference," and is opposed by nature to the norms and ethics of modern society. For example, "he scorns the way Europeans have encumbered themselves with the unnecessary household gods and belongings and tied themselves up with intricate laws and social conventions."

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337 The London Gazette: (Supplement) no. 33746. (2 August 1931), 5466.
338 Jarvis, Yesterday and Today, 31
339 Jarvis, Three Deserts, 164
340 Jarvis, Yesterday and Today, 36
Like many of his British contemporaries, Jarvis treats Arab nationalism with suspicion. He views 'intertribal blood-feuds' as an impediment to Arab unity. Referring once again to the Arab Revolt, he insists that "these inter-tribal blood-feuds are no light matter to the Arab, and it will take a very big man indeed who will have power enough to weld all the Bedouin of Arabia, Iraq, and Palestine into one nation in which pretty jealousies and tribal squabbles are sunk in the face of some big ideal." While Jarvis hails the Arab Revolt as "the biggest thing that happened in the Arab world since the Mohammedan invasion," he maintains that the Feisal-Lawrence alliance failed to achieve its goal *because* of the unruly nature of the Bedouin. "Both these leaders were exceptional in every respect," he notes, "but they quite failed to arouse any real national spirit in the tribes, who were far more occupied in their inter-tribal hatred than in the extermination of the Turkish invaders." Indeed, Jarvis rarely hides his cynicism towards Lawrence's grand ambitions, despite his evident admiration for his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which he classifies among the "books written by people who know the Arab."  

With Jarvis, the identification of Arabness with nomadism lost none of its forces. In his narrative on the Arabs of Palestine and Sinai he reiterates the time-honored duality with even greater ferocity. He agrees with Edward Palmer's characterization of the Arabs as 'essentially desert-people'. He also liked to quip, by way of parody, that the Arab is not "the Son of the Desert, but, as Palmer said, this is a misnomer as in most cases he is the Father of the Desert, 

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341 Ibid, 27-8  
having created it himself". Portraying the Arabs as inherently nomadic is a running theme though his accounts on the Bedouin. His Yesterday and Today begins with a familiar analogy:

I hold the view that the true Arabs is the existing nomad Bedouin and not the settled inhabitants of the villages. My remarks, therefore, on the characteristics of the Arab apply solely to the desert Bedouins, the attractive and hospitable but rather casual individuals amongst whom I live, and not to the cultivated and educated members of the Arab race, who reside in cities and send their sons to Universities.

Like his predecessors, Jarvis could hardly hide his obsession with racial purity. His ethnographic corpus is permeated with sweeping statements on the 'real Arab'. "While the name 'Arab' had been applied to a variety of Arab-speaking peoples," he insists, "the real Arab is ipso facto the Arabian Bedouin or his pure descendents." Despite his systematic exclusion of the Bedouin from his definition of Arab nationhood, Jarvis grumbles with the way "the word Arab is improperly used in all parts of the world to describe Mohammedans who have no claim whatsoever to Arab nationality." He even takes issue with the fact that "in the newspaper reports and official communiqués the Mohammedan population are almost invariably described as Arabs." The true Arab, in his opinion, should not be defined along cultural lines, but racial ones. Locked into its etymological delineation, the name 'Arab' thus refers exclusively to the 'races' of the desert. "As the name itself implies," he concludes, "an Arab must be a native of Arabia." Jarvis applies the same conclusion to the Arabs of Palestine and Sinai. "The Bedouins of Sinai", he writes in Three Deserts, "are mostly offshoots from the big Arabian tribes in the Hedjaz, and

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343 Ibid, 160
344 Yesterday and Today, viii
345 Ibid, 16, my emphasis
as such are of the purest descent and of first-class Arab stock, but are undoubtedly the most striking examples of decadent and decayed gentry in the world."\textsuperscript{346}

A sense of geographical determinism runs through Jarvis’ ethnographic descriptions of the Bedouin. Drawing on a classic analogy between the Bedouin of Sinai and the native Americans, he maintains that whereas the latter had been hemmed in by European immigration, "the Arab dwells in the desert that no man covets, and behind his natural barrier will, no doubt, continue to live his simple life."\textsuperscript{347} This spatial delimitation of the Bedouin is rapidly translated into racial one. In a telling passage, Jarvis writes,

> whatever their name it is more probable that they [the Arabs] were very much the same race of nomad as one sees today. Changes have taken place– tribes have trickled in from the Hedjaz and Transjordan and pushed back the original occupiers of the land, but rigorous climate, sparseness of vegetation and lack of water are the determining factors; the inhabitants of Sinai must of necessity be nomads, and, whatever the conditions in the outside world, their mode of life remains the same.\textsuperscript{348}

One could detect the influence of Burton in Jarvis' racial classifications of the Arabs. This is especially evident in his comparison between the Arabs of the Western Desert with those of Sinai and Palestine. While the former are said to belong to the Semitic race, "facially they do not resemble the Semitic type, but are virile, well set up race of men with short straight noses, whereas the true Arab [of Sinai] is usually a small spare man with either a long or eagle-shaped nose." The true Arab is thus the sum of his physical traits, a classification

\textsuperscript{346} Ibid, 142, my emphasis.
\textsuperscript{347} Jarvis, \textit{Yesterday and Today}, 36-7
\textsuperscript{348} Ibid, 115-6
which not infrequently results in eccentric characterization. For example, "a true test of the pure Arab is his beard, or rather lack of it," whereas "an Arab who can grow a W.G. Grace excrescence has foreign blood in his veins." In a similar fashion, a tribe in Sinai is singled out as foreigners, despite their claim of pure Arab blood, because they are "all lusty specimen of six feet or more with huge patriarchal beards." Owing to their physical peculiarity, Jarvis insists, "it is quite possible that they are the descendants of some Roman colonial legion who stranded in Sinai after the Mohammedan invasion and therefore might be of any European stock."349

For Jarvis the Arabist, nomadism thus becomes the axis on which Arabness is measured and codified. Because of its distance from nomadism, the settled population of Palestine is singled out as a distinct race. Here Jarvis reintroduces the age-old narrative on the Canaanite origin of the fellahin. "The inhabitants of the villages and towns," he writes, "have for the most part very little or no Arab blood." Being of mixed blood, they rather represent the descendants of the ancient races who had occupied the country before the Hebrew conquests. In Palestine, Bedouin and fellahin are viewed as 'racially apart' because, as Jarvis contends, "the true Arab predominates in Southern Palestine south of Gaza and Beersheba, and odd tribes are encamped in various other part, but they have little in common with the fellah who occupy the villages and rich land."350 This perhaps explain why Jarvis would constantly deny the existence of any 'racial kinship' between the Bedouin and the fellahen of Palestine.351

349 Ibid, 17
350 Ibid
351 See, for example, Jarvis, 'Empty Quarter', 664; Jarvis, 'Southern Palestine', 206.
Jarvis' ethnographic descriptions culminate in a clearly demarcated racial hierarchy. In *Today and Yesterday*, Palestine is viewed as a mixture of races, where "many of the Greeks and the Byzantine period no doubt settled in [Sinai] and Gaza in Palestine, as blue eyes and red and fair hair predominate in these villages." Classified as 'Arian' in origin, these 'settled races', having intermarried with Arabs, represent today "the extraordinary mixed race of no particular origin to be found along the Sinai and Palestine coasts."\(^352\) Thanks to the Crusades, there also emerged in Palestine a succession of hybrid generations who "had become so orientalised that there had been no fresh influx of blood from Europe the probability is that in course of time they would have become absorbed by the existing inhabitants and ceased to exist as a distinct race."\(^353\)

The image of the Arab that ultimately emerges from Jarvis' description is that of the invader, of a conquering race both pure and foreign. As his ethnographic narrative gives way to a growing obsession with racial purity, his call for 'desert reclamation' becomes itself a call for reclaiming the 'original races' of Palestine, tirelessly tracing their origins to ancient times. His genealogical survey, with its greater tendency to implicate race with ethnography, becomes a tireless quest for an autochthony that borders on racialized nativism. Drawing on the desert-sown binary, he warns that the 'pure Arab race' typified by the Bedouin should not be conflated with the assimilated Arabs, the 'Arabicized race' of the desert towns. It is with bitter reflection that Jarvis maps out the genealogy of this 'hybrid' race. He writes, "the population of these desert cities, cut off from civilization, had no alternative but to embrace the Mohammedan faith, and were in course of time absorbed by the Arab invaders and

\(^{352}\) Jarvis, *Yesterday and Today*, 116

\(^{353}\) Ibid, 118
existing Arab tribes, for there is every reason to suppose that the desert part of Sinai has
always been inhabited by much the same type of Arab as he who dwells there now."  

The image of the Arab as invader explains Jarvis's radical attitude to modernization.
He was a fervent modernizer who believed that nomadism was as an archaic way of life not
sustainable in the modern era. While echoing many of the cultural prejudices against
nomadism in British travel literature, he dismisses as romantic favorable views of the Bedouin
publicized by early British explorers in Palestine, notably Richard Burton and T.E. Lawrence.
He even blames his predecessors for luring colonial administrators into the misguided policy
of protecting native customs and laws. He rather agrees with his contemporaries, namely
Glubb and Peake, that the best future for the Bedouin is to "settle him on his own land" and
"off the goat standard."  

By the end of his final year in Sinai, he had already cultivated an
image of himself of a savior. "The only way to save the Beduin from extinction," he wrote in
1936, "is to slowly wean him from his present haphazard nomad existence and gradually
settle him on his own land, which is quite sufficient to support him if the best is made of
it."  

Yet Jarvis still distinguishes himself from his British peers by holding the unorthodox
view on the applicability of the assimilation doctrine to the Bedouin. Billing his policy as a
recipe for modernization, he calls for assimilating the 'dependent races' of the desert to European
ways, after the fashion of the French and the Italians.  

*Three Deserts* reads like a policy tract on assimilation, although its author appears to realize that the idea of 'tribal assimilation', after all, is

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354 Ibid, 116
357 Jarvis, *Yesterday and Today*, 34
an inherent impossibility. Drawing on contending attitudes to assimilation in European colonial legacy, he claims that, unlike British policy in Palestine, the colonizing methods employed by the French and Italians in North Africa "apparently aim at the gradual but complete obliteration of the customs, laws, language, and even the religion of the people they administer, the substitution of their own standards and ultimate creation of a race that will know French or Italian nationalism and no other." For the British governor, that England leans towards a policy of association only 'diminishes its colonial prestige', a declining repute which could be otherwise restored by a shrewd adjustment to the French mission civilisatrice. Reflecting on British colonial legacy in Palestine, Jarvis writes: "We, on the other hand, work in the opposite direction entirely. Our young Administrators are exhorted to teach our dependent races to develop along their own lines—native customs and laws are to be encouraged, and in some cases revived."

What follows, from Jarvis' modernizing perspective, is a miserable failure on Britain's part. "The object aimed at appears to be to encourage a backward and uncivilized race to remain backward and uncivilized, except in so as purely material matters are concerned, and to instill into them not a desire for British citizenship but a vague longing for nationalism and self-determination."358

Where British colonial policy, according to Jarvis, most miserably failed is in toning down the burdensome, absolute dependency of the 'native races' on their colonial masters. "Though we are credited with being the most successful colonizing nation in the world," he writes, "we seem to have failed altogether to arrive at the state of affairs where our dependent races grasp the fact that they are active members of the Empire." British policy, in other words, failed where the French succeeded. Treading a delicate line between assimilation and

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358 Ibid, 166

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association, Jarvis writes: "The result is that we receive no credit whatsoever for our benign and easy rule; in some cases we merely arouse feelings of contempt for what is mistaken for weakness and fear, and so far from inspiring a native race with friendship we— in the light of recent events— appear to instill in them instead a desire for complete independence and the removal of British influence."  

To be sure, Jarvis is not suggesting a replication of Italian or French methods in British colonies. What he suggests is a reconsideration of England's stand on assimilation in a way that would better serve its ability to govern its subjects. "The idea at the back of the mind of our Administrators," he warns, "is that the unspoilt, uneducated native is so infinitely preferable and so much more useful in every way in his primitive state than the civilized product." Not that Jarvis disagrees with this diagnosis. On the contrary, "if one could keep the native indefinitely very much as one originally found him it would most certainly be better for him and everybody else". What troubles the British governor is the infeasibility of such a scenario in the context of imperial governance. "One must therefore accept the situation and endeavor to guide our subject races along paths that will lead them to be useful citizens of the Empire— and this, I think, in many cases is what we are failing to do."  

By the time of his retirement, Jarvis had become a vocal advocate of Jewish settlement in the Negev desert.  

In the late 1930s, he championed the inclusion of the Negev in the future Jewish State. The story began in 1937, when the Peel Commission proposed to

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359 Ibid, 167  
360 Ibid  
361 See, for example, Jarvis, "Southern Palestine and its possibilities for settlement", *Journal Royal Central Asian Journal* (Vol.1938 No. 2, April 1938); and Jarvis, 'The Empty Quarter,' *JRCAS* (October 1937), 663-69. See also Fletcher, *British Imperialism*, 202-3
partition Palestine into Jewish, Arab and Mandatory zones. The Jewish State was confined to
the coastal plain and the Valley of Jezreel and the Galilee, whereas the entire Negev was
included in the Arab State. The exclusion of the Negev from the borders of the Jewish State
apparently fueled Jarvis’s protest, who joined other British dissents in sending letters to the
British press and lecturing before members of the House of Commons and other interest
groups, demanding that the Jewish newcomers be granted the opportunity to reclaim, redeem,
and convert that desolate desert region into a populated and blossoming area.³⁶² “Under the
partition scheme, the barren area of that country was to be allotted to the people least able to
exploit it,” Jarvis wrote that year, defending Jewish right to the Negev. Drawing on P.E.F.
reports on the fertility of Roman Palestine, he continued:

    It would seem that the Jews... can supply the type of pioneer to hew an
existence out of the barren lands of Palestine, and in the south they are barren indeed. In
this respect we have to revise the opinion, so freely advanced in the very early days of
the Mandate, when grave doubts were expressed by everyone as to the possibility of
Jewry finding the right type of agriculturist to make the best of Palestine.³⁶³

Jarvis’ tireless defense of Jewish rights in the Negev should be understood against the
backdrop of his negative views on nomadism. It rested on the assumption, so prevalent in his
lifetime, that the Bedouin stood on the opposite end of British conceptions of nationhood and
autochthony. In a time when the notion of 'redemption' of the land was so inseparably linked to
the idea of national revival, the identification of Arabness with nomadism was also complete.

³⁶³ Jarvis, “The Empty Quarter,” 663.
Unlike the European Jews, the Arabs, i.e. Bedouin, represented a destructive race whose presence in Palestine was marked by the 'climatic' decline of the land. The Bedouin, by its very nature, was also avert to the very principles which constituted for the British the core of national revival: Cultivation, labor, progress, settlement, modernity and production. The Jews, coming from Europe, were more suited to the task.

Grounded in the P.E.F. legacy, Jarvis' narrative reproduces the 'climatic' discourse on the Bedouin as a destructive race in Palestine. Writing during his tenure in Sinai, he calls for a 'desert reclamation' by England, constantly blaming the Bedouin for the desertification of the land and the decay of agriculture in Sinai and southern Palestine. Palestine, he insisted, "has been very much more extensively cultivated than it is now."\textsuperscript{364} It was a Roman granary that lost much of its fertility. "The proof of this", he writes, "exists in Central Sinai and Southern Palestine where all the wadis show signs of dams erected by the more virile race that occupied these areas before the Arab invasion." Even today, the country "is terraced for vines and olives, and in those days it must have resembled Southern Italy or Sicily, but today not a tree exists, whilst along the coast are signs of the most intensive cultivation in Roman times, the greater part of which has been allowed to go back to waste land."\textsuperscript{365}

Jarvis was the sum of his contradictions. His unorthodox remarks on British failure in Palestine mask his own failure to reconcile his twin character of statesman and ethnographer. His modernizing doctrine fits poorly with his description of the Bedouin as an archaic, unchangeable race. Despite his advocacy for assimilation among the Bedouin tribes, he still defines the Bedouin by his resistance to change. "The fairest way to judge the Arab," he

\textsuperscript{364} Jarvis, \textit{Three Deserts}, 72
\textsuperscript{365} Ibid, 159-60
insists, "is to accept him as he really is– a relic of the past." In this view, Jarvis differs little from his British predecessors. For him, "the Arab of today and the Arab of the Crusades is the same– he has not altered in any respect, his outlook on life generally and his mode of existence have not changed with the passage of the centuries." It is this tribal 'outlook' which ultimately rendered "the Bedouin Arab the only race that has effectually resisted the march of time." 366

Jarvis was also the product of his culture. In his imagination, there lingered the Lockean legacy in the Americas, which inexorably linked land rights to property and ownership, and property to labor and cultivation. In this view, only by becoming European can one claim one's right to land. This resulted in yet another failure on Jarvis' part. He failed to reconcile his assimilation doctrine, not only with his perception of the Bedouin as resistant to change and progress, but with his continuous proposals to 'reclaim' the Negev desert by Jewish newcomers. In other words, how was it possible to assimilate the Bedouin to European ways without the territorial privilege that comes with such assimilation? Jarvis had little sympathy for the Bedouin, to be sure, which perhaps explains his contradictory attitudes towards his subjects. It also explains why his view on 'desert reclamation' would ultimately diverge from that of his British colleague in Transjordan, John Bagot Glubb.

366 Jarvis, Today and Yesterday, 35
**The Pasha's Men: The Bedouin according to Major Glubb**

In January 1939, as the Arab Revolt in Palestine was already petering out, John Bagot Glubb set down his monthly report on the administration of Transjordan. "The Arabs of Palestine," he wrote, "in every reality have little Arab blood in their veins." A month later, Glubb restated: "The townsmen and villagers of Palestine are not the same race as the tribes... In the case of the Beersheba district, the fact is proved by [the] non-complicity of the Beersheba tribes in the Palestine rebellion, which has been going for three and a half years on their very threshold [even after] the government evacuated their country [i.e. district]."

This was a few months before Glubb assumed the command of the Arab Legion, and before he pledged his faith to Amir Abdullah "to behave like a Trans-Jordanian by birth." Meanwhile, across the border, Arab rebels from Palestine were advancing towards the mountains of northern Trans-Jordan. Glubb, dressed in traditional Bedouin garments, gathered his 'Arab' forces and marched against the 'gangs of Palestine Arab rebels.' By the end of spring, as he later recalls, "the Arab Legion drove the rebel gangs from Trans-Jordan without hesitation."

To translate this episode in Glubb's parlance, the 'pure Arabs' of Transjordan were fighting the 'mixed Arabs' of Palestine. This duality would color his perceptions of the Arabs for years to come. A decade after he assumed his new post, he began to entertain the hypothesis that, unlike the Arabs of Transjordan and Beersheba, "the Palestinians show the

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368 Glubb, 'A Monthly Report on the Administration of the Trans-Jordan Desert for the month of February 1939.' Quoted in Morris, 47
369 Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arab*, 41
main qualities associated with the Levantine races."\textsuperscript{370} A few years later, as he set out to write his 'story of the Arab Legion', he would divide the 'Northern Arab peoples' into three racial classes: The 'Levantine Arabs'– Palestinians and Syrians’ the 'tribes of the desert', and the 'people of Iraq'.\textsuperscript{371}

This racial division, Glubb explains, is validated by modern science, which "corroborates experience and confirms that the Arabs of the Mediterranean countries differ racially from those of the interior." In a manner reminiscent of Richard Burton's scientific racism,\textsuperscript{372} he adds: "Many people with round heads are found in Syria, Lebanon and among Palestine Arabs. The people of central Arabia are long-headed." The racial disparity of the Arabs is also explained by climate. Unlike the 'tribal races' of Transjordan and southern Palestine," he insists, "the Levantines enjoy a warm and equable climate... unused, as a result to severe physical endurance, the Mediterranean Arabs are subtle and intellectually in a way more resembling the Greeks. Indeed, there is doubtless no little Greek blood in their veins."\textsuperscript{373}

In a view that savors of geographical determinism, Glubb continues:

The desert tribes of the interior live in circumstances which differ strikingly from those of the Mediterranean coast. Desert climatic conditions are so severe that the mere struggle for human survival is intense. The surrounding in which they live have produced a hardly race, endowed with martial qualities and with a practical, as opposed to an intellectual and theoretical turn of mind.\textsuperscript{374}

\textsuperscript{371} Glubb, \textit{A Soldier with the Arab}, 34.
\textsuperscript{372} On Burton's influence on Glubb's racial views on the Arabs, see Benny Morris, \textit{The Road to Jerusalem}, 9-33.
\textsuperscript{373} Glubb, \textit{A Soldier with the Arab}, 34-36.
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid, 36.
With terrifying ease, climatic difference is translated by Glubb into racial disparity. This renders the Arabs "hot-headed, hasty and volatile. They are proud and touchy, ready to suspect an insult and hasty to avenge it. To hate their enemies is to them not only a natural emotion, but a duty... Politically they tend, like the Irishman, to be against the government."

One also notices the easy interplay in these descriptions between the spatial and the racial. In this view, the Arabs of Transjordan represent a pure race because they live deep in the desert, which "ever since the beginning of history... has been a formidable barrier to intercourse."

The desert is conductive to racial singularity also because "none of these [foreign] invasions penetrated Central Arabia." This ethnographic sketch, Glubb concludes, proves "how deceptive is the view that the 'Arabs' are all one race."375

What follows is that the Bedouin's estrangement from the national struggles in Syria and Palestine was the result of their 'racial singularity'. Like Jarvis, Glubb attributes the 'non-complicity' of the Bedouin to their natural abhorrence of sedentary disputes, which also explains their detachment from the national developments in the urban regions of the country. It should come as no surprise, then, that Glubb fails to mention Aref al-Aref, who served then as the mayor of Beersheba, and who had received a special commendation from the High Commissioner for keeping the district out of the ethnic conflict.376 For Glubb, it was rather the nature of the Bedouin population which ultimately allowed for its 'impressive' aloofness from the ethnic conflict in Palestine. In an official memorandum dated June 1951, he repeated his view that the Bedouin are "excellent military material [who] have not as yet been infected by

375 Ibid, 31-37
the European virus of nationalism." With the same ferocity he reassured his superiors in London that "Arab nationalism is generally speaking confined to the modern Arabic-speaking countries, the populations of which have little Arab blood in their veins." As he later explains, the "tribesmen make excellent soldiers" because they are of 'pure blood', unlike the urban townsmen who are 'material' and of 'mixed descent'. In another, undated memorandum, Glubb added:

The Bedouins are a most attractive race of men. They despise work, or agriculture, and consider riding, breeding livestock, or military service as the only possible livelihood for a man of honour. The only loyalties are personal or tribal. They have no national feeling and pride themselves on selling their swords as mercenaries to the highest bidder. They are open and frank in conversation to a fault, and [are exceedingly] democratic.

In line with Peake and Jarvis, Glubb maintained that modern theories of race and nationhood were not suitable to the tribal dynamics of Transjordan and southern Palestine. In a letter to Peake, drafted in March 1932, he viewed the notion of 'tribal nationality' as an oxymoron, because it was "almost impossible to turn back a nomadic tribe in the course of its migration without the use of force and the shedding of blood." Glubb also advised his British superior to completely disregard the application of the "the whole idea of nationality" to the Bedouin tribes. Instead, the British government would do better to implement a Desert Law "to

378 Glubb, Soldier, 269
379 Quoted in Morris, 17, my emphasis.
380 Glubb, Soldier, 34. See also Fletcher, British Imperialism, 64.
mete out exactly the same treatment to all Bedwin disturbers of the peace... regardless of 'Nationality'.”

Like his predecessors, Glubb had an impressive imperial career. After receiving his commission from the Royal Engineers in 1915, followed by a wartime service in France and Belgium, he volunteered to serve as a British officer in Iraq in 1920. A year later, he was posted to Ramadi, where he served as an intelligence officer reporting on the movements of Turkish troops and the Bedouin tribes. Having befriended the local tribes of Dulaim near the city, he began to cultivate a keen interest in the Arabs. "Working alone among Arab tribesmen, I soon became intimate with them and picked up a smattering of Arabic," he writes in his autobiography. In 1926, upon resigning his commission, he was offered a civil administrative post in the Iraqi government, which he "joyfully accepted." He was first hired as an Administrative Inspector of the Southern Desert, and later, the head of the Southern Desert Camel Corps. For the next four years, he would work with the Iraqi government "to put an end to desert raiding in the country."

In 1930, Glubb moved to Transjordan, where he was appointed an officer of the Arab Legion. By the time, he had already made his name as an expert in tribal pacification. "The Trans-Jordan government also decided to put an end to the raiding and invited me to undertake the task," he later recalls. The following year, he formed the Desert Patrol, a semi-independent tribal force recruited for securing the desert region and curbing the Bedouin raids in the southern part of the country. In 1936, he became the first recipient of the Lawrence of

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381 Glubb to Peake (20 March, 1932). Quoted in Fletcher, British Imperialism, 174.
383 Glubb, A Soldier with the Arabs, 26.
Arabia Medal for "pacification in the northern Arabian desert." In April 1939, he finally succeeded Peake as the commander of the Arab Legion, a position which he held until 1956.\textsuperscript{384}

Glubb made pacification his legacy. In line with Jarvis' doctrine in Sinai, he sought to implement his pacifying policy in Transjordan "by the sample device of employing the tribesmen themselves to police their own desert." For him, pacification was not merely a military device, but the hallmark of British colonial policy. "The Turks," he writes disapprovingly, "had never attempted to control the desert, and its nomadic tribes always waged war upon one another with impunity". British policy, in contrast, was guided by the notion that "a modern administration could not tolerate private wars."\textsuperscript{385}

Glubb was also a modernizer who wished to remake the Bedouin in the image of modern Europe. "It was my idea to help the Arabs by introducing to their countries those skills and methods and products in which Europe excelled," he reflected in 1957. He believed that the future of nations depended entirely on the passage from nomadism to settlement.\textsuperscript{386} He also advocated sedentarization policies among the Bedouin, and "the process of transformation of a pure nomadic camel tribe from Central Arabia into a group of agriculturalists."\textsuperscript{387} He would later develop his modernizing policy into a grand philosophy of history on the future of nations.\textsuperscript{388}

Nomadism would continue to haunt him in his later years, presenting him with contemporary

\textsuperscript{384} John B. Glubb, \textit{The Changing Scenes of Life}, 58-75.
\textsuperscript{385} Glubb, \textit{A Soldier with the Arabs}, 26
\textsuperscript{386} Glubb, \textit{The Fate of Empires}, 19
\textsuperscript{388} Glubb, \textit{The Fate of Empires}. 

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forms of human mobility, where "the extreme bitterness of modern internal political struggles produces a constant flow of migrants from their native countries to others."

Glubb's modernizing vision, however, was inconsistent with his romantic views of the Bedouin, which ultimately set him apart from the assimilation doctrine of Jarvis and Peake. "I hope that the Arabs would remain basically Arabs," he later confesses, "clinging to and priding themselves on the many fine qualities and traditions inherited by them from their past. I hoped simultaneously to be able to help them to hold their own in the modern world." 

Where Glubb's views clearly diverge from those of his predecessors is on the question of Jewish settlement in the Negev. He constantly protested Jarvis' proposal to allocate the Negev desert to European Jewish newcomers. In his monthly report of August 1939, he wrote: "The Beersheba area should therefore be treated as a tribal area, and every method should be adopted to keep the tribes happy and contend... On no account should Jews be allowed to settle there, as such a step would merely antagonize the tribal community, as it has antagonized the town and village community in the north." Writing against the backdrop of the Arab uprising in Palestine, Glubb further warned that "the theory that the presence of the Jews [in Palestine] is a strategic asset to the British is now completely exploded."

Rather than merely romantic fascination, Glubb's dissenting views reflect a shrewder attitude to the Arabs of Palestine. He understood that maintaining the artificial racial boundaries between the settled and tribal populations would ultimately enable the British to more effectively govern their subjects. As he later confesses, "it is easy to conquer any Arab

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389 Ibid. 19
390 Glubb, A Soldier with the Arabs, 6
391 Quoted in Morris, 48
country, but their natural inclination to rebellion makes it difficult and expensive for the invader to maintain his control. Their mutual jealousies, however, provide their rulers with the means of playing them off against one another, an art which they themselves consider to be of the very essence of politics.\textsuperscript{392} It should come as no surprise, then, that the later Glubb would devote an entire tract to mapping out the 'mixed races of Palestine'.\textsuperscript{393}

In 1957, Glubb had another confession to make, a belated realization of sorts. Writing forty years after the Balfour Declaration, he admits that British promise to the Jews was product of Biblical imagination, adding that "there was little realization that Palestine had ceased to be the land of the Jews nearly nineteenth hundred years ago, and indeed had never been populated by Jews alone." It is quite surprising to hear such remarks from the British commander of the Arab Legion. Yet what I find most revealing about this rare confession is the way it evokes nomadism to explain British partial attitudes toward the Arabs and the Jews. Having traced the genesis of the conflict in the Balfour Declaration, Glubb concludes:

A further illusion prevailed, arising from indiscriminate use of the word 'Arab', that the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine were nomads from the desert. Why cannot the Arabs return to their desert"? was a question which used frequently to be asked.

Glubb's answer is not hard to guess. For the author of \textit{Mixture of Races}, the Arabs of Palestine were not truly Arabs, but a mishmash of Arian and Semitic races. In reality, he continues,

Palestine, so near the junction of Europe, Asia and Africa, has always been a crucible in which many elements have melted and fused. The 'Arabs' of Palestine are the

\textsuperscript{392} Glubb, \textit{A Soldier with the Arabs}, 37.
\textsuperscript{393} See my analysis of Glubb's \textit{Mixture of Races} below.
descendants of the Philistines, the Canaanites, the other tribes of three thousand years ago, Greeks, Romans, Jews converted to Christianity, Arabs, Crusaders, Mongols, and Turks. The fact that they now speak Arabic, and that Muslim culture has been a powerful influence amongst them, has resulted in their being loosely termed 'Arabs'.

In British ethnography, the identification of the Arabs with nomadism had been a century in the making. For Glubb, however, the problem runs much deeper. Writing three decades before Eric Hobsboum and Benedict Anderson, he appears to realize that the problem lies in European conceptions of race and nationhood. While Glubb does not use the word 'invention', it is implied through his argument. "To a great extent the problem arose from the application of the modern European conception of a single 'nation' in one country", he writes, adding,

Western Europeans are familiar with the conception of one country inhabited by one race, such as England and France. But such never hitherto been the state of affairs in the Middle East, where a given area of territory has almost always been shared by a number of different races, communities and religions. Each of these groups is normally distinct, possessing its own rights, laws, schools, judges and headmen. This state of affairs has historically been the normal rather than the exceptional, but it is a conception entirely foreign to modern European nations.

In a complete reversal of his early views, Glubb concludes that "Jews and Arabs alike have fallen victims to unscientific modern theories of race. The Jews, already stated, are not a

394 Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, 29-30
395 Ibid, 29
race but a religion. In fact, the 'Arabs' are scarcely less mixed." Yet while the later Glubb seemingly offers a refutation of the racial legacy of his British predecessors, and ironically, his own legacy, his dissenting views only reaffirm the age-old myth on the Bedouin which he seeks to refute, namely, the perception of the Bedouin as a separate race. His target is clearly Arab nationalism, and by redemarcating the racial divisions in Palestine, he too, whether out of romantic fascination or political motivation, hoped to keep the Bedouin out of national formations. Racial purity, typified by the Bedouin, was his remedy for the kind of racial strife he witnessed in Syria and Palestine, where "there has always been a land with a tendency to fanaticism, a breeding-place of plots, secret societies and esoteric religious sects." By mapping out the 'racial complexity' of Syria and Palestine, Glubb seemingly conceded to the conclusion that only in Trans-Jordan, where racial homogeneity is maintained by a purely Bedouin population, could nationalism find its perfect European expression.

Like Jarvis, Glubb treaded a delicate line between his double career as a colonial administrator and ethnographer. One need not go further than his early writings to grasp how greatly his views on the Arabs fluctuated over the years. In his final year in Ramadi, he set down a Handbook of Desert Administration, where he ventured to map out the 'General Principles' for governing the Bedouin. During his tenure in Transjordan, he drafted a Handbook of the Nomad, which presented his early view on nomadism as a sphere of colonial

396 Ibid, 32
397 Glubb, A Soldier with the Arab, 34.
398 On Jordanian nationalism in Jordan, see Joseph Massad, Colonial Effects.
399 See Fletcher, British Imperialism, 43
The handbook was originally a lecture given by Glubb before the Royal Central Asian Society in September 1934, and published in the JRCAS the following year.

The *Handbook of the Nomad* is a classic example of the tendency to define nomadism by its opposition to nationhood. In line with Jarvis' descriptions of the Sinai Bedouin, Glubb concedes to the widespread notion that tribesmen are inherently opposed to national and state formations. Thus, for example, he portrays tribal economy as an economy of poverty and survival, maintained for generations by the Bedouin's aversion to labor, cultivation and agriculture. In a similar fashion, the 'natural' inclination to inter-tribal warfare is said to have rendered the Bedouin "a raiding fanatic," hence limiting his loyalty to the tribe. "Centuries of politics of this nature have made the Bedouins professional mercenaries," concludes Glubb. "They feel particularly no loyalty to rulers, and unashamedly transfer their allegiances from one to another to further their own advantage."

For the British administrator, tribal law is another key factor in defining the exteriority of nomadism to state formations. Drawing on a familiar analogy, Glubb writes: "The whole attitude of Bedouin law is that offences are offences against the individual. There is no such thing as an offense against the State. In European law the individual is, on the contrary, completely subordinated to the State." Due to its 'individualistic' character, tribal law becomes emblematic to the very absence of the state apparatus. "The key to the comprehension of tribal

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402 Glubb, *Handbook of the Nomad*, VIII- IX.
law is that it is an endeavour to afford some protection to the individual in a society where there is no central governing authority."

After his retirement from the Arab Legion, Glubb published over twenty books and essays, and lectured widely in Britain, Europe, and the United States. It was a period of intensive intellectual production which spanned over two decades. His publications from this period include pamphlets on the Arab Legion, Arab history and civilization, and the history of Syria and Jordan. His racial theories on the Arabs belong to this late period, especially his tracts on the *Mixture of Races* (1967) and *History of the Arab Peoples* (1969).

*The Mixture of Races* is a curious pamphlet that reveals as much as disguises. It was originally a lecture delivered at New College, Oxford, on April 25, 1967. Reading like a treatise on the relationship of race and nationhood in the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, it signals Glubb's attempt to situate himself within the legacy of British ethnographic discourse on the Arabs. Writing after the fashion of early British explorers in Ottoman Palestine, notably Richard Burton, Glubb reproduces the time-honored classification of the Arabs of Syria and Palestine as an amalgam of 'pure' and 'mixed' races.

For Glubb the ethnographer, the Arabs of Palestine do not constitute a single racial stock, but a muddle of nomadic and settled races who differed in every aspect. The Bedouin, hailed as the 'original Arab race', are juxtaposed with the rest of the population, who are viewed as a mixture of Semitic and Aryan races. This perhaps explains why 'Arabs' and 'Bedouin' are

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403 *Handbook of the Nomad*, XII.
rendered synonymous through his narrative, a classification which paradoxically contradicts his criticism of British reductionist perception of the Arabs.

The book is also a classic example of the tendency to translate spatial categories into racial ones. In it, nomadism becomes the axis on which Arabness itself is measured and defined. Thus, for example, "a nomadic tribe on the move is extraordinarily homogenous," whereas "settled people are normally, especially in Syria and Palestine, of much more mixed origin." Nomadism, by virtue of its mobile and elusive nature, had ultimately rendered the Bedouin "an old homogenous race, comparatively unmixed with other stocks." In Glubb, nomadism also serves as a dividing racial line between Arabs and Syrians. Only the Bedouin remained truly Arabs, because foreign races "would not dream of mixing with the nomadic Bedouins of the desert," and because they, the Bedouin, were "little affected by the influx of foreign races, and thus remained in its pristine state of racial purity."406

One could detect the influence of Burton in Glubb's descriptions of 'Arab physiognomy'. He, too, views the physical characteristics of the Bedouin as emblematic of their racial purity. Drawing on the age-old desert/sown binary, Glubb writes:

In general, when travelling due east from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Syrian desert, the racial type changed completely. The coast dwellers were a broad-headed race, the nomads of the desert a long headed-race. The two types had no apparent racial affinity. The true nomad had heads and faces not only longer, but narrower than the settled population. Convex or hooked noses were straight, thin and narrow. The so-

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406 Ibid, 8-15
called Semitic nose was virtually unknown among the Bedouin— who are commonly imagined to be the essence of the Semitic race.\textsuperscript{407}

These racial differences are clearly the product of geographical determinism, a teleological view which links nomadism to racial singularity: Because they are "extremely homogenous," because they remained "isolated in their desert," and because "no foreign races had invaded their territory and intermixed with them," the Bedouin are sorted out as a distinct race in a hierarchy of Arab races. Indeed, when three years later, Glubb ponders "who are the Arabs?", he arrives at the same conclusion: "A medley of many different races, sharing the same language," of whom only the Bedouin are "of pure Arab blood."\textsuperscript{408}

The superficiality of race— the absurdity of claiming unbroken ethnic lineages— was not immediately obvious in Glubb's time. In fact, it would take him two decades to realize the futility of his own endeavor. Writing from his quite retirement in Mayfield, Sussex, three years before his death, he goes to great lengths to offer a radical reconsideration of the roots of Arab and Jewish nationalisms. In an ironic departure from his own racial legacy, he hints that the perception of the Arabs and Jews as two nations, let alone races, unified by a common ethnic origin, has been simply invented.\textsuperscript{409}

It is quite surprising when such a statement comes from the man who ruled Jordan for nearly two decades, and for whom ethnic division had been the winning formula of colonial rule. Yet unlike many of his British peers in the Frontier Administration, notably Peake and Jarvis, Glubb's views on nomadism were the product of his sympathetic, if highly romanticized, attitude

\textsuperscript{407} Ibid 17
\textsuperscript{408} Glubb, \textit{History of the Arab Peoples}, 14-5.
\textsuperscript{409} Glubb, \textit{The Changing Scenes of Life}, 139
to the Bedouin. This fact was underlined not only by his adoption of two Bedouin refugee boys from Palestine and an orphan Bedouin girl from Transjordan in the late 1940s. Rather, it guided his belated realization in the aftermath of 1948– which nonetheless still put him ahead of his contemporaries– that race and nationalism were invented traditions with violent consequences.

With Glubb, Peake, and Jarvis, British tribal discourse in Palestine comes full circle. Steeped in the ethnographic legacy of the Palestine Exploration Fund Society, their tribal narratives and policies reproduced British discourse on nomadism in three major aspects. First, the perception of the Bedouin as a separate race within a hierarchy of Arab races. The three officials conceded to the notion, inherited from early British ethnographers in Ottoman Palestine, that the Bedouin, by virtue of their racial purity, represented an ideal racial archetype on which Arabness itself could be measured, codified, and reproduced. In this reconfiguration, the desert served as a breeding ground for racial demarcation, mediated by the tendency to translate spatial categories into racial ones. As a result, three "Arab races" were sorted out: The Bedouin, the fellaheen, and the town Arabs. Only the Bedouin, however, were true Arabs.

Second, the perception of the Bedouin as a race of foreign invaders, blamed for the destruction of what was once the fertile granary of Roman Palestine. This declensionist narrative enabled British desert administrators not only to justify their expansion in the Negev and Sinai deserts, but to rationalize their modernizing and pacifying schemes among the local tribes. As Diana Davis shows in the context of French penetration in the Algerian Sahara, "the declensionist narrative that quickly developed was used throughout the colonial period to rationalize and motivate French colonization of North Africa."410 The declensionist narrative, in

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410 Diana Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome*, 2
its English version, was also employed by British officials, notably Jarvis, to justify the allocation of the Negev desert to European Jewish newcomers.

Throughout the Mandate period, the declensionist narrative served as a fertile ground for British policies and attitudes to nomadism. Drawing on a century of travel literature on the fertility of Roman Palestine, Glubb, Peake and Jarvis echoed early European depictions of the Bedouin as a race of noble savages untamed by civilization. In their narratives perceptions of the Bedouin as stateless and unruly, lawless intruders, and enemies of the state linger. Ironically, these views did not prevent the British administrators from recruiting local Bedouin and tribesmen in military and police services for maintaining law and order in Sinai, Transjordan, and Southern Palestine. Ultimately, the double image of the Bedouin as both lawless and law keepers masked a profound failure on the British administrators' part: They failed to reconcile their modernizing doctrine with their depictions of the Bedouin as an archaic and unchangeable race. While these depictions of the Bedouin guided and were used to justified their doctrine of desert pacification, they fit poorly with their modernizing schemes among the local tribes.

This perhaps explains Glubb's conclusion about the futility of tribal assimilation. The British administrator must have realized that assimilation, as a colonial doctrine, was an inherent impossibility. That is because the rationality of assimilation, predicated as it was on the desire to goad the natives into the superior culture of their colonial masters, stood in sharp contrast with perceptions of the natives as primitive, inferior and unsophisticated races. Once again, French North Africa provides us with a classic comparative case. In the specific context of French Algeria, this inherent contradiction, embodied in the notion of colonial assimilation, brought about the demise of the French assimilationist doctrine, before it was abandoned to the less-
universalistic doctrine of association which, by advocating the evolution of the natives along their own lines and cultural limits, fit better into colonial rationalities. In this view, "the doctrine of assimilation appears more the exception that the rule in inspiring France's colonial practices. Contested variously through the 1930s and shoved aside and supplanted in the 1948s, the rationalities of assimilation enjoyed but a brief undisputed interlude after 1870, before surrounding ground once more to the ideological regime of colonial association by the turn of the century." 411

Third, the exteriority of nomadism to national and state formations. Grounded in English land theory and praxis, the three British administrators viewed tribal formations as inherently averse to modern structures of nationhood and statehood. Drawing a sharp line between tribal loyalty and national affiliation, they maintained an inherent opposition between nomadism and nationhood, a duality which they often employed to explain the 'non-complicity' of the Bedouin tribes of Palestine with the Palestinian national cause, but also the limits of national unity in Palestine, as opposed to its Jewish counterpart. To the British administrators, national affiliation was the sole property of the peasants, the cultivators and the proprietors. The three, in short, failed to imagine nationhood, let alone statehood, beyond the single apparatus of settlement.

These three aspects of nomadism— the Bedouin as a separate race, the Bedouin as a conquering race, and the Bedouin as a stateless race— brings to the fore a common theme shared by the three British administrators, namely the perception of the Bedouin as a martial race. In both discourse and praxis, they all treated the Bedouin as a martial race fit for warfare, rather than nationhood. This perception was not an innovation of the three men, however. In their views

we find echoes of the British doctrine of 'martial races,' implemented throughout the British Raj. The doctrine maintained that certain ethnic, religious, caste, social or demographic groups possessed biological or cultural disposition to the martial qualities indispensable to the arts of warfare, such as masculinity and loyalty. In colonial India, the doctrine was billed as a scientific taxonomy, and hence employed by British colonial military officials to recruit, justify and regulate their colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent.\textsuperscript{412} While clearly an ideological construct, the doctrine still exploited existing racial and caste distinctions among the local Indians, notably the Punjabi Sikhs, as well as other British colonial subjects, such as the Scottish Highlanders, the Nepalese Gurkhas and the East African Kamba. At its core, the martial race doctrine was a colonial recipe against Indian nationalism, or, as one historian of the British Empire has recently dubbed it, "the imperial antidote to nationalism."\textsuperscript{413} Besides serving as a recruitment tool for service in the colonial army, the doctrine was designed to foster existing caste divides in the subcontinent, thereby impeding the prospect of national unity among the subjects of the Raj, a prospect whose symptoms the British had already witnessed in the Indian rebellion of 1857.

Throughout British rule in Transjordan and Palestine, the perception of the Bedouin as martial race helped foster colonial divide-and-rule policy. Eager to exploit and push the desert/sown divide beyond its demographic and spatial limits, British officials cultivated a narrative on Bedouin's racial singularity, tribal loyalty and detachment from national affiliations, thus furnishing their claims on the 'non-complicity' of the Bedouin tribes of Transjordan and Palestine with the national uprising of the 1930s. Yet unlike Transjordan, where local Bedouin


\textsuperscript{413} Heather Streets-Salter, \textit{Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 158.
tribes were largely integrated into the nation-state apparatus, military and law institutions, and the national fabric of the modern Jordanian identity, the Bedouin of Palestine were largely excluded from such formations. In Mandate Palestine, sorting out the Bedouin as a martial race was taken by British officials not only to remove the local tribes from the rising national movement underway, but to explain away the prospects of Arab national unity in the country. This colonial rationality was not lost on Arab nationalists in Palestine, who throughout the Mandate would embark on a quixotic attempt to reintegrate the local Bedouin into the fabric of the Arab nation and Palestinian identity.
Chapter Four
Aref al-Aref: Reimagining the Arab Nation

This chapter explores Arab perceptions of nomadism by focusing on the works of Aref al-Aref. Aref was a Palestinian historian, an Arab nationalist, and a Mandatory officer whose legacy among the Bedouin of Palestine offers a curious case of national construction as he acted against the backdrop of mounting anti-nomadic rhetoric in British and Zionist discourses. What began as colonial service culminated in a multifaceted nation-building enterprise that covered a spectrum of intellectual fields, including history, ethnography, and political geography. His project in southern Palestine involved mapping, enumerating and writing the Bedouin tribes into the broader narrative of national history. In his attempt to resettle the Bedouin of the Negev in time and space, he employed a set of modern and traditional tools, ranging from providing genealogical tablets, to conducting population surveys among the local tribes.

In this view, Aref stands out as an exemplary figure for Palestinian perceptions of nomadism not merely by dint of his highly polemical narrative, but precisely because his tribal legacy offers a perfect example of how national and colonial narratives converge, rather than diverge, on the question of nomadism and its complex relation to nation and state-building. Still, Aref is also exemplary because his tribal corpus offers an alternative narrative to official Zionist and British historiographies. Finally, Aref stands out because his enterprise among the Bedouin tribes, in its breadth and depth and complexity, has no equal among his contemporaries.

Aref's historical oeuvre, especially his accounts on the Negev Bedouin, weaves a complex relationship between nomadism and nationhood in Mandate Palestine, one which offers
an alternative story to Zionist and British narratives on nomadism. For the Arab nationalist, the Bedouin of Palestine were not only part of the Arab nation, but its racial nucleus. His Bedouin were not outside history, but the agents of Arab return to history. In the Bedouin his nationalism also found its most romantic expression: They are a people in the making, marching from nomadism to civilization, a people whose ethos embodies the very essence of the modern nation: racial purity, historical agency, and national evolution.

In what follows, I show that Aref's romantic views on nomadism culminated in a form of mythmaking exercise. His nationalist enterprise ended up reproducing the same myths on nomadism which he sought to refute in British and Zionist narratives. His efforts to settle, civilize and write the Bedouin into history were predicated on the same territorialist prejudice that failed to imagine nationhood beyond the conceptual apparatus of settlement. Aref also accepted the easy assumption about his subjects as a pure race in a hierarchy of Arab races. In his attempt to integrate the tribes of Palestine into the fabric of the Arab nation, he seemingly conceded to the age-old perception of the Bedouin as the 'original Arabs'. In Aref, to steal a line from Partha Chatterjee, "nationalism sets out to asset its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its object, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashions."414

Literature on the legacy of Aref al-Aref in southern Palestine is relatively scant. Scholars of modern Palestine have largely treated Aref's works as a historical source, not as a particular form of cultural discourse. His works on the Bedouin are mined as ethnographic and anthropological evidence, not as a nation-building exercise. Most of the scholarship on Aref

remains largely biographical. His ethnographic corpus is only briefly discussed in two recent edited volumes on the Bedouin of Palestine. The existing research on Aref's national thought has yet to take advantage of his unpublished manuscripts, which are closely examined below.

Only few scholars have taken an interest in Aref's national enterprise in Palestine. In a recent study, Assaf Likhovski devotes a chapter to exploring Aref's legacy among the Bedouin from the perspective of legal thought. Salim Tamari’s essay on Aref’s exile experience in Siberia offers a curious window on his shifting loyalty from Ottomanism to Arab nationalism to greater Syrian national identity. There remain, however, largely underappreciated facets of Aref's national identity in this literature, such as his pivot to Canaanism during his service years in Palestine. This chapter seeks to bridge this gap by bringing to the fore hitherto overlooked aspects of Aref’s legacy in Palestine.

How does Aref al Aref fit in the debate over Palestinian nationalism? Perhaps one way to answer this question is by departing from the two dominant tendencies in Palestinian historiography fleshed out in the introduction, namely its focus on the question of periodization and on urban centers. For one thing, Aref's constant fluctuation between Ottomanism, Arab nationalism, greater Syrian identity, Palestinian identity and Canaanism defies both unilateral

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417 These include Aref, Three Years in Amman (1926-9); The Gaza Diaries (1934-1936).


and linear periodization in the dating of Palestinian national identity. For another, his enterprise among the Bedouin tribes of southern Palestine shifts the locus of national formation from the center to the periphery, thus extending the historical focus to provinces and non-elite groups.

Finally, by introducing Aref's historical writing on the Palestinian Bedouin, I wish to avoid the tendency of approaching nomadism from the single prism of anthropology, a tendency which had colored the scholarship on tribal Palestine for decades. Rather than an anthropological inquiry, this chapter is a critique of the anthropological outlook embedded in the study of nomadism, which constantly keeps tribal formations outside the broader scope of historical inquiry. This raises the question of whether we should treat Aref himself as a historian. I maintain that Aref was a national historian whose historical narrative on the Bedouin borders on political anthropology, that is, the tendency to trace the evolution of tribal societies from 'primitive' to 'advanced' societies. Rather than agents of historical change, which is the primary locus of historical inquiry, Aref's Bedouin are figured as passive agents of both national return to history and passage into modernity, notwithstanding his tireless attempts to give them a historical agency. As an anthropological object, they are viewed as a time-machine living in a pure, unadulterated past, and hence as agents of national revival in Palestine. In this sense, Aref's history of the Bedouin, rather than history per se, offers a curious form of 'invented tradition', one defined by the redistribution of historical, ethnographic, anthropological and genealogical knowledge of nomadism into new forms of cultural representation and national imagination.

420 See, most notably, the classic work of Emanuel Marx, Bedouin of the Negev (New York: Praeger, 1967).
Aref's Legacy and Sources

The life of Aref al Aref reads like an epitome of nomadism. Moving from one exile to another, it spanned the late Ottomans, the short-lived Arab Kingdom of Syria, the Emirate of Transjordan, the British Mandate in Palestine, the Zionists, and the Israelis. Aref was a Jerusalemite whose career betrays multiple foci of political loyalty, ranging from Ottomanism to Arabism, and from Arabism to Palestinian nationalism. Early in his life, he served in the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he joined the Ottoman Reserve Forces and fought in its Fifth Army on the Russian Front during the Great War. He was captured by the Russians, and freed by the Bolsheviks. From his exile in Siberia he escaped eastward to China, embarking on a long journey through Japan and India. He then broke with the Ottomans, and joined the cause of the Arab rebellion in Hejaz and the Faisal movement in Syria.

Back in Palestine, Aref supported armed resistance against the British occupation. He was tried in absentia and, by his own account, sentenced to death by the British, before it was commuted to imprisonment. He was later pardoned by the High Commissioner Herbert Samuel and offered government posts in northern and central Palestine, including Jaffa, Nablus and Jenin. This was followed by three turbulent years in Amman, where he served as a Chief Secretary of the Administration Council of Transjordan. He then served the Mandate government as a District Officer of the southern sub-districts of Beersheba and Gaza. Later in his life, he
would serve as the mayor of East Jerusalem (1950-1), and briefly as a minister in the Jordanian government.423

Aref left his intellectual imprint wherever he went. In Istanbul, he co-founded al-Muntada al-Adabi (the Literary Forum) in 1909, as a proto-nationalist club which consisted of hundreds of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian members.424 It is to this forum that Aref attributes the discovery of his Arab identity and Arab nationalism. As he writes in his diary, "I was not aware that I was an Arab, and that I should think of the future of my Arab nation until the establishment of the Literary Forum (al Muntada al Adabi) in Istanbul."425 In Jerusalem, he edited the newspaper Suriyya al-Janubiyya (Southern Syria), which, as its name signifies, championed the idea of Palestine as an organic part of Syria.426 It also provided a platform for mobilizing readers against the Zionists and the British in Palestine. In Damascus, he established with Haj Amin al Husseini the Arab Palestinian Society in 1920. In Palestine, he joined the newly established al Nadi al Arabi (the Arab Club) which, like the Literary Forum, advocated the unity of Syria and Palestine, and mobilized readers against Zionism.427

Aref was also a prolific writer whose legacy covers a spectrum of intellectual interests, ranging from history to ethnography and genealogy. He left a rich historical corpus that includes

424 Aref, History of Jerusalem, 366. See also Ya’qub Awdat, Min A’lam al-Fikr w-adabi Filast (Jerusalem: Wikalat Abu ’Arafa, 1979), 400.
425 Quoted and translated in Tamari, "With God's Camel," 35.
426 Ibid, 43-4.
books on the history of every city he governed. During his decade-long service in Beersheba, he wrote two major accounts on the Bedouin of southern Palestine, *Justice among the Bedouin* (1933), and *The History of Beersheba and Its Tribes* (1934). His service years in Gaza culminated in two historical accounts, *The History of Gaza* (1943), and *A Brief History of Askalan* (1943). Aref's historical corpus includes his monumental *History of Jerusalem* (1961), and a seven-volume history of the *Nakba* (1956-63). His oeuvre, well over twenty books, consists also of biographical notes, diaries and memoirs, including two unpublished manuscripts.  

Aref's sources are quite diverse. They range from classical Arab historians, notably Ibn Khaldun, to contemporary Palestinian historians, such as 'Umar Salih al-Barghouthi and Khalil Totah. Contemporary Palestinian ethnographer Tawfik Canaan is cited alongside the famous Czech ethnologist Alois Musil. We also meet early British travelers in Palestine, such as Edward Palmer and Charles Doughty, along with prominent French orientalists, such as Ernest Renan and Louis Massignon. Aref's list of sources also includes early P.E.F explorers in Palestine, notably C.R. Conder and Clermont Ganneau. References to British administrators in Mandate Palestine include C. S. Jarvis, Harry Luke and Edward Keith-Roach.

A major source for Aref is Austin Kennett, who served as the British District Commissioner in Sinai during the 1920s. Aref's indebtedness to Kennett's *Bedouin Justice* goes

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428 These are *Three Years in Amman* (1926-9) and *Gaza Diary* (1934-1936).
beyond borrowing the same title for his book on the Negev Bedouin. A close examination of Aref's *Bedouin Justice* shows a systematic appropriation to the context of Beersheba of Kenneth's themes on tribal law and customs in Sinai. Where their views most clearly converge is on the racial classification of the Bedouin. For Kenneth, the Bedouin of Sinai were "of real and genuine Arabian stock." His perception of the Bedouin of Sinai as the 'original Arabs' is echoed through Aref's accounts on the Negev Bedouin. Yet while Kenneth's purpose was mainly ethnographic, Aref's account, as we shall see, had far-reaching national purposes.

What is perhaps more revealing about Aref's sources is his own translation into Turkish of *Die Weltrastel* (The Riddle of the Universe) by the famous German philosopher Ernst Haeckel. Haeckel was a leading social Darwinist and a renowned proponent of scientific racism. He is widely credited with advancing the doctrine of evolutionary polygenism, which traces the evolution of humans from simian ancestors into speechless human groups, and from separate linguistic groups into distinct races. In *Die Weltrastel*, Haeckel subdivided humans into ten races, placed on a vertical hierarchy that ranges from the 'civilized white Caucasians' at the top to the 'primitive Negroes' at the bottom. He hailed the former as the most highly developed and perfect race, while disregarding the latter as primitive savages doomed to extinction.

One detects a striking parallel between Aref's thesis on the racial purity of the Bedouin Arabs and Haeckel's claim for the "racial purity of the Germans." Yet, as we shall see, Aref's

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narrative on the Bedouin is free of the racist overtones that characterize Haekel's evolutionary racism, let alone his advocacy for the right of superior races to dominate others.\textsuperscript{437} In fact, Aref would go to great lengths to remind the reader that his narrative on Arab nationalism had evolved against the backdrop of Turanian nationalism and the rise of racial chauvinism among the Young Turks.\textsuperscript{438} Not that race does not figure in Aref's narrative. On the contrary, his account on the rise of Arab nationalism reveals clearly that race was at the roots of his national awakening, his disenchantment with Ottomanism, and the discovery of his Arab identity. His model, however, was not Haekel, but, as he writes in his diary, "Bismarck and Goethe, the true founders of German unity."\textsuperscript{439}

\textsuperscript{438} Aref, \textit{History of Jerusalem}, 366.
\textsuperscript{439} Aref, \textit{Amman Diary}, entry dated August 4, 1927.
From Ottomanism to Arabism: Aref’s Narrative on Arab Nationalism

The historical corpus of Aref al Aref is a fascinating tale of hope and disenchantment, promise and betrayal, victory and defeat. Aref belonged to a generation of Arab intellectuals whose Ottoman loyalty was tested by the new reality in Istanbul, brought about by the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. His national awakening is an epitome of his narrative on the rise of Arab nationalism. A story of a generation is reflected in his journey from Ottomanism to Arabism in the interwar period, and from Arab nationalism to Palestinian patriotism in the postwar period. While his national narrative does not fit neatly into revisionist accounts on the rise of Arab nationalism in modern scholarship, which reveals far more complex loyalties, it still offers a curious case of historical and national imagination.  

In this regard, Aref’s Histories read more like a nationalist manifesto than historical works per se. His narratives of Palestinian cities are an exercise in national imagination. History of Gaza (1943) opens with a statement that vividly captures his nationalist motive: "I saw it my duty– as an Arab who loves his people and countries, and as a patriot (watani) yearning for Arab independence and unity– to share my knowledge of this Arab land (Gaza)... with my co-national brothers in other Arab countries." In what reads like an ode to self-discovery, Aref also urges the "the free sons" of those Arab countries to follow his example in rediscovering their historical roots. This is a classic example of what Benedict Anderson refers to as "imagined

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440 See, for example, Ernest Dawn’s collected essays, From Ottomanism to Arabism (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1973); and James Gelvin, Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

441 Aref, History of Gaza, 1.
Clearly, Aref’s national identity at this stage was largely pan-Arabist. A regional, localized and particular sense of Palestinian identity was cultivated gradually and painfully through the 1930s, and would crystallize in the wake of the unfolding drama of the Nakba.

Aref's rupture with Ottomanism is well recounted in his *Detailed History of Jerusalem*. Writing half a century after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, he refers to the 1908 Revolution as a period of high hopes for the Arabs, fueled by promises of constitutional reforms and the end of Hamidian tyranny. What followed, however, was a bitter disillusionment. "Initially," writes Aref, "the Arabs were not interested in a total disintegration from the [Ottoman] government. What they aspired for, especially towards the end of Ottoman rule, was reform. The Arabs placed their hopes in the Ottoman Revolution... and its promise of justice and equality throughout the Empire. They genuinely believed that the Revolution would ultimately serve their collective interests." Yet, to his dismay, this brief honeymoon came to an unhappy end as racial tensions between Arabs and Turks rapidly emerged. In Aref's words,

the Arabs grew disillusioned as they realized that the Turks, while claiming to advocate harmony with the other races of the Empire under the banner of Ottoman unity, were in fact conspiring against these races and plotting to humiliate them. Motivated by the poisonous notion of Turanian nationalism, the Young Turks spared no effort to elevate the Turkish race above others, believing this could save the unity of the Ottoman Empire. That is how the seeds of racial division were sown between the Arabs and the

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Turks, and when the Arabs began to cultivate a strong desire for independence, which they pursued in secret, fearing Turkish tyranny."  

It is to this racial friction that Aref attributes the emergence of proto-nationalist Arab societies throughout the 1910s, extending across Istanbul, Paris and the Arab provinces, including branches in Jerusalem. These include the Society of Arab Ottoman Brotherhood, the Al-‘ahd Society (The Covenant), the Literary Forum, the Green Flag, and the Qahtani Society in Istanbul; Al-Fatat, or the Young Arab Society, in Paris; the Arab League and the Ottoman Decentralization Party in Cairo; the General Reform Society in Beirut, and the National Scientific Club in Baghdad. 

The rupture with the Ottomans, however, was not immediate. "Initially," Aref recalls, "these societies envisioned Arab-Turkish coexistence under the Ottoman flag, thus campaigning for equal rights and duties." Even the first Arab Congress of 1913, Aref reminds us, did not call for a total separatism from the Ottoman state. Instead, it presented a list of political demands and reforms from within the Ottoman system. These included more political rights and effective participation by the Arabs in the central administration, and more autonomy in the Arab-speaking providences, mainly by enhancing local governments, making Arabic an official language, and employing Arab troops in peace-time.

In response, Aref goes on, the Turkish government issued an imperial decree (dated August 3, 1913) in which it conceded, if partly and vaguely, to these provisions, including the

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443 Aref, History of Jerusalem, 366.
444 For a comprehensive list, see Aref, History of Jerusalem 366-7. See also George Antonius, Arab Awakening, 107-118.
445 Aref’s account here is confirmed by Antonius, The Arab Awakening, 114-5.
recognition of Arabic, along with Turkish, as an official language in the Arab provinces. Yet the
Turks, as it turned out, were merely paying lip-service to the Arabs, and had little intention of
implementing these reforms, thereby stirring widespread resentment among the Arabs, and
fostering their demand for complete independence. This was met with a brutal Turkish campaign
against the Arab movement in Syria, led by Jamal Pasha, known among the Arabs as *as-saffah*
(the Blood Shedder) for his execution of many Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian personalities in
Damascus and Beirut in 1916. It is within this context, Aref concludes, that the Arabs embraced
the Arab rebellion in Hejaz, initiated by Sheriff Hussein in 1915, an event which set in motion a
series of dramatic events that hastened the decline of Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces.447

Aref thus belonged to a generation of Arab intellectuals whose Ottoman locality was
disrupted by the new political reality in Istanbul. His hopes in Ottoman unity shattered, he
would join many disenchanted Arabs who pivoted to Arab nationalism in the postwar period.
That Aref takes pains to justify his shift from Ottomanism to Arab nationalism is quite revealing.
For the most part, it is a clear indication that for him, and for many of his contemporaries,
Arabism was not seen as an obvious and immediate alternative to Ottomanism. In other words,
these intellectuals did not initially view Arab nationalism as a natural, timeless essence
awakened from its dormant state. Their national awakening, while having a seemingly thick air
of inevitability, is rather portrayed as a painful political evolution with its historical course and
circumstances, causes and effects, and, most importantly, challenges.

Aref’s devotion to Arab nationalism was not clear-cut, to be sure. It was constantly
eclipsed by his ever-conflicting loyalties. During WWI, he was an Ottoman officer and prisoner

of war, yet a proponent of the Arab rebellion in Hejaz. He voluntarily fought for the Ottoman Fifth Army on the Russian front, before defecting by the end of the war to join the Syrian National movement under Prince Faisal. Paradoxically, it was during his Russian exile (1915-1918) when Aref began to rethink his Ottoman identity and loyalty to the Young Turks. He even foresaw the collapse of the Ottoman empire. In his imaginary memoirs Ru’ayy (My Vision), written shortly after his escape from his prison camp in Siberia in late 1918, he envisions the establishment of a "federation of Arab republics" as an alternative to Ottoman rule.

In Palestine, Aref served the British while conspiring to subvert their rule. He covertly supported the Palestinian revolt in the city of Hebron, while working to maintain order in his district, Beersheba. The British responded to Aref's double role with the same duality. On the one hand, they suspected that Aref was leading the Palestinian rebels in the south. On the other, they commended him for preserving peace and order in his district during the disturbances. Aref himself takes pride in his official record as a Mandatory officer when he reports: "I managed to keep my sub-district [Beersheba] away from the disturbances."

Aref’s service in Transjordan was riddled with the same duplicity. He served as a Chief Secretary in the British-controlled government of Amir Abdullah, yet he sought to undermine it by clandestinely supporting Arab nationalist groups there, such as the Friends of Truth. A series of official reports from that period portrayed him at the centre of subversive nationalist activity against the British. For example, he was denounced by an anonymous informer as a nationalist.

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449 Aref Al Aref, Ru’ayy (Jerusalem, 1943).
450 Report by Acting District Commissioner, Southern District, 4 Dec. 1933, ISA 'Aref al-'Aref personal file.
conspirator.\textsuperscript{452} Aref’s double life in Transjordan is candidly chronicled in his own writing. As he puts it in his \textit{Amman Diary}, he became "servant of the government by day, while plotting against it by night." Aref also recounts in his diary his "thorny and perilous position" of supporting anti-British activity, while serving the Amir Abdullah's shadowy government. As he later confesses,

\begin{quote}
I was compelled to appear in two contradictory guises, meeting with the Amir by day to discuss the best measures to be taken to persuade the people into supporting the treaty with Britain, while by night meeting with the leaders and faithful men of this country to discuss the sure means of guarding against [British] evil, securing the rejection of the treaty, and clipping the claws of the colonizers and their tails.\textsuperscript{453}
\end{quote}

This is not to cast doubt on Araf’s commitment to Arab nationalism. After all, if we were to believe his story, "he was prepared to risk his life in supporting its cause." Indeed, his biographical notes are replete with references to "the perils of leading a double life in Transjordan and Palestine." Not that Aref viewed his double loyalty as necessarily contradictory. As he writes in his \textit{Amman Diary}, "there was not one day in my career as a civil servant, during which I was also loyal to the government, when I forgot that I was an Arab whose life was devoted to the national Arab cause." On a road trip from Amman to Jerusalem, he recalls his days in Amman as a joyous spectacle of "an Arab government, Arab Amir, and Arab flag."\textsuperscript{454}

Reflecting on a heartwarming letter he wrote to Amir Abdallah, he even takes pride in serving

\textsuperscript{452} "True Reporter' to Samuel, 5 Apr. 1921, ISA 2/157. C.I.D.
\textsuperscript{453} Aref, \textit{Amman Diary}, entry dated April 18, 1928. On this episode, see Wasserstein, "Clipping the Claws of the Colonizers," 181.
\textsuperscript{454} Aref, \textit{Gaza Diary}, entry dated November 3, 1939.
"an Arab country, Arab flag, with an Arab Amir, who descends from the most honorable Arab family." 455

Aref's vision of Arab nationalism is vividly captured in a series of personal conversations from his years in Transjordan. In one instance, he recalls a conversation with an "Arab comrade" who described Arab unity as "inevitable, natural, and indispensable to those nations who speak one language and follow one religion." 456 Another, heated conversation involves Peake Pasha, then the British commander of the Arab Legion. It concerns the arrest by the British authorities of Arab rebels who were fighting against the French occupation in Syria, and who were by the time of the arrest taking refuge in Jabal al-Druze. In protest, and speaking apparently on behalf of the government of Amir Abdulla, Aref told Peake: "We will not allow the persecution of our brothers, with whom we share a common religion, language, history, and national interest, especially at a time when their country is rising against foreign rule. To permit their persecution is to do injustice to our Arabism." 457

A third conversation involves Amir Abdullah himself, in which Aref takes pains to "remind him that the Palestinians are a good people, true Arabs who share a sense of veneration for leaders of noble Arab descent, let alone descent from the Prophet family." 458 Apparently, the Emir was complaining about a recent visit he took to Jerusalem, during which he was greeted "halfheartedly" by the local Arab population. Aref also recalls a conversation with Haj Amin al-Husseini, in which he reportedly declines an offer by the Grand Mufti to serve as the Secretary of the Supreme Muslim Council, because, as he later puts it, "he would rather serve a rising Arab

455 Aref, Amman Diary, entry dated December 2, 1928.
456 Ibid, entry dated July 31, 1927.
457 Aref, Amman Diary, entry dated July 19, 1926
458 Ibid, entry dated April 6, 1928.
state such as Transjordan than a local council whose authority was limited to the management of endowments, almshouses, mosques, Zawyas, and other religious affairs. 459

This is not to suggest that Aref was blind to the colonial reality of Transjordan. As he grumbles throughout his letters and diaries, his joy was spoiled by the heavy infiltration of the country by English officials. He also constantly complains that the "Arab government in Amman is only Arab by name, with a cursory and superficial independence." He even provides a list of those English officials who occupied the top positions in the country, ranging from the High Commissioner at the top, to army generals, finance and legal personnel, and border administrators."All are English", he would cry out in bitter resentment. Interestingly, Aref borrows the biblical term aghyar (gentiles) to describe English officials in Arab countries, "who have no connection whatsoever to Arabness."460

Aref’s criticism of British rule in Transjordan and Palestine is oftentimes directed against the person of Emir Abdallah himself, whom he views as a "puppet of London". For example, he recalls, with evident resentment, how the "Emir preferred to see the Zionists take over Mecca than his Wahhabi rivals."461 It is quite absurd, Aref continues, that "to the Emir, the enemy is not the English, but a true Arab knight like Ibn Saud, an Arabian who speaks pure Arabic, and a Muslim who believes in Allah and His Prophet Muhammad."462 He even accuses the Amir Abdallah of "going so ridiculously far in his blind obedience to his English masters as to declare war on Germany." Not that Aref was in favor of the Germans or German Mandate over Palestine. Rather, as he later writes, "both countries had imperial stakes in Arab lands, both

459 Ibid, entry dated June 14, 1926.
460 Ibid, entry dated August 6, 1926.
461 Ibid, entry June 19, 1926.
462 Ibid
sought to subjugate the Arab people, and both hovered over our heads as a looming nightmare.\textsuperscript{463}

Aref’s insistence on the term 'English' is quite telling here. Unlike Britishness, Englishness betrays a strong sense of ethnic connotation, and hence fits better into the Arab/English binary permeating his narrative. In his \textit{Gaza Diary}, for example, he ridicules a British official who goes to great lengths lecturing before a group of Arab representatives on "the deep ties binding the two races, the Arab and the English." For Aref, paying lip service to racial harmony was nothing but a rhetorical device used to conceal British enmity towards the Arabs.\textsuperscript{464}

Palestine provides yet another stage for Aref’s conflicting loyalties. While serving the Mandate government in the southern district, Aref rarely concealed his opposition to British rule in Palestine, the Balfour Declaration, and England's betrayal and broken promises to the Arabs. His biographical corpus is permeated with references to his "double shock" caused by the British occupation and the rise of Zionism in Palestine.\textsuperscript{465} In the \textit{Gaza Diary}, which he wrote during his service as the District Officer of Gaza, he constantly complains about being closely monitored and persecuted "by the British and their spies", even as he served their government in the city. This, he confesses, "only fueled my hostility towards the English and their policies."\textsuperscript{466}

A biographical review of Aref in the Hebrew daily \textit{Heruth} (dated February 2, 1929) attempted to capture his complex character by drawing on "a life of conflicting loyalties": First, between his wartime service in the Ottoman army and his covert incitement against the Turkish

\textsuperscript{463} Ibid, entry dated February 10, 1940
\textsuperscript{464} Aref, \textit{Gaza Diary}, entry dated November 3, 1939.
\textsuperscript{465} Aref, \textit{Amman Diary}, entry dated June 25, 1926
\textsuperscript{466} Aref, \textit{Gaza Diary}, entry September 17, 1939
government toward the end of the war. Second, between his nationalist activity and his close ties to British officials, notably the High Commissioner Herbert Samuel. Finally, between his campaign against the Zionists and the Balfour Declaration, and his cozy relationship with Jewish Arabists and Zionist circles in Palestine, such as Brit Shalom. The editors then ponder whether this unorthodox intimacy with the Zionists "involved bribery on Aref's part, or, using the Arabic-Turkish term, accepting 'baksheesh' from the national Jewish fund."\(^{467}\)

Aref's opposition to Zionism was never in doubt. It began early in his life, during the early phases of Jewish settlement in Palestine. In an article he wrote in 1912 for the Jaffa paper *Filastin*, he condemned land sales to Jewish newcomers in Palestine, warning, in a prophetic manner, that if such purchases went unstopped the Zionists would eventually take over the country.\(^{468}\) His campaign against Zionist activity in Palestine lost none of its force in the postwar period. The Zionists in turn constantly accused him of incitement. During the riots of 1929, Aref was portrayed by the Hebrew press as the mastermind of the riots, and widely accused of inciting for the massacre of the Jews in Hebron by giving inflammatory speeches in a local mosque.\(^{469}\)

During the Mandate, Aref viewed the British and the Zionists as the twin enemies in Palestine. A chief target of his criticism was the British High Commissioner Herbert Samuel, whom he constantly viewed as "an absolute Zionist."\(^{470}\) Aref's resentment of Britain's partial policy in Palestine centered on the infamous Balfour Declaration and other official statements issued by the British in favor of the Zionists.\(^{471}\) At the same time, he supported the White Paper

\(^{467}\) "Who is Aref Al-Aref", *Heruth* (February 2, 1949), 3.
\(^{468}\) Aref al-Aref, *Filastin*, 1912
\(^{469}\) *Heruth* (February 2, 1949), 3
\(^{470}\) See, for example, *Amman Diary*, entry dated June 25, 1926
\(^{471}\) Ibid, entry dated June 25, 1926
of 1939, which he viewed as "a welcome rectification of the Balfour Declaration." In the same analytical breath he goes to great lengths documenting Zionist rejection of the document by translating the provisions of the 21st Zionist Congress, which convened in Geneva in August 1939 to discuss its implications on the Jews. He regards his efforts in uncovering and publicizing Zionist hidden motives as his "duty towards his beloved and dear Palestine".472

Aref's criticism, to be sure, was not limited to the British and the Zionists. His diaries breathe a deep resentment of the "hypocrisy of Arab collaborationists" in Palestine, notably the Nashashibi and Shawa families. He frequently credits himself with blocking their 'collaborative' activity in his district, Beersheba. He recalls with indignation how these families opened their doors to British officials during the height of the Arab rebellion of 1936-39, and at a time when their fellow countrymen were being imprisoned and deported by the British authorities.473 Ironically, this did not prevent Aref from accepting invitations by British, even Zionist, officials, nor from seeking promotion in British civil service.474 Another unusual target for Aref were the editors of Filastin, whom he accused of siding with the British government by urging the Arabs to support British policies, both in defiance of their own national interests and in spite of England's broken promises to the Arabs, instead of joining forces with fellow Palestinians in championing "an independent Arab policy free of foreign intervention."475

Aref's shift from Arabism to Palestinian nationalism crystallized during the 1930s, that is, ironically, during his service of the Mandate government in Palestine. Fueled by the Palestinian Revolt of 1936-39, it was fostered by his mounting opposition to the British and the Zionists

472 Aref, Gaza Diary, entry August 26, 1939
473 Ibid, entry August 5, 1939
474 Ibid, entry February 19, 1939.
475 Aref, Gaza Diary, entry September 10, 1939

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alike, accompanied by a fierce criticism of what he deemed collaborative tendencies among fellow Palestinians. Nowhere was this shift in Aref's national orientation more evident than in his activity in southern Palestine, to which we shall now turn.
The Negev Bedouin: Aref's 'Original Arabs'

Aref al-Aref spent the bulk of his administrative career in Palestine. His service in the civil mandate administration spanned over two decades, largely divided between Beersheba (1929-1939) and Gaza (1939-1943). What began as colonial service culminated in a multifaceted nation-building enterprise that covered a spectrum of intellectual fields, including history, ethnography, political geography, and legal theory. His intellectual enterprise in southern Palatine clustered around writing the Bedouin into the broader narrative of national history. In his attempt to resettle the Bedouin in time and space, he employed a host of modern and traditional tools, ranging from mapping tribal boundaries, to providing genealogical tablets and conducting population surveys among the local tribes.

Aref’s History of Beersheba and Its Tribes (1934) was written during his decade-long service there. In a quixotic endeavor to reconcile the double image of the Bedouin as original Arabs and native Palestinians, the book begins with an ethnographic inquiry:

Who are the Arabs ('urban) of Beersheba? Where did they come from? to which tribes of the Arab Peninsula do they belong? from which clan of the original Arabs do they descend? Are they true Arabs? did they originate in the Arabian peninsula, from which they migrated to Palestine? do they share a bond of kinship with the ancient nations of Palestine, such as the Canaanites?

What Aref is asking, in other words, is whether the Bedouin are Arabs or Palestinians, or both? His answer, as one should expect from a devoted nationalist like Aref, attempts at
The rest of the book, however, leaves us with one unequivocal conclusion: the Bedouin of Palestine are the descendants of both the Arab immigrants of the seventh century, and the pre-Biblical nations of ancient Palestine, such as the Canaanites and the Philistines, who were also Arabs.

Aref treaded a delicate line between his Arab nationalism and regional Palestinian identity. This culminated in a new form of national identity, one which might be termed Canaanism—not to be confused with the Canaanite movement of the 1940s. Drawing on a group of Western anthropologists and ethnologists, Aref entertains the conclusion that "the majority of the Arabs of Palestine descent from a Canaanite origin." As a territorial land-based form of identity premised on tracing national roots to an indigenous and settled past, Canaanism provided Aref with the ultimate expression of autochthony. Canaanism, like nationalism, was thus another discursive device employed by the Palestinian historian to settle the Bedouin of Palestine in time and place— to write the Bedouin into history. This begs the question: how could Aref reconcile his appeal to Arab nationalism with this form of (Canaanite) identity that clearly borders on regionalism?

Since nationalism is largely predicated on the interplay between the spatial (autochthony) and the temporal (racial lineage), nationalists like Aref tend always to synthesize the twin taxonomies into a single narrative. That for Aref the Bedouin are both the pure descendants of the original Arabs and native Palestinians is by no means anachronistic. Not if we remember that for the Arab nationalist, nomadism, that is mobility, is not an absolute liability. His Bedouin are

476 Aref, History of Beersheba, 1-2
478 Aref, History of Beersheba, 200.
shrewdly employed in a double game that involves the substitution of conquest by a taxonomy of immigration, and of immigration by that of return. In other words, the Bedouin originated in Palestine, moved to Arabia, and returned to Palestine. Aref’s Bedouin, to use a modern parlance, are both original and aboriginal.

One notices the striking resemblance of this cyclical description to the Zionist maxim of 'Jewish return' to Palestine. Indeed, Aref’s awareness of Zionist claims in Palestine is attested by his polemical tone. This does not prevent him from adopting, modifying, even inverting the Zionist story in his narrative on the Bedouin. While Aref accepts the traditional Biblical narrative that portrays ancient Palestine as home to the "first national gathering of the early Israelites," he seeks to juxtapose it with a counter narrative on native Palestinian resistance. "The ancient Israelites," he contends, "were met in Palestine by fierce resistance from the Philistines, the true ancestors of modern-day Palestinians." The meaning of return, for Aref, is not only spatial—solely captured in the cyclical movement between settlement and migration— but also temporal. His Bedouin, as he constantly reminds us, are not outside history, but agents of Palestinians’ return to history, to their Canaanite origins.

The History of Beersheba thus marks Aref's first attempt to write the Bedouin of Palestine into history. For the Arab nationalist, the Bedouin represented the original Arab race by virtue of their racial purity and homogeneity. In what strikes us today as a classic definition of a nation, Aref writes: "The inhabitants of this district [Beersheba] are homogenous in origin, religion and language: They belong to one nation, the Arab umma, they follow one religion,

479 Ibid, 33-4.
480 Ibid, 199-200
Islam, and they speak one language, Arabic”. Of all the Arab-speaking populations outside the Arabian Peninsula, he continues, the Bedouin of Palestine are most closely related to the original Arabs. In his own estimation, up to seventy percent of the Arabs of Palestine and Transjordan descended from original Arabian stock. While Aref gives to further explanation for this figure, it bodes well for his nationalist narrative.

Indigeneity is a governing theme in Aref’s narrative. For him, the Bedouin represent the aboriginal people in Palestine because they are "the original owners of the land.” Mining a wide array of sources, from Biblical texts to modern archeology, he draws the conclusion that the majority of the ancient nations who lived in pre-Biblical Palestine were of Arab origin. Guided by the general premise of Arab autochthony in Palestine, he ventures into tracing the Arab roots of his own district, Beersheba, where "there have been found remnants more ancient that those left by the early Hebrews." According to Aref, the Arab character of Beersheba is attested today by two facts: First, there were only four Jewish men living in the district during his tenure. Second, not a single Jewish colony was founded there, although the Jews began to acquire lands in the Negev region of late.

For Aref the nationalist, Palestine belonged eternally to the Arabs. In his History of Gaza, for example, he contends that Gaza was an Arab city from time immemorial, noting that "the Arab conquest was only a reaffirmation of the old Arab settlement in the city.” That Gaza was the first Palestinian city to fall to the Arab conquerors in the seventh century had a symbolic

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481 Ibid, 274
482 Ibid, 65
483 Ibid, 274-5
484 History of Beersheba, 28-9.
485 Aref, History of Gaza, 114.
meaning for Aref. In what resembles a discursive parody of the Zionist narrative, combined with a curious reconstruction of the Biblical story, Aref dwells on the portrayal of the ancient Philistines as "native Arab Palestinians" who showed a heroic resistance to the foreign Israelite conquerors. The ancient city of Gaza, we are told, served as a central stage for this epic encounter.486

Clearly, Aref is writing against the backdrop of fast-growing territorialist discourse on the Bedouin of Palestine, one which views tribal formation as the antithesis of rootedness, belonging, and national identity. During the Mandate, Zionist and British ethnographic literature on the Arabs flourished. Steeped into the agriculturalist outlook on land and national rights, this literature is replete with anti-tribal rhetoric that portrays the Bedouin as foreign invaders, lawless intruders, enemies of the state, and barbarians at the gate.487 As his bibliographical list clearly indicates, Aref was well-acquainted with this literature. He was a regular reader of the P.E.F. ethnographic publications, local Zionist and Hebrew press, along with European travel literature and British handbooks to Palestine.488

Not that Aref's national narrative marks a radical departure from this literature. Rather, his ethnographic corpus on the Bedouin is permeated with descriptions which he would otherwise dismiss as hostile and paternalistic. This is especially evident in his discussion of the challenges he faced while conducting the first population census among the local tribes of Beersheba, in which he seemingly concedes to the characterization of the Bedouin as lazy,
elusive and unruly. Not infrequently, his historical narrative becomes a discursive mimicry of the same anti-nomadic myths which he sought to refute in Zionist and British narratives. Drawing on the same desert/sown binary, which he elsewhere dismisses as "superficial", he maintains that the Bedouin of southern Palestine must be settled, sedentarized, and civilized after the fashion of the settled Arabs of the fertile heartland. In other instances, his narrative becomes a mere inversion of the ethnographic myths on nomadism in Zionist historiography. Thus, for example, he portrays the ancient Israelites as a group of nomadic hordes pillaging the fertile granary of ancient Palestine. In what resembles a civilizing mission in reverse, he further claims that the "the Arab conquest was a civilizational blessing to the [early] nomadic Jews."490

This is a classic example of how nationalist and colonial narratives converge on the question of nomadism. Both narratives accept the easy notion that nomadism represents a primitive stage in the history of human civilization. This particular notion nurtures Aref’s historical imagination of both Arabs and Jews. His narrative of Jewish history is a tale of cultural assimilation, a linear passage from nomadism to settlement. In the History of Jerusalem, he even projects a Khaldunic view onto Jewish history in Palestine. "The Israelites indulged in a life of comfort and luxury," he writes. "Conquest and occupation led to hubris, and shortly thereafter, they gave in to extravagance, idleness, disobedience to leaders, division and inter-fighting."

What followed, we are told, was a steady process of sedentarization brought about by the ancient Arabs— the Canaanites. "The mixing with the Canaanites brought about fundamental changes in the life of the ancient Hebrews," Aref continues. "They gradually deserted their tents and nomadic way of living, soon leading a sedentary and civilized life." Yet Jewish passage to

489 Aref, Bedouin Love, 202-207.
490 Aref, History of Gaza, 40.
civilization, Aref warns, was only partial, and "it only accounts for the Hebrews of the northern part of the country, while in the southern part, they retained their ancient nomadic life."  

Jewish history as told by Aref is one of conquest, immigration and nomadism. To 'nomadize' Jewish history goes hand in hand with his attempt to 'resettle' the Bedouin in history. Mining an extensive body of ancient and modern sources— including the Bible, the famous Romano-Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus, Encyclopedia Britannica, and P.E.F. archaeological findings—Aref ventures into the modern cult of demythization. His narrative on Jewish history evolves into a tireless exercise in historical deconstruction. "That in Palestine the Jews are prior in time to the Arabs is a sheer myth," he contends. "The Canaanites, who had descended from the Arabian Peninsula, were not only more ancient than the Jews. Rather, they, being the original owners of the land, fought the Jewish conquerors relentlessly." In a similar fashion, "the Bedouin of Palestine are the descendants of the ancient Arabian tribes who had immigrated from the Arabian Peninsula long before the Exodus, and whom the Israelites found in Palestine when they invaded it." Aref, to be sure, agrees that Arabs and Jews share a nomadic origin. Yet unlike the Jews, the Arabs are portrayed as natives to Palestine, because "they were the first race to resettle in the country." It should come as no surprise, then, that the early Israelites are excluded from what Aref defines as "the ancient founders of Palestine." In other words, Aref's territorialist narrative on the Arabs of Palestine has its limits. "Even the Canaanites," he reminds us, "were immigrants, a group of Semitic tribes who migrated to

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491 Ibid, 11
492 Ibid, 10-12.
Palestine from the Arabian Peninsula." In yet another parody of the Biblical etiological narrative on the ancient Hebrews, he refers to this immigration as "the Canaanite Exodus."493

A second 'myth' which Aref seeks to refute is that "the Jews have a civilization in Palestine." His main source, curiously, is the Bible. In what reads as a paradoxical projection onto Jewish history of the Zionist 'climatic' narrative on the Arabs, he argues that the Jews were not indigenous to the country, but a horde of foreign invaders who "came to Palestine by means of plunder and conquest." Aref becomes all the more polemic when he turns the Zionist story on its head, constantly depicting the ancient Hebrews as a nomadic race bent on the destruction of the country. In yet another ironic inversion of the Zionist narrative, Aref goes in great lengths to establish the 'nomadic character' of the Jews. His favorite example is the "forty-year wandering of the Israelites in the Sinai desert." Jewish nomadic character is also attested, in his view, by their natural aversion to cultivation. "When the Hebrews came to Palestine," we are told, "there had been a diversity of fruits, trees and plants, to which they added none."494

Clearly, Aref was writing under the cultural spell of Ibn Khaldun and his view of human history as a constant cyclical march from nomadism to civilization, although at its core, the Khaldunic view bodes well for Zionist and British declensionist narratives on nomadism, which depicted the Bedouin as a destructive race responsible for the deforestation, desertification and decay of the fertile land of ancient Palestine. Yet while Aref's Histories claim to offer a counter narrative to the one canonized by Zionist historiography, it sinks into the same cult of mythmaking. In his quixotic attempt to debunk Zionist myths on nomadism, Aref replaces one myth by another. Drawing a sharp line between nomadism and civilization, he premises his

493 Ibid, 13
494 Aref, History of Jerusalem, 11.
historical narrative on the same dualistic paradigm of settlement and mobility which characterized Zionist ethnography on the Arabs. By portraying the history of Palestine from the dualistic prism of conquest and autochthony, he also reproduced the manichean worldview invented by early European ethnographers in Palestine, and transformed by the Zionists into quasi-scientific knowledge. Ultimately, both narratives, the national and the colonial, failed to imagine autochthony beyond the single apparatus of settlement.

Where the two narratives clearly converge is on the racial perception of the Arabs. Echoing early European travelers in Palestine, Aref seemingly conceded to the romantic image of the Bedouin as a pure race in a hierarchy of Arab races. By leaving unchallenged the nexus of race and nomadism, maintained by decades of British ethnography, he also accepted the easy assumption that nomadism, as a unique mode of living, explains the racial purity of the Bedouin. His historical corpus on the Arabs is guided by the ethnographic axiom that the Bedouin represent a singular and homogenous race because they are Bedouin: By virtue of preserving their tradition pure and intact, the Bedouin have not been contaminated by foreign civilization, and hence not touched by the kind of racial admixture which tainted the settled population. Thanks to their closed system of tribal dynamics, he concludes, the Bedouin remained more racially related to the original Arabs than their sedentary neighbors.

Yet unlike British and Zionist ethnographers, Aref’s Bedouin were not outside history. In his national imagination, the Bedouin serves as an agent for Arab return to history. Portrayed as a time-capsule living in a pure, unadulterated past, his Bedouin are not only part of the Arab nation, but its racial nucleus. It is in the Bedouin that the ethnic roots of the Arab nation had been

495 A recurrent duality in the literature of Yede'at Haaretz (Knowledge of the Land). See Meron Benvenisti, Sacred Landscape, 59-60.
preserved from time immemorial. In Aref, the semiotic relationship of race and nomadism is premised on the same anthropological teleology which guided early British ethnographers in Palestine: The Bedouin dwell deep in the desert, on the frontier and the fringe of the country. They live in a state of pristine existence free of foreign influence. They speak pure Arabic, and they descend from the cradle of the Arab race, the Arabian Peninsula. To the Arab nationalist, however, the Bedouin were not outside national formations. On the contrary, it is the Bedouin that his nationalism finds its most romantic expression: They are a people in the making, marching from nomadism to civilization, a people whose tribal ethos embodies the essence of nationalism: racial purity, historical agency, and national evolution.
Nationalism, Modernity, and the Perils of Nomadism

Aref’s national enterprise among the Bedouin of southern Palestine is multifaceted. In his double capacity as a public servant and national historian, he employs a set of traditional and modern tools that cluster around his attempt to write the Bedouin into history. One notable tool is the classical Arabic taxonomy of genealogy, the art of tracing tribal lineages to noble origins. His ethnographic accounts on the Bedouin are replete with genealogical tables that map out the origins of the local tribes of Beersheba and the Negev. The image that ultimately emerges from this kind of ‘genealogical imagination’ is not of a segmentary society broken into discrete tribal lineages, but of an ‘imagined community’ united by a common noble descent.

Weaving genealogy into nationalism is one of Aref’s tools of bridging tradition and modernity. This hybrid construct, the synthesis of the tribal and the national, is what Andrew Shryock, in his study of tribal Jordan, terms "genealogical nationalism." In Aref, though, genealogical nationalism goes beyond the "the tendency to speak of genealogical thought and tribalism in the same analytical breath." This is especially evident in his attempt to extend the scope of genealogy to the urban population. In this regard, his genealogical imagination is not limited to the Bedouin tribes, but shrewdly woven into the fabric of his national narrative on the Arabs of Palestine. Like his works on the Bedouin, his accounts of the urban population are permeated with genealogical tablets that map out the origins of local Arab families in major Palestinian cities, notably Gaza, Ashkelon, and his native city, Jerusalem. In *The History of Jerusalem*, for example, he takes pains to trace the names of prominent Arab Jerusalemites who

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496 I borrow this term from Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination.*
497 Ibid, 5-6.
are buried in the mosques and Churches of Jerusalem, enumerate their merits, and bring to light their contributions to the city. In doing so, Aref was echoing a fast-growing tradition of local history and family genealogy that flourished in various Palestinian cities and towns during the Mandate. What distinguishes Aref’s genealogical corpus, however, is its nationalist overtones.

Aref dreamed of ‘rediscovering’ the Arab roots of Jerusalem from his Siberian exile. His *History of Jerusalem*, written during his brief service as the mayor of the city, is the culmination of a historical inquiry that spanned over two decades. The book offers a unique example of historical reconstruction, in which history itself is drafted into the service of nation-building. An epitome of Palestine, Jerusalem is portrayed as an "eternal Arab city." The Dome of the Rock is celebrated as a "pure Arab artifact enshrined by a pure Arab leader", the Umayyad Caliph Abud al-Malik, "a true son of our homeland, nation and religion." The founders of Jerusalem, the ancient Jebusites, are hailed as a "clan of pure Arab blood", who originated in the depth of the Arabian Peninsula, before migrating to Palestine three thousand years ago, along with the Canaanite tribes, who were also Arabs." These early Arabs, we are told, were "the first to settle in Palestine, and the first to build in Jerusalem."

Aref’s ethnographic corpus on the Bedouin is guided by the same method of employing a traditional taxonomy for a modern enterprise. His twin *Bedouin Law* and *History of Beersheba* are supplied with exhaustive lists of the names of local Bedouin sheikhs representing the various clans of Beersheba. This sort of genealogical inquiry signals his attempt to write the Bedouin of Palestine into national history by locating their origins onto *both* the original tribes of the

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498 For a Nabulsi equivalence, see Ihsan al-Nimr’s *History of the Mountains of Nablus and the Balqa’a* (1938).
500 Ibid, 1
Arabian Peninsula and the ancient nations of Palestine. A notable example is his genealogical survey of the local Jabarat tribe. First we are told that the tribe has its origin in the Hejaz, from which they migrated to Palestine with the early Islamic conquests. Then the same tribe is labeled 'Canaanite'. As Aref writes, "I tend to believe that the Jabarat tribe, who were the first Arabs to settle in Palestine, has a common blood with the ancient Canaanites."

Giving a Palestinian locality to "a pure Arabian tribe" clearly clusters around Aref's tireless attempt to bridge the temporal and the spatial, and hence reconcile the twin concepts of racial unity and autochthony, the two poles of his national enterprise in Palestine.

Aref was also a modernizer who sought to lead the Bedouin to "the threshold of civilization." In his Preface to the English translation of Bedouin Law (1944), he describes the Bedouin as "a race of people whose methods of living, whose laws and customs and whose outlook on things, material and spiritual, are in marked contrast to those of civilized communities." Aref's remarks are echoed here by Thomas Blamey, who served as the commander of the Australian Imperial Forces. In his forward to the book, Blamey writes: "The people about whom the book has been written are a hardy race, and in spite of long battles with nature and economic conditions, they maintain their spirit of independence."

Aref's modernizing doctrine was not an appeal for total westernization, to be sure. Like many Arab intellectuals of his generation, he found himself torn between multiple foci of cultural identity, ranging from Arab and Ottoman traditions to modern European culture. Often his modernizing scheme borders on cultural schizophrenia. He despised Arabs who assimilated

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501 Aref, History of Beersheba, 140
502 Ibid, 200
503 Aref, Bedouin Love, 16
504 Ibid, 10

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to British ways, yet he rarely concealed his admiration for European culture. He boasted of his mastery of foreign languages, such as English and German, while urging his fellow Arabs to keep Arabic pure and free of foreign influences.\(^{505}\) Since language in particular played a central role in his national imagination, Aref's corpus betrays an obsession with linguistic purity. His Gaza and Amman diaries, for example, are replete with complaints about the infiltration of Transjordan and Palestine by the English language, an outcry which also colored his earlier warnings against the Turkification of Arab lands in the wake of the 1908 Revolution.

Aref was a modernizer also in the sense that his national narrative was smoothed to appeal to Western ears. His *Bedouin Law* was translated into Hebrew, German and English. Curiously, the three editions omitted the genealogical section. One way to explain this omission is by its lack of appeal to European aesthetic sensitivity. Apparently, Aref's translators failed to grasp the rationale behind his tendency of employing a traditional tool for modern purposes, that is, the national merit of his genealogical tables. Genealogy, as a native art of tracing tribal history to family lineages, seemingly did not fit neatly into the epistemic structure of European ethnography, where ethnographic interest was limited to the perception of the Bedouin as an exotic race, rather than a people with names, histories, and origins. Nor did genealogy, as employed by Aref, abide by the anthropological outlook embedded in Western ethnography, with its tendency to keep tribalism outside the scope of historical inquiry. That Aref took part in the English and German translations, and apparently read and approved the Hebrew edition, by no means diminishes the national significance of the original genealogical survey.\(^{506}\)

\(^{505}\) Aref, *Gaza Diary*, entry September 10, 1939
\(^{506}\) Aref, *Gaza Diary*, entry March 27, 1940.
Aref the modernizer also wished to remake Arab cities in the image of Jewish settlements. In his *Gaza Diary*, he recalls how, during a brief stay in Jaffa in early 1940, a visit to the neighboring Jewish city of Tel-Aviv fueled his grief, agony and envy. The city struck him as "a piece of Europe." Its paved roads and tall buildings left him yearning for the day when his people, the Arabs, could cross the threshold of modern civilization by reaching the same level of progress and prosperity. Tel-Aviv also reminded the Palestinian nationalist that the Jews were a hopelessly invincible nation, a cultured and refined people who had not by chance survived millennia of persecution across generations.507

Jewish communal life had a special appeal for Aref, providing him with a rare model of national unity. In *History of Gaza*, he documents Jewish colonies in the distinct, with tedious details about population, land and ownership. Through the lens of communalism he explores various models of Jewish agricultural community, including the yishuv, the moshav, the moshava, and the kibbutz. There is also a list of active Jewish organizations in Gaza, notably the Jewish National Fund, along with Jewish labor unions, such as the Agricultural Laborers' Union. A plea for cultural imitation colors his descriptions of Jewish communalism, most evident in his frequent, if timid, remarks in praise of Jewish colonies as an advanced stage in the history of civilization, and a model for communal life and modern organization.508

Aref was not a passive observer of Jewish communal life, to be sure. He must have realized that the economy of the Jewish yishuv is an essentially political economy, shrewdly clustered around the twin ideas of nationhood and statehood. This left him both alarmed and inspired. In his capacity as a district officer of Gaza and Beersheba, he would venture into

507 Ibid, entry March 26, 1940
508 Aref, *History of Gaza*, 301-3
implementing various aspects of that life among the local Arab population, thus embarking on a painful enterprise that involves mapping and surveying his subjects, registering tribal property, enacting legal reforms, and presiding over intertribal disputes among the local population. His mission, as he saw it, was not only to settle and pacify, but to nationalize his subjects.

For Aref the nationalist, admiration for Jewish modernity has its limits. His documentation of Jewish settlements in southern Palestine is often accompanied by warnings against Zionist economic activity and land purchases. In his History of Beersheba, for example, he provides a detailed list of the lands acquired by Jews in the city, including names of the new owners, both individuals and organizations, names of the sellers, location of the land, its size, and the date of purchase.509 Aref also frequently warns against suspicious Zionist agents "who freely roamed the Arab lands of Beersheba in search for cultivable tracts of the land."510 With the same ferocity, Aref constantly urged the Bedouin to register their lands. In his mind lingered the notion that governing property was equal to the making of nation state.511

Where Aref's modernizing and nationalist schemes clearly converge is on the question of land ownership. During the Mandate, the British introduced a series of land legislations with unmistakably anti-tribal measures. These include the 1928 Land (Settlement of Title) Ordinance, the 1943 Land (Acquisition for Public Purposes) Ordinance, and the Forestry Ordinance of 1926. The Mandate Government also adopted new measures for identification and registration of land according to cadastral surveys, known the Cadastral Survey Ordinance (1920). To facilitate the

509 Aref, History of Beersheba, 275
510 Ibid.
511 On this theme, see Martha Mundy and Richard Smith, Governing Property, Making the Modern State: Law Administration and Production in Ottoman Syria (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).
process, it conducted numerous population censuses and surveys, mappings, statistical measurements, and tax assessments surveys.\(^{512}\)

Initially, land ownership under the British Mandate was based on the Ottoman Land Code. The Ottoman Code, enacted in 1858, "aimed to both enhance the power of the central government and to protect the peasant agriculture", and hence was "clearly and strongly anti-tribal measure."\(^{513}\) The Ottoman Code classified land into five categories, arranged under the two general heads of mulk (private lands), and miri (land leased from the state). The Mandate government added a sixth category of land, Public Lands, which included lands under the control of the government (mewat), and lands acquired for public purpose (metruka). This amendment enabled the British to annex tribal lands deemed waste. Debating the classification of the uncultivable tracts of land of the Negev, the district officer of Beersheba advised the Director of Lands in 1926: "It is our interest to do nothing on the one hand to obstruct the spread of cultivation and on the other to prejudice the right of the government to dispose of the Mewat land for, say, colonization."\(^{514}\)

A series of new laws enacted by the British had direct impact on the Beersheba sub-district. These include the Mahlul Land Ordinance of 1920, which related to "lands given over by the State for agricultural cultivation but which for reasons had not been cultivated for three years and which, according to Ottoman law, reverted to the State." This was followed by the Mewat Lands Ordinance of 1921, which aimed "to prevent unauthorized occupation of waste lands


outside village domain." The Land Courts Ordinance of 1921 also called "for the courts to accompany the surveyors from district to district in order to clarify and determine all claims and disputes regarding boundaries of parcels".\textsuperscript{515} For this purpose, a land court was established in Beersheba in 1921, followed by the founding of agricultural educational institutions.\textsuperscript{516} During this period the British government also began to collect tithes on Bedouin crops.\textsuperscript{517}

Another related legislation was the Bedouin Control Ordinance, which was enacted in 1942 (and amended in 1945). The law aimed to provide the British administration with "special powers of control of nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes with the object of persuading them towards a more settled way of life." It also allowed the District Commissioner to direct the movement of those local tribes classified as nomadic, presiding over disputes of grazing rights and land ownership. Implemented under the pretext of security, pacification and prevention of Bedouin raiding, the law facilitated British control of 'illicit grazing' and the eviction of Bedouin from land which they did not possess under the newly enacted legislations.\textsuperscript{518}

That Aref was aware of English legal discourse on nomadism is evident in his systematic defense of Bedouin land ownership on British models. A telling example is his tireless efforts to establish tribal land rights on the basis of private property, as opposed to communal and collective ownership. "The land of Beersheba is parcelled out (mafruz), not communal (musha), as many tend to believe," he contends in the \textit{History of Beersheba}.\textsuperscript{519} Elsewhere he explains that

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\textsuperscript{515} Gavish, \textit{Survey of Palestine}, 110-111.
\textsuperscript{516} See Roza El-Eini, "British Agricultural-Educational Institutions in Mandate Palestine and Their Impress on the Rural Landscape," \textit{Middle Eastern Studies} (Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jan., 1999), 98-114.
\textsuperscript{518} Government of Palestine, Bedouin Control Ordinance, 1942 (No. 18 of 1942).
\textsuperscript{519} Aref, \textit{History of Beersheba}, 273.
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"there is no musha among the tribes because every Bedouin knows his land." 520 In Beersheba, he elaborates in the English edition of *Bedouin Justice*, "every inch of land is owned by someone, and everyone knows his own land despite the absence of boundary fences." 521 It appears that Aref here treats musha as an exclusively communal property, whereas in reality, musha meant a joint property that combined both communal and individual land rights and duties. 522

In Aref, nationhood and property are inseparable. He saw his effort to guide and educate the tribes of Beersheba on modern notions of ownership as part of his nationalist mission "to lead the Bedouin into the threshold of modern civilization." 523 In line with his modernizing doctrine, the shifting conceptions of land ownership among the Bedouin are presented in evolutionary terms. He writes, "there had been a time when the Bedouin barely cared about the land, when he despised cultivation and agriculture, and when he disregarded ownership as an obstacle to his free movement and mobility— a tendency which explains his hostility towards the fellah and sedentary life in general." Today, however, "the Bedouin began to exhibit a growing interest in cultivation and agriculture, as evident in the developed lands north of Beersheba." This transition was not immediate, we are told. As Aref explains, "initially tribal interest in land acquisition was limited to the practice of hijr, which entailed seizing land by force, without securing official permits or sale agreements." During this transformative stage, and despite the commence of local registration offices, the Bedouin remained reluctant to recognize, if not ridiculed, the idea of land purchase, the notion that "a piece of paper is more valid than his sword." Even today, the

523  Aref, *Bedouin Justice*, 278
Bedouin continues to show aversion to land registration. In Beersheba, for example, there are scarcely registered lands, except those owned by the municipal authority.\textsuperscript{524}

Aref was clearly writing under the sway of widespread perceptions of *musha* as a primitive form of ownership. The conventional wisdom in British land discourse was that the *musha* land in Palestine was an archaic system that blocked any chance of development and productivity.\textsuperscript{525} As an official report put it, "under this system... no one [had] any inducement to improve his land."\textsuperscript{526} This misconception held sway in Zionist historiography, where *musha* was widely viewed as a catalyst to indebtedness, rural insolvency, and alienation of the peasants.\textsuperscript{527} Another misconception was that the *musha* system encouraged "over-parceling" of the land.\textsuperscript{528} This perhaps explains why the Government of Palestine devoted considerable effort to carrying out land reforms under the banner of Land Settlement, which limited land rights and registration to cadastral methods by dividing *musha* into individually and permanently owned land plots.\textsuperscript{529}

To be sure, Aref did not hold that British legal conceptions of land ownership were absolute. With the same ferocity he reminds us that "the Bedouin has an intimate knowledge of the land, although he rarely pays attention to the practice of *tatwib* (land registration)."\textsuperscript{530} By introducing the notion of "intimacy with the land," Aref weighs local perceptions of land rights

\textsuperscript{524} Ibid, 235.
\textsuperscript{528} Nadan, "Colonial Misunderstanding of an Efficient Peasant Institution," 321.
\textsuperscript{530} Aref, *History of Beersheba*, 273.
against official ones. In *History of Beersheba*, he goes to great lengths to defend native notions of ownership among the Bedouin tribes. In a telling passage, he writes: "The Bedouin, when told that only by acquiring a land title (tapu) could he establish his right to the land, raises his sword in protest and exclaim: by this alone shall I establish my right to the land."\(^{531}\)

Aref's defense of tribal conceptions of ownership has a distinctively moral dimension. Land ownership, in this regard, is a matter of honor and moral duty for the Bedouin. As Aref reminds us, "the Bedouin loathes to part with his land. He deems it his honor to protect it. In times of hardship, he would rather pledge it (rahn) than sell it to strangers."\(^{532}\) Land ownership is also about national pride. For the Arab nationalist, moral duty is inseparable from national duty, and tribal honor is synonymous with patriotism. Land ownership, in other words, is no longer a personal or tribal affair, but a national obligation.

In the same analytical breath, Aref thus defends and rebuffs the practice of communal ownership among the Bedouin. In his double defense of native and European notions of ownership, he occupies a middle ground between the two poles of assimilation and resistance. On the one hand, his defense of private land ownership among the Bedouin seemingly concedes to the English (Lockean) notion that land ownership is vested in private property. On the other, his commendation for tribal "intimacy with the land" reads like a statement on the limits of state knowledge and definition of ownership. To use a famous axiom by James Scott, there is a realization in Aref that states can only exert their power on what they can know about. "Intimacy

\(^{531}\) Ibid.
\(^{532}\) Ibid, 274
with the land” also fits into what Scott describes as strategies of resistance to state power, which often act upon the gaps in state knowledge.\(^{533}\)

In both cases, Aref’s legal defense assumes a symbiotic relationship between ownership and autochthony. His synthesis both questions and embraces the territorialist outlook on nomadism, which views national and state formations from the single apparatus of settlement. In confronting modernity through the lens of tradition, he occupies both ends of a spectrum of opinions on autochthony: Bedouin’s land rights, in his reckoning, are established by virtue of property and ownership, but also by indigenous forms of rootedness, namely, tribal knowledge and intimacy with the land.

Land cultivation offers another legal axis around which tribal autochthony is restructured. For Aref, the Bedouin belonged to the land by right of cultivation, that is, by virtue of settlement. "The Arabs are the true owners of the land," he insisted, "because they continue to cultivate it even as it passed to the hands of new owners [the Jews]."\(^{534}\) In his defense of land cultivation among the Bedouin, Aref identifies two contending claims in the dispute over the size of cultivable land in Beersheba: one estimates this land at well below a million dunams, while the other goes well over three million. It is not hard to guess where Aref stands on the debate (he concedes to the latter), despite the fact that "it has become a matter of consensus that the cultivated land, currently, falls short of a million dunams."\(^{535}\) Aref’s defense of the three-million account rests clearly on his claim that the Negev was not only overpopulated, but also well-


\(^{534}\) Aref, *History of Beersheba*, 275

\(^{535}\) Ibid, 274
cultivated, a claim which fits neatly into his tendency to fuse elements of the agriculturalist argument (in the Lockean sense) into his national narrative. In a word, agronationalism.

Aref mines every possible evidence to prove the fertility of Palestine before the arrival of the Zionists. His sources range from European travel literature to the publications of the Palestine Departments of Land Registry and Agriculture. There are detailed lists of Palestine’s flora and fauna, native trees and plants, types of vegetation, plant species and quantity, agricultural exports, and so on. Aref is consistent in maximizing his estimates by adjusting his numbers. For example, citing a variety of sources, he contends that the land allocated for olive trees in Palestine by 1931 had been half a million dunams, and numbered nearly 4.5 million trees. When numbers fall short, he resorts to ready historical explanations, including blaming, not without justification, the Turkish army for cutting most of the trees during the war for fuel.536

Perhaps more telling is Aref’s contention that the Arabs preceded the Jews in the mastery of cultivation in Palestine. "The early Israelites," we are told, "learned from the ancient Palestinians, the Canaanites, how to cultivate the land, along with the art of planting and growing olive trees in Palestine."537 Aref’s tone is clearly polemical here. His insistence on "Jewish estrangement from cultivation" bodes well for his nationalist scheme, and is systematically juxtaposed with his depiction of cultivation as indigenous to the Arabs. That the Arabs pioneered in the art cultivation is evidence, in his view, of their legal, moral and national right to Palestine.

This form of reasoning is clearly predicated on the much-venerated English axiom that labor and cultivation constitute a legal basis for land ownership (John Locke). It also ironically clusters near Zionist legal claims in Palestine, which vest Jewish national right in the singular

536 Aref, History of Gaza, 291
537 Aref, History of Gaza, 290
notion of 'land redemption'. One detects in Aref's argument an ironic imitation of the very
principle that guided the founding of Jewish agricultural communities, namely, the celebration of
agriculture as the locus national unity and communalism in Palestine. In his capacity as a public
servant, mediated by his self-cultivated image as a modernizer and nationalist, Aref sought to
launch his own 'agrarian revolution' in Palestine.

Land settlement, ownership and cultivation constitute the tenets of Aref's national
enterprise in southern Palestine. His activism among the Bedouin shows a growing awareness of
the interplay between settlement and nationhood. This is evident, for example, in his constant
complains about Bedouin's reluctance to cultivate the land. "In vain I try to persuade the Bedouin
to cultivate their land by tree plantation, hence relinquishing persistent nomadic habits among
them, such as wandering and mobility." Settlement and sedentarization, Aref hoped, "would
ultimately lead the Bedouin into the path to civilization, thereby earning their due place in the
sun." One outstanding feature in Aref's nationalist enterprise is his redefinition of nomadism.
"Almost universally it is accepted that the Badu are wholly nomadic", he consents, adding, "they
certainly do wander from place to place." However, "in these wanderings there is a definite
objective: They are not aimless meanderings." What Aref is questioning here is the notion that
the Bedouin of Palestine are inherently nomadic, and hence impervious to assimilation: "I
concede that the Badawi is nomadic or semi-nomadic, not from desire, but from need. The true
nomad has no holding or cultivation of his own. The Beersheba Badawi has both. He lives
mainly on what he cultivates. He knows and practices the principles of cultivation." In this view,

538 Ibid, 277
539 Ibid, 278
the Bedouin of Palestine are not truly nomadic, Aref concludes, because "fully nomadic Badu who have no specific anchorage are called ruhhal. The Badu of Beersheba are shebeh-ruhhal (semi-nomadic)." In a similar vein, the Bedouin are not inherently nomadic because "their movements are dictated by seasonal conditions", because "their raids are inspired by [external] act of aggression and offence," because "their wanderings are within their territory," and because "they always return to what we might call the home site." The Bedouin, in short, are suitable for modern conceptions of settlement, nationhood, and statehood.

A major component of Aref's efforts to resettle the Bedouin is the population census. Under the Mandate, two attempts were made to enumerate the Bedouins of Beersheba: The first during the general census of 1922, the second during the census of 1931. The first attempt was met among the Bedouin with stern resistance, meshed with a collective sense of cynicism. "Their attitude," recalls Aref, "was that [only] God knows their numbers." Apparently tribal sheikhs suspected that the census would ultimately lead to conscription, taxation, and "other forms of oppression anathema to the Bedouin's mind." Their skepticism was not without justification. It has its roots in the misfortunate turn of events which the Bedouin had experienced under the Turkish government. In 1831, for example, when the Ottoman government, in an attempt to rebuild its professional army, set out to conduct its first empire-wide census, it was met with deep skepticism among the local tribes, if not outright hostility and violence. This fact was not lost on the British. As a compromise, the British government decided to halt its original plan,

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540 Aref, *Bedouin Love*, 21-22, my emphasis.
542 See Aref, *Bedouin Love*, 202-207
543 Kasaba, *Moveable Empire*, 99
resorting instead to making rough estimations, mainly by comparing tithe records with similar records in areas where the Bedouins had provided information to the census officials.\textsuperscript{544} The second attempt brings to the fore Aref’s leading role in enumerating the Negev Bedouin during the Mandate, which culminated in the first successful census among the tribes of southern Palestine. This attempt, however, was not without challenges. In his report on the \textit{Census of Palestine 1931} (published in 1933), E. Mills, the superintendent of the census, concludes that the Bedouins, after all, were not properly enumerated. "To have attempted to enforce the census... would have met, almost certainly, either stubborn resistance or a temporary disappearance of a proportion of the population into Trans-Jordan, or Sinai, or the parts of the desert to the south east of Beersheba inaccessible to census officers."\textsuperscript{545} Another major shortcoming in the census was the strict application of the nomadic/sedentary binary. "The census figures for 1931 fall short of adequately reporting the Beduin population, using the term \textit{nomadic} in a severely limited sense and thereby introducing a division between sedentary and nomadic Bedouin which was more artificial than real."\textsuperscript{546}

The census was Aref's singular accomplishment in Beersheba. "The census of 1931 was perhaps the most challenging, yet the most interesting task I have faced as a District Officer," he recalls in \textit{Bedouin Justice}. "When I set out to enumerate the Bedouins that year, I was confronted with the same challenges as in 1922, and would have failed had I not used every possible means of persuasion that speaks to the Bedouin's heart. Finally, my life and travels among the Bedouin, along with my intimate knowledge of their customs, helped me convince them that there was no

\textsuperscript{544} Dajani, “The Enumeration of the Beersheba Bedouins”, 301-307
\textsuperscript{546} Amiran, "Nomadic and Bedouin Population", 250
risk whatsoever in taking the census."\(^{547}\) In the English edition of *Bedouin Justice*, Aref recalls a conversation with the local sheiks, in which he reassured them that "the census was in their interest." The census, he insisted, "would help the Bedouin secure fodder and seed loans from the government, and keep record of their land ownership, cultivation, and grazing rights." Aref also assured the sheiks that he was both "a good Muslim and a good friend of the Bedu."\(^{548}\) This is not to suggest that Aref was merely paying lip-service to the Bedouin. After all, he was no less suspicious of the British than his subjects. For example, he tells us that he agreed to undertake the census among the Bedouin on a number of conditions. "The first was that there should be no undertaking that nothing adverse to the interests of the Badu would result from the census."\(^{549}\)

But how exactly could Aref convince the Bedouin that it was in their interest to participate in the census? How could he, as he later put it, "conquer centuries of [tribal] prejudice against the census"? And what in his view speaks to the Bedouin's heart so dearly as to lure them into cooperation? The key word is nationalism.

Henry Vollam Morton was a British journalist who travelled in Palestine during the second census. In his travel account, which first appeared in 1934, Morton hails Aref as "one of the most valued and trusted members of the Palestine administration. His government of the desert tribes of the Beersheba district is a triumph of personality, for no man could rule these people unless he was both trusted and admired by them." Morton was especially impressed by Aref's "remarkable achievement" in carrying out the first census among the Bedouin, despite

\(^{547}\) Aref, *Bedouin Justice*, 7-34
\(^{548}\) Aref, *Bedouin Love*, 204
\(^{549}\) Ibid, 203
their "strong prejudice" against it.\textsuperscript{550} In a revealing passage, Aref confesses to Morton that one of his key methods in "conquering the Bedouin's prejudice against the census" was to appeal to the their sense of patriotism, that is, their 'national' interest in proving that the desert was not empty as the Zionists claimed. "What I want to know is how you managed to count the Bedouin", asks Morton. "It was not easy", smiles Aref, adding:

As soon as my intention was made known, five thousand of them packed up and escaped to Sinai. Whole tribes went into hiding. It took me eight months to persuade them. I had to go out and live with them, sleep with them and eat with them. \textit{But what won them over in the end was the idea that if their numbers were known to the Government, it would be clear that there could be no room for Zionists in the Beersheba district}.\textsuperscript{551}

Aref's appeal to the Bedouin on the ground of national affiliation was candidly embedded in his vision on nomadism, namely, his tendency to view nationhood, let alone statehood, through the single prism of settlement. By accepting the census, the Bedouin could part not with nomadism, but, ultimately, with their deep-seated resistance to national and state formations. Perhaps more telling still, his account here is a rare testimony that the Bedouin, too, conceded to this national vision.

Another major component of Aref's nation-building enterprise in southern Palestine is mapping. Aref is credited with providing the first modern map of the Bedouin tribes of Beersheba (see Figure I). Unlike previous maps of southern Palestine, such as the famous map of the Palestine Exploration Fund, Aref's map was not limited to the \textit{locations} of the tribal units. It

\textsuperscript{550} H. V. Morton, \textit{In the Steps of the Master} (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934), 156-7.\textsuperscript{551} Ibid, 156-7, my emphasis.
also marked, for the first time, the *boundaries* of these units, or what Aref describes as "tribal borders." In so doing, Aref was clearly projecting a modern European notion onto a traditional form of organization. The map brings into sharp focus the modernizing aspect of his national enterprise. It is a political, territorial map, both detailed and simplified, of the Negev terrain and its people. Yet it fails to reflect the complex aspects of tribal land, such as patterns of ownership (private or communal), land usage (gazing or cultivation), and type (parceled or communal).

In this regard, the map is a perfect example of what James Scott terms "legibility", which he employs to account for the "state's attempt to make society legible, to arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion." The modern map, in this sense, joins a cluster of measures taken by the state (the Mandate government) to make its population legible, to "translate what it knew into a common standard necessary for a synoptic view." These include, in our case, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers, and the invention of land tenure. "In each case," as Scott explains, "officials took exceptionally complex, illegible, and local social practices... and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored."\(^{552}\) The census and the map, as ultimate expressions of the strong nexus of knowledge and power, are thus emblematic to colonial and national (state) institutions alike.\(^{553}\)

Yet, to label Aref's map as a merely colonial device is oversimplification. A brief comparison with the P.E.F. map will illustrate this point. The P.E.F. map, while claiming to combine scientific knowledge and historical inquiry, culminates in the creation of a map that

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\(^{552}\) Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 2.  
both imposes and projects into modern science elements of biblical imagination, let alone colonial imagination, hence it was issued in two distinct formats, a 'Modern Edition' and an 'Old & New Testament Edition,' the former being an empirical, military and topographical map of the country, and the latter a biblically-inspired map that blends names of modern settlements with those of ancient territories, including the Twelve Tribes of Ancient Israel. This perhaps explains why the British map, which purported to detail Palestine's topography and toponymy, its local flora and fauna, fails to mention tribal borders. A colonial instrument, the P.E.F. map also imposes a uniquely European form of knowledge on a traditional form of organization. The Map of Western Palestine (1878), for example, published in a large scale of 1 mile to 1 inch, borrows the trigonometric standards employed by the Ordnance Survey of England. This should also explain why the map, which covered over 6,000 square miles of surveys and was issued in 26 sheets, was followed by an eight-volume series of texts detailing its (re)demarcation of the land and its topography (1881-5). In this view, the map embodied the legacy of the P.E.F. Society, namely, its double mission as a platform for scientific inquiry and a vehicle for military intelligence gathering and imperial hegemony. It was a cadastral map which, in line with other topographical and surveying projects undertaken by the Society, was instrumental in both 'illuminating the secrets of the Holy Land' and deploying the geographical knowledge of Palestine for the service of British colonial institution.

By comparison, Aref's map stands out as a uniquely localized map, bringing into sharp focus his intimate knowledge of local Bedouin lands, and detailing existing tribal borders, towns,

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villages and cisterns. Aref's map also stands out for avoiding the reductionist view, characteristic
to P.E.F. mapping, of tribal land, thus redrawing it on a proportionally larger, and hence more
reflective, scale (notice that the Negev comprises nearly half of Israel's land area). In other
words, while the P.E.F. map projects external (colonial and biblical) knowledge into the
geography and topography of the land, Aref's map seeks to reflect, document, record, and, most
important, recognize the existence of tribal lands. Mapping, by its very nature, is not a faithful
reflection of spatial and geographical reality, but a graphic, snapshot representation or scale
model of this reality. While no map is ever entirely objective or neutral or impersonal, let alone
universal, Aref's map, while not the product of a laborious cadastral survey, is more
representative still.
Figure I: Aref al-Aref's Map of Bedouin Settlements in the Negev (1932)
The Hebrew Reception of Aref's Histories

Aref's activity in southern Palestine sparked a lively debate in Zionist circles during the Mandate period. Jewish readers were widely acquainted with Aref's works on the Bedouin through the Hebrew translations of his twin Law Among the Bedouin (1935) and History of Beersheba (1937). These translations, which appeared during Aref's tenure in Beersheba, brought into focus his attempt to write the Bedouin into history. In his introduction to the Hebrew edition of History of Beersheba, the translator, the renowned Arabist Menahem Kapeluk, hailed the book as "first truly scientific attempt" to write the history of the Bedouin tribes of southern Palestine.\(^555\)

A series of reviews in the local Hebrew press attempted to capture Aref's nationalist motive. A book review of History of Beersheba by the Arabist Michael Assaf appeared in the Hebrew daily Davar two years after its translation (January 21, 1938). The article reflects a growing awareness in Zionist circles towards Aref's 'nationalist' enterprise in southern Palestine. The Hebrew reader is informed, with an air of urgency, of Aref's attempt to "rewrite the history of the country." Aref is further depicted as an Arab nationalist who, "rather than writing the history of Beersheba, wishes to write it into history."\(^556\)

Aref's History of Jerusalem was a source of equal concern for the Zionist author. Citing a previous report in Haaretz, Assaf informs his Hebrew readers of a meeting held by a group of Arab representatives in Jerusalem to discuss "the sure path towards an Arab Jerusalem." During the meeting, we are told, Aref presented his Arab comrades with a historical survey, in which he

\(^{555}\) Aref, History of Beersheba [H], 1
\(^{556}\) Michel Assaf, "A Review of the History of Beersheba by Aref al-Aref," Davar (January 21, 1938), 15 [H]
struggled to prove that the Jebusites, the original founders of Jerusalem, were Arabs. "Aref took pains to prove that the Jews had no [historical] right whatsoever in Jerusalem," concludes Assaf, "and that Jerusalem belonged eternally and exclusively to the Arabs."\(^{557}\)

Assaf could hardly hide his discontent with Aref’s activity in southern Palestine. Aref's role in conducting the census of 1931 is singled out as the culmination of his 'nationalist activity' in Beersheba. "During Aref's service as a mayor of Beersheba," Assaf warns, "an astronomical number of Bedouin was revealed in the city, an event which marks his [Aref's] subversive attempt to prove that the desert was overpopulated."\(^{558}\) This not only confirms Aref's nationalist motive for undertaking the census of the Bedouin, but that he was acting against the backdrop of mounting dispute over the fate of nomadism in Mandate Palestine.

A critical article in the daily Maariv, entitled "A Book with a Trend", embarked on yet another attempt "to enlighten the Hebrew reader on the perilous intellectual activity of Aref al-Aref in Palestine." The article (dated December 26, 1950) consists of a biographical note on Aref's life, his historical corpus on Jerusalem and Beersheba, his political activity in southern Palestine, along with his "collaboration with the Mufti [of Jerusalem] in organizing protests against the Jews, while serving the Mandate government."\(^{559}\) The article specifically warns of "an upcoming book by Aref on the history of Jerusalem." The following passage is quite telling:

[Jewish] historians in Jerusalem had been inquired about books on the history and origins of the Jewish yishuv in the city. They soon realized that the inquiry was made on behalf of none other than the mayor of the city, Aref al-Aref. It then came to our

\(^{557}\) Ibid, 3
\(^{558}\) Ibid, 3
\(^{559}\) "A Book with a Trend", Maariv (December 26, 1950), 2
knowledge that Aref had decided, with the encouragement of King Abdullah of Jordan, to write a book on the history of Jerusalem, with the aim of proving that Jerusalem, except for a passing phase of its long history, had always been a non-Jewish [i.e. Arab] city. The book is expected to come out within three months.\(^{560}\)

The book in question was Aref's *Brief History of Jerusalem*, which indeed appeared during his brief service as the mayor of East Jerusalem in 1951.\(^{561}\) It did, indeed, mine Hebrew sources on Jerusalem, and many other sources, to prove that Jerusalem was eternally an Arab city. Unlike his other *Histories (of Beersheba, Gaza, Askalan)*, Aref's *Histories of Jerusalem*, surprisingly, have never been translated to Hebrew.\(^{562}\)

The critical reception of Aref's *Histories* in the Hebrew press is revealing on both counts: First, it confirms Aref's own narrative on the nationalist character of his enterprise. Second, it uncovers a deeper conflict over the meanings of history and nationhood in Palestine. For his Zionist critics, Aref's struggle to resettle the Bedouin in time and place was not the singular enterprise of a desert administrator or a single-minded modernizer, but rather undertaken against the backdrop of mounting dispute over the place of nomadism in national and state formations.

The Hebrew translation of Aref's accounts on the Bedouin, besides its obvious scholarly merit, was also apparently driven by the realization that such 'native' literature was not only inimical to Zionist plans, but also useful. Indeed, Aref's intimate knowledge of the Bedouin and their customs had a special appeal for Zionist attempts during the Mandate to come to terms with

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\(^{560}\) Ibid, 1.

\(^{561}\) Aref al-Aref, Tarikh Al-Quds (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ārif, 1951).

\(^{562}\) These include Aref’s monumental *Detailed History of Jerusalem* (1961), and *History of al-Haram al-Sharif* (1947).
the Bedouin population in Palestine, let alone its appeal for later Zionist plans to "conquer the desert" in the post-state period. In the next chapter I show how Zionist discourse on nomadism both shaped and was shaped by such knowledge.

Aref would doubtless agree with this evaluation of his legacy. At its core, his national enterprise in southern Palestine clustered around one grand mission: settling the Bedouin in time (genealogy, ethnography, writing the local tribes into history) and place (mapping, census-based surveying, and land cultivation schemes). In his polemic against both Zionist and British narratives, he equally defended and redefined, incorporated and restructured, the tropes of nomadism into his nation-building formation, a duality dictated by what he believed was his national duty towards the Bedouin of Palestine, and still more by his double capacity as an avid modernizer and a true Arab nationalist. Ultimately, his passage from Arabism to Palestinian nationalism, or rather, his reconciliation of the two identities, was formed and shaped into his reconstruction of nomadism along the lines of modern nationhood, leading to his unrelenting assertion that the Bedouin of Palestine were both original Arabs and native Palestinians. It was a national rite of passage of sorts, a passage whose course was set and staged in southern Palestine.

Perhaps most important, Aref's legacy in southern Palestine sheds fresh light on the ways in which colonial and national narratives converge on the question of nomadism and its complex relationship with race, nationhood, and statehood: If settler colonialism denies nomadism a national history, nationalism reinvents it. In this sense, nationalism, rather than simply

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563 For example, Yaacov Shimoni, the author of perhaps the most comprehensive book on the Arabs of Palestine during the Mandate, mines Aref's accounts on the Bedouin. Shimoni, *The Arabs of Palestine* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1947) [H].

emancipating native histories from colonial narratives, represented yet a new form of hegemony in which native histories, memories and identities are reconstructed, re-imagined, and invented. His nationalist enterprise reveals that nationalism and colonialism are equally involved in a dual process of denial and invention, erasure and redemption, association and assimilation. In Mandate Palestine, this double practice was not the sole legacy of British colonialism or Arab nationalism, but also of Zionist settler colonialism.

Not that Aref’s national enterprise in Palestine was a mere mimicry of colonial narratives. In the struggle over the fate of nomadism, his national narrative tended to depart from official Zionist and British narratives in a number of key aspects. These include his unwavering faith in tribal assimilation, historical agency, and tribal intimate knowledge with the land and complex forms of autochthony. His mapping and enumeration of the Bedouin tribes, while bearing traits of colonial hegemony, tended to weave traditional and modern forms of knowledge into the single taxonomy of national rights. Where the two narratives, the colonial and the national, most clearly diverge is on the nomadic character of the Bedouin. To Aref, the Bedouin were nomadic, or semi-nomadic, by necessity, not by choice, by historical accident, not by nature. Their wandering was neither aimless nor permanent, but was dictated by seasonal conditions, by their will to escape foreign conquest and survive government tyranny. Their movement was within a delineated territory, within a land they knew, loved, owned and cultivated. In this view, Aref’s vision for the future nomadism was neither entirely romantic nor tyrannical; rather, it rested on his conviction that the Bedouin were firmly on the path of sedentarization, transformation and assimilation to modern civilization, and, more importantly, nation and state-building.
Chapter Five
Zionist Perceptions of Nomadism

This chapter examines perceptions of nomadism in Zionist discourse by drawing on the legacy of Zionist pioneers in Mandate Palestine. Mining primary sources in Hebrew, I show how Zionist tribal discourse marked both ruptures and continuities with British narratives on nomadism, at once borrowing and reinventing colonial taxonomies on race, nationhood, and statehood. I maintain that these taxonomies transformed not only native Palestinian conceptions of nomadism, but conceptions which had characterized early Zionist literature. A governing theme running through this chapter is how Zionist national enterprise in Palestine—its legal apparatus and para-state institutions—has been defined by its opposition to nomadism.

To this end, I focus on a new breed of Labor Zionists whose views on nomadism helped reshape Zionist discourse and attitudes to the Arabs of Palestine. These include, most notably, David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Aaron David Gordon, and Moshe Smilansky. I credit these men with laying the intellectual foundation for what I term agronationalism, that is, the shift from nomadic to settled sectors of society as the locus of national revival. In its Zionist version, agronationalism can describe the entire legacy of Labor Zionism in Palestine. To Labor Zionists, it was the peasant, not the Bedouin, who embodied, by virtue of labor and cultivation, the prototype of the New Jew in Palestine. The Bedouin, meanwhile, were portrayed as a race of foreign conquerors responsible for the destruction of what was once 'the fertile granary of ancient Palestine.' This sheds light on the genesis of the so-called 'agrarian revolution' in the Jewish yishuv during the Mandate. To Zionist pioneers, agriculture was not merely an economic means,
but an end in itself, a national ethos. To nationalize agricultural means of production was key to the 'national redemption' of the Jews. Not that agronationalism was limited to nationalizing the agricultural economy of the yishuv. As we shall see, in Zionist historiography agronationalism also meant rewriting Jewish history into the ancient system of agricultural settlement in Palestine, a mission which dominated the intellectual legacy of Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi.

These men were not inflexible doctrinaires, to be sure, but in the early stage of Labor Zionism, they occupied a spectrum of opinions on nomadism that ranged from assimilation to association. That meant shifting the Zionist narrative on nomadism in at least two aspects: from reviving Jewish nomadic identity to the suppression of that identity, and from embracing the Bedouin as agents of Jewish return to history to celebrating the fellahin as the locus of national revival in Palestine. Fervent proponents of land settlement in Palestine, they shared a territorialist worldview that rested on the exclusion of nomadism, in its Arab and Jewish manifestations, from national and state formations. Settlement, not mobility, dictated their vision of the New Jew.

I locate Zionist perceptions of nomadism in two formative stages. The first is characterized by a widespread fascination with the Bedouin as the locus of Biblical nostalgia, racial purity, national revival and cultural assimilation. This stage witnessed the emergence in the Jewish Yishuv of hybrid forms of para-state movements with unmistakably nomadic character, notably ha-Shomer (the guardsman) and ha-Ro’eh (the shepherd. The second stage is marked by a gradual disenchantment with nomadism, shifting Jewish models of autochthony from nomadic epistemes to those of settlement and territoriality. This accompanied the founding in Palestine of new forms of political expedience and social organization with a distinctly territorialist character, such as the Jewish kibbutz, Hebrew Labor and Canaanism.
Widely hailed as an 'agrarian revolution' brought by so-called Socialist Zionism, this shift allowed Zionists to identify the Bedouin with nomadism and conquest, while reinstating the fellahin as agents of Jewish negation of exile and return to history, and hence as a model of national revival. The settler/nomad duality also culminated in a narrative of decline, a climatic discourse which helped reinforce the image of the Bedouin as a destructive race blamed for the destruction of the once fertile Jewish agricultural yishuv. This declensionist narrative, which bears trains of British discourse on nomadism, enabled Zionists to justify not only their expansion in the Negev desert, but their schemes of land redemption and reclamation across the country. Paradoxically, it was the privileging of the Bedouin as the 'pure Arabs' in early Zionist literature that enabled Zionists to ultimately view the Arabs as a race of foreign invaders in Palestine. Rather than the enmity, it was the romantic fascination with the Bedouin in this literature which nurtured the image of the Arabs as the sons of the desert.

This perhaps explains why many Zionists came to view the Bedouin and the fellaheen as 'a race apart', hailing the latter as the descendents of the ancient Canaanites, and, in the case of Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, the ancient Jews. By the early twentieth century, in the wake of the First and Second Aliyahs (Jewish waves of immigration), the national character of the New Jew had been firmly founded upon the basic tenets of land settlement, labor and cultivation. To secular Zionists, the New Jew was linked to the land, not to the Bible. Jewish autochthony in Palestine, they believed, could not be established on the notion of 'historical right' alone, and hence necessitated the creation of a new taxonomy of rootedness, drawing on modern territorialist epistemes and elements of the (Lockean) agriculturalist argument. The fellah, therefore, was celebrated, not only as a symbol of the 'hidden Jew' or as a living vestige of the
ancient Jewish yishuv, but as the agent of Zionist negation of exile and Jewish national redemption in Palestine.

In this transformation, the shift in Zionist discourse from nomadic to territorialist ideals transformed not only Zionist perceptions of the Arabs, but, ironically, perceptions that had characterized Jewish literature up to the twentieth century. This was no easy feat. As we shall see, shifting Jewish identity from the 'exilic' to the 'settler' was not a one-way passage. The heterogeneous corpora of textual evidence still shows a complex process characterized by a series of ruptures and continuities, internal conflicts and compromises.

In tracing these unsteady metamorphoses, I examine a set of para-state groups and organizations that flourished in the Jewish yishuv during the early decades of the twentieth century. These include, most notably, the Galilee-based associations of Ha-Ro’eh (The Shepherd) and Ha-Horesh (The Plowman), two offshoots of Ha-Shomer organization and the broader Labor movement. Except for a few articles in Hebrew, literature on these groups is virtually nonexistent.565 One valuable, and largely overlooked, source I draw on is Kovetz Ha-Shomer, a collection of firsthand testimonies, platforms and programs by members and founders of Ha-Shomer and the two subgroups, which was first published in 1936.566

The complex history of nomadism in the Jewish yishuv is the culmination of a dynamic exchange between individuals, institutions, and the broader framework of Zionist discourse on nomadism. Two main actors are David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. The two are hailed in Zionist historiography as founding fathers of Labor Zionism. Founding fathers they were, not

566 Kovets Ha-Shomer: Te’udot, Zikhronot Ve-Divre Ha’arakhah (Tel-Aviv: Arkhiyon ha-‘Avodah, 1936).
only of a new movement (Labor Zionism), but of a cultural discourse that shaped Zionist perceptions of both the Arabs and the Jews. The two were prolific writers whose revived intellectual interests in Palestine ranged from history to ethnography to anthropology. Their early monumental volume *Eretz Israel in the Past and Present* (1918), closely discussed below, became a founding text in Zionist ethnographic discourse on the Arabs of Palestine. The book also offers a classic example of agronationalism in Zionist historiography, namely, its tendency to rewrite Jewish history from the single prism of the ancient Jewish agricultural yishuv in Palestine. During this period, the two also wrote extensively on the Arabs, notably Ben-Gurion's special pamphlet on the origins of the fellahin, and Ben-Zvi's monumental history of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine.

Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi set the tone for Zionist discourse on nomadism. Where their opinions clearly converged is on the perception of the Bedouin (or the Arabs) and the fellahin as two discrete races in Palestine. This view, while not uncommon at the time, culminated in a curious theory on the Jewish origins of the Arab fellahin. Writing under the sway of early European ethnographers in Palestine, notably the P.E.F. ethnographic legacy, they entertained the thesis that the fellahin were the descendants of the ancient Hebrews who had founded the early Jewish yishuv in Palestine. In their narrative, the autochthony of the fellahin, mediated by the radical identification of Jewishness with settlement, was juxtaposed with the identification of the Arabs with nomadism and conquest. During the Mandate, however, their unorthodox view of the Arab fellahin shifted against the backdrop of mounting Palestinian resistance to Zionism. Yet

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567 Published in David Ben-Gurion, *Our Neighbors and Us* (Tel-Aviv: Davar, 1931) [H].
568 Yitshak Ben-Zvi, *She’ar Yishuv*, (printed in Palestine, 1927) [H]
this mattered little to their core concept that the new Jewish ethos was vested in land settlement, labor and agriculture.

A.D. Gordon was the spiritual force behind Labor Zionism. His labor doctrine revolutionized Zionist conceptions of nationhood and autochthony beyond recognition. Acting as the moral foundation for the so-called 'agrarian revolution', it helped establish the nexus of labor and cultivation as the basis of Jewish nationhood in Palestine. In championing Jewish return to the land, Gordon provided Labor Zionism with a new legal taxonomy of land settlement that rested on the twin notions of sacrifice and redemption. In this regard, his doctrine, widely hailed as a new 'religion of labor,' is the Zionist equivalent of Locke's legal conceptions of land ownership. In Gordon, Jewish right to Palestine was lodged in the harmony between the spiritual and the material, that is, the unity of biblical and territorialist returns to the land. Despite its integrative attitude to the Arabs, his labor doctrine helped reinforce the dogma of Hebrew Labor, the subsequent replacement of Arab workers by Hebrew ones, and, ultimately, the nationalization (i.e. Judaization) of agriculture in the yishuv. And while Gordon rarely wrote about the Bedouin, his doctrine influenced Zionist views on nomadism in a fundamental way.

If Gordon was the theoretical incarnation of Labor Zionism, Moshe Smilansky was its literary manifestation. His literary corpus on the Bedouin would shape Zionist perceptions of the Arabs for decades to come. His desert tales and stories reinforced the dual image of the Arabs as the sons of the desert, as opposed to the sons of the field (the Jews); and as the original Arabs, as opposed to the 'mixed multitude' of the urban and sedentary Arabs. Smilansky's obsession with the desert was not merely romantic, nor limited to the noble savage imagery. It fed into his

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570 Moshe Smilansky, Bene Aarav: Sipurim (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1964); Ba-Aravah: Sipur (Tel Aviv: Masadah, 1946).
active role during the mandate in championing land settlement, reclamation and acquisition in the Negev. He was a founder, not only of a new Jewish settlement in Palestine (Rehovot), but of a new taxonomy that reconfigured agriculture as the basis of Jewish national redemption in Palestine. His legacy as a writer and a settler thus embodies the strong nexus of knowledge and power reshaping Zionist discourse on nomadism.

This chapter builds on revisionist accounts in Zionist historiography. Over the past decades, historians of the Zionist movement in Palestine have explored the interplay of land and labor in shaping Zionist national and state formations. Their scholarship shows, though timidly, how Zionist para-state institutions, clustered around Jewish agricultural settlement and Hebrew Labor, shaped the national ethos of the Jewish yishuv. By tracing the twin taxonomies of land and labor in the origins of the Jewish yishuv, I wish to advance the thesis that the very genesis of the yishuv was designed around the idea of Jewish nationalism, and hence embedded into the deeper structures of Zionist conceptions of autochthony, nationhood, and statehood.

Scholars and historians of Zionism have also touched upon the question of racial classification of the Arabs in Zionist ethnography, and more specifically, how the racial demarcation of the Arab population along settled and nomadic lines was at the root of Zionist nationalist agenda in Palestine. Anita Shapira, for example, shows how the theory of the Jewish origins of the Arab fellahin was aimed at solving the so-called 'Arab problem' in early Zionist historiography– which faced Zionists with the inconvenient truth of demographic imbalance.

between Arabs and Jews in Palestine—"by their assimilation with the Jewish population by dint of racial similarity between the two people."\(^{572}\)

Only recently, however, have historians of the Jewish yishuv begun to recognize nomadism as a defining feature in the early stages of Labor Zionism in Palestine. Whereas some chose to examine the integration of Bedouin aspects into the formation of a new Jewish identity in Palestine (e.g. the Sabra),\(^{573}\) others demonstrated how nomadism provided Zionist pioneers with a radical notions of otherness.\(^{574}\) Others still ventured to show how orientalist memes in Zionist literature transformed its perceptions of the Arabs and Jews alike.\(^ {575}\) This revisionist literature offers an alternative narrative to classic Zionist historiography, in which nomadism is pushed to the margin of the historical inquiry of early Arab-Jewish interactions in Palestine.\(^{576}\)

Where this literature falls short is in providing a comparative perspective on Arab and Jewish attitudes to nomadism. There has been little attempt to explore the dual suppression in Zionist discourse of those cultural aspects in Arab and Jewish histories that fall outside its nationalist agenda, namely the existence of a sedentary Arab culture, and a Jewish nomadic tradition. Indeed, there is little discussion of how Zionist conceptions of 'Arab nomadism' were a mirror-image of its own nomadic tradition, that is, how the disenchantment with the model of the Arab Bedouin in Zionist literature reflected a deeper rupture with its own nomadic identity. In short, these studies fail to account for the unspoken erasure of Jewish nomadic identity in Zionist

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\(^{572}\) Shapira, *Land and Power*, 49.


historiography, and how this erasure went hand in hand with its double reduction of Arabness to nomadism and Jewishness to settlement.

This chapter seeks to bridge this gap by bringing to the fore the role of nomadism in shaping national and identity formations in early Zionist historiography. One uncharted area of inquiry is the symbiotic relationship of race of nomadism in Zionist national discourse during the Mandate. I show that Zionists conceived a ladder of national development that assigned the top rung to sedentary populations, while degrading tribal factors of society to the bottom of this hierarchy. In this reconfiguration, Zionists deemed agriculture not merely an emblem of human progress, but a marker of racial and national superiority. Lack of agriculture, they believed, correlated not simply with primitivism, but with a lower racial and national status. Tracing this conception in the origins of the so-called ‘agrarian revolution’ in the Jewish yishuv, widely hailed as the singular accomplishment of Labor Zionists in Palestine, I show that Jewish agrarianism evolved not only from Zionist rupture with its Jewish nomadic or Diasporic past, but against the backdrop of a fast-growing Bedouin tradition in the early phases of the Jewish yishuv, which manifested itself in a complex array of social and cultural formations.
Desert Reclamation: From Exile to Conquest

In September, 1953, five years after its establishment, the State of Israel hosted its first international exhibit in Jerusalem. The Conquest of the Desert International Exhibition and Fair, aka Jerusalem 1953, was dedicated to the "the reclamation and population of desert regions."

Sponsored by the Jewish National Fund, the monumental exhibition was attended by prominent Israeli officials and Zionist leaders. It attracted over half a million visitors, including representatives from over twenty foreign countries, and international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Health Organization.577 Visitors were handed a bilingual Hebrew/English catalog featuring greeting remarks by state officials and organization representatives. The front cover featured a logo depicting a hand clutching a flower and rising from the desert. In an advertising stamp, the JNF described its mission as "making the desert bloom." Other posters displayed Jewish settlements awash with plowed fields and flora.578

A universalistic aura ran through the catalog, featuring grand themes of human progress, and man's victory over the desert, over nature. The exhibit symbolized, in the words of one official, "the conquest of the unconquered forces of nature."579 Avraham Granott, the president of the JNF, hailed it as the manifestation of "man's incessant grappling with the powerful elements of survival and development," which culminates in Zionist struggle to "drive the desert from our boundaries." "The history of the new Hebrew nation in this country," he added, "is composed of chapter after chapter of one subject—mastery over the desert." Hebrew conquest of the desert,

578 Catalogue: The Conquest of the Desert Exhibition and Fair (Jerusalem, 1953) [In English and Hebrew].
579 Ibid, 11.
declared the Zionist leader, "will bring about the final fulfillment of Zionism." Berl Locker, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, dubbed the exhibit the "highest percept of Zionism, and the natural accompaniment of the task of ingathering the exiles in Israel." In his Forward to the catalog, Moshe Sharett, Minister of Foreign Affairs and patron of the exhibition, described it as the culmination of Zionist victory in the "the far-flung battle-front of the Sown against the desert." This victory, he further rejoiced, will "bequeath a broader basis of existence to coming generations," thus defining "the nation which has re-established itself in this country", and whose existence is "driven by force of destiny to devote ceaseless efforts to the redemption of the wilderness." To James Rothschild, President of Palestine Jewish Colonization Association, "the conquest of the desert was the first step in the establishment of the Jewish people on the land of our ancestors." By conquering the desert, declared prominent Jewish leader Rabbi Z. Gold, the Jews became partners "in the act of creation." In Gold's parlance, the desert serves as a euphemism for Palestine before the arrival of Zionism, a definition which fits neatly into Zionist climatic narrative on the Arabs. Gold sums up Zionist desert narrative as follows:

Two thousand years ago the land was conquered by the enemy and utterly destroyed, and so it remained desolate until the lord visited his people and aroused the spirit of our nation's pioneers who returned to the land of their forefathers, and by the sweats of their brow and their precious blood converted a desolate wilderness into a Garden of Eden.

Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, then the President of Israel, launched the event by drawing on the same narrative of decline. He hailed agriculture as the locus of Jewish national renewal, a vehicle for resurrecting the fertile land of ancient Israel, and a symbol of return to the golden era of Jewish

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580 Ibid, 1-12
581 Ibid, 11
history, a history whose glory and serenity were interrupted by centuries of Jewish exile and Arab conquests. "During all the time that Israel lived on its land," said Ben Zvi, "we find a picture of unceasing activity in this sphere," thereby "widening the areas under cultivation."

What followed, we are told, was an immense process of desertification brought about by the Arabs. "When the land was conquered by desert [Arab] tribes, camel drivers, and shepherds, the desert once more pushed back the cultivated land. Settlement shrank and the wasteland expanded; for the Bedouin made his livelihood mainly in wild growth and not in cultivated plants." This decline, boasted the Zionist leader, "continued for generations and was reversed only at rare intervals when settlement again grew at the expense of the desert. In particular this applies to our own colonization which started some 70 years ago."

In Ben Zvi, the new Jewish State of Israel is defined by its opposition to nomadism. "Israel is not a country of nomads and desert tribes," he reminded his visitors. "Her future lies in intensive agriculture and industry. Our State cannot be satisfied with the sparse settlement such as existed in the country at the time of the Ottoman regime." An air of mission civilisatrice ran through his speech as he pleaded: "It is up to us to save what has been destroyed. It is up to us to extract the utmost from the desert."582 The 'Conquest of the Desert,' Ben Zvi later told the Hebrew daily Haaretz, marked "a victory of the constructive forces over the forces of destruction."583

Not only Israel, but the crux of Jewish history is defined by its opposition to nomadism. To Ben Zvi, the Jews were not the sons of Jacob, but "the children of Joseph [who] began tilling the land and cutting down the ancient forests in the hills of Ephraim in order to extend the settled

582 The Conquest of the Desert, 6-7 [English edition].
areas." Like their ancestors, the modern Jews are tied to the land by dint of their devotion to agriculture. Desert reclamation, in this view, was not merely a celebration of man's dominion over nature, but of Jewish national redemption. It is a reclamation of Jewish lost identity, its national ethos and moral fiber, the hallmark of Labor Zionism in Palestine. With it Zionism came full circle, thereby realizing its promise of historic return and national rejuvenation.

Ben-Zvi's vision was shared by his lifelong friend and associate David Ben-Gurion, then the Prime Minister of Israel. "We [the Jews] have inherited a desolate and ruined country, and more than a half of its land is empty and gloomy desert," he wrote in 1954 for a JNF series on *Desert Reclamation*. Drawing on the same binary of decline and redemption, Ben-Gurion added: "While not responsible for its desolation and desertification, we [the Jews], as the new owners of the land, bear the burden of redeeming and restoring the land" to its ancient condition. To the Zionist leader, the tenets of the Jewish "national revolution" in Palestine clustered around agriculture and desert reclamation. "The true conquest [kibbush] of the land", he contested, is not achieved by military means alone, but through "land cultivation and redemption".  

'Conquering the desert' became Ben-Gurion's primary agenda in this period. In 1947-8, when the boundaries of the Jewish and Arab states were being contested, he insisted that the Negev be part of the Jewish state. In 1955, he urged Jewish youth to settle the Negev in the name of Zionism's pioneering spirit. "Only by recruiting our youth into this mission could we make the desert bloom and transform it for the service of Israel and its people," he wrote that year,

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585 David Ben-Gurion, "Importance of the Negev" (17 January 1955) [Hebrew].
hailing the Negev as "the cradle of our people and its hope." 586 A few years later, he issued his famous "call for desert communities and science" in the Negev. In 1970, seven years after retiring from public service, he would set a personal example by settling in kibbutz Sde Boker in the heart of the Negev, where he lived until his death in 1973. In a set of letters he wrote from his new residence, Ben-Gurion described his 'pioneering mission' in the Negev as far more joyful than his service as a prime minister. 587

For the 'Father of Modern Israel' 588, the "conquest of the desert" doctrine was at the root of Jewish struggle for national redemption. "The transformation of the Negev into a center of agriculture," he wrote in 1961, "is the central pioneering task of this generation of Israelis and world Jewry." 589 Like his colleagues at the JNF exhibition, Ben-Gurion infused his desert mission with the universalistic maxim of "man's mastery over nature." Writing a few months after Israel announced plans to establish 'the world's first chain of industrial co-operative towns' in the Negev Desert, he declared: "The reclamation of the Negev desert, however, has more than local interest, vital as that interest may be, to the State of Israel itself. Here, man is faced with a fateful and momentous challenge of nature." To the Zionist leader, Israel stages "the universality of the drama inherent in this struggle for reclamation of the Negev," where the Jewish people are drawn in a battle to "give the Negev a universal value." The Negev, covering over half of Israel's

586 Mikha’el Deshe and Ya’akov Goren (eds), Da’ Et Ha-Negev (Know the Negev) (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1955), 7.
587 See David Ben-Gurion, and Peninah Ben-Gurion, Mikhtavim El Polah Ye-El Ha-Yeladim (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968) [Hebrew]
588 This is title of Anita Shapira's recent biography of Ben-Gurion.
total land area, serves as a stage for "mankind's over-all battle against the desert regions anywhere." 590

In Ben-Gurion, desert reclamation begins where Jewish nomadism ends. In conquering the desert Zionists staged the negation of the Diaspora, the end of Exile (Galut), and the return of the Wandering Jew. Like Ben-Zvi, Ben-Gurion believed that the 'conquest of the desert' was nothing short of a 'Jewish miracle'. It was a twofold mission to transform, redeem and free the land, not only from the yoke of Arab nomadism, but from the haunting legacy of Jewish nomadic tradition, their long history of exile and wandering. "By virtue of this miracle of halutziut (pioneering), we resisted habits acquired in the Diaspora and uprooted them," wrote Ben-Gurion, adding:

Who believed decades ago that Jews who for centuries had lived in towns, and for generations had been strangers to labor and the soil, would become the builders of a country? Who imagined that a people which had been scattered and dispersed for over two thousand years would reassemble in its ancient homeland under foreign occupation and in it renew its sovereign independence?591

Like his JNF colleagues, the founding leader believed that nomadism, in both its Arab and Jewish manifestations, was the direct opposite of statehood. Writing nearly a decade after the founding of Israel, he reassured his readers that "the small State of Israel, however, cannot long tolerate within its bounds a desert which takes up over half its territory. If the State does not put an end to the desert, the desert is liable to put an end to the State."592

590 David Ben-Gurion, "A Call for Desert Communities and Science," in The Desert Experience in Israel, 9.
591 Ibid, 11-12
592 Ibid, 10, emphasis added.
On 'Arab nomadism' Ben-Gurion had more to say. Drawing on the century-old narrative of climatic decline, he contends that "the Arabs have transformed more than one flourishing and populous country into a desert." This constituted the moral basis of his 'desert conquest' doctrine. The 'conquest of the desert' was not merely a metaphoric delineation for the Zionist leader. As he wrote in his War Dairies in February 1948, "in the Negev we shall not buy the land. We shall conquer it."593 In fact, Ben-Gurion had envisioned violence as the sure path to Zionist "conquest of the desert" long before the war. In a 1937 letter, he told his son Amos that "we [the Jews] must expel Arabs and take their place." Ben-Gurion justified his attitude by drawing on a taxonomy of development. "If not allotted to the Jewish state," he claimed, "the Negev will remain barren because the Arabs have neither the competence nor the need to develop it or make it prosper. They already have an abundance of deserts but not of manpower, financial resources, or creative initiative." The Arabs, he reasoned, would rather "follow the dictates of sterile nationalist emotions" and ensure that "the Negev remain barren than that Jews should inhabit it." In the event of a Jewish state, Ben-Gurion further warned, "we can no longer tolerate that vast territories capable of absorbing tens of thousands of Jews should remain vacant, and that Jews cannot return to their homeland because the Arabs prefer that the place remains neither ours nor theirs." Only force, he concluded, would "guarantee our right to settle there."594

Ben-Gurion's last remark proved prophetic. By 1949, Israel had assumed control of the Negev desert. Of the nearly 53,000 Bedouin registered by the British as living in the area, only

594 "Letter from David Ben-Gurion to his son Amos" (October 5, 1937), obtained from the Ben-Gurion Archives in Hebrew, and translated into English by the Institute of Palestine Studies, Beirut.
12,500 remained. The rest, expelled, scattered to the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai and Jordan. Like the rest of the Arabs who managed to remain within the newly demarcated boundaries of Israel, the Bedouin were now considered a security threat to the young state. During the military rule period that followed the war (1949-1966), the Negev district was declared a 'closed area,' and a policy of concentrating the Bedouin in the area east of Beersheba was set in motion. This set the stage for Ben-Gurion's declaration of the Negev as an unsettled area, while issuing his endless pleas for Jewish youth to resettle it.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the JNF exhibit chose to define the accomplishments of the young state in terms of 'desert conquest and reclamation.' After all, 'making the desert bloom' was Zionism's singular promise of national redemption in Palestine. For decades, Labor Zionists had billed their mission in Palestine as an 'agrarian revolution' in the face of a primitive, backward and tribal Arab economy. The 'desert', in this sense, was not merely a geographical delineation, but the frontier of the Jewish yishuv itself. This perhaps explains why at the end of nearly every statement about Jewish 'agrarian revolution' in Zionist literature there is always a statement about Arab nomadism. To many Zionists, the desert/settlement binary was not only a spatial demarcation, but emblematic of a deepening struggle between two peoples, two cultures, and two economies.

A desert taxonomy shaped Zionist spatial conceptions of Palestine. While 'settlement' referred to the Jewish yishuv, the 'desert' denoted the desolate and barren landscape occupied by the Arabs, the once fertile land of ancient Israel awaiting its modern Jewish redeemers. That the

596 On this period, see Emanuel Marx, Bedouin of the Negev (New York: Praeger, 1967).
JNF exhibit chose the Hebrew term *shemama*, instead of the more common term *midbar*, to describe its mission is quite telling. Unlike *midbar*, *shemama* conveys the more general, and hence rather fluid, connotation of barren and desolate landscape. The desert, in this sense, simply denoted Palestine before the arrival of Zionists. Indeed, by the time of the exhibit, the 'conquering the desert' had become the locus, not only of the JNF's 'land reclamation and afforestation', but of the entire settlement enterprise of Labor Zionism in Palestine. As Anita Shapira points out, "the concept of *kibbush* [conquest] is frequent in the literature of that period, but it has the connotation of settlement, not militant action. In the terms employed before World War I, "conquering the land" meant one thing: settling in Palestine."\(^{598}\) This meaning, in fact, never lost its force, as was evident in a series of Conquest programs sponsored by the JNF in the post-state period: Conquest of the Desert, Conquest of Shepherding, Conquest of the Mountains, even Conquest of the Swamps.\(^{599}\)

In declaring victory over Arab nomadism, the JNF exhibit hides more than it reveals. For the most part, the event marked a radical rupture, not only with Arab nomadism, but, essentially, with Jewish nomadic tradition. The culmination of a dual suppression of nomadism in Zionist theory and praxis, the 'Conquest of the Desert' thus symbolized the conquering of Jewish nomadic past by cultivating an essentialized narrative of decline on Arab nomadism. That the new State chose to define itself by its opposition to nomadism was not only reflected in the exhibit publications, but in a vast body of literature on desert reclamation that flourished in that

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\(^{598}\) Anita Shapira, *Land and Power*, 41.

\(^{599}\) See, for example, JNF, *Conquest of the Mountain* (Jerusalem, 1954) [Hebrew].
period, the bulk of which was sponsored by the JNF. This literature, I would argue, must be read against the backdrop of a fast-growing nomadic tradition in the early Jewish yishuv, one characterized by internal conflicts and ruptures. The thread of this tradition weaves into a different story: To many early Jewish newcomers in Palestine, nomadism, not settlement, was the locus of national revival. It is to this unspoken phase of Zionist history in Palestine, now completely erased from Jewish national historiography, to which I must now turn.

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The Birth of the 'Hebrew Bedouin': The Nomadic Phase

Early Jewish newcomers in Palestine shared a widespread fascination with the Arab Bedouin. Members of the First Aliyah (1882-1903), who came mostly from Eastern Europe and Yemen, drew on centuries of Biblical and Christian depictions of the Holy Land as an exotic desert landscape awash with palm trees, tents and herds. Hebrew literature from this period is replete with nomadic motifs, ranging from invoking the common nomadic descent of Arabs and Jews to cultivating a Jewish desire to 'go native' after the fashion of the Arab Bedouin.

Ephraim, the protagonist of the first Hebrew novel to be published in Palestine, is portrayed as a Jewish newcomer roaming the country in search of the lost Jewish tribes of the Bible. In the story, we follow Ephraim's discovery of a Jewish tribe near the Jordan River. The tribe is recognized as the 'sons of the ancient Rachabites.' Thanks to centuries of assimilation to the local Arab Bedouin, the Jewish tribe, we are told, had managed to preserve its ancient heritage in its purest form. In the story we also encounter a tribal leader striving to reunite Arabs and Jews under one language, Hebrew. The leader, a Jew gone Arab, welcomes the Jewish protagonist as his brother. A happy ending.\(^{601}\)

The author of the novel was none other than Hemda Ben Yehuda, wife of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the prominent Jewish lexicographer widely hailed as the reviver of modern Hebrew language. The young couple, who arrived in Palestine from Belarus in 1892, are commemorated in Zionist historiography as the "first Hebrew-speaking family in Palestine." Like Hemda, Eliezer was a devout revivalist. From his new residence in Jerusalem, he embarked on a quixotic

\(^{601}\) Hemda Ben-Yehuda. *The Farm of Rechabites* (Jerusalem, 1903), reprinted in *Sipurim me-Hayye ha-Haluẓim* (Jerusalem, 1945), [Hebrew].
attempt to revive ancient Hebrew on the basis of modern Arabic. "The roots of Arabic were once a part of the Hebrew language," he conceded, "once lost, and now we have found them again."602 Eliezer also believed that the revival of the Hebrew language in Palestine will unite Jews worldwide. "The Hebrew language", he famously declared, "can live only if we revive the nation and return it to the fatherland."603

Hemda was the literary incarnation of Eliezer's revivalist vision of reclaiming Hebrew on the basis of Arabic. Her novel, *The Farms of the Rechabites*, first published in Jerusalem in 1903, caters to her early vision of reviving the ancient Hebrew heritage in Palestine by tracing its roots among the local Bedouin tribes. To the young newcomer, the Bedouin were no longer the pure Arabs, but the 'hidden Jews' in whose veins ran the blood of the ancient Hebrews. It is the Bedouin, not the farmer, who lodged in her imagination as the prototype of the modern Hebrew nation. In her later stories, Hemda's fascination with the Bedouin is often juxtaposed with a growing aversion towards the Arab fellahin, whose villages struck her as a shocking rebuttal to the Biblical depiction of the Holy Land as the land of "every man under his vine and under his fig tree."604

Hemda and Eliezer, still free from the fetters of political Zionism at the time, believed that the path to Hebrew revivalism began with liberating Jews and Arabs from their modern cultural barriers. A common Hebraic origin of the two peoples was claimed by the couple as the basis of this union. This unorthodox vision underlined a desire shared by many Jewish

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603 Ben-Yehuda, "Each Under his Vine and Fig and His Fig Tree," in *Wandering in the Land: Travels by Members of the First Aliyah*, Ed. Yaffa Berlovitz, Tel-Aviv: Defense Ministry, 1992 (1944), 160 [Hebrew].
newcomers to reinstitute themselves in Palestine. To the young revivalists, the prominence of Hebrew gave Jewishness a cherished sense of locality, territoriality, and belonging. With striking foresight of the Canaanites (or Young Hebrews) of the 1940s, they envisioned national revival in the quest for a common pre-biblical heritage of a Hebrew nation free of European and Jewish influences. In tracing the roots of the modern Hebrew nation in an early Hebraic culture that extended beyond its Jewish past, Hemda and Eliezer can be seen as precursors of the subsequent Canaanite movement which, while claiming Hebrew as the dominant language of Palestine, still embraced Arabs as members. To the Yehudas, it is the Bedouin who served as the prototype of the New Hebrew, the agent of modern Hebrew revivalism. Hailed as a native Arab who spoke pure Arabic, the Bedouin lodged in their imagination as a model of racial and cultural purity in whose image was preserved the pre-exilic Jew of the ancient homeland.

Early Jewish fascination with nomadism had been centuries in the making. It had a long and stable tradition in Jewish history, deeply rooted in biblical and medieval literatures. The ancient Hebrews and Israelites are believed to have shared a deep-seated nomadic identity. Their religious laws, cultural motifs and literary forms display a predominately nomadic character. It is from the wanderings of the Exodus that they entered into the land of Canaan. From their tribal milieu, it is believed, came the highest ideals of the Bible. In this spirit, the Rechabites, who accompanied the children of Israel into the Holy Land, were commanded, “Neither shall you build a house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have you any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents, that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.” (Jeremiah 35:6-7).

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605 On the emergence to the Canaanite Movement see Ron Kuzar. Hebrew and Zionism: A Discourse Analytic Cultural Study (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001)
606 Gilah Ramraz-Ra’uhk, The Arab in Israeli Literature, 10.
607 See Michael Homan. To Your Tents, O Israel! (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1
In the Bible, the tent figures as a cherished habitat for Jewish prophets and personages. Even Yahweh is said to have dwelt in a tent in Sinai. Tents had also hosted the courts of Deborah and Samuel, and the monarchy of David and his successors. Later Israelite prophets idealized their tent life, tirelessly praising those who deserted urban comforts in favor of tents. In classical Jewish literature, the tent served as a metaphor for God, Israel and Judah. In medieval Hebrew poetry, the Land of Israel was frequently referred to as the 'tent'.608

Fascination with the Arab Bedouin touched all walks of life in the early Jewish yishuv. The Bedouin, it was believed, retained intact traces of ancient Jewish life, its nomadic ideals, and biblical character. Folkloric and literary forms from this period praised the Bedouin's ethos, his courage and loyalty to the tribe.609 In early Hebrew literature, the Bedouin also figured as agents of Jewish return to the past, to the golden era of Jewish history in Palestine. The Bedouin, hailed as the direct descendants of the ancient Israelites, served as a model for the New Jew who embodied the anti-model of the exilic Jew. They were part and parcel of the land, the true natives, and the sons of the soil. Assimilation to the Bedouin was key to Jewish 'negation of exile', their rootedness, belonging, and renewed bond with the land. Early Jewish newcomers adopted Bedouin's customs, cavalry virtues, horsemanship and riding skills, even their speech.610

Paramilitary Jewish groups drew a direct link between the Bedouin and the Cossacks of Eastern

609 See Yael Zerubavel, "Memory, the Rebirth of the Native, and the 'Hebrew Bedouin' Identity", Social Research 75, No. 1, (Spring 2008), 315-352.
610 See Yafa Berlovetz, Inventing a Land, Inventing a People: The Literature of the First Aliya (Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad, 1996) [H]
The Bedouin, in short, was an integral part of the cultural landscape in the early Jewish yishuv.

Fascination with the Bedouin left its mark on early Zionist organizations in Palestine. In 1903, members of the first Jewish agricultural school in Palestine, while gathered to create a new generation of Hebrew farmers, were photographed in traditional Bedouin costumes. The school's founder, Israel Belkind, was a Zionist pioneer and a First Aliyah leader. He was also founder of the Bilu movement for agricultural settlement of Palestine, whose members later created the Jewish settlement of Gedera, south of Rehovot. Like the Yehudas, Belkind, who also came Belarus, fell under the spell of Canaanism: He would wander for a year among the Bedouin tribes on both sides of the Jordan, learn their language, and weave his observations into a theory on the Jewish origin of the Arabs of Palestine. In the Arabs Belkind believed he had solved the mystery of 'the ten lost tribes of Israel.'

Legion Ha'am (The People's Legion), a paramilitary group founded by the Zionist pioneer Michael Halperin in 1903, adopted military language and customs borrowed from the Bedouin. The Legion was created in the wake of Herzl's El-Arish proposal, which called upon Jews to join the occupying British forces in exchange for establishing a Jewish colony in Sinai. Its members would spend the prewar period herding and shepherding and roaming the Sinai Peninsula after the fashion of the local Bedouin. The Legion, with its strong tribal character,

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613 Israel Belkind, and David Ben-Gurion. Ha-’arvim Asher Be-Erets-Yiśra'el (Tel-Aviv: Hermon, 1969).

614 *The Haagana Historical Archive, *"Legion Ha'am" [Hebrew].
would inspire a succession of paramilitary underground movements that flourished during the
Second Aliyah, such as Bar-Giora and Hashomer.

In the early phases of the Second Aliyah (1904-1914), Jewish attraction to nomadism lost
none of its force. First generation Zionist pioneers like Moshe Smilansky and Yosef Haim
Brenner still praised the Bedouin’s ethos, his freedom, rootedness, and loyalty to the tribe.\textsuperscript{615} For
many Zionist newcomers, the Bedouin continued to serve as the agent of Jewish return to
history. In her Aliyah memoirs, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, wife of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, recalls a burst
of collective excitement among Zionist newcomers as they learned about a Bedouin tribe who
had "descended from the ancient Jews."\textsuperscript{616} Yitzhak Ben-Zvi himself is reported to have travelled
among the Bedouin of Palestine and Transjordan in search of the lost Jewish tribes of Israel.\textsuperscript{617}

Jewish assimilation to nomadism in this period was nowhere more manifest than in the
formation of Ha-Shomer (the Watchman) and Ha-Raroeh (the Shepherd), two Zionist groups that
flourished in the Jewish yishuv during the first decade of the century. Assimilation to Bedouin
ways by members of these groups was not limited to dressing in \textit{abayas} (robe) and \textit{kufiyas}
(headdress), or adopting Arabic language and customs.\textsuperscript{618} Nor was it confined to "learning
shepherd ing" or "watching over flocks and raising and tending sheep", as one member
recalled.\textsuperscript{619} It was rather woven into the social fabric of these groups, their political visions and
cultural ideals.

\textsuperscript{615} See Moshe Smilansky, \textit{Sons of Arabia} (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1964); Joseph H. Brenner. \textit{Out of the Depths & Other
Stories} (New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2008).
\textsuperscript{616} Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, \textit{We Descend} (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1959), 54-5 [Hebrew].
\textsuperscript{617} “Travels of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi in Arab land in search for Jewish Bedouin,” \textit{Central Zionist Archives}, A25\textbackslash{}178-4t.
\textsuperscript{618} See Yafa Berlovetz, \textit{Inventing a Land, Inventing a People: The Literature of the First Aliya} (Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz
Hameuchad, 1996) [H]
\textsuperscript{619} Quoted in Avraham Yaari (ed.), \textit{Zikhronot Eretz Israel} [Memories of the Land of Israel] (Jerusalem: Zionist
Histadrut, 1947-8).
Ha-Shomer was established in 1909 as a defense organization with the aim of protecting Jewish settlements (moshavot) in Palestine. It was created by a group of Socialist Zionists, mostly members of Poale Zion movement, such as Israel Shochat and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. Founded out of the paramilitary Bar-Giora, Ha-Shomer was militant in character. The first Shomrim (guards) adopted local dress, horseback riding skills, and other fighting customs borrowed from the Bedouin and their European counterparts, the Cossacks. While founded on socialist ideals, Ha-Shomer made more enemies than comrades. Its policy of replacing Arab guards by Hebrew watchmen antagonized the Arab population. Many of its members were exiled by the Ottoman authority during World War I. In 1920, the group ceased to exist and most of its members were integrated in the defense organization Haganah, which constituted the core of the Israel Defense Forces.620

The first Shomrim cultivated a strong sense of Bedouin identity. One need not look beyond Kovetz Ha-Shomer, a rare Hebrew collection published by the group in 1936, to grasp the ferocity of this trend. The book contains valuable firsthand testimonies by its founders and members.621 One major theme running through the collection is tribal assimilation. In an opening article, the editors struggle to refute widespread accusations of "exaggerated assimilation to Bedouin customs" among the Jewish guards, claiming instead that the group aims to "create a middle class of Jewish farmers."622 The personal stories and testimonies unfolding through the rest of the book, however, paint a more complex picture, one which reveals a deep sense of 'nomadic pride', meshed with internal conflicts and resistance.

620 Ben Zion Dinur (ed.) The Haganah History Book (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library, 1954) [Hebrew]
621 Kovetz Ha-Shomer: Te’udot, Zikhronot Ye-Divre Ha’arakhah (Tel-Aviv: Arkhiyon ha-’Avodah, 1936).
622 Ibid, xv.
One member, Israel Geladi, recalls how many Shomrim chose to run a "life of complete assimilation to Bedouin ways, living in tents, wandering and moving around, and raising animals after the fashion of the local tribesmen." By assimilating to the Bedouin way, those Jewish guards meant not only to fashion themselves into a new human type, a new breed of Jewish warriors or romantic ascetics. By adapting to the local Bedouin, Jewish newcomers sought also to belong. Indeed, that Jewish newcomers imagined themselves as natives was not immediately obvious at the time. Geladi himself grumbles how the local Arabs viewed him and his comrades as "strangers and foreigners," despite their "genuine efforts to adapt." 623

The main question that preoccupied the first Shomrim was 'to settle or to wander.' In the early phases of the Jewish yishuv, it had become customary to view guardianship as inferior to settlement. Members of Ha-Shomer, whose mission was to protect Jewish farmers and workers, grew frustrated as they were restricted from participating in the settlement activity of the yishuv. Settlement was not only seen as morally and socially superior to guardianship, but its very opposite. Another member, Mendel Portugali, was haunted by the question "to work or to guard", as one of his letters is entitled. 624 To the Jewish watchman, asking whether "to work or to guard" was equivalent to asking whether "to settle or to wander." Portugali, however, chose the latter. "Bedouin's life is very attractive to me," he wrote. "I heard of men who deserted their life and wandered far away, to live a life of freedom, a communal life full of purity and moral supremacy." 625

623 Ibid, 6
624 Ibid, 30
625 Ibid, 80
In Ha-shomer, the two forms of mobility (guardianship) and settlement (labor and cultivation) existed side by side. Coexistence, however, had its limits. It rarely went without conflict, as is reflected by the wealth of personal testimonies. In one of its 1908 meetings, the organization underlined the "significance of learning horseback riding, gaining proficiency in using weapons after the fashion of the Bedouin." One representative told the council how frequently he had visited the Bedouin tents to learn Arabic virtues, courage and freedom. Manya Shochat, one of the group's founders, recalled how members of the original Bar-Giora "struggled to learn the Arabic language and Bedouin customs." 627

Not that all members conceded to this characterization of Ha-Shomer. Other members, for example, stressed the supremacy of labor over guardianship. In an article on the "People of Ha-Shomer", Yitzhak Ben-Zvi wrote: "We all believed in the power of labor to liberate our people and put them on the path of independence. We believed that our redemption and revival rested entirely on labor." 628 Others still hinted at reconciliation. To Manya Shochat, if the question was "to wander or to cultivate," then the answer should be both. 629

The second question that haunted the early Shomrim was Arab labor: Should Ha-Shomer employ Arab guards? There was hardly a consensus on the answer among the founders of the group. In its formative years, the movement, in fact, did not stipulate the expulsion of Arab guards as part of its scheme. In a 1911 meeting in Rehovot, the settlement's council set out to discuss the question of 'Hebrew guardianship.' The council, except for one member, rejected a proposal of Jewish-only guards policy, for obvious financial reasons (Arab labor was cheaper, 626 Ibid, 51 627 Ibid, 96-100. 628 Ibid, 61. 629 Ibid, 51
after all). Bowing to pressure from dissenters, the council finally agreed, as a compromise, to a mixed-guardianship policy: Arab guards would be overseen by Jewish horse-rider supervisors.\textsuperscript{630}

This kind of reconciliation was not uncommon in the Jewish yishuv, given how vaguely nationalized it was at the time—nearly a decade before the Arab riots of the 1920s, and over two decades before the national uprising of the 1930s.

One classic example of this conciliatory tendency was the Sabbatical year, a religious practice widely observed among the conservative community of the Old Yishuv. The Sabbatical year commands Jews to desist from working the field or cultivating the land every seventh year. For members of the New Yishuv, who were rather secular and idealist in character, the orthodox practice clashed with the ambitious modernizing and nationalistic schemes of Labor Zionism. Moshe Smilansky, the legendary founder of Rehovot, recalls an incident which took place during the first Sabbatical year following his arrival in Palestine. It involves a group of young vine-growers in Rehovot who refused to keep the ancient Biblical decree of allowing the land to lie fallow, a practice which they regarded as absolute and absurd. Yet since the Rabbinate of the yishuv enjoyed the sole authority to determine whether the crop was fit for cultivation, an accommodation was finally reached, and the two sides decided to employ a form of legal fiction: The soil of the vineyard, up to a depth of one meter, was to be sold to an Arab. As the owner was now formally a non-Jew, work on the land was legally permitted from the Rabbinical point of view.\textsuperscript{631}

Such a compromise could hardly please a Labor Zionist like Moshe Smilansky, not if we remember that Smilansky, in fact, was the only member at the 1911 council's meeting who

\textsuperscript{630} Ibid, 162.
\textsuperscript{631} Moshe Smilansky, Resurrection and Disaster (Massada, 1953), 27 [Hebrew]
argued for Hebrew-labor only policy. Unlike his peers, Smilansky thought as a nationalist. To him, Hebrew labor was not merely an economic means, but an end in itself, an ethos. To nationalize the means of production was at the root of his vision for Socialist Zionism. While the Hebrew-only doctrine seemingly conflicted with his 'socialist' ideals, let alone class struggle and economic interests, it fit neatly into his view of Jewish nationalism as the ultimate goal of Zionism. As he wrote in *Hapoel Hatzair* in 1908: "If the land of Israel belongs to us, the Jewish people, then our national interests come before all else," because "it is not possible for one country to serve as the homeland of two peoples."\(^{632}\) Over the next decade, Smilansky's view would dominate Zionist attitude to the Arabs. Until then, the Arab would continue to dwell in Jewish imagination as the prototype of rootedness and belonging in Palestine.

Nowhere was Jewish Bedouin identity more forcibly embraced than among the members of Ha-Roeh (The Shepherd). An offshoot of Ha-Shomer, the new organization was founded by a group of Jewish shepherds in Upper Galilee in the spring of 1913. Like the early Shomrim, members of Ha-Roeh lived among the Bedouin tribes, adopting tribal customs and learning from the Arabs the 'art of shepherding.' Israel Belkind, the spiritual leader of the Shepherds, advised his followers to move to Galilee and realize their dream by assimilating to the Arab Bedouin. He even advised fellow Jewish shepherds to marry Arab women.\(^{633}\) Many Shepherds undertook to spend a whole year among the Bedouin, without any contact with their Jewish friends. "This absolute isolation, this asceticism, this living outside in nature was meant not only to turn them

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\(^{632}\) Quoted in Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 58.

\(^{633}\) A testimony in *Ha-Shomer Collection*, 961.
into accomplished shepherds, but to fashion them into new human type: hardened, resourceful, capable of taking care of themselves.\textsuperscript{634}

Ha-Roeh was not merely a disparate group of ascetics, to be sure, but in the early stage of its existence, its founders and members wished to cultivate a form of class identity. "The dream of the Shepherds was to found a tribe of [Jewish] nomadic shepherds," wrote one founding member in 1917. The Shepherds also aspired "to create a political force in the country, to conquer shepherding the same way guardianship had been conquered by Ha-Shomer, and, ultimately, to create a Jewish bloc against the Arab [Shepherds]." To realize this ideal, another founding member wrote, "we need to arm ourselves, move with our flocks to wild areas across the country, roam its free lands and live in tents after the manner of the Bedouin."\textsuperscript{635}

The relations between the Shepherds and the Shomrim were often tense. Conflicts were not uncommon. While founders of Bar-Giora and Ha-Shomer embraced the vision of Ha-Roeh in principle, they did nothing to realize it. As one member of Ha-Roeh recalls, "whereas the Shomrim were treated with respect, the Shepherds were despised and disregarded as culturally inferior." This perhaps explains why Ha-Roeh never evolved into a full-fledged movement, unlike the Labor Legion, the other offshoot of Bar-Giroa and Ha-Shomer. As the conflict between the two groups widened, the Shepherds accused the Shomrim of lack of empathy and appreciation for their vision and political ideals. Alexander Zaid, one of the founders of Bar Giora and Ha-Shomer, recalls: "the struggle between the Shepherds and the council of Ha-Shomer was a result of their demands for autonomy: The Shepherds aspired to create a model

\textsuperscript{634} Gil Eyal, \textit{Disenchantment with the Orient}, 47. See also Ya'acov Golstein, \textit{The Group of the Shepherds, 1907-1917} (Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1913) [H].

\textsuperscript{635} Quoted in Nakdimon Rogel, "Like Sheep without a Shepherd," (Jerusalem: Katedra, 1985), 102-124.
for a Hebrew, nomadic shepherd, free and independent of the [Jewish] yishuv." Thus when Israel Shochat, a leading founder of Ha-Shomer, refused to recognize Ha-Roeh as a special division within Ha-Shomer, the Shepherds left Ha-Shomer for two years. In the spring of 1916, the Shepherds moved to Upper Galilee to organize themselves into a 'shepherd association' and found a 'settlement of shepherds'. Their dream, another member recalls, was to "to create a generation of Hebrew shepherds and revive shepherding as the primary occupation which gave our nation its best and most refined men." Eventually, though, the Shepherds' original plan to assimilate to the Arab Bedouin as a prelude to conquering shepherding failed, largely due to a lack of cooperation on the part of Ha-Shomer.

636 Ibid, 108.
637 Ibid, 122.
Hebrew Conquest of Labor: The End of Jewish Nomadism

In 1907, the Ha-Horesh (the Plowman) organization was founded in the Upper Galilee by a group of Jewish farmers. The group's name, curiously, was derived from the Arabic root *harath* (to plow), to distinguish the plowman from both the 'worker' (po'el) and the 'laborer' ('oved). The same year, Ha-Horesh published its platform, composed jointly by Shlomo Zemach and Eliezer Shochat, two founding members of the group. The small pamphlet hailed agriculture and cultivation as the primary venue for the realization (hagshama) of the Zionist dream in Palestine. "Our mission is to establish a farmers' party, which we lacked in the Diaspora," they declared. "In recognizing that one of the basic means for realizing Zionism is through working the land, we envision ourselves with the mission to create and organize a healthy element of Hebrew workers in the Land of Israel: the Plowmen [Ha-Horesh]."

For inspiration, Ha-Horesh looked to the Arab fellah. The fellahin, its founders believed, were more settled, rooted and tied to the soil, and hence embodied an ideal model for the 'redemption of the soil', one of Labor Zionism's official mantras in Palestine. This, of course, was not to suggest that the Plowmen were looking for a sort of class fraternity with the Arab fellahin. After all, one of their primary goals was "to increase the number of Hebrew workers in the [Jewish] agricultural settlements in Palestine." The fellah acted merely as a passive agent, an enemy both admired and despised. In fact, Ha-Horesh, claiming a socialist origin, tended to view the relations between the Jewish plowmen and the Arab fellahin in terms of class struggle,
despite admitting the supremacy of the latter. In an updated edition, published in December 1918, the group's founders declared: "In the spirit of class struggle between the plowmen and the peasants, we concede that the latter were more rooted in the soil, and thus better fighters."641

Ha-Horesh was a vital force in the development of Labor Zionism. In both ideology and practice, the group inherited the militant character of Bar-Giora and Ha-Shomer. One of its members, David Robin, defined its goal as an attempt to develop a group of 'peasant-soldiers' in the Jewish yishuv. "Our mission is to conquer the land, not labor," he told his peers in a meeting of the group in 1908. Another member, Eliezer Shochat, added that the mission of Ha-Horesh was to "create an element of [Jewish] settlers" in Palestine. Shochat further underlined the fundamental link between labor and settlement, the twin tenets of the Zionist movement and Jewish national revival.642 The impact of Ha-Horesh on the evolution of Labor Zionism was perhaps best articulated by Shlomo Zemach, a Zionist pioneer and one of the founders of Hapoel Hatzair: "In the origin of the Labor movement," he wrote, "Ha-Horesh organization served as a spiritual bridge between [Jewish] conquest of labor and agricultural settlement."643

In elevating national interests over class ones, Ha-Horesh proved more Zionist than socialist. Its 'socialist' elements, in fact, and while based on the notion of class struggle, had their own struggle within the group. Indeed, many Jewish youth who joined the group were initially interested in creating an agricultural proletariat, not settlements.644 In the end, however, the settler and nationalist elements prevailed. Thanks to the lasting influence of Ha-Shomer and the

641 Ibid.
642 Eliezer Shohat, Bi-Netive 'avodah: Reshimot, Devarim, Mikhtavim (Tel-Aviv: Tarbut ye-Ḥinukh, 1967) [Hebrew].
643 Quoted in Chazan, "Ha-Horesh", 10.
644 Israel Kolat, "Eliezer Shohat and Hapoel Hatzair: Truths and Metamorphoses," 249
Labor Zionists, the choice of Jewish plowmen to dedicate themselves to working the land was gradually and inexorably linked to the imperative of creating a class of Jewish peasants by replacing the Arab peasants. Ultimately, the doctrine of Hebrew conquest of labor, which propagated the replacement of Arab by Jewish workers in the Jewish yishuv, played a decisive role in the total integration of the Plowmen in the Zionist national enterprise.645

Ha-Horesh was a product of its era. In this period, 'conquest' became a euphemism for Labor Zionism. 'Conquest of Labor', or Hebrew Labor, became the single slogan used by young Zionist pioneers to express their desire to supplant Arab workers in the Jewish fields. There also prevailed in the Jewish yishuv the notion that foreign labor, that is, Arab labor, was a form of heresy. As Anita Shapira points out, "avodah zara (in its religious sense "idol worship") is a notion pregnant with meaning in Judaism. It was one of the three sins—along with bloodshed and incest." This gave the concept of 'kibbush ha-avodah' (conquest of labor) its twofold meaning in Zionist historiography: The replacement of Arab by Jewish workers, and the adjustment of Jewish workers to the rigors of physical labor as a means of national redemption.646 Hebrew 'conquest of labor' was also billed as a key factor in solving the so-called 'Jewish Question.' Founders of Ha-Horesh preached that labor was not merely an economic means, but part and parcel of Jewish emancipation. Some members invoked Theodore Hertz, the father of political Zionism, who reportedly concluded his speech before the First Zionist Congress in August 1897

645 Quoted in Chazan, "Ha-Horesh", 10.
646 Shapira, Land and Labor, 64-65
saying, "only when ploughmanship is transferred to the hand of the Jewish peasant will the Jewish question be resolved."  

In Zionist historiography, Ha-Horesh is memorialized as an integral part of the agrarian revolution brought about by Labor Zionism. Historians of the Jewish yishuv, notably Yosef Gorny, identifies the group as one of the most powerful manifestations of the national activism and revivalist legacy of the Zionist movement in Palestine. In this, Ha-Horesh met a better fate than Haroeh, owing largely to its appeal to the agrarian ideals of Labor Zionism. While the group disintegrated a few years after its inception, its legacy lingered on into the Mandate period. A series of kibbutzim were named after it, including Ein HaHoresh (the plowman's fountain), founded by Hashomer Hatzair members in central Palestine in 1931; and Kfar HaHoresh (the plowman's village), founded in northern Palestine by members of the Gordonia youth movement in 1933.

Ha-Horesh was but one group in a succession of Zionist organizations founded upon the supremacy of territoriality over mobility, and settler over nomadic forms. Widely hailed as an 'agrarian revolution', these organizations were deemed the backbone of the Zionist national enterprise in Palestine. The single decade of Second Aliyah saw the emergence of two youth movements dedicated to the mission of Jewish settlement through the twin conquests of land and labor. In 1905, Hapoel Hatzair (the Young Worker) was founded by A. D. Gordon and a group of young pioneers as a counterpart to the Marxist Po'alei Zion (Workers of Zion), founded by the Socialist Zionists Ber Borochov and Nahum Syrkin in 1901. Then came the Hashomer Hatza'ir
(The Young Guard), founded in 1913 by a group of idealist Zionists from Eastern Europe. The kibbutzim (communal settlements) which these members had established in Palestine would organize into a federation of settlements (Hakibbutz Haartzi) in 1921.

The rapid nationalization of labor in the Jewish yishuv culminated in the founding of two major movements by the end of the decade. In 1919, a group of Zionist pioneers, including David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, founded Ahдут Ha-Avoda (Unity of Labor) out of Poale Zion party. In 1920, the Histadrut, or the General Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine, was founded. The Histadrut dominated the Jewish settlement economy for decades to come, leading public campaigns to supplant Arab with Jewish labor. In 1930, MAPAI, acronym for the Jewish Workers' Party in Eretz-Israel, was founded by the merger of the Hapoel Hatzair and the original Ahдут Ha-Avoda. For nearly four decades, MAPAI would act as the single dominant party in the life of the Jewish yishuv and its successor the State of Israel.649

The founding of these movements marked a three-fold victory for political Zionism. The first signaled the triumph of the Zionists over the Territorialists. Territorialism was a Jewish movement that coalesced in the debate over the Uganda Program, and after the Zionist Congress rejected its plan in 1905, the Territorialist Jewish Organization was established in Basle under the leadership of Israel Zangwill. The Territorialists attempted to locate and create a Jewish territory (or territories) in various parts of Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Soviet Union. Both Zionism and Territorialism traced the 'Jewish problem' to the lack of national territory. Yet while the Zionists sought to solve it by the settlement and the transfer of European Jews to Palestine–their 'historic homeland'–the Territorialists called for the creation of a Jewish collective in

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Palestine or anywhere else. Territorialism flourished in Eastern Europe for nearly two decades, before the Balfour Declaration and the growth of the Zionist movement led to its dissolution in 1925. The establishment of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine, accompanied by the so-called 'agricultural revolution' and the fast-growing settler colonial activity in the first decades of the century, played a decisive role in this victory. It is this victory which ultimately gave political Zionism its three facets of ideology: (1) that there was a Jewish people that had existed for centuries, (2) that Jews wished to continue to exist as a people, (3) and that Jews wished to exist as a people in Palestine, their 'historic homeland.'

The second victory marked the suppression by Labor Zionism of its socialist elements. The predominance in the Zionist agenda of nationalist interests over those of class struggle was facilitated by its Jewish-only schemes: Conquest of the land (establishing Jewish ownership in Palestine by annexing Arab lands); and conquest of labor (replacing Arab workers by Jewish ones, and thus creating a Jewish-only working class). Jewish socialist groups such as the Bund—a Jewish workers' party that envisioned socialism and non-territorialist 'national-cultural autonomy' for the Jews in Eastern Europe as the solution for the Jewish question—were suppressed. Equally suppressed were non-Jewish socialist parties, where Jews played a prominent role, not as Jews but as adherents of the proletarian cause. These groups rejected Jewish nationalism, in both its Zionist-territorialist and Bundist-cultural forms, calling instead for a socialist revolution as the only remedy for the Jewish problem. A third group rejected by

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650 The first two principles are mentioned by Anita Shparia, *Land and Power*, 7.
the Zionists were pacifist parties in Palestine, who called for Jewish integration with the local Arab society. 652

The third, and perhaps most decisive, Zionist victory was the near erasure of the fast-growing nomadic tradition that thrived in the early Jewish yishuv. Its target was not Arab nomadism, to be sure, but the Jewish nomadic tradition that flourished up to the early twentieth century. Nomadic identity was admired at times, emulated at others, but rarely tolerated in the New Yishuv. Young Zionist pioneers of the Second Aliyah, who tended to distinguish themselves as national idealists, came to view Jewish existence in Palestine from the single prism of land settlement. Hailed as an 'agrarian revolution', this trend culminated in what I call agronationalism: the shift from nomadic to settled sectors of society as the locus of national revival. To Labor Zionists, agriculture was not merely an economic means, but an end in itself, a national ethos. It was the farmer, not the shepherd, who now embodied, by virtue of labor and cultivation, the prototype of the New Jew in Palestine. To nationalize, or Judiacize, the agricultural means of production was deemed inseparable from the national redemption of the Jews. This rendered the economy of the Jewish yishuv an essentially political economy goaded into the service of Jewish nationalism. In this reconfiguration of national identity, agronationalism, the ultimate expression of Labor Zionism in Palestine, prevailed over nomadism. It is to this unspoken victory that I must now turn.

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652 See Zachary, "The Left in Israel", 3-18.
From Nomadism to Agronationalism: Agriculture as a National Ethos

In the interwar period, the brief honeymoon between Jewish newcomers and the Arab Bedouin came to an unhappy end. By the time the British Mandate for Palestine was established, a new image of the Bedouin had gradually emerged, shifting Zionist ideological focus from biblical nostalgia to land settlement and territoriality. The Bedouin, once hailed as the hidden Jews and the agents of Jewish return to history, fell from Zionist grace. No longer suited for Zionism’s settler enterprise, the Bedouin was now billed as the antithesis of the New Jew: He is a foreign invader, a lawless intruder, and a barbarian at the gates. He is mobile and propertyless, uprooted and stateless, living out of time, outside history. The Bedouin exhibits an archaic, primitive mode of production. He is a permanent nomad, an eternal son of the desert. He is a member of a foreign race of conquerors, a pure Arabian whose ancestors were responsible for the destruction of what was once the fertile granary of ancient Israel. His society is a society against the state employed, inherently, against the sedentary forces of modern civilization.

The Arab fellah, meanwhile, was celebrated as the original Jew, the agent of Jewish return to history, a symbol of rebirth, and a true Semite in whose image was made the fertile culture of the early Jewish yishuv. Hailed as the locus of Jewish agrarian revolution, the fellah was lodged in Jewish imagination as both the descendant of the ancient Hebrews of the early Jewish yishuv, and the ideal model for the New Jew. It is the fellah who now embodied, by virtue of labor and cultivation, the model of national renewal in the Jewish yishuv. Unlike the nomadic Bedouin, the fellah symbolized rootedness and belonging. He was the son of the soil, a true native whose racial kinship with the Bedouin was nothing short of a myth.
The shift began well before the British Mandate. Members of the Second Aliyah, most of whom came from Czarist Russia, saw themselves as revolutionary idealists, as opposed to the romantics of the First Aliyah and the Old Yishuv. Inspired by the revolutionary slogans that had swept the Russian Empire by the turn of the century, these newcomers aspired to create in Ottoman Palestine a system of Jewish agricultural colonies. These communal settlements, founded upon a peculiar combination of socialist utopia and ethnic nationalism, would constitute the nucleus of the New Yishuv, whose secular foundation was meant to hasten the withering away of the Old Yishuv.

Historical and biblical rights, these newcomers believed, were symbolically significant, yet hardly sufficient to justify the creation of Jewish ownership in Palestine. The new Jewish nation, they widely preached, required a new ethos, a modern apparatus, and radical forms of social and economic organization. Jewish national rebirth, in this view, rested on the same revolutionary ideals which had inspired the thousands of peasants and workers of the Russian Revolution. What the returning Jews needed was nothing short of an agrarian revolution, a new national taxonomy based on the twin forces of labor and agriculture. On these ideals was founded the first Jewish Kibbutz in Palestine, named Dagania, established by the kibbutz movement in the Galilee in 1909. One of the spiritual forces behind this movement was Aaron David Gordon.

A.D. Gordon was a visionary man. An early member of the Hibbat Zion movement, he made aliyah to Palestine in 1904. He first lived in Petah Tikva, the first modern Jewish agricultural settlement in Ottoman Palestine, before settling in Galilee in 1919. An ascetic Tolstoyan, he worked in agriculture by day, while composing his philosophical tracts at night. In
his attempt to act as a model for the pioneering spirit, Gordon combined theory and praxis. He took up the hoe and worked in the field, always focusing on the aesthetics of his work. In 1905, he founded Hapoel Hatzair, a labor movement dedicated to establishing a Jewish foothold in Palestine through the twin conquests of land and labor.\textsuperscript{653}

In his writings, Gordon championed the idea of land reclamation through national labor. Hailed as the spiritual force behind Labor Zionism, he preached that labor and cultivation marked the surest path to the national redemption of the Jews. He saw it his mission to educate fellow Jews on "the value of Jewish labor in the restoration of our land, and in the revival of our people." Gordon also sought to teach Jewish newcomers how to "strike roots in Palestine by means of our own labor upon the soil." His labor essays, written during his years in Palestine, are replete with proposals to establish a society of Jewish peasants and workers in Palestine.\textsuperscript{654}

Gordon inherited the Zionist narrative on Palestine as an 'empty land' awaiting its Jewish redeemers. The desolate condition of the land, he believed, justified Jewish efforts to restore it to its former state. He called for the "physical return of the Jews to the soil," an idea which he practiced throughout his life in Palestine. For Gordon, the deserted land of Palestine, once flowing with milk and honey, had been awaiting the return of its Jewish sons, who are entitled to it by virtue of their dedication, sacrifice, and creativity. "This is a kind of affirmation of our right to the country, as it was a hint that the country awaits us," he declared. Labor, not force, was his recipe for Jewish ownership in Palestine. "The Land of Israel", he insisted, "is acquired through labor, not through fire and not through blood." \textsuperscript{655}

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\textsuperscript{654} Ibid, 59-77.
\textsuperscript{655} Ibid.
Gordon viewed labor as the prime element in the creation of the New Jew. "We must create a new people," was his famous cry, to which labor was the remedy. To the Zionist pioneer, labor was not merely an economic activity, but the "the principal ingredient for national life." If a new Jewish nation were to flourish in Palestine, he maintained, workers and farmers should constitute "the cream and the fine flower of that nation." Labor was his recipe for Jewish return, not only to their 'historic homeland,' but to a state of 'normal existence.' In his view, only by embarking on manual labor could the Jews break with the 'abnormal' state of the Diaspora, when "the Jewish people has been completely cut off from nature and imprisoned within city walls for two thousand years." In Gordon, Jewish labor meant the end of Diaspora. As he further complains, "we have been accustomed to every form of life, except a life of labor--of labor done at our behalf and for its own sake. It will require the greatest effort of will for such a people to become normal again." Jewish immigration to Palestine marked a return not only to the soil, but to nature itself. In this romantic configuration, exilic Jews were not merely a people without "roots in the soil", but a people "cut off nature." Gordon also perceived nature as an organic bond for a people in quest for national unity. In Palestine, the Jews were to lead "a natural collective life [that] is achieved within a nation." This renders 'nature' and 'nation' one and the same, while engulfing Jewish immigration to Palestine with a universalistic aura.656

Gordon, a true nationalist, believed that labor and cultivation would unite the Jewish people with the land, thus justifying its national existence in Palestine. Jewish return to the soil, he also believed, was key to realizing the Zionist promise. That is the promise of Jewish national revival through the negation of Exile (Galut), the end of their Diasporic suffering, and the

656 Ibid, 4-23.
beginning of their cultural rejuvenation in Palestine. Indeed, Gordon believed that Jewish collective suffering could be traced to their 'parasitic state' in the Diaspora, the culmination of centuries of alienation from creative labor and agriculture. In its ultimate expression, labor became a euphemism for Jewish emancipation. "For it is labor which binds a people to its soil and to its national culture, which in its turn is an outgrowth of the people's toil and the people's labor," he wrote in his famous tract *Our Tasks Ahead* (1920).657

Labor is also what distinguishes Jewish from Arab national rights. As Gordon concludes, "apart from the right of occupancy, the Arabs have only historical rights to Palestine." The Arabs, lacking the redemptive force typified by Hebrew labor, had never been the masters of Palestine in the national sense: Their agriculture is primitive, their labor is archaic, and their modes of production are mired in feudalism and serfdom caused by centuries of Turkish rule. Unlike the Jews, Gordon insisted, Arab rights to Palestine were based on a primitive claim by "a living people to their natural country." This claim "was not expressed in attractive and cultured fashion," he told the central committee of Hapoel Hatzair in 1921.658

Gordon's legacy had a lasting impact on the Labor Zionist movement. To young Zionist pioneers, he was a prophet. During his last ten years in Galilee, "Gordon became an almost legendary figure," writes one of his biographers. "He lived like a worker among workers in Dagania... tilling the ground and participating in communal life."659 His labor doctrine, the culmination of his theory and praxis, was transformed by his followers into a new 'religion of labor'. Gordonia, a Zionist youth movement created to put his teachings into practice, helped

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658 Gordon, *Letters and Articles* [Hebrew], 149-151.
establish several *kibbutzim* in Palestine. Following in the footsteps of the master, the *Gordonites* preached labor and cultivation as the twin tenets of Jewish national redemption. Founded in Poland in 1925, the new movement would play a prominent role in promoting Jewish aliyah and settlement activity in Palestine during the Mandate period.

In Zionist historiography, Gordon is celebrated as a pioneer of early Zionism in both theory and praxis. In his seminal work on *The Founding Myths of Israel* (1998), Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell, perhaps one of the few scholars to recognize the formative, pioneering role played by Gordon in the history of the yishuv,\footnote{Surprisingly, modern scholarship on the Jewish yishuv pays little attention to Gordon. He is, for example, only briefly mentioned in the works of Lockamm and Shafir quoted above. Most of the existing literature on Gordon is either anthological, or treats him as an ascetic philosopher, not as founder of a new national ethos.} describes Gordon as a "chief theorist of Jewish nationalism in Palestine in the first two decades of the century," and founder of a new form of "organic nationalism [which] corresponded to the teachings of the tribal nationalism in Europe." A founding father of Labor Zionism, "his thought dominated the ideology of the labor movement throughout its existence."\footnote{Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1998), 16.}
The Invention of Jewish Agricultural Past

In the early phases of the Jewish yishuv, as Zionist fascination with the Arab fellahin reached its zenith, a curious theory came to dominate Zionist ethnography. The fellahin, it was widely believed, were none but the descendants of the ancient Jews. The theory, which gained popularity in Zionist circles during the first two decades of the century, was propagated by prominent Zionist figures in Europe and Palestine. Referring to the Arab fellahin, Ahad Ha'am, founder of Cultural Zionism, noted in 1912: "After we become established as a cultural force in the country in the spirit of Judaism, the Arabs may possibly become assimilated among us, for they are the natives of this land since long ago and quite possibly, some of them belong to our people."²⁶⁶²

This unorthodox view on the Arab fellahin had been a decade in the making. It had its origin in the writings of Ber Borochov, one of the founders of Labor Zionism. Writing against the backdrop of the Uganda Controversy in 1905, Borochov declared:

The local population of Palestine is closer to the Jews in racial composition than any other people, even the 'Semitic' peoples; it is highly feasible to assume that the fellahin in Palestine are the direct descendants of the remnants of the Jewish and Canaanite agricultural community, together with a very high mixture of Arab blood. For it is known that the Arabs, as proud conquerors, mingled very little with the masses in the countries they conquered.²⁶⁶³

²⁶⁶² Ber Borochov, "On the Question of Zionism and Territoriality" (1905); quoted in Yosef Gorny, "The Arab Question and the Jewish Problem" [H] (1985), 133
²⁶⁶³ Quoted in Gorny, 35-6
Borochov is widely hailed as the father of Marxist (Socialist) Zionism. His theoretical enterprise attempted a synthesis of socialism and nationalism (Zionism). The Jewish problem, as he saw it, lay in the absence of a Jewish agricultural class, which he regarded as the foundation of all nations. As he put it in one of his early tracts on Jewish Socialism, "we are foreigners, and nowhere in the world do we possess the social power that could make us masters of our fate. We are cut off from nature and have no agriculture." A prominent opponent of the Territorialist ideology, and any form of Zionism that sought to establish a Jewish territory outside Palestine, Borochov looked to the Arab fellahin as a living testimony to Jewish roots in Palestine. The native fellahin provided the Socialist Zionist with an ideal model for Jewish agrarian revolution, national redemption, and the realization of Zionism's promise of negation of the Diaspora. Borochov, a sworn Palestinocentric, also hoped that Jewish 'racial kinship' with the fellahin would render the native Arab population more receptive to Zionism, before being completely assimilated into the superior culture of Jewish newcomers.

The theory on the racial affinity between the Arab fellahin and the Jews was not created in a historical vacuum. It signaled a shift in Zionist ideology from nomadic to territorialist epistememes. Agriculture, labor and cultivation were no longer economic means, but the tenets of Jewish national redemption. The agrarian revolution, which dominated the life of the Jewish yishuv during the Mandate, rested on this vision. The fellah, meanwhile, replaced the Bedouin as the locus of national revival in Palestine. His image as a model of rootedness and belonging was woven deep into the national ethos of Zionism. Nowhere was this shift more manifest than in the early writings of two Zionist pioneers: Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and David Ben-Gurion.


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In 1915, during their brief exile in New York, Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi set out to write a historical survey of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine. The result was a monumental volume on the history of Eretz Israel (The Land of Israel) from the destruction of the Second Temple down to the present. Eretz Israel in the Past and Present covers a wide canvas of nearly 500 pages, a bibliographical list of 200 references, and a massive glossary of Arabic-Turkish words. The book, published by the Poale Zion Palestine Committee, first appeared in Yiddish 1918. It was originally written in Hebrew, and translated into Yiddish to reach a wilder Jewish-American public. It enjoyed a wide reception in the Diaspora. Tens of thousands of copies were sold, and new editions were printed over the following years.665

Eretz Israel was written for internal purposes. That is, it was a Zionist propaganda that targeted a Jewish audience. Like Borochov's socialist essays, Eretz Israel was written against the backdrop of the Uganda Controversy and the rise of the Territorialist movement. In a letter to his father in 1919, three years after the publication of Eretz Israel, Ben-Gurion wrote: "I was amazed by the ignorance about the Land of Israel, not only among the opponents of Zionism, but among its most passionate proponents. The book was inspired by this internal ignorance."666 Thanks to its nationalist appeal, the book was received with widespread excitement, inspiring endless reviews in the Hebrew and Zionist press both in Palestine and abroad. Besides generating substantial financial gains for the Poale Zion Palestine Committee, Eretz Israel helped boost the Halutzim [pioneers] movement, luring many young Jews into the Jewish Legion founded by the

665 David Ben-Gurion, and Itzhak Ben-Zvi, Eretz Israel Be-‘avar U-ba-Hoveh (Jerusalem: Hotsa‘at Yad Yitshak Ben-Zvi, 1979) [Hebrew]
666 Quoted in ibid, 13.
two authors in Palestine.\textsuperscript{667} In a meeting of the Committee in Philadelphia in December 1918, the book was hailed as a founding text in the Labor Zionist movement. Its authors, hitherto obscure figures, rose to national fame in Zionist circles.

In \textit{Eretz Israel}, Jewish history in Palestine is depicted as a linear progression from the ancient to the modern Jewish yishuv, interrupted by waves of Arab conquest. Jewish Diaspora and Exile (Galut), meanwhile, are excluded from this narrative. To the Zionist authors, Jewish history \textit{is} the history of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine. In their attempt to 'rediscover' Jewish territorialist past in Palestine, the authors draw a curious demarcation between the Diasporic Jews, described as 'eternal nomads', and the settled Jews of the Hebrew yishuv.\textsuperscript{668} "In the Jewish yishuv in Palestine," they write, "there had been contentious attempts to return to land cultivation at a time when European Jews could only dream of that." The yishuv/Diaspora binary is clearly predicated on the interplay between nationhood and agriculture, or what I term agriculturalism: "Jewish settlement and the Jewish yishuv in Galilee over the past hundreds years are the best proof that, at a time when European Jews were immersed in religious conservatism and superstition, there developed among the Jews of Palestine a liberating, patriotic and organic sense of national redemption."\textsuperscript{669}

The exclusion of the Diasporic phase is inseparable from the silencing of Jewish nomadic past in Zionist historiography. \textit{Eretz Israel}, which culminates in the celebration of settlement and labor and cultivation as the locus of Jewish national revival, is a quixotic attempt to create an autochthonous narrative for Jewish history, a territorialist past whose drama is set in Palestine. It

\textsuperscript{667} See an introduction by Mordechai Eliav on the birth of the book, 11-20.  
\textsuperscript{668} Ibid, 25.  
\textsuperscript{669} Ibid, 77.
declares, for example, that long after the destruction of the Second Temple, and even after the defeat of Bar Kokhba, "large masses of Jews still tilled the soil of Eretz Israel." In tracing Jewish agricultural history in Palestine, an idea that runs like a basic thread through all six parts of the book, the authors attempt to rewrite Jewish history from the single prism of settlement and territoriality. Jewish nationalism, we are told, was born in Palestine, in the Jewish yishuv, not in the Diaspora. Nationhood, in this view, is only imaginable in connection to land settlement and cultivation. The meaning of national redemption thus lay in the redemption of the land, in Jewish return, not to Palestine as such, but to the soil.

Three stages of Jewish history in Palestine are sorted out by the Zionist authors. The first is the early Hebrew yishuv, when Jewish cultivators and workers flourished, despite Roman hostility. In this period, Jews led a continuous struggle for their national future and rights, which culminated in a series of Jewish revolts against the Roman authorities. The second stage followed the destruction of the Second Temple, when the Jewish yishuv was dispersed, and receded into near oblivion. While many cities were ruined and entire communities destroyed by the succession of wars and uprisings, remnants of the Jewish agricultural yishuv survived. The Jewish farming population could not be wiped out so easily. Due to foreign oppression and persecution, town dwellers chose to leave their homes and migrate to freer countries such as Babylonia. The Hebrew peasant, however, remained. Like all peasants across the world, he was unwilling to abandon the land developed by his sweat and the labor of his parents and grandparents. In the seventh century, yet again, Jewish agricultural life was nearly destroyed by the Arab conquest. This marked the third, and most devastating, stage in the history of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine. The Jewish peasants, tied to the soil as they were, survived. In Palestine, a
juncture of transient nations, the Jews proved most rooted in the soil. The endless sequence of
invasions and conquests, including the Arab conquests, failed to eliminate the Jewish yishuv.
"The remnant of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine, albeit weak and small, served as a living link
between a people that had lost its land and a land that had lost its people." 670

This historical inquiry brings to the fore a curious aspect of nomadism: Nomadism as a
form of mobility is not limited to the Bedouin, but also characteristic of urban populations. In
times of war and revolts, townspeople, the educated and the wealthy, tend to leave their
homeland and migrate to freer lands. The peasant population, thanks to its devotion to the land,
tend to resist and stay. As the authors constantly remind us, "Jewish peasants, the original people
of the land, the native sons of the soil, had never abandoned their land, even in the darkest of
times." In fact, "Jews who left their land after the Destruction, due to repeated persecution, were
predominantly town-dwellers, that is, Jews with a greater tendency to mobility." Another aspect
of this historical view involves the changeless nature of the fellahin. "Unlike the profound
changes which the urban population had historically undergone under the succession of rulers,
the peasant population, despite centuries of oppression and persecution, has barely changed" 671
But how could the Jewish peasants, nearly untraceable today, have survived?

The Hebrew peasant, we are told, survived in the Arab fellah, the original occupant of the
land who had adopted the language and religion of the new masters, the Arabs. Here Ben-Gurion
takes it upon himself to trace the roots of the Arab fellahin. 672 "The fellahin are not descended
from Arab origins," he declares in a chapter on the origins of the fellahin. "The fellahin did not

670 Ibid, 75-77.
671 Ibid, 199
672 In 1917, Ben-Gurion wrote a special pamphlet, "For the Clarification of the Origin of the Fellahin," published in
Our Neighbors and Us (Tel-Aviv: Duvar, 1931).
originate in the Arabian conquerors who seized Palestine and Syria in the seventh century. The Arab invaders did not completely eliminate the agricultural population whom they had found in Palestine. They only expelled the foreign Roman rulers, while sparing the local population."\(^{673}\)

The question that haunted the authors was who were the fellahin whom the Arab conquerors had found in the villages of Palestine in the seventh century? The answer is not hard to guess if we remember that for the Zionist authors, agriculture in Palestine had its origins in the ancient Jewish yishuv. "The fellahin were neither Romans nor Greek, because these were mainly urban and city dwellers," they contest. The fellahin were not Canaanites either, "a completely fallacious claim that can hardly withstand historical scrutiny."\(^{674}\) In a polemic manner, the authors set out to refute a widespread ethnographic theory on the Canaanite origin of the fellahin, laid down by early P.E.F. explorers in Palestine, notably the French orientalist Clermont Ganneau, who based his claim on the survival among the fellahin of pagan rituals and ceremonies and festivals inspired by the ancient Canaanites, such as tree worship, along with archaeological remains of pagan sanctuaries and shrines.\(^{675}\) This could hardly convince the authors of *Eretz Israel*. The Arab fellahin, they conclude, are "none but the descendants of the Hebrew peasants of the ancient Jewish yishuv in Palestine." Their proof of this is a classic dictum on nomadism:

The Arabs did not engage in settlement or agriculture. They were, just like the Bedouin of today, nomadic shepherds, devoted to a life of wars and raiding. They lacked a middle class of farmers. Their affair was purely political, religious and economic: to

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\(^{673}\) Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, *Eretz Israel*, 196.

\(^{674}\) Ibid, 197.

rule, to spread Islam, and to collect taxes. Nomadic as they were, they had no desire whatsoever in cultivating the land. Even today, we can see how hard it is for the Bedouin— the pure Arab— to engage in land cultivation.676

What follows is a complete identification of Arabness with nomadism. To the Zionist authors, "the Arabs, the free sons of the desert," are inherently resistant to land settlement and cultivation, as opposed to Jewish deep-seated resistance to mobility. Efforts to settle the Arabs, they contend, were as futile as those aiming to uproot the Jews from their land. The original Arab conquerors were rather satisfied with exploiting the local peasant population, "a fact evident today in the enmity between the Bedouin and the fellahin." It should come as no surprise, they conclude, that the Turkish government failed to tie the Arabs to the land after the fashion of the fellahin.

Arab nomadism is juxtaposed here with a well-cultivated narrative on Jewish agrarianism. "The single occupation of the early Jewish yishuv in Palestine was agriculture," claim the authors, "where the peasantry class constituted a distinctive feature of Jewish society." Those Jewish peasants, we are told, were endowed with a strong nationalist spirit, which explains why "the thousands of Jewish rebels who rose against the Romans were predominantly peasants." The depiction of Jewish revolts as peasant uprisings fit well into the nationalist vision of Labor Zionism and its tendency to identify Jewish nationhood exclusively with agrarian sectors of society. It is no surprise, then, that the authors conclude, in a teleological manner, that

676 Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, Eretz Israel, 197.
"to doubt that the fellahin were Jews is to doubt the very existence of Jews in Palestine."

To the Zionist authors, to be a peasant in Palestine is to be a Jew.

The narrative on the Jewish origin of the Arab fellahin rested on an unorthodox theory of cultural assimilation. To the authors of Eretz Israel, the Arabization of the Jewish peasantry class, along with the rest of the Syrian population, "unfolded with special ease." The secret, they agree, lay in "the democratic character of Islam," where "the doctrine of the prophet of Mecca proved far closer to Jewish hearts than the doctrine of the prophet of Nazareth." Thanks to the assimilative and egalitarian nature of Islam, they further attest, Jews adopted the faith of the new rulers in a way that would have been unimaginable under Christian or Roman rulers. That the Zionist authors, to prove their point, draw on an unorthodox approval of the Islamic doctrine only testifies to the predominance of the nationalist vision of secular Zionism over the orthodox elements of the Old Yishuv.

One outstanding feature of the theory of the Jewish origin of the fellahin is the denial of any racial kinship between the fellahin and the Bedouin. According to the authors, the Jewish origins of the fellahin are traceable in their language and customs, which set them apart from their urban and Bedouin neighbors. In fact, the Arab fellahin struck the Zionist pioneers as more Jewish than the urban Jews of the Old Yishuv. Drawing on the ethnographic legacy of the Palestine Exploration Fund, they contend that the Jewish agricultural community of biblical Palestine is most alive today among the peasant population. "In the language of the fellahin of today, their customs, religion and traditions, we can find many traces testifying to their Jewish origin." This is evident in the dialect of the fellahin, which is distinguishable from that of the

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677 Ibid, 198
678 Ibid, 199-200.
(Arab) townspeople and the Bedouin. Another living proof are the Hebrew names of the villages, where "thousands of years of endless upheavals failed to eliminate the Hebrew character of the land which the people of Israel had implanted in Palestine." A third proof is "the astonishing resemblance, even identification, between the daily life of the fellahin of today and the descriptions of Jewish life in ancient times, as reflected in Biblical and Talmudic literatures."

The fellahin, therefore, are only Arabs by name, as "generations of those fellahin who had been Arabized, unwittingly, preserved and bequeathed their Hebrew origin." The fellahin, rooted as they were in the soil, constituted not only the "economic basis of Jewish national revival, but its spiritual basis." It is the fellah, not the wandering nomad or the urban Jew, who now served as the agent of Jewish return to history, to its fertile past. In the fellahin, the authors rejoice, "the laws of Abraham has been preserved." 679

The laws of Abraham, it was now believed, were founded on agriculture, not on wandering or mobility. In the Bible, Abraham, father of the Hebrews, was promised a new home in the land of Canaan. In Zionist literature, Abraham was also a farmer whose descendants would settle in Palestine. His son, Isaac, not only could detect the "smell of a field" on Esau's clothes, but prayed that Jacob may be blessed with "plenty of grain and wine" (Gen. 27:27-28). The Jews, therefore, were not the sons of Jacob, but the children of Joseph, who tilled the land and cut down forests in the hills of Ephraim to extend its settled areas. The young king David was a faithful shepherd, but also a farmer living in a pastoral setting. Yahweh Himself is described as a farmer, a 'vinedresser' who tends the vine, storing a rich supply of food and crops of fruit (Amos 9:13-15; Joel 2:18-19). By the time Eretz Israel appeared, it had become customary for Zionist

679 Ibid, 202-6
pioneers to cite Biblical verses praising settlement and agriculture. Not the Rehabites, but prophet Jeremiah was invoked as advising his Jewish followers: "Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them" (Jer 29:5-7 KTV). In Zionist reading of the Bible, early Hebrew farmers appreciated the value of labor as illustrated in the Book of Genesis: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Genesis 3:19). In the Hebrew literature of the period, Jews and Arabs embodied the hostile rivalry between Cain and Abel. In an ironic reversal of the Biblical story, Cain the farmer, not Abel the shepherd, symbolized the New Jew.

Yet Zionist admiration of the Arab fellahin had its limits. In Eretz Israel, Ben Gurion and Ben-Zvi distinguish between the fellahin who descended from the Arab Bedouin stock, and those who descended from the ancient Jewish peasants. While the latter are described as "peasants by nature," the former are depicted as "nomadic in origin" and "peasants by conversion." The Zionist authors, in other words, are evolutionist when it comes to the Arab fellahin, creationist when it comes to the Jewish fellahin– a distinction of an unmistakably ethnic character.

In Eretz Israel, nomadism is portrayed as the limit of Arab nationalism. To the authors, the Bedouin and the fellahin are not only "a race apart", but two hostile races whose divergent trajectories explain "the lack of Arab nationhood" in Palestine. "It is a grave mistake to think that the Arab population of Palestine is one people," they contest. In their classification, only the Bedouin are labelled true Arabs. "The Bedouin are in fact the only element in Palestine that deserves to boast of a pure Arab origin and a direct affiliation with the Arab nation." Unlike the fellah, in whose veins runs Jewish blood, "the Bedouin are homogenous in origin, race, language, religion, vision, mode of living, and customs." This is a classic example of the tendency in Zionist ethnography to translate spatial relations into racial ones, where "natural conditions, such
as mountains and deserts, allowed the varying populations of Palestine to preserve their distinct racial characters." Nomadism also sets limits to Arab claims to rootedness in Palestine, where the autochthony of the fellahin is established not only by the identification of Jewishness with settlement and cultivation, but of Arabness with nomadism and conquest.

Steeped in the P.E.F. ethnographic legacy, Eretz Israel reproduces the declensionist narrative on the Arabs. "The Bedouin turned the Jordan Valley into a wilderness," write the authors, citing C.R. Conder. To the Zionist authors, the Arab conquest of Palestine was nothing short of a barbarian invasion. "The region of the Jordan Valley, more than Western Palestine, suffered from continuous infightings, from barbarian invasions and the absence of central and administrative power." Thos form of statelessness is equated with nomadism. "Ruins were most manifest in the southern part of the Jordan, thanks to its proximity to the desert, where invasions by the desert-dwellers— the Bedouin— wreaked havoc on the populated mainland. There the Bedouin implanted chaos, insecurity, fear and violence." This account of Arab nomadism is infused by a counter narrative on native Jewish resistance to nomadism. In what reads like an exercise in mythmaking, the authors are convinced, for example, that "Herod the Great populated the Jordan Valley with Jewish farmers from Babel to protect it from Bedouin raids."

This declensionist narrative, curiously, is equally applied to the Arab fellahin, thus allowing the Zionist authors to introduce their modernizing scheme in Palestine, that is, the notion that the land awaits its Jewish redeemers and pioneers. After all, the fellah of today is "mired in a primitive economy." His is a subsistence economy characterized by "extreme

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680 Ibid, 118-119.
681 Ibid, 184-5
682 Ibid, 200

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conservatism.” He is locked into a cycle of debt and poverty. His mode of life, his customs, his work methods and tools, have not changed over the centuries, "as if he lived out of time."
Curiously, the presumed changeless nature of the peasant population, well-established by the authors, is taken here to justify Jewish modernizing schemes in rural Palestine, where the fellah, thanks to his inherent resistance to change, "continues to live outside progress." Thus, "progress in modern agriculture, modern methods of cultivation, and scientific development in agriculture, remain foreign to the fellah, as they were thousands of years ago, if not worse." The fellah, in his life and labor, is "a living museum of the ancient past."683

A comparison between the Arab village and the ancient Jewish yishuv is in order. First, the authors set out to refute their own claim that the state of modern agriculture in Palestine, as typified by the fellahin, is a true reflection of Hebrew agriculture that had flourished two thousand years ago. "Agriculture in Palestine," they agree, drawing on the same narrative of decline, "has, in fact, only deteriorated." The reason, again, is attributed to the primitive economy of the fellahin. In the ancient Jewish yishuv, agriculture prospered. "Yet unlike the condition of agriculture maintained by the Jews in times of political autonomy, which extended hundreds of years after the Destruction, we find agriculture among the modern fellahin extremely inferior, not only in degree, but in quality." What followed, we are told, was a sad tale of decline. "After the downfall of the Jewish yishuv, and especially following the Arab conquest, tree planting came to an end in Palestine." Agriculture, as it figures in the Arab village today, is "nothing but an artifact, a relic of a fertile Jewish past in Palestine," whose growth was halted by the Arab conquests. To the authors, decline was not limited to agriculture, but extended to the

683 Ibid, 207.
population, thereby reducing "the demographic density and the settlement capacity of Palestine."

Historical and archaeological evidence, they believed, "shows that Palestine was ten-fold more populous in the past than in the present." The absorptive capacity of the land, or settlement potential, was greater, too. That is because, under the Jewish yishuv, "agriculture was more developed, more progressive, and more intensive." Even in the Negev, "we can still find in many places traces of intensive agricultural work and overpopulation in the past." Ultimately, the authors conclude, "Palestine was turned from a fertile granary into a barren, empty land." 684

In Eretz Israel, nomadism is singled out as the primary reason for climatic decline in Palestine. In a polemic manner, the authors go to great lengths to refute the theory that this decline was due to natural causes, not to man-made or human activity. 685 To the Zionist authors, climatic decline was a result of "tribal wars and raids, and the continuous penetration by the Bedouin of the fertile mainland." Social and cultural reasons are discussed, too, ranging from Turkish oppression to Islamic fatalism to the moral degradation of the fellahin. The modern Jewish yishuv, hailed by Zionists as a human miracle, is to the authors "a living proof that demographic and agricultural decline was a man-made cause." The agrarian revolution, brought about by Zionist pioneers, built on the ruins of Arab nomadism. "Thanks to the progress in cultivation over the past decades, "a once waste and barren land was revived, redeemed, and made fertile again." Curiously, the authors cite the Palestinian ethnographer Tawfik Canaan to prove that decline and progress were both man-made, by the Arabs and the Jews, respectively. 686

684 Ibid, 208-14
685 Among the proponents of the natural decline theory was Ellsworth Huntington, Palestine and Its Transformation (Boston- New York: 1911).
686 Ibid, 226
In *Eretz Isarel*, nomadism is viewed as the antipode of nationhood. Decline in agriculture, the authors contend, was accompanied by a decline in national spirit: "Due to years of oppression and exploitation, the fellahin have declined both morally and spiritually." This decline, they continue, explains why the fellahin today "lack a patriotic feeling, and a unifying sense of national belonging." There is also absent among the fellahin "a collective attachment to the soil in the national sense, a cultivated sense of belonging to the land as a *homeland*." Their ties to the soil are rather physical, betraying a primitive and natural attachment to a land which they inherited from their forefathers." The mission of Zionism, therefore, is not to simply "resurrect and restore the land to its fertile condition," but to revive this national meaning of land ownership lost on the Arabs.687

Land reclamation by the Jews is linked by the Zionist authors to national redemption. Their narrative unfolds through a series of past failures, halted by the arrival of Zionism: Since the decline of the old Jewish yishuv, and during two millennia of Jewish Diaspora, "Palestine has been a land without a people, without a unified population attached to its historic and beloved land." None of the nations who inhabited it ever made it its national home, or an organic part of its national existence. None has cultivated a patriotic affection for it. Palestine, in other words, "has been *denationalized.*" The Romans, who ruled Palestine for five centuries, failed to make it a national home "because their presence in the country was purely colonialist and political, but never organic or patriotic." The Arabs and the Egyptians, who inhabited it for nine centuries, left deep and lasting traces on the religion and language of the population, but equally "failed to cultivate an organic and national attachment to it." The Turks, who ruled it for four centuries,

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687 Ibid, 213-14
"were even less linked to the land than the Arabs." Today, "Turkish culture and language remain as foreign to Palestine as they were 400 years earlier." Like the Romans, "Turkish rule was political and administrative in nature, claiming superficial control of a country inhabited by a mixture of nations and races."\textsuperscript{688} The land, in short, is awaiting its true sons, its national redeemers and pioneers: The Zionists.

Writing against the backdrop of the Arab Revolt in Hejaz, Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi are quick to deny the existence of an Arab national movement in Palestine. The lack of Arab nationhood, once again, is explained by reference to nomadism. "In Palestine today, the descendants of the original Arabian conquerors barely changed their nomadic way of life to a more developed and settled one." Drawing on the age-old desert/sown binary, they also exaggerate the enmity between the Bedouin and the fellahin. This enmity, they contend, is steeped in etymology. "Among the population of Palestine, the world 'Arab' is synonymous with nomad or Bedouin. Even today, the fellahin continue to see in the 'Arab' a foreign enemy." Owing to this interracial enmity, "the Arabs represent discrete national units without any [cultural] ties, save of religion." The identification of Arabness with nomadism culminates in their conclusion that "the cradle of Arab nationalism remains in the vast desert of the Arabian Peninsula." Ben-Gurion would repeat this last point three decades later. "Arab history was born and raised in Arabia", he told the Anglo-American committee of Inquiry in March 1946.\textsuperscript{689}

\textit{Eretz Israel} is concluded with a plea to Jewish nationalism. Having disposed of the Arabs into discrete elements of nomads and settlers, the authors bill Jewish nationalism as the only feasible form of national unity in Palestine. "Since the denationalization of Palestine culminated

\textsuperscript{688} Ibid, 227
in a country laying in ruins and desolation," they explain, "the land awaits its true owners, the Jewish people, to return to their ancestral homeland." To the authors, ownership meant national ownership. The land was empty in the national sense— not empty of people, but of a people, of its national owners. Drawing on the presumed nexus of ownership and nationalism, they contest that while the Arabs continue to inhabit Palestine, the land remains empty, propertyless, and devoid of owners—again, in the national sense of the word. Lack of 'national ownership' is taken here to explain why the land remained a desert wilderness. For one thing, there was not a single nation in Palestine that had the desire, the will, or the capacity to build and develop it. For another, the succession of foreign governments in Palestine were merely interested in military control and economic exploitation of the local population. For centuries, therefore, Palestine remained 'a land without a people'. Ultimately, "it was this state of 'a land without a people' which presaged the desolation and desertification of the country." Echoing Gordon, the authors conclude: "The land awaits its people to return and redeem it, to revive and rebuild their fertile ancient homeland, armed with devotion and sacrifice, progress and innovation, but also with the bliss of modern science, labor and cultivation."^{690}

Like Borochov, Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi were writing against the backdrop of the Territorialist movement, which coalesced in the wake of the Uganda Controversy. The theory on the Jewish origin of the Arab fellahin should be understood in this light. For the most part, it fit into Zionism's quest for autochthony in a period of perplexity and division, nurturing its nationalist mantra that Palestine was the only national home for the Jews. Ben-Gurion would go as far as to criticize Herzl's lack of attachment to Palestine, claiming that his Judenstaat, which

^{690} Ibid, 227-28.
fails to mention Palestine, was not based on Eretz Israel, and that "the connection with Palestine was not awakened by Herzl." "During their 1800 years of Diaspora," wrote Ben-Gurion, "the Jewish have not found a national home outside Palestine. The distance in time and space could not weaken the ties linking the Jewish people to its historic land and national home."\(^{691}\) Ben-Gurion's view would prevail in the interwar period, as the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised to establish a national home for the Jews in Palestine, signaled a decisive history for the Zionists.

The theory on the Jewish origin of the fellahin is also inseparably linked to Zionist demographic concerns, that is, its desire to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine. Anita Shapira shows how the theory aimed to solve the so-called 'Arab problem' in early Zionist historiography— which faced Zionists with the ugly inconvenience of demographic imbalance between Arabs and Jews in Palestine— "by their assimilation with the Jewish population by dint of racial similarity between the two people."\(^{692}\) This perhaps explains the theory's allure for Zionists in this early period when, by the time *Eretz Israel* was published (1918), Jews amounted to a mere 8.1 percent of the total population.\(^{693}\)

Another way to explain Zionism's unorthodox fascination with the Arab fellahin is by linking it to the territorialist outlook on nomadism described above. Because in Zionist imagination Arabness had been long identified with nomadism, early Zionist historians and ethnographers, such as Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, failed to imagine the settled Arabs as part of

\(^{691}\) Ibid, 227
\(^{692}\) Shapira, *Land and Power*, 49.
the native Arab population. Since the fellaheen were settled, it was inconceivable, from the perspective of Zionist ethnography, that they could have belonged to a race whose original members (the Bedouin) were 'inherently nomadic.' After all, both authors agreed that the Bedouin were the only racial element in Palestine that had a "pure Arab origin." In early Zionist historiography, settlement was so forcibly linked to Jewish nationalism that it became fashionable to view every settled population in Palestine as originally Jewish: Since the fellahin are settled, they must be Jews.

Over the next decade, the theory on the Jewish descent of the Palestinian fellahin lost none of its force. In 1927, Ben-Zvi would further develop it in a monumental volume devoted to tracing the remnants of the ancient Jewish yishuv in Palestine. Two years later, amid mounting ethnic conflict between Arabs and Jews, Ben-Zvi would modify his opinion, stating that "it would be mistaken to think that all the fellahin are descendants of the ancient Jews, but it can be said of most of them, or their core." During this period, the theory was echoed by another Zionist pioneer, Israel Belkind, who reclaimed it in an ethnographic tract on the Arabs of Palestine. Like Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, Belkind, believed in the close historical and racial ties between the ancient Jews and the fellahin of his day.

During the 1930s, the theory would enjoy limited popularity in Zionist circles, thanks to growing nationalist sentiments in Palestine. Its implications, however, never fully vanished. In fact, the theory, while completely erased from Zionist historiography, would survive in the
Hebrew literature of the period. Even as late as 1937, when it seemed that the theory was completely swept under the rubric of nationalist propaganda, Zionist writer Yosef Meyuhas, in a story entitled *The Fellahin*, could still proclaim that “if you came across the Arab fellahin and learned their customs and ways of life, you would find a striking resemblance to those of the ancient Jews.”698 In another story, *The Children of Arabia*, Meyuhas further writes that the Arab fellahin are "important to us, the Jews, because they are closely linked to the life and spirit of our people in biblical times... they are the oldest inhabitants of Eretz Israel, in whose image are preserved the ancient customs and traits of our forefathers, which we had forgotten in our years of exile.”699

However, the theory on the Jewish origin of the fellahin was short-lived. It could not survive the separatist forces in Labor Zionism, which gained extra momentum amidst the rise of Palestinian nationalism. In the late 1930s, as the Palestinian uprising reached its climax, the theory receded into near oblivion in Zionist memory. The Arab fellahin, like the Bedouin, were increasingly portrayed, not as the hidden Jews, but as the descendants of the 'Arabian invaders' of the seventh century. As the Palestinian uprising expanded to Arab villages, the fellah was no longer seen as a model for national revival in the Jewish yishuv, but a hindrance to Jewish national redemption, whose secret was now linked to the twin conquests of land and labor by Jewish newcomers. Nowhere was this shift more acute than in the doctrine of Hebrew labor, which aimed to displace Arab workers and farmers to accommodate Jewish ones.700

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698 Meyuhas, *The Fellahin* (Dvir: Jerusalem, 1937), IX [Hebrew]
699 Meyuhas, *The Children of Arabia* (Dvir: Tel-Aviv, 1927) [Hebrew]
700 On the Hebrew labor doctrine, see Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor."
One prominent opponent of the Hebrew Labor doctrine was David Ben-Gurion. In his semi-autobiography, the Zionist leader recounts that shortly after his arrival in Palestine in 1906, he was shocked to find out that a Jewish moshav (a private agricultural settlement) was employing Arab guards. This left the young newcomer wondering: "is it conceivable that even here [in Palestine] we are doomed to replicate our Galut (exile) experience, hiring strangers to guard our properties and protect our lives?" 701 Shabtai Teveth, one of Ben-Gurion’s chief biographers, writes that it is during this early period that Ben-Gurion developed the notion of Avodah Ivrit (Hebrew Labor). 702 To Ben-Gurion, Hebrew Labor was "not a means, but a sublime end" aimed at transforming the Jews into a creative and productive people. While Hebrew Labor constituted an integral part of Jewish national redemption, Ben-Gurion believed, Arab labor could only hope to create a "typical colonial society based on the exploitation of cheap and unorganized indigenous labor," thereby hampering Jewish immigration and settlement. In 1907, Ben-Gurion began to champion the creation of an exclusively Jewish labor on lands owned by the Jewish National Fund. 703 By the 1920s, he had become a staunch advocate of the enforcement of Hebrew labor in the entire economy, calling for a complete segregation between the Jewish and Arab communities, where Jews and Arabs “should live and work in separate settlements and economies.” In the next decade, he would exploit the Palestinian general strike and uprising to enforce his separatist doctrine. 704 Toward the end of the Mandate, Hebrew Labor became an ideology, a national ethos guiding Jewish communal

703 Ibid, 66
704 Ibid, 44-79
organizations in Palestine. This was anything but a 'socialist revolution.' In fact, Ben-Gurion himself would on many occasions refute this view. In a pamphlet published in 1956, he conceded that the kibbutz movement was not predicated on socialist ideals as widely believed, but as a tool to “guarantee Jewish labor.”

During the Mandate, the idea of national redemption through labor and cultivation became a governing motif in Hebrew literature. Prominent Zionist writer Ya'akov Rabinovitz concludes one of his novels by echoing the utopian vision inspired by A.D. Gordon: "The New Hebrew world will come about through labor, not through mercenaries with dreams of war and idle talk of materialism and dull of secrecy." Labor Zionist pioneer Moshe Smilansky culminates his novel *Resurrection and Disaster* with a similar plea: "Agriculture must constitute the basis for settlement in this country, its economic and cultural foundation." To Smilansky, Jewish negation of exile, national redemption and political independence in Palestine "can be achieved only through their return to soil."

The prevalence of agrarian epistemes in Hebrew literature during the Mandate marked a widespread disenchantment with nomadism in the Jewish yishuv. Agriculture, labor and cultivation—hailed as the tenets of Jewish nationalism in Palestine—constituted the aesthetic body of this literature. In lieu of the rapid expansion of Jewish agricultural and communal settlements, nomadism demarcated both the territorial limits of the Jewish yishuv and a coveted colonial space, hence the "Conquest of the Desert". The rupture with nomadism was not complete, however. In the final stages of Jewish immigration to Palestine, nomadism continued

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707 Smilansky, *Tkuma vi-Sho’a* (Massada, 1953), 27 [Hebrew].
to hold sway over the national and cultural imagination of Jewish newcomers. In what follows, I show that Zionist fascination with nomadism persisted well into the late Mandate period.

The Persistent Legacy of Nomadism

Jewish fascination with nomadism did not fully disappear during the Mandate. It survived in a diversity of cultural and social forms. Later Jewish newcomers in Palestine continued to live among the local Bedouin, learning and adapting to tribal customs. Pessah Bar-Adon, known among the Bedouin as Aziz effendi, left a vivid documentation of his life among the Bedouin tribes near the Jordan Valley during the 1930s. Leading a life of a Bedouin shepherd, Bar-Adon, like many Zionist newcomers of his day, sought to recover the early lives of the ancient Kings of Israel.\footnote{Pesach Bar-Adon, \textit{In Desert Tents: Diaries of a Hebrew Shepherd among the Bedouin} (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1981); Bar-Adon, \textit{Among Flocks Sheep: A Shepherd's Stories} (Jerusalem, 1942)} Members of Zionist youth movements preserved the custom of wearing the white \textit{kafiyya}, even after it had emerged as an Arab national icon during the Palestinian revolt in the 1930s.\footnote{See Ted Swedenburg, \textit{Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past} (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).} Members of the paramilitary Palmach, the elite fighting force of the Haganah, which constituted the underground army of the Yishuv during British Mandate, retained a distinct Bedouin identity in their language, customs and fighting skills. They wore a variety of \textit{kafiyyas},
and indulged in horse riding after the fashion of the Bedouin. In her autobiography, Netiva Ben-Yehuda, a commander in the Palmach, describes a strong desire among members of the paramilitary group to live after the manner of the Bedouin:

From the days of Hashomer to the Palmach– we were dying to be like them... to talk like them, to walk like them, we imitated them in everything... Anyone who knew how to chat in Arabic seemed more worthy in our eyes. And one who had Arab friends– was a king... The more familiar one was with Arab custom- or with how to mingle with them, to behave like them, to foster a common language with them- the more God-like one appeared to us.710

Bedouin values permeated the Sabra education and literature of the period.711 In his semi-autobiography, The Sons of Ishmael, prominent Zionist writer Moshe Shamir reflects on his childhood in Palestine during the 1920s, recalling how “the Arab lived in Jewish consciousness as a symbol of naturalness, of deep-rootedness.” Shamir also recounts learning from the Arab “how to wash and drink like a child of nature."712 Romek Amashi, the protagonist of a novel by Yaakov Rabinowitz, is a Jewish guard dressed like the Bedouin and leading a "life of freedom in the heart of nature in the Choran mountain." In his final cry, Amashi implores his fellow Jews to assimilate to Bedouin ways: "We are a withered and feeble people with little blood in our veins. To redeem itself, our nation needs to infuse a savage blood in its veins... We must have Jewish Bedouin.”713

711 See Oz Almog, The Sabra, 185-208
Bedouin tradition flourished in the popular culture of the Jewish yishuv. The Eretz Israeli Songs, a collection of Hebrew folksongs, is permeated with nomadic motifs. A JNF Songbooks, entitled 'Songs of the Land' (1928), was issued "to afford Jewish youth in the Diaspora the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Eretz Israeli song which, to a degree, reflects our pioneering spirit." In the collection, "the first important characteristic is the motif of a shepherd, usually playing a flute and/or guarding the fields. Derived from indigenous Palestinian culture, this pastoral motif underwent continuous development throughout this period." For example, the two collections, Mizimrat Haaretz (Tunes of the Land) and Misherie Haaretz (Songs of the Land), contained songs such as 'A Shepherd Plays his Flute,' and 'The Song of the Shepherd', which depict the shepherd in his flock, where, in six of the sixteen measures, the sound of the flute is imitated.

In the Hebrew textbooks of the period the Bedouin continued to figure as an ideal model of racial purity. One popular textbook dated 1946 classifies the Arabs according to racial criteria, "color of their skin, their facial features, their build, etc." The Arab fellahin occupy the lowest rank at the racial ladder because their origins "are not purely Arab from a racial point of view," whereas the Bedouin are hailed as "the purest Arabs, because they have not mixed with foreigners; and hence embody the pure race of the ancient Semitic population." The Bedouin thus preserve Jewish blood in their veins, for "this likeness to the ancient Semites makes them descendants of the same stock to which the ancient Hebrew belonged, and thus blood relations of

the Jews.” In the textbook the Bedouin is also depicted as a noble savage, free in spirit, loyal to the tribe, and a model of rootedness in whose image were made the ancient Hebrews. 716

Yet Jewish fascination with nomadism in this period had its limits. One need not go beyond these textbooks to see how radically the image of the Arab Bedouin had shifted. This is especially evident in the literature of Yede’at Haaretz (Knowing the Land), which consisted of a series of curricula designed to teach Jews on the history and geography of Palestine. 717 Yede’at Haaretz literature is defined as the culmination of "the mutual correspondence between modern scientific inquiry and ancient literature and archaeology, which renders the geography of Palestine the geography of the Hebrew culture, and its history the history of the Jewish people." 718

Steeped in the P.E.F. legacy, this literature culminates in a climatic narrative on the Bedouin as the source of ecological ruin in Palestine. The Bedouin are portrayed as nomadic hordes blamed for the desertification of what was once the "fertile granary of the Land of Israel." Hailed as the original Arabs, they are depicted as a foreign race of conquerors "responsible for the destruction of the ancient farming terraces, thereby causing soil erosion and exposing bare mountain rocks and turning the land into a perpetual battlefield." 719 One textbook links "the origin of agriculture in Palestine to the agricultural Jewish yishuv," which inherited from the Arabs "a desolate land." 720

716 J. Paporish, Settlement Geography, 209
717 Joseph Braslavi, Did you Know the Land? (Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Me’uhad, 1940); Michael Deshe and Ya’akov Goren, Know the Negev (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1955). [Hebrew]
718 Braslavi, Did you Know the Land?, 9.
719 See Meron Benvenisti, Sacred Landscape, 59-60:
720 Ibid, 182
A leading proponent of this discourse was Abraham Granott, who served as the head of Jewish National Fund during the 1940s. In a famous book on the land system in Palestine, Granott attributes the "utter absence of villages in Palestine" to Bedouin pillages. The book, which reads as an attempt to establish the superiority of the Jewish land system over its Arab counterpart, concludes that "large districts, especially in the east of the country, were under the control of numerous strong Bedouin tribes, which from time to time fell on the inhabitants, robbed and despoiled them, drove them from their homes, and made the whole of the surroundings a desert."\textsuperscript{721}

This declensionist narrative marked a radical rupture with the early image of the Bedouin as a model of racial purity and national revival in Palestine. Yet it was precisely this romantic fascination with the Bedouin which ultimately culminated in the identification of the Arabs with the desert and conquest. Differently put, it was the privileging of the Bedouin as the original Arabs which enabled Zionists to later view the Arabs as invaders. No Zionist writer had contributed to this romanticized image of the Arabs more than Moshe Smilansky.

Moshe Smilansky was born and raised in Ukraine. He emigrated to Ottoman Palestine in 1890, at the age of sixteen. He settled and worked in agriculture in the settlement of Rehovot. There he owned vineyards, orange groves and almond trees. An agricultural pioneer, he helped found a host of Jewish farmers and settlements' associations in Palestine. During the Mandate, he became active in Jewish organizations devoted to the reclamation and acquisition of land in the Negev. His method of purchasing lands for private Jewish investors often stood in opposition to

\textsuperscript{721} Abraham Granott, \textit{The Land System in Palestine} (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 36.
the official Zionist policy, which required that land be acquired only through the Jewish National Fund for the Jewish people as a whole.\textsuperscript{722}

Smilansky wrote extensively on agriculture, ranging from farming manuals to autobiographical novels, to memoirs and documentary accounts on the Jewish yishuv and Zionist pioneers in Palestine. In the early twentieth century, he rose to prominence as a literary figure thanks to his groundbreaking fiction on the Arabs of Ottoman Palestine. His first story collection appeared under the pseudonym Hawaja Mussa in 1906, and was later published in the volume \textit{Bene Arav} in Odessa in 1911.\textsuperscript{723} Hailed by critics as the first Zionist writer in Palestine to introduce the Arab to Hebrew readers, "his stories [on the Arabs] were extremely popular– so much that a selection of them was published as an anthology as early as 1910. Entitled \textit{The Sons of Arabia} (Beni Arav) the anthology went into several reprints for the next thirty years, and eventually became a founding text of the new Hebrew culture of Palestine."\textsuperscript{724}

Like many Jewish newcomers in Palestine, Smilansky had imagined the land empty and uninhabited. His first encounter with the native Arabs, which took place on his way from Jaffa to the settlement of Rishon, took him by surprise. "What are these Arabs doing here?", he protested in one of his early stories. "Why are they so poor and dirty, when the soil of their village is rich and fertile?"\textsuperscript{725} Smilansky had little sympathy for the fellahin, whom he viewed as primitive savages. His contempt towards the Arab peasants is often meshed with a prescriptive tone: "We must not forget that we are dealing here with a semi-savage people, who have extremely

\textsuperscript{722} See, Moshe Smilansky, and Israel Schen, \textit{Unknown Pioneers} (Tel-Aviv: Lion the printer for the Zionist Organization Youth Dept, 1944).
\textsuperscript{723} Moshe Smilansky, \textit{Bene Arav} [Children of Arabia] (Odessa: Vi-Defus N. Heilperin, 1911).
\textsuperscript{725} Smilansky. \textit{Ba-ʿAravah.}, 23-4
primitive concepts." While recognizing the common origin of Arabs and Jews, Smilansky tended to exaggerate their enmity. "The Arabs," he declared, were "anti-Semites Semites."  

Not that Smilansky had any sympathy for the Bedouin. For one thing, the Bedouin exhibited a primitive mode of ownership, and hence presented the Zionist pioneer with an antitype to Jewish communal ownership. Their tribal ownership “was based on oral tradition which was handed down from father to son, from one Sheikh to another, for many generations.” The Bedouin, Smilansky contended, "are savages: When they are on the land they are happy and peaceful, but when roused they are murderers. They will share their meager bread with a starving man, but they will commit murder for a tool they desire but cannot afford." This image is repeated over and over, depicting the Bedouin as "not less wild than the rocks. They are not evil people. They are primitive and quick-tempered. They are easily aroused. They are poor, too, and will commit a crime for a loaf of bread.”  

Yet Smilansky still praised the Bedouin’s ethos, their freedom, their asceticism and abstinence from of worldly goods, and their loyalty to the tribe. His fascination with the Bedouin is often juxtaposed with an evident contempt towards the fellahin. One of his early stories, for example, is devoted to warning fellow Jewish newcomers of the Arab peasants: "Let us not be familiar with the Arab fellahin lest our children adopt their ways and learn from their ugly deeds. Let all those who are loyal to the Torah avoid ugliness and that which resembles it and keep their distance from the fellahin and their base attributes." In another story, entitled The Fellahin, he

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726 Quoted in Benny Morris, Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict (Knopf: New York, 1999), 43
727 Smilansky, Rebuilding and Devastation, 159
728 Smilansky, BaʿArab, 39
729 Ibid, 139
describes the fellahin as "sinking in the mud which was by their front doors," while depicting their houses as “muddy, small, black, filthy and blind- without a window, [where] they were attached to each other and sinking in the mud which was by their front doors.”

Jewish peasants, in contrast, are portrayed as modern pioneers, national heroes, and native sons of the soil. Reflecting on a visit to the Jewish settlement of Gederah, Smilansky describes Jewish farmers as the “exalted soul of the land, full of majesty, heroism and the glory of devotion.” In another story, he hails Jewish agricultural settlements and farming technique as a beacon of progress, a living model for the backward Arab fellahin to follow. “The Jews have turned the world upside down,” he rejoices in the same collection. His tone is often paternalistic, missionary, and teeming with references to Zionist modernizing mission in Palestine, that is, "the effect of Jewish land settlement in Palestine on the native rural population and agricultural development," as he puts it in his 1930 tract on Jewish Colonisation and the Fellah.

Perhaps more than any Zionist writer of his time, Smilansky's Bedouin stories reinforced the image of the Arabs as the sons of the desert. This identification had a distinctively semantic aspect. Arava and midbar are two Hebrew words for desert, with the latter traditionally more commonly used in Hebrew literature. Yet, in the course of the massive waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, which intensified in the first part of the twentieth century, araba gradually replaced midbar as the most commonly used Hebrew phrase for desert, frequently

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731 Smilansky, The Fellahin, 156
732 Ibid, 51
applied in reference to the Bedouin of Palestine. Thus, for example, the bulk of Smilansky's stories and collections contain the root *arav* and its derivations in their titles, notably his twin collections *Bene Arav* (Sons of Arabia) and *Ba-Arava* (In the Desert). The radical affinity between *Arab* and *araba* colored Zionist perceptions not only of the Bedouin, but of the Arabs in general. In Zionist historiography, *arava* and *Arabs* became one and the same, owing to the widespread notion that since Arabia is a desert inhabited by nomads, an 'Arab' must be, inherently, a desert-dweller, a nomad. Initially, this designation helped draw a sharp distinction between the Bedouin as the 'sons of the desert' and the 'pure descendants of the original Arabs' on the one hand, and the fellahin as a 'mixed multitude', on the other.\(^{734}\) Ultimately, however, it culminated in a sharp demarcation between the Arabs and the Jews, where, as Smilansky puts it, “the children of Arabia are fighting the children of Arabia, and the sons of the desert are fighting the sons of the field [the Jews].”\(^{735}\)

A governing theme in Smilansky's literary oeuvre is the depiction of the Bedouin as nomadic fanatics. His perception rests on the easy identification of Arabness with nomadism, deeming Arab nomadism as inherent, permanent and inevitable. In what reads as a classic example of this deterministic view on Arab nomadism, Smilansky quotes a Bedouin chief saying: "We are Arabs and we heed our forefathers’ commands: Ye shall not live in houses built of stones because their foundations wound the heart of the earth. Ye shall dwell in tents which your woman shall weave from the hair of the camel. Do not plant a tree upon your land lest it hide the face of the sacred land from your eyes."\(^{736}\)

\(^{734}\) Smilansky, *Ben Karme Yehudah* (Tel-Aviv: s.n, 1948) 90
\(^{735}\) Smilansky, *The Hill of Love*, 82
\(^{736}\) Ibid, 147
This romanticized image is clearly taken from the Bible. The similarity with the commands of the Rechabites is striking. It reflects not simply a Zionist tendency to project Biblical images into Arab life and culture, but a desire to impose on the Arabs an essentialized image of nomadic fanaticism. Nomadism is viewed as a creed, a dogma to the Arabs. This image is often masked by highly romanticized tribal memes. Thus, for example, when Smilansky praises Bedouin's freedom from the burden of governance and civilization characteristic to the settled population, he further reinforces their image as unruly nomads.

Early Hebrew literature exhibits a deep fascination with the Bedouin, a fascination shared by many Jewish newcomers in Palestine. The Bedouin were often viewed as noble savages, surely, but also as agents of return to ancient biblical life, and a model for racial purity, national redemption, and cultural assimilation. Smilansky himself recalls being "attracted to the wild charm of the heroes of the People of Israel, from the days of their ancient wars, [who] stood constantly before his mind’s eyes."\(^{737}\) This early fascination, however, was gradually overshadowed by the newly constructed image of the Jews as farmers and cultivators. The Arab Bedouin, meanwhile, emerged as primitive nomadic hordes, a foreign race of conquerors, and the source of agricultural decline in Palestine. The identification of the Arab with the desert furnished Hebrew literature with images of Arab patriarchy, Arab enmity towards nature, and Arab violence and barbarity towards the Jews.\(^{738}\) One outstanding feature of this literature is the easy identification of Arabs with nomadism, which enabled Zionists to demarcate a sharp dichotomy between the nomadic Arabs and the settled Jews. Not only did this binary obscure the

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\(^{737}\) Smilansky. *Be-tsel Ha-Pardesim: Sipur* (Tel-Aviv: Masadah, 1950), 197.

\(^{738}\) Nahum Yerushalmi’s, *Mirchado ha-Hamor: Sipur mi-Hayi ha-Aravim* (1937); Yizhak Shami, *Niqamat ha-Avot* (1928); Yihuda Burla. *Naftule Adam* (Tel-Aviv, Davar-Masadah, 1962);
fact that thousands of Arab Bedouin had lived in the heart of the fertile regions of the country, but that many early Jewish newcomers in Palestine had claimed a Bedouin identity and nomadic character, let alone common ancestry with the Arabs.

To conclude, while early encounters brought Zionist pioneers and the Bedouin into close contact, they also presaged their ultimate, if not inevitable, divorce. In retrospect, Zionist fascination with Bedouin and early assimilation to tribal customs were only a transitional stage that laid the ground for their claims of redeeming the land and making the desert bloom. Overnight, nomadism became an obstacle to what Zionists deemed the 'agrarian revolution' in the Jewish yishuv. In this spatial reconfiguration, nomadism demarcated both the territorial boundary of the Jewish yishuv and the locus of Zionist schemes of land redemption and desert reclamation. Zionist fascination with the fellah followed along the same route. The fellahin, hailed by early Zionist newcomers as the hidden Jews, met a similar fate when the expansion of the Jewish yishuv set the stage for Zionist Jewish-only schemes, such as Hebrew Labor, which demanded the replacement of Arab peasants with Jewish ones. It is the ethnocentric character of Labor Zionism, embedded in the genesis of modern nationalism, which guided the reconfiguration of the Jewish yishuv along purely ethnic lines.

The discussion above sheds critical light on how Zionist perceptions of nomadism were vested in the deeper structures of nationhood and statehood. If nomadism was the antipode of modern nationalism, and Zionism marked the culmination of European nationalism in Palestine, what follows is that Jewish nationhood must be defined by a radical rupture from nomadism in every aspect. In Mandate Palestine, this rupture developed across a wide spectrum of political, social, economic and cultural forms, ranging from the creation of Jewish settlements to the
negation of exile and the rewriting of Jewish history into the ancient system of Jewish settlement in Palestine. In this spatial and temporal transformation, Labor Zionism, the Jewish yishuv, even the founding of the State of Israel: all were defined by their opposition to nomadism.

Finally, this chapter has brought to the fore a theme largely neglected in the historical scholarship on the Jewish yishuv, namely agronationalism. By tracing the shift from nomadic to sedentary sectors of society as the locus of Jewish national revival, I sought to illustrate how early Zionist pioneers embarked on a colossal enterprise to nationalize local modes of production, such as land settlement, labor and cultivation. In its ultimate manifestation, agronationalism meant the nationalization, not only of the agrarian economy of the Jewish yishuv, but the entire social and cultural apparatus of Jewish existence in Palestine.

In theory, agronationalism was the product of English legal legacy that inexorably linked land and national rights to settlement, a legacy which I have traced in the teachings of John Locke. The question, though, was not whether those Zionist pioneers had read John Locke or other English legal theorists, but how their national enterprise was the product of its time, when modern nationalism was being constructed into modern European epistemes and new legal taxonomies, which had accompanied the spread of European settler colonialism in South Asia and North Africa, and of which Labor Zionism in Mandate Palestine was a perfect culmination.

But settlement by itself was no guarantee of nationhood. Indeed, a fundamental feature of settler colonialism, in its Zionist and Israeli version, lay in its ethnic (or ethnocratic) character. Labor, property, land ownership and cultivation were not mere economic spheres, but contested spaces to be conquered, nationalized, and Judaized. Thus, labor must be Hebrew Labor, and likewise the tailoring of the entire apparatus of land rights. Agronationalism, in this sense,
defines the crux of Zionism's national enterprise in Palestine: the modern Jews constitute a people whose claim over Palestine is established by nationalizing the Palestinian space and territorializing the Jewish nation. On these new taxonomies were founded the economy of the Jewish yishuv, its institutional instruments, political expedience, social organization and legal apparatus. In this sense, Labor Zionism was indeed a state without statehood.
Conclusion

I began this study with an open question: Can we treat nomadism as a field of historical inquiry, a formative discourse by which British officials, Zionist pioneers, and Palestinian nationalists imagined, managed and governed the Bedouin of Palestine?

One way I have approached this question is by treating nomadism as a mutually constituted category within a set of interrelated categories that include race, nationhood and statehood. From a methodological perspective, this meant treating nomadism as gender, class, nationalism, colonialism, or Orientalism is treated in postcolonial literature: an analytical framework for historical interpretation and, perhaps more importantly, a perfect example of how native histories and memories and identities are reconstructed, re-imagined, even invented by colonial and nationalist elites. By focusing on the nexus of knowledge and power underpinning colonial and national narratives, I have examined how a particular form of knowledge (nomadism), produced in particular historical context (Mandate Palestine), is woven into the deeper structures of power relations (colonialism/nationalism/state-building). This involves the redistribution of historical, geographical and ethnographic imagination into new forms of knowledge and representation, political expedience and social organization. To this end, I have explored the complex history of nomadism in Palestine as a dynamic exchange between individuals, institutions, and the broader framework of cultural discourse on nomadism.

The beginning was with early British explorers in Palestine, around late nineteenth century, at the peak of scientific racism in Europe, British nationalism and colonial expansion. These explorers were not mere romantics, but in the early stages of British expansion into
Ottoman Palestine, their legacy embodied the strong nexus of knowledge and power underpinning imperial narratives. Most of them were working under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund Society, which was founded in London with the aim of carrying out surveys on the topography, ethnography and anthropology of Ottoman Palestine. What followed, however, was a pseudo-scientific legacy that culminated in three founding myths on nomadism:

First, the Bedouin are the 'original Arab race': Guided by Victorian theories of racial classification, British ethnographers concluded that the Bedouin were not only the pure Arab race, but a racial archetype on which Arabness itself was measured, codified and reproduced. In its reconfiguration of the Palestinian space, 'scientific' exploration was no longer limited to the land, but soon extended to what British ethnographers believed was the 'racial reality' of Palestine. Thus, for example, cadastral mapping went hand in hand with mapping the races of Palestine. Like land, race became a colonial sphere to be conquered, reconfigured and restructured into the imperial visions of the immediate postwar reality. Indeed, if a book on the invention of the Arab race in Palestine is ever to be written, it must begin with this early period.

By the early twentieth century, it had become customary to speak of the Bedouin as the 'original Arabs,' a perception which continued well into the Mandate period. It is on this perception where the views of Arab nationalists, Zionist pioneers and British administrators ultimately converged: the Arabs because they sought to integrate the Bedouin into the fabric of the Arab nation, the Zionists because it suited their scheme to identify the Arabs with nomadism and conquest, and the British because it fit into their divide-and-conquer policy. In fact, if we were to believe the firsthand testimonies provided by desert administrators in Palestine, the Bedouin themselves would concede to this romanticized image, yet not in the racial sense, and
that is precisely what British officials, Zionist pioneers and Arab nationalists had done—

*racializing* Arabness.

Second, *the Bedouin and the fellahin are 'a race apart'*: Drawing on the time-honored desert-sown binary, British ethnographers in Palestine classified the local Arab population into a hierarchy of nomadic and settled races, thereby denying the existence of any 'ethnic kinship' between the Bedouin and the fellaheen. This racial typology, mediated by the tendency to translate spatial categories into racial ones, was a century in the making. Early British explorers in Palestine had examined 'native' skeletons and skulls and bones, and concluded that the two groups were indeed distinct races. Later, this classification was employed by British colonial officials to explain away the prospects of Arab nationhood in Palestine, as opposed to Jewish nationhood. In this view, Bedouin, fellahin, and townspeople did not merely represent distinct demographic or socioeconomic strata, but discrete racial elements with separate and disconnected national trajectories. This classification was not a mere theoretical exercise, but in the early phases of the British Mandate, it would guide the administrative division of Palestine along newly demarcated racial boundaries. This redemarcation not only facilitated the division of Syria and Palestine among the two superpowers, Great Britain and France, but also enabled the British to label Palestine as 'non-Arab' country, because the Bedouin, labeled as the 'pure Arabs,' constituted but a small minority of the local population. Trans-Jordan, in contrast, was dubbed an Arab country because it was predominantly inhabited by Bedouin tribes. Hence the Balfour Declaration, which promised to establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people, made perfect sense to many British officials. "A further illusion prevailed, arising from indiscriminate use of the word 'Arab', that the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine were nomads
from the desert. 'Why cannot the Arabs return to their desert'? was a question which used frequently to be asked,” declared John Bagott Glubb, the man who ruled Jordan for nearly two decades and for whom ethnic division was a winning formula of colonial rule, but who, in a rare and belated confession, realized that 'nomadizing' Arabness—a key aspect of my definition of nomadism—was nothing short of a discursive device employed by British and Zionist officials to justify the allocation of Palestine to the Jews.

Third, the Bedouin are a 'destructive race' in Palestine: Having sorted out the Bedouin race, British desert administrators invented a narrative of decline on nomadism, blaming the Bedouin for the decay and desertification of what was once the 'fertile granary of Roman Palestine'. This declensionist narrative enabled the British to justify not only their expansion in the Negev and Sinai deserts, but also their modernizing and pacifying schemes among the local tribes, and, ultimately, the allocation of the Negev desert to European Jewish newcomers. Paradoxically, it was the privileging of the Bedouin as the 'original Arab race' in the early literature on nomadism which ultimately enabled the British and Zionists to view the Arabs as a foreign race in Palestine.

The image of the Bedouin that emerged from this literature was a total reversal of early British ethnography in Palestine, where the Bedouin had been portrayed as the aristocracy of the East, a pure racial prototype, and a model for national revival at home. The Bedouin were now stateless, unsettled and rootless nomads, foreign invaders, illegal intruders, a war-machine, a society against the state, and barbarians at the gate. Ironically, the perception of the Bedouin as stateless, unruly and lawless did not prevent the British administrators from recruiting local tribesmen in military and police services for maintaining law and order in southern Palestine.
Eventually, the double image of the Bedouin as both lawless and law keepers masked a profound failure on the British administrators' part: They failed to reconcile their modernizing and assimilating doctrine with their depiction of the Bedouin as a primitive, archaic and changeless race. In fact, many British officials, notably Glubb Pasha, would eventually conclude that tribal assimilation, as a colonial doctrine, was an inherent impossibility. That is because the rationality of assimilation, predicated as it was on the desire to integrate the natives into the superior culture of their colonial masters, stood in sharp contrast with perceptions of the native Bedouin as inferior and unsophisticated race. The solution was to simply classify the Bedouin as a martial race, fit for warfare, rather than nation and state-building, a policy which they adopted from the 'martial races' doctrine implemented throughout the British Raj. In a way, this was a double-edged sword. Not only did many Bedouin cooperate with the British, but if we were to trust the firsthand testimonies left by British officials in Palestine, they also conceded to, internalized, and even cultivated an image of themselves as a martial race, loyal colonial subjects, and custodians of law and order in a time of mounting national conflict. Even the Arab nationalist, Aref al-Aref, would concede to this image of the Bedouin when he boasted about keeping law and order in his district, Beersheba, thanks to the loyalty of his subjects.

Having established the image of the Bedouin as a distinct, foreign and destructive race in Palestine, the ground was now fertile for a fourth, most definitive feature of British discourse on nomadism, namely, nomadism as the antipode of national and state formations. British desert administrators in Palestine viewed with suspicion the applicability of nationality to the Bedouin. Nationalism, they believed, was averse to nomadic and tribal formations, where one's loyalty was limited to the tribe, not to the nation. Drawing a sharp line between tribal loyalty and
national affiliation, they maintained that the inherent opposition between nomadism and
nationhood could explain the 'non-complicity' of the Bedouin tribes of Palestine and Transjordan
with the Palestinian national cause. To the British Arabists, national affiliation was the sole
property of the peasant, the cultivator and the proprietor. It is the fellaheen, both rooted and
settled, who now embodied, by virtue of labor and cultivation, the archetype of nationhood in
Palestine.

To British desert administrators in southern Palestine, nomadism was the antipode of
nationhood because it lacked those agriculturalist elements which they had recognized in the
legal legacy of John Locke and other English legal theorists: land settlement, labor, property,
ownership, etc. But, more decisively, the Bedouin of Palestine were not fit for nation and state-
building formations because they lacked the kind of national archetype typified by the Jewish
settlers who, coming from Europe, better embodied the Lockean vision of nationhood and
statehood. This perhaps explains why nomadism fared better in Transjordan than in Palestine.
While in Transjordan the Bedouin constituted the nucleus of the nascent Jordanian nation and
state apparatus, in Palestine, thanks to the ethnic character of the conflict, they were treated as its
very opposite. This was not only a total reversal of British policy in Transjordan, but, once again,
of early British perceptions of the Bedouin as the racial nucleus of Arab nationhood in Palestine.

Of course, the divergent trajectories of British tribal policy in the two countries cannot be
attributed solely to the ethnic character of the conflict. One major factor can be linked to the
unique demographic composition of Palestine, where the peasantry constituted the majority of
the population, and the Bedouin but a small minority. At the end of 1946, for example, peasants
consisted of nearly 65 percent of the total Arab population in Palestine.\textsuperscript{739} In other words, Palestine, more than Trans-Jordan, provided a fertile ground for this form of (Lockean) agriculturalist taxonomy, which culminated in what I have described here as agronationalism.

The transition from the Bedouin to the fellah as the ideal national archetype was nowhere more radically manifest than in Zionist discourse. As we have seen, early Jewish newcomers in Palestine shared a widespread fascination with the Bedouin. Not merely in the romantic or exotic or biblical sense, but as agents of Jewish return to history, negation of exile, national revival, and cultural assimilation. In fact, many believed that the Bedouin were none but the original Jews. Hebrew literature from that period is replete with stories of Jewish newcomers bent on rediscovering their Bedouin roots. In the early phases of the twentieth century, Jewish Bedouin para-state movements flourished, notably Ha-Shomer and Ha-Raroeh. Assimilation to Bedouin ways by members of these groups was not limited to dressing in abayas (robe) and kufiyas (headdress), or adopting Bedouin speech and customs and communal ethos, or living in tents, or learning from the Bedouin the art of shepherding and horsemanship and cavalry and fighting skills. It was rather woven into the social fabric of these groups, their cultural ideals and national visions. The Shepherds, whose members spent years among the Bedouin in search for total assimilation, aspired to create a class of Hebrew Bedouin free and independent of the yishuv.

In later Zionist historiography, early Jewish fascination with nomadism came to an unhappy end. The fellahin, not the Bedouin, Zionists now believed, were the original Jews. It is the fellah, not the Jewish Bedouin of the early yishuv, not even the exilic or Diasporic Jew, who now embodied, by virtue of settlement and labor and cultivation, the prototype of the New Jew in

\textsuperscript{739} Paul Scham, Walid Salem, and Benjamin Pogrund. \textit{Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue} (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, Inc, 2010), 96.
Palestine. The Bedouin, meanwhile, were treated as a foreign race blamed for the destruction of what was once 'the fertile granary of the Land of Israel.' Ironically, it was the privileging of the Bedouin as the 'original Arabs' in early Hebrew literature which enabled Zionists to later view the Arabs of Palestine as a race of foreign invaders.

In this period, Arabs and Bedouin became synonymous. This perhaps explains why many Zionists, too, came to view the Bedouin and the fellaheen as 'a race apart', hailing the latter as the direct descendants of the ancient Hebrews. Oftentimes this racial classification resulted in a quixotic theological exercise, blended with a peculiar form of national genealogy, ethnographic imagination, and historical invention. As Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi put it in their colossal account on the history of the Jewish yishuv: "The Arab fellahin of Palestine are none but the direct descendants of the Hebrew peasants of the early Jewish yishuv, who were tempted into conversion thanks to the democratic character of Islam". That the Zionist authors, to prove their point, invoke the unorthodox approval of the Islamic doctrine only testifies to the predominance of the nationalistic vision of secular Zionism over the religious and orthodox elements of the Old Yishuv. In fact, the fellahin struck the Zionists as more Jewish than the urban Jews of the Old Yishuv, who, because of their penchant to mobility in times of war and economic duress, were seen as not so different in nature from the Bedouin.

The theory on the Hebrew origin of the fellahin was directed against the Territorialist movement in the wake of the Uganda Controversy, which held that a Jewish state could be established in Palestine or elsewhere. To the Zionists, who viewed themselves as Palestinocentric or Palestine-loyalists, the fellahin were a living testimony to Jewish roots in Palestine. Drawing a linear and unbroken lineage with the Arab fellahin was also meant to solve the so-called 'Jewish
Question,’ the demographic imbalance with the Arabs, and the desire to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine. Racial kinship with the fellahin was also meant to render Arabs more receptive to Jewish newcomers. But more important, it fit neatly into Zionism's nationalist vision that increasingly viewed nationhood through the single prism of land settlement. During the Mandate, though, the unorthodox theory shifted against the backdrop of mounting ethnic conflict and Palestinian resistance to Zionism. Yet this mattered little to Labor Zionism's core concept that Jewish national ethos was now vested in land settlement, labor, and agriculture. In the words of prominent Zionist writer Ya'akov Rabinovitz: "The New Hebrew world will come about through labor and cultivation, not wars or mercenaries."

Like with the Bedouin, Zionist honeymoon with the Arabfellahin came to an unhappy end. Zionists now distinguished between peasants who descended from original Arab stock, and those who descended from the ancient Hebrew peasantry. While the latter were described as 'peasants by nature,' the former were depicted as 'nomadic in origin' and settled by conversion. The Zionists, in other words, were evolutionist when it came to the Arab fellahin, creationist when it came to the Jewish fellahin. It is the Jewish settler, or the Sabra, of the New Yishuv who now embodied the prototype of the new Jewish nation in Palestine, not the propertyless Arab peasant— and again, not the exilic or Diasporic Jew. This perhaps explains why many Zionists in this period tended to describe the Diasporic Jews as the 'eternal nomads', a description which fused nomadism with an extra meaning that extended to Diasporic and exilic modes of existence. This marked the third in a series of discursive metamorphoses in Zionist perceptions of nationhood and autochthony, namely, its shift from the exilic Jew to the native Bedouin, from the Bedouin to the Arab fellah, and from the fellah to the Jewish settler.
I have termed this curious transition *agronationalism*, that is, the shift from nomadic to sedentary sectors of society as the locus of national revival. This sheds light on the genesis of the so-called 'agrarian revolution' in the Jewish yishuv during the Mandate. To Labor Zionists, agriculture was not merely an economic means, but a sublime end, a national ethos, a contested space to be conquered and nationalized. To nationalize the agricultural means of production was key to the national redemption of the Jews. This rendered the economy of the Jewish yishuv an essentially political economy goaded into the service of Jewish nationalism. (How else to explain the subsequent replacement of Arab labor by Hebrew Labor when the former was cheaper?)

Not that agronationalism was limited to the realm of economics. In Zionist historiography, agronationalism also meant rewriting Jewish history into the ancient system of agricultural settlement in Palestine, which, curiously, meant glossing over two thousand years of Jewish exile. To men like Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, the history of the Jewish people was the history of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Jewish nationalism, they also contended, was born in the yishuv, not the Diaspora, a claim which could hardly withstand historical evidence, but which the two Zionist authors so tirelessly defended. Clearly, the exclusion of the exilic phase from the fabric of Jewish history was inseparable from the silencing of Jewish nomadic past in Zionist historiography. This form of rewriting, or national imagination, was not short of historical invention. For example, the thousands of Jewish rebels who rose against the Romans, we are told, were predominantly peasants.

In this spatial and temporal reconfiguration, nomadism demarcated both the territorial boundary of the Jewish yishuv and the locus of Zionist schemes of land redemption and desert reclamation. It is no wonder, then, that Israel's first international exhibition, held in Jerusalem in
1953, was called 'Conquest of the Desert.' In other words, the young State of Israel was defining itself by its opposition to nomadism. Not only Israel, but the entire Jewish history was now defined by its opposition to nomadism. As Ben Zvi put it figuratively in his opening remarks, the Jews were not the sons of Jacob, "but the children of Joseph who tilled the land and cut down the ancient forests in the hills of Ephraim in order to extend the settled areas." Desert reclamation, in this view, was not merely a celebration of man's dominion over nature, but a reclamation of Jewish lost identity, the redemption of its cultural ethos and moral fiber, and the fulfillment of Zionist promise of historic return and national rejuvenation—in a word, the hallmark of Labor Zionism in Palestine. To Zionist pioneers, desert reclamation began where Jewish nomadism ended: It marked the negation of Diaspora, the end of Exile, and the return of the Wandering Jew. Thus, in conquering the desert Zionism staged a victory, not only over Arab nomadism, but its own. In this Zionist redemarcation of Jewish national identity, if nomadism did not exist, it had to be invented.

The desert, in this sense, was not merely a spatial delineation, but the locus of Jewish national enterprise in Palestine. In later Zionist historiography it became a metaphor for Palestine before the Zionists. When Zionists referred to Palestine as an 'empty land,' they were not in fact implying that it was empty of people (it was not), but of a people, of true national owners, of its Zionist pioneers and national redeemers. Arabs did own and occupy land, to be sure, but their occupancy of the land was deemed 'natural, primitive and archaic.' It lacked the redemptive force typified by Jewish agricultural settlement and Hebrew labor, and hence lacked ownership in the modern, European, and national sense. In this view, the mission of Labor Zionism was not simply to resurrect or restore the land to its former condition and state of fertility, but to revive
this national meaning of land ownership, a meaning which, they believed, was 'lost on the Arabs.'

Like the British before them, the Zionists also viewed nomadism as the limit of Arab nationhood, where the decline in agriculture was linked to a decline in national spirit. Palestine, they contested, had been completely denationalized under the Arabs, that is, after the Jewish exile from it. To the founding father of modern Israel, David Ben-Gurion, Arab history and nationalism were born and raised in Arabia.

Yet the perception of nationhood, in the Palestinian context, was not limited to the epistemic delineation demarcated by Locke and early English theorists of empire, but was now given a decisive ethnic character. This perhaps explains why at the end of nearly every statement about Jewish 'agrarian revolution' in Zionist literature there is always a statement about Arab nomadism. To many Zionists, the desert/sown binary was not merely a spatial demarcation, but emblematic of a deepening struggle between two peoples, two cultures, and two economies. Thus, for example, Jews and Arabs came to embody the biblical rivalry between Cain and Abel. In an ironic twist of the biblical story, Cain the farmer, not Abel the nomad, symbolized the New Jew. (Even Yahweh became a farmer in this period.) In Hebrew literature the word arava (Hebrew for desert) replaced the more common Hebrew words for desert, midbar and shmama, because arava fit better into the Zionist scheme to identify the Arabs with the desert. Nobody contributed to this identification of the Arabs with nomadism like Moshe Smilansky. Not only because most of his story collections contain the root arav and its derivations in their titles, but because in them, nomadism is treated as an Arab creed, a dogma, even a religion. His Bedouin tales and stories, which were extremely popular at the time, reinforced the dual image of the
Arabs as the sons of the desert, as opposed to the sons of the field (the Jews); and as the original Arabs, as opposed to the 'mixed multitude' of the urban and sedentary populations.

And yet, the binary which Zionists drew between the Arabs as nomads and the Jews as settled not only obscured the fact that thousands of Arab Bedouin had lived in the fertile regions of the country, but that many early Jewish newcomers in Palestine had claimed a Bedouin identity and nomadic origin, let alone common ancestry with the Arabs. In other words, the 'agrarian revolution' evolved not only from Zionism's rupture with its nomadic or Diasporic or Jewish past, but against the backdrop of fast-growing Bedouin tradition in the early phases of the Jewish yishuv, which manifested itself in a complex body of social and cultural formations. In fact, even today, we still see echoes of this tradition in contemporary Israeli culture. To grasp the irony, one need not go beyond the cover of Ariel Sharon's recent biography entitled Haroeh (The Shepherd), which features the architect of the 'Green Patrol', known among the Bedouin as the 'Black Patrol,' kissing a goat in his arms.

In retrospect, though, early Zionist fascination with nomadism and assimilation to tribal ways were only a transitional stage that laid the ground for its claims for desert reclamation and redemption— to make the desert bloom. Nomadism, it seems, fared better when Jews in Palestine imagined themselves as members of a shared culture, not as members of a nation-state. Agronationalism, in this view, defines the crux of Zionism's national enterprise in Palestine: the modern Jews constitute a people whose claim over Palestine is established by both nationalizing the Palestinian space and territorializing the Jewish nation. On this dual mission were founded the economy of the Jewish yishuv, its institutional instruments, social organization and legal
apparatus. In this sense, the Jewish yishuv, the prototype of the State of Israel, was acting as a state without statehood.

This sums up the legacy of Labor Zionism, whose national enterprise in Palestine culminated in a three-fold victory over nomadism: The first signaled its triumph over the Territorialists and their early plans to locate and create a Jewish territory (or territories) outside Palestine, plans which were viewed by Zionists as yet another form of Jewish uprootedness. Ultimately, the consolidation of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine, accompanied by a fast-growing settler colonial activity, played a decisive role in the dissolution of the Territorialists. The second marked the suppression by Labor Zionism of its socialist elements, where nationalist interests were elevated over those of class struggle, accompanied by the creation of Jewish-only schemes, such as Hebrew Labor, ultimately leading to the replacement of Arab workers by Hebrew ones. The third, and perhaps most decisive Zionist victory was the near erasure of the burgeoning nomadic tradition that thrived in the early phases of the modern Jewish yishuv in Palestine, which manifested itself a diverse array of Jewish organizations with unmistakably Bedouin character, such as the Shepherds and Ha-Shomer. While Bedouin identity was widely admired and embraced by early Jewish newcomers, it was rarely tolerated by the young Zionist pioneers of the Second Aliyah, who, in their quixotic attempt to redefine Jewish national identity, tended to distinguish themselves as national idealists and devoted modernizers, avant-garde nationalists for whom Jewish existence in Palestine rested on the radical disassociation, not only from the Arab Bedouin model, but from early Zionist narratives on Jewish Bedouin roots and common descent with the Arabs. This unspoken erasure was not confined to the modern Jewish yishuv in
Palestine, to be sure, but also involved the deep-seated nomadic heritage that had colored Jewish literature up to the early twentieth century.

Arab nationalists in Palestine seemingly conceded to the same territorialist logic by embarking on modernizing schemes to settle the Bedouin after the fashion of the sedentary fellahin. Palestinian historian Aref al-Aref, who served as the District officer of Beersheba under the Mandate, saw it his national mission to prove that the Bedouin of the Negev were entitled to the land by right of settlement and cultivation. Clearly, Aref was acting against the backdrop of mounting anti-Bedouin rhetoric in British and Zionist discourses. What began as a colonial service culminated in a multifaceted nation-building enterprise that covers a spectrum of intellectual fields, including history, ethnography, political geography, and legal theory. His nationalist enterprise in southern Palestine involved mapping, enumerating, and writing the Bedouin tribes into a territorialist past. In his attempt to resettle the Bedouin in time and space, he employed a set of modern and traditional tools, ranging from providing genealogical tablets to conducting population surveys among the local tribes. In short, the Palestinian nationalist was writing his own version of agronationalism.

Aref's historical corpus, especially his accounts on the Negev Bedouin, weaves a complex relationship between nomadism and nationhood in Mandate Palestine, one which seemingly offers an alternative story to Zionist and British narratives. To the Arab nationalist, the Bedouin of Palestine were not only part of the Arab nation, but its racial and national nucleus. His Bedouin were not outside history, but the agents of Arab return to history. In the Bedouin his nationalism found its most romantic expression: They are a people in the making,
marching from nomadism to civilization, a people whose tribal ethos embodies the very essence of the modern nation: racial purity, historical agency, and national evolution.

Aref's romantic views on nomadism culminated in a form of mythmaking exercise. In many aspects, his nationalist enterprise ended up reproducing the same myths on nomadism which he sought to refute in British and Zionist narratives. His efforts to settle, civilize and write the Bedouin into history were predicated on the same territorialist prejudice that failed to imagine nationhood beyond the conceptual apparatus of Jewish settlement, which, curiously, provided him with an ideal model of communal and national organization. Aref also accepted the easy assumption about his subjects as a pure race in a hierarchy of Arab races. In his attempt to integrate the tribes of Palestine into the fabric of the Arab nation, he also conceded to the age-old perception of the Bedouin as the 'original Arabs'. In Aref, to steal a line from Partha Chatterjee, "nationalism sets out to asset its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its object, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashions."

As mentioned above, Aref's nationalist enterprise in southern Palestine took multiple forms. First: Writing the Bedouin into history. Aref treaded a delicate line between his Arab nationalism and regional Palestinian identity. His historical survey of the Bedouin is clustered around his quixotic attempt to reconcile the double image of the Bedouin as original Arabs and native Palestinians, as the descendants of both the Arab immigrants of the seventh century, and the pre-biblical nations of ancient Palestine, such as the Canaanites and the Philistines, who were also labelled Arabs. This form of national genealogy, or nationalized genealogy, culminated in an image of the Bedouin as both original and aboriginal— to use a modern parlance. Since nationalism is largely predicated on the interplay of the spatial (autochthony) and the temporal
(racial lineage), Aref the national historian tended to weave the two taxonomies into a single narrative. In his reckoning, that the Bedouin were both the pure descendants of the original Arabs and native Palestinians was by no means anachronistic. That is because, to the Palestinian nationalist, nomadism, or mobility, was not an absolute liability, but a virtue. His magic solution was thus to substitute the Zionist narrative on 'Arab conquest' by a taxonomy of return, which, ironically, he borrowed from Zionist terminology. In other words, the Bedouin originated in Palestine, moved to Arabia, and returned to Palestine. A notable example is his genealogical survey of the local Jabarats, who are believed to be the first Arab tribe to settle in Palestine, and who were labelled by Aref as both 'pure Arabians' and 'Canaanites.'

It has become customary to speak of Arab nationalism as a form of anticolonial discourse that has evolved from the encounter with European colonialism, namely, as a native polemic against colonial narratives. Aref's polemic tone is no more evident that in his mimicry of Zionist maxims, such as his repeated talk about 'the Canaanite Exodus.' In other instances, it becomes a mere inversion of Zionist myths on Arab nomadism. Thus, for example, he portrays the early Israelites as a group of nomadic hordes pillaging the fertile granary of ancient Palestine, before forcing the native Bedouin out to Arabia. In what resembles a civilizing mission in reverse, Aref also claims that the 'the Arab conquest was a cultural blessing to the nomadic Jews.' In yet another ironic inversion of the Zionist narrative, he goes in great lengths to establish the 'nomadic character' of the Jews. His favorite examples are the 'forty-year wandering of the Israelites in the Sinai desert,' Jewish 'inherent' aversion to agriculture and estrangement from labor, and Arab pioneership in the art of cultivation. Jewish history in Palestine, as told by Aref, is thus one of conquest, migration and nomadism, that is, a mirror-image of Arab history as told
by the Zionists. His attempt to 'nomadize' Jewish history goes hand in hand with his efforts to 'resettle' the Bedouin in history. This form of reasoning is clearly predicated on the well-established Zionist and British axiom that labor and cultivation constitute the sole legal basis for land ownership, and hence national and land rights. In his double capacity as a public servant and devoted Arab nationalist, Aref sought to launch his own 'agrarian revolution' in Palestine.

A second major component of Aref's efforts to resettle the Bedouin is the population survey. Aref played a leading role in enumerating the Negev Bedouin during the Mandate, which resulted in the first successful census among the tribes of southern Palestine. It was not an easy task, Aref tells us. For the most part, the Bedouin, who had the Ottoman experience in mind, feared taxation and conscription. Even before the census began, thousands of them packed up and escaped to Sinai and Trans-Jordan, and it would take Aref months to win them back, or, in his own words, 'to conquer centuries of tribal prejudice against the census'. Once again, the magic remedy was nationalism, namely, to appeal to the Bedouin's sense of patriotism, and their 'national' interest in proving that the Negev desert was not empty as the Zionists claimed, and hence had limited absorptive capacity for Jewish newcomers. Yet, Aref's accomplishment here did not lay in carrying out the census per se, but in modifying its meaning— in nationalizing it. In his seemingly conflicted role as a Palestinian nationalist and mandatory official, Aref treated a delicate line between his public and national duties. With him, the census, a distinctly modernizing enterprise undertaken by a colonial government, was shrewdly goaded into the service of Palestinian nationalism. And yet, Aref's appeal to the Bedouin on national ground was clearly and paradoxically embedded in his view of nomadism as the limit of national aspirations:
By undertaking the census, the Bedouin were meant to part not only with nomadism, but, ultimately, with their 'inherent' resistance to national and state formations.

A third major component of Aref’s nation-building enterprise in southern Palestine is mapping. Aref is credited with drawing the first modern map of the Bedouin tribes of Beersheba, which, unlike the cadastral maps of the Palestine Exploration Fund Society, demarcated, for the first time, the boundaries of tribal units. By mapping the local tribes, Aref was not only infusing a modern European notion into a traditional form of organization, but also a native form of organization into an exceptionally colonial apparatus. His map, while failing to reflect the complex aspects of tribal land, is distinguished by its uniquely localized and highly non-reductive view, bringing into sharp focus his intimate knowledge of the tribal space. While not entirely a faithful reflection of spatial reality, as all maps are, by recognizing existing tribal boundaries his map attempts at a fairer representation of that reality than its British counterparts. In other words, while it is easy, even tempting, to describe the map and the census as ultimate expressions of the strong nexus of knowledge and power emblematic to colonial and national institutions alike, in this context divergences and convergences abound.

To sum up, the shared legacy of British administrators, Zionist pioneers and Arab nationalists in Mandate Palestine sheds fresh light on the ways colonial and national narratives converge on the question of nomadism and its complex relation to race, nationhood, and statehood: if settler colonialism denies nomadism a national history, nationalism reinvents it. In this sense, nationalism, rather than simply emancipating native histories from colonial narratives, represents yet another form of official discourse and cultural hegemony in which native histories and memories and identities are reconstructed, re-imagined, even invented.
Yet that is only part of the story. In the struggle over the meaning of nomadism, national and colonial narratives tend to part ways. Where they clearly diverge is on the nomadic character of the Bedouin of Palestine. To Arab nationalists like Aref, the Bedouin were nomadic, or semi-nomadic, by necessity, not by choice, by historical accident, not by nature, from desire, not from need. They do wander from one place to another, it is true, but their wandering is neither aimless nor permanent. It is rather dictated by seasonal conditions, by their will to escape foreign conquest and government tyranny, and to avoid taxes and conscription—*to survive*. Their movement is within a delineated territory, within a land they know, love, own and cultivate.

More important, the Bedouin were not inherently nomadic because they had willingly embarked on the path of transformation, sedentarization and assimilation to sedentary culture— in short, the Bedouin were keenly and firmly invested in the steady process of nation and state-building.

Paradoxically, Aref's view of nomadism and mobility as emblematic of Bedouin's will to escape, evade, and survive foreign conquest and state tyranny was recast by Zionists into a counter narrative on the Bedouin as foreign invaders, illegal intruders, enemies of the state and barbarians at the gate bent on the destruction of the sedentary power of the state. To Zionist pioneers, and, to a varying extent, British officials, the Bedouin were inherently and permanently nomadic, and hence incapable of change. Their tribal policies and attitudes were rooted in the widespread perception of tribal assimilation to sedentary forms as an inherent possibility, a perception turned into reality thanks to the subsequent displacement of the Bedouin population by the Zionist movement, and later, the State of Israel. Indeed, few scholars today seem to realize that sedentarization, let alone assimilation, is a mere political fiction created by a partial reading of the history and politics of nomadism in Mandate Palestine. The fact remains that as far as the
Zionist movement, and the subsequent Israeli government, is concerned, the Arab Bedouin community was meant to remain unsettled, and thus stateless, unlike the Jewish community of the Negev. Demarcated along purely ethnic lines, this policy was widely and systematically justified by projecting onto the Bedouin the same narrative of decline described above. This narrative was not a mere theoretical exercise, but in the early phases of Israel's existence, it guided the implementation of new strategies designed to block 'tribal invasions' into state lands and curtail 'illegal dwellings,' which, as Oren Yiftachel points out, are none but code terms of Bedouin residence on traditional tribal lands and resistance to forced displacement and involuntary concentration in small towns designated by the state in the Negev and the Galilee.740

This form of nomadization—making the Bedouin nomads against their will—puts Zionist and Israeli tribal policy at odds with former rules in Palestine. The Ottomans, for example, who were originally nomadic tribes, had constantly pursued sedentarization as an official policy. The Ottoman Land Code, which was enacted in 1858 to both enhance the power of the central government and protect the peasant agriculture, was clearly a measure for tribal assimilation. For one thing, the law replaced communal property, characteristic to tribal ownership, to private property and individual ownership. For another, it limited seasonal migration of tribes, and declared gazing lands as empty lands. Accidentally, many Bedouin, who did settle down and cultivate their land but did not register it— to avoid conscription and taxation— ended up landless refugees.741 Ironically so, the first Ottoman attempt at sedentarization ended up creating a large

movement of nomadism, a paradoxical fate which seemingly bears much resemblance to that which they later suffered at the hands of the Zionist movement and the Israeli government, thanks to their constant replacement and relocation of the Bedouin population of the Negev. In the Zionist case, however, due to the ethnic character of the conflict, nomadization was not an accident of history, but a systematic policy.

Under the Mandate, British officials fell into the same cult of unintended nomadization, that is, pursuing sedentarization policy while imposing a nomadic character on the Bedouin at the same time. This was especially evident in their efforts to extend the population census to tribal Palestine, an enterprise aimed ultimately at settling the Bedouin. What followed, however, was a reaffirmation of the Bedouin's nomadic character. As Eric Mills, the superintendent of the census, concluded in his report on the Census of Palestine 1931, the Bedouin were not properly enumerated mainly because the British were applying a strict application of the nomadic/sedentary classification: "The census figures for 1931 fall short of adequately reporting the Bedouin population, using the term nomadic in a severely limited sense and thereby introducing a division between sedentary and nomadic Bedouin which was more artificial than real." By applying this form of dichotomous classification, the British, to use a common postcolonial parlance, have essentialized the Bedouin as an inherently and permanently nomadic society. In a striking resemblance to their Ottoman predecessors, their sedentarization effort resulted ultimately in the widespread perception of the Bedouin as rootless and stateless, an image which the Zionists would fully embrace.

In seeking to explain the legal rationalities underpinning the exteriority of tribal formations to Israel's state apparatus, I have examined official Zionist policies and attitudes to
the Bedouin within the boarder framework of settler colonialism. A sphere of colonial expansion, nomadism demarcated both the territorial boundary of Jewish settlement and the locus of Zionist schemes of land redemption and desert reclamation. It also demarcated the ideological boundaries of Jewish national identity as defined by Zionism's settler colonial apparatus. Nomadism, as both discourse and praxis, thus defined the crux of Zionism's national enterprise in Palestine, namely, its ultimate mission of nationalizing the Palestinian space and territorializing the Jewish nation.

A fundamental feature of settler colonialism, in its Zionist and Israeli version, lies in its ethnic character. Thus land settlement, ownership and property are not mere economic spheres, but contested spaces to be conquered, nationalized, and Judaized. In this reconfiguration Palestine's spatial reality, the 'Conquest of the Desert', in which the young state of Israel envisioned its historic mission of national and state-building, meant, in its basic and final delineation, Jewish conquest of the desert, and Jewish reclamation and redemption of the land from the Arabs. In this reconfiguration, nomadism symbolized not simply a spatial sphere of colonial expansion, but a marker of an ethnic reality, one defined by a radical redemarcation of the historical, geographic and ethnographic boundaries dividing Arabs and Jews.

In the same breath, I have shown that settler colonialism, as a form of colonial formation overseeing the transfer and settlement of foreign settlers by displacing the native population and native modes of existence, fails to capture the entire reality of Labor Zionism in Palestine. For one thing, Labor Zionism, as a modern movement founded on the radical reconfiguration of Jewishness into new territorialist and national taxonomies, has mandated the erasure, not only of native (Bedouin) modes of living, but its own. One need not go beyond Kovetz Ha-Shomer,
closely examined above, to see how the early Shomrim, who constituted an integral part of the modern Jewish yishuv in Palestine, had imagined themselves as both aspiring Bedouin and native sons; or how the Shepherds imagined themselves as both native sons and true Jews; or how early Zionist pioneers traced their Hebrew roots among local Bedouin tribes—in short, how Labor Zionism, as a unique and complex form of settler colonialism, had to conquer, displace and transform its own forms of autochthony and national identity.

What does this study contribute to the questions of race, nomadism, nationhood and statehood beyond the boundaries of Palestine? And what does the study of nomadism in Mandate Palestine contribute to the study of empire and nationalism in the broader context of settler colonialism?

The main contribution of this study lies in its conceptual framework. In it, I have treated nomadism and agronationalism as interpretative taxonomies for historical inquiry. This rested on my conviction that nomadism and agriculturalism can serve to explain national narratives and identity formations in Mandate Palestine. At the same time, I have shown that the shift from nomadism to agronationalism was not an easy feat, but a complex process characterized by a series of ruptures and continuities, internal conflicts and compromises, assimilations and associations. Perhaps rather than two discrete linear stages, nomadism and agriculturalism can be seen as representing formative stages in the early phases of nation-building in pre-state Palestine. This is attested, I hope, by the heterogeneous corpora of textual evidence cited in this research.

Not that nomadism and agronationalism, as discursive taxonomies, are limited to Palestine. A comparative look at other postcolonial settings in the Middle East and North Africa would reveal parallel courses of transformation, in which tribal assimilation into sedentary
culture was invested into the formative stages of nation and state-building. For example, scholars of colonial North Africa, notably Benjamin Brower and Diana Davis, have shown how anti-tribal narratives were deployed by French administrators to justify colonial violence and desert pacification doctrines, policies of modernization and assimilation, and, ultimately, the exteriority of tribal forms to the modern state apparatus. Not that politics and practices of nomadism in other postcolonial settings are identical to those implemented in Palestine. Transjordan is a case in mind. As historians of the Middle East, notably Joseph Massad and Yoav Alon, have shown, nomadism fared better in Transjordan, where tribal law and culture were well integrated in the military and legal apparatus of the new Jordanian state. My study offers a curious and unique case of nomadism, in which tribal forms were excluded, rather than included, from the state apparatus, thanks largely to the ethnic character of the conflict.

This is not to suggest that nomadism, in the Palestinian context, lacked the complexity attached to tribal assimilation in Transjordan. Tribal exteriority, as we have seen, was neither smooth nor clear-cut, but a complex process replete with struggles and contradictions. If in the early Mandate period nomadism marked a meeting place for Arabs and Jews, by the end of the Mandate it had become a conflicted zone in which their national trajectories would ultimately diverge. Nomadism, it appears, fared better when Arabs and Jews in Palestine imagined themselves as members of a shared culture, not as members of separate nations and ethnic identities.

Another governing theme running through my narrative is how colonial and nationalist discourses converge, rather than diverge, on the questions of race, nation and state formations. Drawing on a relational approach, I have maintained that if settler colonialism denies nomadism
(or any native form of living) a national history, nationalism reinvents it. My argument here is by no means an innovation. A similar course of argument, for example, has been pursued by Partha Chatterjee in the context of British India, and James McDougall in French Algeria.742 These scholars, among others, have challenged prevailing notions that nationalism emancipated native histories, thus portraying nationalism as yet another form of cultural hegemony by which native histories, memories and identities are reconstructed, re-imagined, even invented. Nationalism and colonialism, in other words, are equally involved in a dual process of denial and invention, erasure and redemption, association and assimilation. In Mandate Palestine, this practice has been the shared legacy of British imperialism, Zionist settler colonialism, and Palestinian nationalism.

Still, my research departs from previous studies by showing more nuisances and divergences in the perceptions of nomadism, not only between national and colonial narratives, but in each narrative, and, in many cases, each individual. Men like Aref, Ben-Zvi, Ben-Gurion, and Glubb Pasha, saw their visions on nomadism change dramatically in the course of the ethnic conflict, sometimes revolting against their own views. In this regard, nomadism is the shared legacy of colonial and national narratives not in the sense that it sums up the similarities between these narratives, or the binary lines dividing them, but as the inventory of the conflicts and struggles, victories and defeats, enchantments and disillusions, shaping this legacy.

What is perhaps novel about my argument is the introduction of this shared legacy, in both convergences and divergences, through the lens of a new discourse, one which I have

742 Partha Chatterjee, _Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse_ (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); James McDougall, _History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria_ (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
termed nomadism. For decades, modern scholarship has treated nomadism as a largely anthropological phenomenon lying outside the scope of historical inquiry and discursive formations of statehood and national identity. Only recently have scholars of colonialism and nationalism begun to treat nomadism as a historical and discursive event, a trend which, as we have seen, has found expression in a series of innovative studies on colonial legacies in the Middle East and North Africa. My work on nomadism in Mandate Palestine falls within this fast-growing academic tradition, which was only partially pursued in the context of Palestine.

Drawing on a century of colonial and nationalist tribal legacies in modern Palestine, I have traced nomadism as a discourse event in three interrelated aspects. The first concerns the ways in which British, Arab and Jewish perceptions of nomadism were shaped within the matrix of power relations involving British colonialism, Palestinian nationalism and Labor Zionism. The second involves the rationalities guiding the constitution of these perceptions within a web of discursive formations, such as race, nationhood, statehood, autochthony, modernity, settlement, and land rights. The third concerns the ways in which nomadism has emerged across fields as diverse as raciology (or scientific racism), ethnography, anthropology, legal theory, political economy, and climatic theory.

Nomadism was the product of its time. Born into the early encounters between colonial expansion and national resistance, it represented a contested space in which colonial administrators and nationalist pioneers jockeyed for domination over the meaning of history, autochthony, statehood, and national identity. I hope to have shown that nomadism, in this sense, can indeed serve as a field of historical inquiry, a formative discourse through which colonial
and national agents alike, be they individuals or institutions, seek to manage and govern native
and tribal populations, both in Palestine and beyond.

The unspoken story of nomadism in modern Palestine is a fascinating tale of enchantment
and disenchantment, assimilation and disintegration. It is also a curious tale of transformation
brought by a coalition of forces, ranging from modernity to settler colonialism to nationalism.
Scholars who studied nomadism—or other native forms of existence—tended to be motivated
by sympathy for it, which often resulted in a complex form of sympathy for their subjects. My
purpose here was not to glorify or defend nomadism and nomadic modes of living, but to show
how the end of nomadism as a viable form of existence was largely inevitable under modern
colonial and national formations. In the same breath, I strove to show how nomadism, as a set of
ready assumptions and official narratives on the Bedouin of Palestine, was also largely invented.
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