

THE SETTLEMENT OF PASTORAL NOMADS IN THE  
ARAB MIDDLE EAST: INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS AND TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT  
POLICIES, 1950-1990<sup>1</sup>

Riccardo Bocco

The sedentarization projects for pastoral nomads undertaken in the Middle East between 1950 and 1970 did not mark a departure from policies carried out during the Mandate period or in Wahhabite Arabia. Then, as earlier, the solution suggested for the nomad 'problem' was the same: sedentarization. However, from the 1950s onwards, international organizations entered the scene as new actors setting the ideological framework for the 'new' settlement programs. They brought along with them not only important financial means but also expertise and up-to-date technology, which aided greatly in elaborating global approaches to the sedentarization of nomads and in legitimizing the state policies adopted for the nomads of the region.

We will not attempt to establish yet another necrology of aborted or reinterpreted projects, but try, through an analysis of the logic governing development processes, to retrace the genealogy and 'philosophy' of the policies applied to the nomads. Following a brief historical presentation of the activities of international organizations from 1950 to 1965, when the 'doctrinal' basis for future projects was elaborated, we shall examine the representations underlying the work of the experts. Whether we look at Western or Arab experts, we can conclude that in general their writings are not based on knowledge gained from field studies. The divide opposing Western experts to bedouin populations is mirrored in

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter was previously published in: *The Transformation of Nomadic Society in the Arab East*, edited by Martha Mundy and Basim Musallam, (2000, pp. 197-217). This is a revised and augmented version of a paper originally published in French: *'La sédentarisation des pasteurs nomades: les experts internationaux face à la question bédouine au Moyen-Orient arabe (1950-1970)'*, published in *'Société Pastorales et Développement'*, an issue of *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines* edited by Edmond Bernus and François Pouillon (see Bocco 1990). All quotations from reports have been translated into English.

the gulf separating the Arab intelligentsia from the rural people of their own countries.<sup>2</sup> If the experts can be criticized because of their ethnocentrism, this applies equally to Arabs and Westerners: the prejudices of both are mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, the majority of their reports have a marked ideological character, their explicit aim being to guide political action; for decision makers, the recommendations contained in these studies count more than presentation and analysis of the data. In this sense the experts enjoy the double legitimacy attached to scriptural knowledge and to their indirect political power as 'advisors to the prince.' For native-born experts, the Arab affiliation is an additional source of legitimacy.

Parallel to this question is that of the historicity of sedentarization programs. If Westerners pretend that the projects are innovative, Arab experts want them also to mark a break with the colonial past. Our case study on Jordan shows the continuity in sedentarization policies from the Mandate period up to the 1970s, while bringing out clearly how some texts reinterpret or even mystify certain aspects of the recent past as well as use ideological re-adaptations to legitimize one or another of these policies. From development programs there emerges a vision of social change and a 'project of society' to be implemented. It should be noted that conservative or 'socialist' experts (and governments) have hardly differed in the option they favored regarding the sedentarization of nomads.

#### *International Organizations and Sedentarization Programs (1950-1970)*

The 1950s constituted a preliminary phase in the history of sedentarization projects in the Middle East. The institutional framework set up at that time is a proof of the importance given to the problem. It is also during this period that the first research programs

---

<sup>2</sup> In his study covering the issues of pastoral nomadism and settlement policies in the regions included between West Africa and Turkistan, Monteil (1966) analyzed almost four hundred books and articles, published between the beginning of the century and the mid-1960s. In commenting on the sources he gathered, the author stressed that "they come either from the interested parties themselves, who lack specialised training, or from Western researchers, who can only give scant attention to these matters due to lack of time or a too brief stay. When, by chance, an Eastern researcher studies nomadism, it is a city-dweller looking at things with mistrust and from a distance" (Monteil 1966, p. 7).

were launched. The outcome of this research was presented in experts' symposia and publications that provided the scientific and technical underpinnings for the policies put into practice during the 1960s and 1970s.

Between 1949 and 1954 the League of Arab States, together with the United Nations, organized a series of seminars on the subject of 'Social Welfare in the Arab States of the Middle East' (United Nations 1956). In the meetings at Beirut in 1949 and Cairo in 1950, each Arab country had been urged to set up a department whose specific task would be to 'protect' nomads, co-ordinate all actions concerning them and train indigenous experts to deal with them. Sedentarization was adopted as an official policy at the 1952 meeting in Damascus. During the final seminar, in Baghdad in 1954, the methods to be adopted were spelled out as follows:

We should proceed towards sedentarisation by giving a piece of land to each individual capable of engaging in agriculture, the surface area to be determined by each state and calculated in such a way as to ensure a rise in the [owner's] standard of living, and to allow him to support himself and all his dependants.... During the redistribution of land, care should be taken to group any one family in a single area, made up of all the pieces of land given to family members, the family being defined as the parents of the first grandfather.

(International Labour Organization 1962, p. 80)

Thus within a relatively short time experts had moved from general resolutions to very precise recommendations leaving no doubt about the policies to be applied and the role each country was expected to play.<sup>3</sup>

Parallel to the Arab League meetings, in 1951 UNESCO set up a consultative committee for the 'Research on Arid Zones.' A six-

---

<sup>3</sup> After the Baghdad meeting, the recommendation most debated concerned the abrogation of tribal customary law, a very sensitive issue which has known various kinds of compromises according to the political history of the different Middle Eastern states. Concerning the priorities and the objectives of settlement policies, the Syrian government did not hesitate to address them in the 'Arab Ba'ath Party Constitution' of 1947. Article 6 (43) is very explicit; "Bedouin nomadism is a primitive social state which weakens national production and makes an important part of the nation a crippled limb, and so it is a factor retarding its development and progress. The Party is therefore actively settling the bedouin, giving them land, abolishing the tribal system and applying to them the laws of the State" (quoted in Seurat 1980, pp. 87-142).

year program was launched in 1956 to study living conditions and improve soil fertility in desert areas. Comparative studies covering nomadic tribes in the Middle East and North Africa were assigned to various experts: sociologists, anthropologists, agronomists and geologists. The results, published between 1958 and 1962 as reports and conference proceedings, also favored the settlement of nomads through the implementation of projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the steppe populations.<sup>4</sup>

From 1956 onwards, following a series of epidemiological studies on nomads in the Middle East, the World Health Organization (WHO) joined in the research initiated by UNESCO. WHO's general assembly in its annual meetings in Athens in 1956 and Baghdad in 1957, after calling for various health measures and a campaign against malnutrition, also recommended the sedentarization of nomadic populations. Its aim was to eliminate diseases (especially malaria and tuberculosis) the eradication of which would not be possible as long as nomadism continued (ILO 1964b, pp. 29-34).

In 1959 the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) went on record with its own series of reports on the agricultural and arboricultural situation in the Middle East and North Africa. Without questioning the imperative to settle nomads, FAO experts were, however, the first to point out the importance of maintaining and developing pasture lands and improving animal species. From the early 1960s the FAO, often in collaboration with the World Food Programme, launched a series of projects to set up agricultural colonies in the steppe areas with the declared aim of resettling nomads, developing fodder crops and encouraging sedentary animal husbandry. At the twelfth session of its general conference in 1963 the FAO passed a resolution assigning its experts the further task of studying land-tenure systems, in order to assure better integration of nomads within the regional states.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) took the role of main coordinator for sedentarization programs. In 1957 the fortieth session of the ILO (attended also by FAO, WHO and UNESCO) adopted a 'Convention for the protection and integra-

---

<sup>4</sup> Inside the ASFEC (Arab States Fundamental Education Centre) established under the patronage of UNESCO, a special department was created in 1959 whose main task was to deal with the educational problems of the nomadic populations.

tion of aboriginal and other tribal and semi-tribal populations in independent countries' (Convention no. 107). This convention states that "governments will be principally responsible for undertaking a co-ordinated and systematic programme to protect the concerned populations and to integrate them progressively in the life of their respective countries," and "recourse to force or coercion to integrate the concerned populations in the international community is to be excluded" (article 2). Specific articles in the convention also outline the role which the state should assume in the promotion of health, education and socio-economic development. Special attention is given to problems of land ownership and land use by nomadic groups. Recommendation 104 underlines the importance of states providing protection to the semi-nomadic tribal groups whose traditional territories are found on both sides of international boundaries (ILO 1964b, p. 5).

In 1958 and 1959 the ILO financed a series of studies on the conditions of nomadic tribes in several Middle Eastern countries: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and Iran. The research was mostly assigned to academics of Arab universities. During its sixth session in 1960 the ILO's Permanent Agricultural Commission recommended that priority be given to studies on sedentarization in order to help the member states carry out their rural development plans. In the spring of 1962 the ILO's general director, in concert with FAO, WHO and UNESCO, formed the 'Advisors' Group on Aboriginal and Tribal Populations'; within it, a department was set up to co-ordinate the activities of international organizations and develop a program for applied research.<sup>5</sup> The resulting recommendations (ILO seminars of 1962 and 1964) show clearly the orientation adopted by experts and representatives of Arab states: sedentarization, synonymous with development and progress, is the declared objective; the state is the entity most capable of carrying out any project, and the only subject of debate concerns the strategies through which sedentarization can best be achieved. The convergence of views among the different

---

<sup>5</sup> The task of co-ordinating and promoting the research on nomadic pastoral populations, undertaken by the ILO, was suspended at the beginning of the 1970s, mainly because of the refusal of the Soviet Union to subscribe to the suggested recommendations and because of the veto imposed on international consultants to pursue research in Central Asia (personal communication of Dr S. Radwan, ILO, spring 1988).

international organizations thus played a role in providing a transnational legitimacy to individual projects later carried out.

The views of two experts, one Arab and the other French, typify the approach dominant in the 1950s, where politics took priority over all other considerations. "Concerning the sedentarisation of nomads," affirmed the Egyptian researcher Muhammad Awad, "the most important factor is the existence of a strong central government determined to maintain order and peace and to encourage the country's progress and the well-being of its inhabitants . . . Whether the motives are humanitarian, political, economic, strategic or administrative, it is important that this result be achieved as rapidly as possible" (Awad 1959, pp. 37-38). In spite of the sensitivity he usually displayed in analyzing complex situations, Jacques Berque also affirmed: "We can no longer see the relationship between the old and the new once a nomadic society has entered into history, once it has abandoned a cyclical world view and a conservative practice in favour of new techniques and has come to conceive of time as, so to speak, cumulative, as something which has meaning, viewed as good or bad. Is such a passage even possible outside sedentarisation?" And he continues by stressing that "the right and indeed the imperative duty to make the nomads evolve cannot be questioned" (Berque 1959, pp. 515, 518).<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Concerning the relationship between, on the one hand, the socio-geographic origin of the experts who worked for international organizations in South-West Asia and Saharan Africa during the 1950s, and, on the other, their attitudes towards sedentarization policies, two remarks are in order. The first is that we agree with the judgement of Monteil (1966, pp. 61-68) that, in general, the experts of Arab origin, none of whom are of nomadic background, are all in favor of implementing sedentarization programs. Among Western experts there is no such unanimity. Our second observation is that the majority of Western experts opposed to sedentarization have acquired, through their working experience, an in-depth knowledge of arid and semi-arid zones and of nomadic peoples. In this sense there is a noteworthy difference between North Africa and the Middle East. While in the Mashreq countries gained their independence before 1950, in North Africa and in the Sahara most countries won independence only at the beginning of the 1960s. Thus, during the 1950s, a number of experts for Saharan Africa were recruited from among colonial administrators still in their posts, or former colonial officials, such as Theodore Monod, director of IFAN in Dakar. Robert Capot-Rey, or the researchers of CHEAM (Centre des Hautes Etudes Administratives sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes), With the exception of J. Berque, most of the Western experts who had worked in French colonial administration in Saharan Africa were all extremely reticent as to the implementation of sedentarization policies. In this respect, the Near East seems to be different and we have no knowledge of international consultants

*Experts and Bedouins: Representations of the 'Other'*

A development program cannot be reduced to the sum of technical measures envisaged for one particular operation. It is above all an attempt to propose or impose a particular world view and praxis, and it embodies a set of values, a vision of the world, of social change and progress. The sedentarization programs proposed by the experts of international organizations thus reveal the representations these experts have of nomadic pastoralism. By masking their pre-established conceptions with sociological jargon, the experts transformed them into scientific postulates which were then used to justify or support development activities. The reports of international organizations which formed the basis of development programs carried out in the 1960s and 1970s build on a core of common conceptions. Given that these reports, monographs or comparative studies all adopt a similar thematic plan—relations to the environment, economic activities, socio-political organization and sedentarization problems—we shall follow the same outline to analyze the representations of nomadism they contain.

1. The ecological context is often singled out as the major constraint on pastoral societies. By presenting nomadism as a successful adaptation to a desert environment, its weakest point is effectively stressed: its dependence on the hazards of climate (Yacoub 1970, p. 109). Perpetuating nomadism would in the best of cases represent a waste of potential agricultural land (ILO 1962, p. 15). As a future Egyptian minister of agriculture also claimed: "Nomadism and semi-nomadism are wasteful and destructive. Vast stretches of land which can be reclaimed at little cost and cultivated intensively, are simply left for grazing without any serious attempt to make better use of them" (Abu Zeid 1966, p. 280).

For partisans of one particular ecological approach, nomadism is responsible for the deterioration of pasturelands and constitutes a real menace for the future of the steppe. This hypothesis is, however, not universally accepted and remains subject to debate. The land-tenure policies adopted by the states are themselves never the subject of analysis (UNESCO 1960). The question of territo-

---

in the 1950s, whether French or English, who were recruited from among the administrators of the Mandatory period.

rial appropriation, though considered crucial, is approached only from the angle of land-ownership laws and ecological constraints. Only in passing is mention made of the conflicts between successive governments and nomadic and sedentary groups of a particular region, or of the socio-economic implications that the creation of international boundaries had for tribal territories. If the question of land ownership arises at all, the experts recommend that a solution to it can be found through 'equitable' agrarian reform (ILO 1964a, pp. 96-103).

2. In the majority of reports, the ecological context is accorded not only a textual but also a causal priority. The economic activities of nomads are highly conditioned by the environment, forcing pastoralists to roam incessantly in search of water and pasture for their animals. As an economic activity and a pattern of land use, pastoral nomadism is reputed to be marginal and resistant to integration into the national market (FAO 1972, p. 3). In most of the reports, groups are classified according to their lifestyle and economic activity: nomads, semi-nomads, semi-sedentary, sedentary. The socio-economic categories adopted by experts are never confronted with the social categories used by the interested parties themselves. Thus, when bedouin settle, experts consider them to have disappeared as a distinctive social group.<sup>7</sup> For the 'real' nomads, all agricultural activity is supposed to be socially degrading and wholly antithetical to their 'psychology': "Agricultural activity is repugnant to the nomad: it deprives him of the liberty he holds so dear" (Awad 1959, p. 36). Following the same perspective, a French sociologist stated: "Used to exerting strenuous but brief efforts, [nomads] do not readily countenance the necessity of staying continuously near their cultivated plots. Furthermore, the nomad feels a certain contempt for agricultural activities, which he views as inferior tasks traditionally carried out by slaves" (Destrée 1969, p. 268).

Apart from some reminders of the role formerly played by nomads in caravan trade and transport—a role now eliminated due to the

<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere I have outlined the different definitions of 'nomad' and 'bedouin' adopted over time by state administrations, academic researchers and development experts in Jordan, to show their implications for policy making. See Bocco 1989b.

development of modern means of transportation—experts present nomads as wholly isolated in the desert. The myth concerning the dichotomy between nomads and sedentary groups is universally accepted, and nowhere do we find discussion of the history of interrelations between the groups, particularly ancient in the Middle East. If nomads are found practicing other economic activities, it is, the experts would have us believe, due to the policies of post-independence states who have provided them with jobs in industry, technical crafts and commerce (ILO 1964a, pp. 27-75; Yacoub 1970).

3. Concerning the socio-political organization of nomads we find two principal theses adopted by the experts. In the first the ecological variable is seen as determinant: "The crucial variable of environmental uncertainty and instability at the micro-ecological level compels nomads to develop loosely organised and generally uncentralised political systems" (FAO 1972, p. 5). The other interpretation makes no pretence of precise concepts and merely affirms that nomads are governed by a backward and often despotic social organization. The terms used by Selim concerning Jordan and Iraq typify this trend:

All political power in the tribe is centralised in the person of the sheikh—he is generally a despot with quasi-royal authority who holds in his hands the life and destiny of his subjects. The sheikh is the owner of all land, commander-in-chief and judge. He distributes the land to his subjects and can take it away from any of them. Not only can he banish any tribal member from his territory, he can also severely punish all who disobey him. It is he who imposes taxes and rights, decides the tribe's moves and conducts wars. The sheikh's executive powers are carried out through the intermediary of the heads of clans... as well as by his close relatives and chosen representatives.

(Selim 1959)

These generalized affirmations take precedence over the presentation or analysis of facts—facts so skimpy that we are entitled to wonder if in fact the expert actually knows the nomad groups he is describing. Nomadism and tribalism are always lumped together: to one type of land use there corresponds a single type of social organization, and, apart from a few simplistic definitions, a tribal system appears inconceivable among sedentary groups. Experts also stress the consequences of tribalism, said to hamper the birth and development of a national identity (Helaissi 1959, pp. 554-555), to prevent the

establishment of external authority (Awad 1959, pp. 34-35), and, in a word, to raise the problem of state control: "Nomads are no respecters of national frontiers which they cross and recross very rapidly, evading arrest and taxation, avoiding any new modernising program.... This elusiveness curtails the nomads' commitment to the State" (FAO 1972, p. 5). In discussing relations between the communities, nomads are often presented as predators on farming societies, a veritable 'mafia' of the desert which the state alone can control (ILO 1962, p. 29). The prevailing view in this respect is that tribal chiefs should be subject to strict administrative control and their powers be closely regulated. Customary law should also be abolished or at least reformed so as to be in conformity with the needs of 'modern' life (ILO 1964a, p. 416).

4. All the reports conclude by presenting the advantages of sedentarization but also the problems that it raises. Defined as the process of fixing nomadic populations on the land, sedentarization leads to the redirection of economic activity, sedentary animal husbandry, and manual skills and trade. Experts always make a distinction between the process of 'spontaneous' sedentarization, that is, where nomads choose 'naturally' to abandon nomadism, and 'forced' sedentarisation, due either to 'direct' measures (state projects for rural development) or to the 'indirect' effects of national economic development (ILO 1962, pp. 63-69). In all forms, whether spontaneous or induced, sedentarization is seen as a veritable cure-all. Rendered possible thanks to the control over the environment that the state is able to assure by introducing new technologies, sedentarization also allows bedouins to benefit from health and educational facilities and their economy to be integrated into national trading networks. In other words it is synonymous with social and economic integration: "The abolition of nomadism will lead to the regrouping of pastoral, rural and urban communities ... into one solid whole and will bring to an end the social distance which now keeps them apart" (ILO 1962, p. 63). In socio-political terms, another effect of sedentarization of nomads will be to weaken tribalism. According to the experts, detribalization can be attained by various means. For some experts the role of education is primordial: "If a nomadic child has the opportunity to complete his schooling normally he will in the end be "detribalized" and lost to his family and the community to which

he belongs" (ILO 1964a, p. 132). For other experts it is economic development that will fuel rapid emancipation: economic independence obtained by the young removes them from the authority of their elders; individualism develops proportionately to the weakening of family ties; tribal chiefs lose their power and customary law its prestige (ILO 1962, p. 78). With ongoing detribalization, a corollary to sedentarisation, socio-political organization "should tend to be more democratic and less prone to strife and social inequality" (FAO 1972, p. 12). Another expert views this process as replacing the trilogy 'nature-nomadism-poverty' by a new one of 'civilisation-sedentarism-prosperity' (Filali 1966).

The state is viewed as the most competent agent to effect this transformation but there is some disagreement over how it should be done. Some experts are in favor of an approach we would qualify as 'paternalistic':

It must be understood that these nomads living outside the mainstream of modern civilisation are at present unable to perceive their real interests, nor can they find unaided the means to improve their social level. It therefore appears essential for their own good that they leave this responsibility to their own government.

(Helaissi 1959, p. 556)

Other more 'alternative' experts favor less conventional development schemes but still have a very classical perspective in terms of forms of intervention:

Successful innovation is very often best introduced by outsiders.... It is necessary to choose appropriate innovators who are acceptable to the local community and whose presence will inspire admiration and stimulate emulation

(FAO 1972, p. 12).

It was only at the end of the 1970s that 'participant' approaches started to become fashionable; in earlier years communication between developers and developpees was strictly from the top down: a gulf separated the two worlds. When the subject of participation was tentatively brought up, never was there any discussion as to where, when, how and by whom it should be solicited (Leighton 1986).

The representations of pastoral nomads haunting the experts of international organizations during the 1950s and the 1960s contributed to the elaboration of stereotyped terms of reference and

legitimized sedentarization policies in the Middle East. The case of Jordan is an interesting example of how the rhetoric of development as applied to nomads was transposed from the international to the local level. It furthermore shows how the discourse of experts in the 1960s partially obscured the history of relations between the state and the bedouin tribes during the British Mandate. This is why it is revealing to retrace the principal stages of sedentarization policies as they were carried out in the period preceding independence in Jordan.

*Bedouin Settlement Policies in Trans-jordan under the Mandate*

When the Emirate of Trans-Jordan was established in 1921 it had a considerable population of nomads and semi-nomads. Estimates made by the British authorities at the end of the 1920s show that out of a total population of about 300,000 there were 120,000 semi-nomads and 50,000 nomads.<sup>8</sup> This significant proportion posed the problem of how the authorities were to ensure the political allegiance of bedouin tribes, particularly those in the eastern and Southern-central regions of the country. Although the Mandatory powers, France and Britain, were able to control the regions to the West of the emirate, the greater part of the desert regions to the east consisted of pasture lands of nomadic tribes, whose political loyalty was divided between Amir 'Abdullah and 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Sa'ud. The creation of an international border between the emirate and what was coming to be the kingdom of Saudi Arabia left the new states and bedouin groups facing the dual problems of tribes' nationality and of tribal territories' division.

The British Mandatory authorities signed an initial agreement on the emirate's north-eastern border with Ibn Sa'ud—then still 'Sultan of Najd and its dependencies'—at Hadda in November 1925. The border agreed upon posed serious problems for the bedouin tribes of northern Trans-Jordan. On the one hand, the border divided in

---

<sup>8</sup> For the analysis of sedentarization policies during the Mandate period. I have relied principally on the British archives in the Public Record Office (PRO), particularly those of the Colonial Office (CO) and the Foreign Office (FO). For estimates of Jordan's population at the end of the 1920s, see PRO:CO831/8/5, Administration Report 1929.

two the nomadic territories of the Bani Sakhr, Bani Khalid, Sirhan and 'Isa tribes, whose winter grazing pastures were in the Wadi al-Sarhan, placed under Saudi jurisdiction. On the other hand, Ibn Sa'ud's anti-Hashemite policy consisted of sapping the authority of Amir 'Abdullah, considered a pawn of the British, by gaining the allegiance of 'Trans-Jordanian' tribes, and came up against article 4 of the Hadda agreement which recognized the 'traditional' rights of Trans-Jordanian tribes to grazing land and property in the Wadi al-Sarhan oasis.<sup>9</sup> In 1926, when lands belonging to the present-day governorate of Ma'an, in the South of the country, were annexed to the emirate, the question of tribal territories came up again. This time the Mandatory authorities refused to give in to Ibn Sa'ud when he claimed the Jabal Tubayq region, which was the winter camping site of the Huwaytat.

Following the establishment of the northern border, and in response to the Wahhabis' expansionist ventures, the 1926-1933 period was characterized by great political instability in the east of the emirate, with a rapid escalation of intertribal raids.<sup>10</sup> In 1924 a separate department was created to deal with tribal affairs, while Amir 'Abdullah and the British adopted a policy of handing out subsidies to tribal shaykhs to ensure their loyalty. Later, and parallel to the periodic reorganization of international commissions and courts to arbitrate raids across borders, the Mandatory authorities in 1929 set up a special army corps. This was the Desert Patrol Force, recruited exclusively among the bedouin, who were thus drawn into the administration of the steppe regions. Accompanying these measures was the promulgation of special legislation for the bedouin—'Tribal Courts Laws' and 'Bedouin Control Laws'—between 1924 and 1936.

With both the Mandatory authorities and the Hashemites using diverse strategies to secure the tribes' allegiance, sedentarization as a means of control appeared an attractive idea from the early 1930s. The economic resources of the emirate were, however, very

---

<sup>9</sup> PRO:CO733/131/5 Annual report for Trans-Jordan, Annex 7, Hadda Agreement. See also Bocco and Tell, 1994 and 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Between 1926 and 1931, the period where intertribal raids reached their peak, tribes from the Hijaz and Najd were estimated to have 'stolen' about 6,700 camels and 6,200 sheep and to have killed ninety-five members of Trans-Jordanian tribes. The 'booty' of the latter during the same period was much less: about 3,000 camels, 950 sheep and forty-one persons killed from the Hijaz and Najd tribes (PRO: CO831/12/1, McDonnell commission's report on raids' arbitration, 1931).

limited: the larger part of the country's territory was made up of desert; irrigated cultivation was spread over a small area; and rain-fed agriculture was possible only on a tenth of the land. The country was also lacking in important mineral deposits. In order to develop agriculture, which remained the country's principal resource, and to reduce Britain's financial aid to the emirate's budget, the authorities decided in 1927 to reorganize the land register and to survey and evaluate land-ownership titles, with the aim of setting up a new system of land taxation.

The new Land Code and the Land Settlement Law of 1933 conceded no rights to the tribes over their traditional pasturelands. The tribes were, however, granted rights in the regions where they had summer camping grounds or where they cultivated land, either directly or via sharecroppers. From the 1930s on, several tribal shaykhs were thus given title, individually or in the name of their section, to agricultural or potentially arable land where plans were made to build villages. In the north, among the Bani Sakhr in particular, the four most important sections of the tribe acquired land near their principal summer camps, east and South-east of Amman.<sup>11</sup> The different sections of the Huwaytat tribe acquired similar landholding rights in the South, in the Jabal Shara' region and Wadi 'Araba. Glubb mentions the Huwaytat of Shara' engaging in plough farming from as early as 1933.<sup>12</sup>

The Mandatory authorities began formulating real agricultural development plans only in 1935. They set up a development department, financed by the British Colonial Development Fund, to administer and plan projects. British experts recommended a sedentarization policy for the bedouin built around such measures as digging artesian wells, building small dams and improving old reservoirs in order to encourage the development of agriculture and the construction of villages. They planned to set up schools in the 'bedouin villages'

---

<sup>11</sup> Several shaykhs and members of different sections of the Bani Sakhr had obtained titles (*sanud tabu*) to agricultural lands during the Ottoman period (see Hamarneh 1985; Lewis 1987). For the bedouin tribes of Southern Jordan, the situation was rather different due to the weak and sporadic presence of the Ottoman administration before World War I (see Bocco 1989a).

<sup>12</sup> PRO:CO831/23/11. Glubb's report on events in Southern deserts, November 1933; and PRO:CO831/41/5, Loans to Agricultural Bank, letter of high commissioner for Trans-Jordan to Colonial Office, 17/4/1937.

and to teach the rudiments of health care to at least one member of each tribal section. They dug new wells and repaired old ones in the steppe region.<sup>13</sup> Long periods of drought in the 1930s adversely affected the pastoral economy as well as the early attempts to develop agriculture in the steppe. Malnutrition and the epidemics consequent to it, tuberculosis in particular, brought disaster, especially to the tribes in the South.<sup>14</sup> In these very hard times, the army came to be the main source of livelihood for many bedouin families.

Between 1937 and 1939 the development department surveyed the emirate's hydrogeological resources. In the report written by G. Ionides, director of the department, it appeared advisable to expand irrigated cultivation in the Jordan Valley as well as on the high plateau, and to develop rain-fed agriculture on the margins of some arid zones, such as the eastern Shara' areas. It was in the latter that the greatest efforts were made to settle nomads.

From the numerous reports of that period concerning sedentarization policy, we have a series of notes written by Glubb in 1938. According to the commander of the Desert Patrol Force, it was because bedouin tribes enjoyed relative political autonomy and, in the

---

<sup>13</sup> PRO:CO831/34/8, British Resident report on the economic situation, 1935, report of the Advisory Committee to the British Colonial Development Fund, November 1934.

<sup>14</sup> An enquiry into the health conditions of the bedouin population was commissioned by the British authorities from Dr McLennan. The results of the survey were astonishing. Of 1,030 persons inspected among four main bedouin tribes (Bani Sakhr, Huwaytat, Sirhan and Bani Hasan), only 16 per cent were sufficiently nourished; 15 per cent of the adult population were suffering from advanced tuberculosis and 40 per cent of the children under fifteen years of age were infected by the tuberculosis bacillus. Conscious of the close relationship between British policy towards the bedouin population in Trans-Jordan and the near starvation observed among them, Capt. Glubb did not mince his words in commenting on Dr McLennan's report:

There can be no doubt whatever that this condition is not peculiar to all Bedouins, but to the Transjordan Bedouin alone, and that there cannot be a moment's doubt that it is primarily due directly to the diplomatic policy of His Majesty's Government in failing to protect these tribes from *Ikhwān* raids, and finally in failing to face up to Ibn Saoud and compel him to return the loot. The fact that bad rains and bad grazing are not primary causes is proved by the fact that . . . the Rwala and the Shararat are still prosperous, as also are the Iraq Bedouins.

(PRO:CO831/29/2, Glubb's monthly reports on events in Southern deserts. Enquiry into the Health Conditions of the Bedouins, report by Dr McLennan, 1934).

absence of a strong state power, were able to impose a levy on peasant populations and travelers, that the stereotype of the bedouin as 'social parasite' came into being. He states that the pastoral economy is by no means an enclaved economy: the bedouin are integrated into the national market economy on which they depend to sell their goods. From an economic point of view, sedentarization may encourage them to diversify their activities and investments. If they are not to abandon pastoralism altogether—since the national market requires meat—they should, however, take up agricultural activities to compensate the disastrous effects of the prolonged drought. On this point Glubb calls for the demystification of the image of nomads as opposed to any agricultural task, supposedly socially demeaning to bedouin. He points to the examples of the Jbur section of the Bani Sakhr at Nuqayra east of Amman, as well as that of the Matalqa, Tuwayah and Mara'yah in the eastern region of the Shara', which contradict this myth. Glubb also stresses that, from a political point of view, sedentarization accompanied by a redistribution of land to the nomads would permit greater control over the tribes: a nomad can take his family and his herds wherever he wishes, whereas once he is a settled land owner he knows that by leaving his land he loses part of his wealth.<sup>15</sup>

In the last years of the Mandate sedentarization was already well

---

<sup>15</sup> Whether the settlement of the nomads should entail transforming their economic system into an agricultural one or maintaining a mixed agro-pastoral model was an issue debated among British authorities. Glubb sided for the second option, expressing his view in these terms:

The breeding of livestock is as necessary and useful a profession in Transjordan as in Australia and Argentine, and half-baked statements about the value of compelling nomads to live in houses are economically unsound. For nomadism is essential to a profitable breeding of flocks under present conditions, in countries with such a sparse and uncertain grazing and rainfall

(PRO:CO831/46/9, Glubb's monthly reports on events in Southern deserts, Internal Administration: Bedouin Cultivation, April 1938).

The same perspective was adopted by an advisory committee composed of Trans-Jordanian and British experts:

With regard to the recommendations made to induce the nomads to settle, it is first of all necessary to remember that the desert area will continue to hold as large a pastoral population as it can reasonably support, so that if the present nomads were to settle down, others would appear to take their place. Many of the nomads of Transjordan are already possessors of agricultural land as well, and are very anxious to obtain firm titles to such land. It is thus

under way and the pastoral economy integrated into the national market. In socio-political terms, the bedouin were subject to special laws dating from 1924 on, had parliamentary representation since 1928, and were integrated into the army from 1929.

The emirate was not directly affected by the events of World War II, but Jordan—declared independent in 1946—witnessed drastic upheavals as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict that broke out in 1948. The annexation of part of Palestine and the massive influx of refugees led to serious economic and social difficulties. For the bedouin, the early and latter part of the 1950s were marked by drought so severe that the government was obliged to seek international aid. Several expert missions, mostly British and American, came to Jordan at the request of the government to define strategies for development. Two studies made by experts at the Beirut-based British Middle East Office supported the options for agricultural development of the steppe areas already adopted during the Mandate period. They maintained, however, that if agricultural development and sedentarization of the bedouin were to be effectively carried out in the steppe regions, animal husbandry should also receive special attention.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of the 1950s, international and national experts could therefore draw on almost two decades of experience in the field of sedentarization, yet the terminology and practice of planners continued to give currency to old clichés.<sup>17</sup> Let us then analyze how the

---

the duty of the Government to compel and ensure a peaceful habit amongst the Bedouin to develop the water resources of the desert so as to make available grazing areas which are at present inaccessible, and to apply the benefits of the Disposal of State Lands Law and of the Settlement Land Law to the Bedouin just as much as to the fallahin, but to ensure at the same time that they do not give up their occupation as grazers.

(PRO:CO 831/34/8, British Resident report on the economic situation, 1935. Report of the Transjordan Economic Commission, para. 14)

<sup>16</sup> PRO:FO371/104899, Jordan's Prospects for Development, report by R. S. Porter, 1953; and PRO:FO371/104905, Agricultural Development of the Southern Districts of East Jordan, report by J. C. Eyre, 1953.

<sup>17</sup> In his study on rural development studies during the Mandate period, Hamarneh (1985) supports the thesis that Britain had a purely political-strategic interest in creating a 'buffer state' in Trans-Jordan. The British lack of economic interest in the country, coupled with their desire to reduce financial aid to the emirate, thus favored implementing agricultural policies that had the effect of reproducing underdevelopment. It is true that from a general economic viewpoint when the small kingdom

experts, by brushing away part of the recent history of development of the steppe, proposed already well-known strategies as if they were new solutions.

*National and International Experts in Jordan during the 1960s*

At the beginning of the 1960s, sedentarization policies took the form of projects for irrigated agriculture in the steppe areas. According to the 1961 census, the number of nomads east of the Jordan River at the time was about 80,000. Two-thirds of them were concentrated in the Southern-central zone,<sup>18</sup> where agriculture, roads and infrastructure were the least developed. Between 1960 and 1980, with the help of international aid, the Jordanian government created eleven sedentarization projects in these areas.

As part of an aid program beginning in the early 1960s, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) carried out research on the hydrogeological resources of eastern Jordan. The Jafr basin in the South-east of the country appeared a particularly propitious site, and in 1963, with help from the World Food Programme and the UNDP, the government decided to start up a sedentarization project for the bedouin of the region.<sup>19</sup>

The analyses and representations of nomads in Southern Jordan published in reports of this period by Jordanian or foreign experts are

---

became independent it was financially dependent on external aid and incapable of promoting an autonomous development. However, if we look at the plans for developing the arid regions, the results achieved during the Mandate indeed allow us to mitigate the sometimes too harsh criticism of the British authorities. Contrary to Hamarneh's thesis, the Mandatory authorities were by no means unanimous in supporting sedentarization, a fact which reveals a less monolithic attitude than has been claimed. Furthermore, the development programs aimed at combining agricultural and pastoral activities, which were mainly proposed by Glubb but also supported by other officers, are propositions that appeared modern in the 1980s in the course of the debate about 'sustainable development' in the arid zones.

<sup>18</sup> The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. *First Census of Population and Housing (1961: Scattered Tents Census Districts)*, interim report no. 10, Amman. Department of Statistics, October 1963.

<sup>19</sup> I have analysed elsewhere the institutional and legal framework of the policies of sedentarization projects, as well as the local reinterpretations of development programs (see Bocco 1989a; 1990). Other settlement programs for the Southern bedouin tribes—namely the Ahaywat and the Sa'idiyyin—were planned in the late 1970s by the Jordan Valley Authority in the Wadi 'Araba. See Sultat Wadi 'Araba, *Dirasat al-hajat al-tanmawiya fi qura mintaga Wadi 'Araba*, Amman, 1987.

virtually indistinguishable from those made in other Middle Eastern countries during the same years or earlier. Here again we find the ecological factor 'determining' the type of economic and socio-political organization governing nomads and motivating sedentarization policies (Huneidi 1965; Qalyoubi 1967; UNESOB 1973). Analysis of the socio-economic organization of nomads in most of these reports is rudimentary. Opinions are sometimes contradictory concerning the chances of success of these projects: "The nomad has neither the knowledge nor the ability to break with tradition" (WFP 1969a, p. 3); "The project [of al-Jafr] has shown that the Bedouin is both interested in and capable of adapting to sedentary farming life" (WFP 1969b, p. 4). The success of projects is supposed to result simply from detailed technical planning with a vague appeal to the 'participation' of the nomads concerned, without further specification (Qalyoubi 1967). The tribes' political organization is analyzed only in relation to changes that sedentarization is supposed to bring about:

For many Bedouin in the al Jafr area and elsewhere in Jordan, the lifestyles and values of sedentarisation and freedom from tribal and kinship ties are gradually replacing those of nomadism and the maintenance of strong kinship and tribal ties

(UNESOB 1973, p. 32).

In the euphoria surrounding the al-Jafr experiment, that project is perceived as wholly novel: "The dawn of a new life started with so bold an aim as to transplant the twentieth century to where only the camels thrived . . . The project is a unique experiment" (Qalyoubi 1967, pp. 153-154); "A new community has been created at al Jafr" (UNESOB 1973, p. 31).

If in these reports the old clichés already questioned during the Mandate period appear again, the transposition to Jordan of stereotypes fashioned elsewhere is obvious. Apart from Huneidi (1965), experts all too often ignore the historical dimension. If referred to at all, it is either to hide or to enhance some characteristics of the nomads or other actors who historically played a role in the process of sedentarisation.

Huneidi identifies the beginning of the Mandate period as a point of rupture with the Ottoman past. According to the author, bedouin tribes of northern Arabia for several centuries lived a 'natural' life based essentially on herding. This existence was broken by wars and

conquests in a climate of perpetual political instability (1965, p.1). With the Mandate appeared a strong central authority capable of imposing lasting political stability, with the army permitting control and integration of the bedouin tribes. Parallel to this, economic factors paved the way for the sedentarization process, notably the decline of the camel as a means of transportation and prolonged periods of drought (Huneidi 1965, pp. 2-3). For the 1946-1964 period, the author stresses the role of the newly independent state as the motor for progress, through technological development in controlling the desert environment and allowing for the growth of agricultural projects, but also through the creation in 1948 of the army's cultural department, very active in developing educational facilities for the bedouin, Huneidi's report, despite its wealth of data, tends to credit the independent Jordanian state with having 'innovated' in the field of sedentarization and development projects in the steppe areas. In his analysis, the Mandatory period appears as merely the first stage in the passage of nomadic societies to 'civilisation.'

*The Experts' Vision of Social Change (1950-1970)*

It is possible to deduce the vision of social change held by experts in international organizations writing between 1950 and 1970, by looking at their representations of Jordanian bedouin or nomads of surrounding countries, by reviewing their discussions concerning the role of the state, and finally by studying carefully all the ways they have hidden, manipulated and reinterpreted the history of nomadic societies. The sources for much of what has been written are simultaneously the economic and socio-political theories of 'modernization' elaborated by the American developmentalist school and ideas born of 'Orientalist' currents specific to the Middle Eastern context.

During the 1950s and 1960s, theoreticians of modernization of the developmentalist school elaborated models to explain development and to propose alternatives to underdevelopment.<sup>20</sup> They adopted a functionalist approach and worked within a comparative perspec-

---

<sup>20</sup> I refer here to such American developmentalist authors of the 1950-1970 period such as W. Rostow, G. Almond, B. Powell, D. Apter and L. Pye, to mention only the most well known.

tive, holding an evolutionist vision of social change. One of their principal assumptions was the idea that each society is a strongly integrated system and that any change capable of jolting the inertia of that system can only come from the outside: this postulate led them to privilege the role of the state as *the* agent in the process of modernization. The corollary to this assumption is that social change is an irreversible, unidirectional and cumulative process. Thus sedentarization, taken to be inevitable, seemed to be led by an almost teleological necessity: it would be the catalyst for the different 'inputs' of change (Salzman 1980).

To take one example of how modernization theories were applied in the Middle Eastern context, we may look at Lerner's "The Passing of Traditional Society" (Lerner 1958) whose work often served as a reference for experts. For Lerner, Western societies are the model and standard of comparison for development. Modernization occurs through the elimination of tradition and through a process of mobilization capable of bringing about a positive and rational mentality leading individuals to universalist behavior patterns. According to Lerner, it is the growth of social communication that is at the origin of the process of mobilization and that regulates the development of socio-political systems. It is thus possible to measure and to predict the progress of modernization through a series of variables such as urbanization ratios, literacy rates and the systems for the circulation of information.

A large number of experts found these developmentalist approaches appealing and therefore opted for an evolutionist analysis of pastoral societies in the Middle East: this one-way vision of social change has all too often ruled out any possibility of local reinterpretation or adaptation on the part of nomadic societies. Similarly, experts have often showed a lack of any sense of history just as they have misappropriated sociological notions by comparing nomadic societies of different countries on the basis of typologies which take into account only the groups' mobility. The developmentalist rhetoric thus served to iron out specificities and differences and to produce veritable caricatures of pastoral societies.

Modernization theories thus had a very significant impact on the analyses of experts between 1950 and 1970, but several 'Orientalist' currents also influenced thinking during this period. At the beginning of the 1950s the American anthropologist Coon published one of

the first introductory studies of Middle Eastern and North African societies. His work, often quoted in experts' reports, was extremely popular in the Anglo-Saxon world. Coon utilized the 'mosaic' metaphor to describe the different lifestyles and physical characteristics of the population, as well as the different linguistic and religious groups or the varied systems of socio-political organization found in the Middle East. It is possible to explain how this model functions only if what is 'modern' is separated from what is 'traditional' in the different contexts under analysis. Anything 'in transition' is eliminated: "A culture in transition is hard to explain and harder to understand; we must find some period in history when the culture was, relatively speaking, at rest" (Coon 1961, p. 8). Coon maintains that from the 15th to the end of the 19th century Middle Eastern societies lived in a state of hibernation or what might be called 'cultural rest.' From a perspective once again functionalist, in search of a golden age when societies now living the "agony of modernization" were in some mythical situation of equilibrium and prosperity, Coon side-steps any explanation that might take into account historical transformations of any component of the mosaic or changes in the types of interrelations between these components.

Coon's perspective is complementary to the approaches adopted by the theoreticians of modernization and for this reason played a role in the analysis of experts. According to this perspective the history of nomadic societies in the Middle East becomes the history of societies still 'in hibernation' and sheltered from change. Following this perspective, Filali states that nomads:

continue to lead lives more or less closed to outside influences, show a high capacity for rejection and seek refuge in tradition, perhaps because they are completely unprepared to confront the impact of factors of transformation

(1966, p. 72).

Given this view, the history of nomads 'begins again' with the creation of independent modern nation-states.

Finally, we realize quite quickly from studying most reports that the paragraphs devoted to social factors and objectives in sedentarization programs are merely jargon providing a sociological 'cover.' Questions concerning the social development of nomad groups are always posed through what are called 'integrated' approaches, but the price

of integration is nearly always a hierarchical cohabitation in which social factors are sacrificed to the imperatives of predominant policies, to the preoccupations of immediate intervention and to the criteria of performance effectiveness. In this context it is hardly surprising to hear ILO experts define the task of sociologists as follows:

It is necessary to make a serious effort to re-educate them [the nomads] in order to explain the real nature of these projects to them, as well as the benefits and privileges inherent in a less nomadic lifestyle. This objective can be attained with the help of a sociologist whose concern with the social aspects of sedentarisation is greater than that of the technocrat.

(ILO 1962, p. 79)

*The 'himā System' and the Rangeland Development Projects in the 1980s:  
Towards a New Ideology of Development?*

In the early 1990s the sedentarization of nomads was no longer a priority in state policies for development in the Middle East's steppe regions. If pastoral nomadism as a means of land use had been greatly reduced, we are nevertheless justified in asking whether the effects of sedentarization promised by the experts were actually realized. From an economic standpoint, former nomads showed a remarkable capability of adaptation to the constraints imposed by the new states, and we have seen the rise of 'multi-resource' economic systems within most bedouin families, where pastoralism is but one of the activities undertaken. Sedentarization has contributed to the integration of local bedouin economies and has permitted access to public health and educational facilities. There has, however, been no accompanying process of detribalization as predicted by experts. On the contrary, several recent studies have shown that the model of tribal organization has not disappeared among sedentarized bedouin. In Jordan in particular, the term 'bedouin,' once a synonym for pastoral nomad, now indicates a political identity of a tribal nature (Bocco 1989b; Layne 1986).

Control of the steppe was long formulated in terms of political security, and sedentarization of the nomads was one means of obtaining it. However, the priority given to developing agriculture in the steppe regions rather than renewing pastures and developing pastoralism has had other consequences. The growing ecological

fragility of the steppe, due to the deterioration of its soil, linked to the rhythm and conditions of land exploitation as well as to the new pattern of management of animal and plant resources, now appears to be one of the most disturbing effects of development policies carried out over the past thirty to forty years. Modern technological assets in the hands of the state have not been sufficient by themselves to ensure control over the environment or to guarantee the success of development models. Economic and land-tenure policies contributed to the breakdown of former systems of managing steppe regions, thus leading the elites to fall back on short-term investment and speculation. In Jordan alone—though it is a regional phenomenon—local meat production in the mid-1980s was able to satisfy only 25 per cent of the national market demand, and agricultural surveys have shown a dramatic reduction in soil fertility and agricultural productivity in the steppe regions (Barham and Mensching 1988).

Faced with the problem of the degradation of plant resources in the steppic zones, during the 1980s a number of international organizations and state agencies from several Middle Eastern countries expressed a growing interest in pastureland conservation and development programs. However, this important reorientation is not totally novel. During the 1960s, at a time when most studies recommended the sedentarization of nomads and the development of agriculture in the steppe, other research carried out in Saudi Arabia under FAO auspices stressed rather the need to develop systems to regenerate natural pasturelands. Omar Draz, an official in Syria's Agricultural Ministry and an FAO consultant, was the instigator of this research by calling to the attention of planners the importance of a traditional system of range management known in the Arabian peninsula as *himā* (pl. *ahmiyā*, literally 'protection' and by analogy 'reserve'). According to Draz:

the Hema system was once common in parts of the Arabian Peninsula, and is still used in parts of Sa'udi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Syria. It originated in the Near East and is suitable as a means for controlled grazing in selected areas in arid, semi-arid and mountain ranges, where nomadic grazing is the only system practised. Carefully protected *ahmia* would furnish fodder reserves essential for stability of nomadic grazing. They would also change the attitude of the people towards the range, introducing the philosophy of protection and improvement instead of exploitation.

(Draz 1969, p. 8)

At the beginning of the 1990s, in an international context highly sensitive to environmental issues, the *himā* system has become the latest 'religion' of experts in the social and nature sciences; it is the new means of fighting against desertification and ensuring 'sustainable development' for the arid regions of the Middle East. Islamic legitimacy traced directly to the Prophet has been accorded this traditional system of resource management (Masri 1991; Nesheiwat 1991), but no study, whether ancient or recent, has been able to provide a detailed analysis of how this system actually works in the steppic regions of the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, according to the experts who advocate it, the establishment of *himā* programs depends on the revival of tribal landholding rights in the steppe, on a participatory approach taking into account the tribes' social organization, and on the relative disengagement of the national authorities from the administration of these projects. This significant shift from policies advocated in the 1950s and 1960s is not only underpinned by explicit criticism of sedentarization projects already put into effect,<sup>22</sup> but also implies the partial 'de-sedentarisation' of former nomads.

---

<sup>21</sup> According to the examples given by Draz (1980), most of the *himā* reserves found in Syria and Saudi Arabia prior to 1960 were not located in true steppic zones, i.e. ones with less than 300 mm of annual rainfall. An American anthropologist, J. Shoup (1990), maintains that the Syrian government instituted the *himā* system at the beginning of the 1970s by setting up a network of pastoral co-operatives in the steppe areas. He is contradicted in a study by Masri, a Draz 'disciple' and his successor at the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture. Masri wrote:

All the infrastructures (set up by the government) are meant to develop the Syrian rangelands through a revival of the Hema system, but the present situation is now analogous to the installation of a well-designed electrical circuit before the plug is inserted in the outlet, and the light is still off (1991, p. 35).

In Jordan, Nesheiwat (1991) acknowledges that there are no modern examples of the *himā* system being applied. A large-scale project, the Hamad Basin Project, launched at the beginning of the 1980s under the auspices of ACSAD (Rofail 1984), is purportedly inspired by the *himā* 'philosophy.' However, the fact that it straddles the borders of four countries (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq) has led to its implementation proving slow indeed.

<sup>22</sup> In the summing-up of a symposium on the *himā* system organised recently in Amman by the FAO, we can read:

The man-land relationship had remained harmonious in the area until World War II. Up to this point, the range was exploited with no feed supplements, routes were agreed between tribes and range was controlled. After World War II, misdirected government efforts of modernization led to settlement, which

While we have no intention of questioning the probity of this new approach<sup>23</sup>—which incidentally has not yet been truly tested—we note its great popularity with a large number of experts and decision makers, a popularity we believe is closely linked to the ideologies concerning development prevalent at the end of the 20th century. With its evocation of the principles of local participation and self-sustained development, the *himā* system cannot but appeal to the representatives of international agencies such as the World Bank or the IMF, who see in it the chance to apply their policies of economic liberalization and promote free enterprise through the ‘rediscovery’ of a traditional system of resource management. If, in its socialist-Ba‘thist reinterpretation, the ‘philosophy’ of the *himā* system has already enjoyed some success in Syria, it is no doubt destined to seduce a large number of non-governmental organizations which, while being opposed to liberal policies of structural readjustment, share the concern to take into account local models of social orga-

---

brought further costs and no sustainable bases for production. Tribal rights were no longer recognized

(FAO 1991, p. 3).

(We might note, in passing, that the Mandatory period in the Middle East apparently had no effect on nomadic peoples and range management!) At the same symposium, the FAO representative expressed support for adopting the *hima* system in these terms: “Traditional institutions can also become part of the modern democratic development process for range management, which requires first of all the active involvement and participation of the pastoral populations themselves” (FAO 1991, p. 2).

<sup>23</sup> Among the resolutions formulated by a group of experts meeting at a FAO conference in December 1990 in Amman are some which are extremely critical and innovatory in comparison to the approaches dominant from 1950 to 1970. They urge decision makers concerned only with the short-term political benefits of development projects to adopt a more far-sighted vision taking into consideration long-term effects. The experts also explicitly express their opposition to any continuation of sedentarization projects. Finally, along with the necessity of recognising tribal land rights, they also bring up the concept of ‘ecological responsibility’ in resource management:

Tribal rights should be formally respected and protected along with customary relations that exist between and among tribes... Rangeland and water resources should remain State property and be allocated on a long-term basis to specific local groups/associations for their exclusive pastoral use and with the responsibility of maintaining ecological equilibrium

(FAO 1991, p. 9).

nization. The consensus being formed around the *himā* programs, however divergent the ideological positions of the experts or the institutions that advocate them, should not mislead us. Unlike forty years ago, tribal organization would now appear to be the linchpin of these new projects, but as was already the case in the past, when experts mentioned it in their reports, it is still a sort of 'black box' the workings of which are never made explicit. However, without wanting to question the importance of the ecological objectives of the *himā* programs, it should be said that their adoption requires far more profound socio-political analyses than those we have seen so far.

Sedentarization projects are now history, but let us hope that the accumulated experience of the past decades in development of the steppe will provide future experts with some critical abilities in elaborating projects still to come. Any development project will always be the result of a set of representations of reality and of a 'philosophy' which is the product of its time. The ability to analyze it with lucidity is thus all the more essential.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu Zeid, A.M., 1966. 'The Changing World of the Nomads,' pp. 279-288 in John G. Peristiany (ed.), *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Awad, Muhammad. 1959. 'La sédentarisation des tribus nomades et semi-nomades au Moyen-Orient,' *Revue internationale du travail* 79 (1): 27-60.
- Barham, Nasim and Mensching, Horst. 1988. 'Pressure on the Pastureland Environment in Jordan,' *Applied Geography and Development* 31: 37-53.
- Berque, Jacques. 1959. 'Introduction' to 'Nomades et nomadisme en zone aride,' *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales* 11 (4): 501-518.
- Bocco Riccardo. 1989a. 'Espaces étatiques et espaces tribaux dans le sud jordanien: législation foncière et redéfinition des liens sociaux,' *Maghreb-Machrek* 123: 144-163.
- . 1989b. 'L'Etat producteur d'identités locales: lois électorales et tribus bédouines en Jordanie,' pp. 271-288 in Jean Bisson (ed.), *Le nomade, l'oasis et la ville*. Tours: URBAMA.
- . 1990. 'La sédentarisation des pasteurs nomades: les experts internationaux face à la question bédouine au Moyen-Orient arabe (1950-1970),' Edmond Bernus and François Pouillon (eds.), *Société Pastorales et Développement, Cahiers des Sciences Humaines* 26 (1-2): 97-117.
- Bocco, Riccardo and Tell, Tariq. 1994. 'The Pax Britannica in the Steppe: British Tribal Policy in Transjordan, 1921-1939,' pp. 108-127 in Eugene Rogan and Tariq Tell (eds.), *Village, Steppe and State: The Social Origins of Modern Jordan*. London: British Academic Press.
- . 1995. 'Frontières, tribus et états en Jordanie orientale à l'époque du Mandat,' pp. 26- 47 in Riccardo Bocco and Christian Velud (eds.), *Tribus, Tribalismes et Etats au Moyen-Orient*, special issue of *Maghreb-Machrek*.

- Coon, Carleton S., 1961 [1951]. *Caravan: The Story of the Middle East*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Destrée, A., 1969. 'Le développement des Etats du Moyen-Orient et la crise du nomadisme,' *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie* 2: 263-81.
- Draz, Omar. 1969. 'The "Hema" System of Range Reserves in the Arabian Peninsula: Its Possibilities,' in *Range Improvement and Conservation Projects in the Near East*. PL:PFC/13, Rome: FAO.
- . 1980. 'Rangeland Development in the Arabian Peninsula Based on Syrian Experience through UNDP/FAO/WFP Assistance,' pp. 291- 303 in *Rainfed Agriculture in the Near East and North Africa*. Rome: FAO.
- Filali, M., 1966. 'Les structures sociales en Arabie Séoudite,' *Revue Tunisienne des Sciences Sociales* 6: 69 -84.
- Food and Agriculture Organization. 1972. *Report on the FAO Expert Consultation on the Settlement of Nomads in Africa and the Near East*. FAO Regular Program n. RP 20. Rome: FAO.
- . 1991. *Workshop on Pastoral Communities in the Near East. Traditional Systems in Evolution*. Human Resources, Institutions and Agrarian Reform Division. Rome: FAO.
- Hamarnah, M., 1985. *The Social and Economic Transformation of Transjordan. 1921-1946*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, Washington.
- Helaissi, A. S., 1959. 'Les Bédouins et la vie tribale en Arabie Séoudite,' *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociétés* 11 (4): 554-560.
- Huneidi, M. I., 1965. 'Taqrir al mamlaka al-hashimiyah al-urduniyya 'an ri'ayat al-badw wa tahdirihim wa tawtinihim,' pp. 1-26 in *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of Experts in Social Welfare and Labour*, Jerusalem, 8-13 May 1965, II. League of Arab States, Department of Social Welfare and Labour.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). 1962. *Sédentarisation des tribus nomades et semi-nomades, Rapport du groupe des conseillers en matière des populations aborigènes et tribales*. PCITP/1962/1/3. Geneva: ILO.
- . 1964a. *Réunion technique d'étude sur le nomadisme et la sédentarisation, Problèmes soulevés par le nomadisme et la sédentarisation*. TMNS/1964/1. Geneva: ILO.
- . 1964b. *Coopération régionale et Internationale dans le domaine de la sédentarisation*. TMNS/1964/2. Geneva: ILO.
- Layne, Linda. 1986. *The Production and Reproduction of Tribal Identity in Jordan*, Ph.D. dissertation. Department of Anthropology, Princeton University.
- Leighton, Charlotte. 1986. 'How Important is Local Participation to Development Programs?' *Nomadic Peoples* 20: 85-94.
- Lerner, Daniel. 1958. *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Glencoe: Free Press.
- Lewis, Norman. 1987. *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Masri, Abdullah. 1991. *The Tradition of Hema as a Land Tenure Institution in Arid Land Management: the Syrian Arab Republic*. Rome: FAO.
- Monteil, Vincent. 1966. *Les tribus du Fârs et la sédentarisation des nomads*. Paris: Mouton et Cie.
- Mundy, Martha and Basim Musallam (eds.), 2000. *The Transformation of Nomadic Society in the Arab East*. University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nesheiwat, K., 1991. 'Socio-economic Aspects of the Traditional Hema System of Arid Land Management in Jordan,' *Working Papers on Pastoral and Agro-pastoral Societies*, no. 12. Rome: FAO.
- Qalyoubi. T. A., 1967. 'Jafr Pilot Project for the Settlement of Bedouins,' pp. 152-

- 163 in A. R. Ghonemy (ed.), *Land Policy in the Near East*. Rome: FAO.
- Rofail, N., 1984. *Integrated Regional Development Plan for Hamad Basin Project*. Damascus: ACSAD.
- Salzman, Philip C., 1980. 'Processes of Sedentarisation as Adaptation and Response,' pp. 1-20 in Philip C. Salzman (ed.), *When Nomads Settle*. New York: Praeger.
- Selim, S.M., 1959. *A Survey of Conditions and Problems of Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribal Populations of Jordan and Iraq*. Geneva: ILO.
- Seurat, Michel. 1980. 'Les populations, l'état et la société,' pp. 87-142 in André Raymond (ed.), *La Syrie d'aujourd'hui*. Paris : CEROAC-CNRS.
- Shoup, John. 1990. 'Middle Eastern Sheep Pastoralism and the Hema System,' pp.195-215 in John C. Galaty and Douglas L. Johnson (eds.), *The World of Pastoralism*. London: Guilford Press.
- UNESCO. 1960. *Les problèmes de la zone aride*. Paris: Imprimeries Oberthur.
- UNESOB. 1973. *A Social and Economic Evaluation of the al Jafr Bedouin Settlement Project in East Jordan*. UNESOB/HR/73/18. Beirut: UNESOB.
- United Nations. 1956. *Social Welfare Seminars for Arab States in the Middle East*. Reports on the meetings of Beirut (15.8-8.9.1949); Cairo (22.11-14.12.1950); Damascus (8-20.12.1952); Baghdad (6-21.3.1954). New York: United Nations.
- World Food Programme. 1969a. *Bedouin Settlement and Nomadic Livestock Development Projects*. WFP/IGC: 6/8, Add. 3. October. Rome: WFP.
- . 1969b. *Jordan 036: Pilot Project for Bedouin Settlement and Improvement of Nomadic Sheep Husbandry*. WFP/IGC: 16/8, Add. 3, Annex 1. October. Rome: WFP.
- Yacoub, S., 1970. 'Nomadic Populations in Selected Countries in the Middle East and Related Issues of Sedentarisation and Settlement,' pp. 105-117 in *Studies on Selected Development Problems in Various Countries in the Middle East*. New York: United Nations.

NOMADIC SOCIETIES  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND  
NORTH AFRICA

*Entering the 21st Century*

EDITED BY

DAWN CHATTY



BRILL  
LEIDEN • BOSTON

## CONTENTS

Preface. . . . .	VII
Author details . . . . .	XIII
Glossary. . . . .	xxv

Introduction: Nomads of the Middle East and North Africa Facing the 21st Century . . . . .	1
DAWN CHATTY	

### PART ONE

#### CONTESTED AUTHORITY AND POWER: GLOBAL AND LOCAL CHALLENGES

The Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia . . . . .	33
MOHAMMED BAMYEH	
Last Battles of the Bedouin and the Rise of Modern States in Northern Arabia: 1850-1950 . . . . .	49
ANTONY B. TOTH	
The Political Economy of Middle Eastern and North African Pastoral Nomads . . . . .	78
EMANUEL MARX	
Individuals, Factions and Tribes among Moorish Societies . . . . .	98
PIERRE BONTE	
Are There Still Tribes in Morocco? . . . . .	123
JOHN SHOUP	
From the Disappearance of 'Tribes' to Reawakening of the Tribal Feeling: Strategies of State among the Formerly Nomadic <i>Bidān</i> (Arabophone) of Mauritania . . . . .	144
MARIELLA VILLASANTE CERVELLO	
Counting Votes That Do Not Count: Negev Bedouin and the Knesset Elections of 17th May 1999, Rahat, Israel . . . . .	176
CEDRIC PARIZOT	
Readapting the <i>gabzla</i> . The Ahāmda Pastoralists of Central Sudan and the State 'Tribal Federalism' Politics in the mid-1990s. . . . .	204

Customary Law among the Bedouin of the Middle East and North Africa . . . . .	239
FRANK H. STEWART	
Legal Traditions and State-centered Law: Drawing from Tribal and Customary Law Cases of Yemen and Egypt . . . . .	280
BAUDOIN DUPRET	
The Settlement of Pastoral Nomads in the Arab Middle East: International Organizations and Trends in Development Policies, 1950-1990. . . . .	302
RICCARDO BOCCO	

PART TWO

CONTESTED SPACES AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Integration into Modernity: Some Tribal Rural Societies in the Bilād ash-Shām. . . . .	335
WILLIAM AND FIDELITY LANCASTER	
New Homes, New Occupations, New Pastoralism: Al Murrah Bedouin, 1968-2003 . . . . .	370
DONALD P. COLE	
Coping with Shrinking Spaces: The Ait Unzār Pastoralists of South-Eastern Morocco . . . . .	393
BARBARA CASCIARRI	
Forced Migration, Sedentarization and Social Change: Malian Kel Tamasheq . . . . .	431
SARA RANDALL AND ALESSANDRA GIUFFRIDA	
Uncertain Livelihoods: Challenges Facing Herding in a Lebanese Village . . . . .	463
MICHELLE OBEID	
Multinational Oil Exploitation and Social Investment: Mobile Pastoralists in the Sultanate of Oman . . . . .	496
DAWN CHATTY	
Language and Identity: The Perpetuation of Dialects . . . . .	523
BRUCE INGHAM	
Art and Generosity: Thoughts on the Aesthetic Perceptions of the <i>'arab</i> . . . . .	539
ANNEGRET NIPPA	

## PART THREE

CONTESTED DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC  
TRANSFORMATIONS

- Facing Change in Arabia: The Bedouin Community and the  
Notion of Development . . . . . 573  
UGO FABIETTI
- Government Interventions and Pastoral Accommodations:  
Social and Economic Adaptation to Change in Agricultural  
Policy in Jordan's *Bādiya*. . . . . 599  
ALAN ROWE
- Land and Identity among Awlad 'Ali Bedouin: Egypt's  
Northwest Coast. . . . . 634  
SORAYA ALTORKI AND DONALD P. COLE
- A Nomadic Fight against Immobility: the Tuareg in the  
Modern State . . . . . 654  
HÉLÈNE CLAUDOT-HAWAD
- Sustainable Nomadism: The Case of the Algerian Tuareg . . . . . 682  
JEREMY H. KEENAN
- Desert Tourism as a Substitute for Pastoralism? Tuareg in  
Algeria and Bedouin in Jordan. . . . . 710  
GERALDINE CHATELARD
- Assumptions of Degradation and Misuse: The Bedouin in the  
Syrian *Bādiya*. . . . . 737  
DAWN CHATTY
- Conservation, Land and Nomadic Pastoralism: Seeking  
Solutions in the Wadi 'Araba of Jordan . . . . . 759  
ALAN ROWE
- Guidelines for the Involvement of Nomadic Pastoralists in  
Conservation and Development Efforts. . . . . 785  
JOSEPH HOBBS

## PART FOUR

## CONTESTED CULTURES AND ENGENDERED SPACES

- Integration, Modernization, and Resistance: Qashqa'i Nomads  
in Iran Since the Revolution of 1978-1979 . . . . . 805  
JULIA HUANG

Adaptation of Bedouin in Saudi Arabia to the 21st Century: Mobility and Stasis among the Shararat . . . . .	840
KHALED AL-RADIHAN	
A Century of Education: Bedouin Contestation with Formal Education in Israel . . . . .	865
AREF ABU-RABI'A	
Women's Roles, Polygyny and Cultural Transformation in Negev Bedouin Townships: A Gendered Landscape of National Resistance to Post-Colonial Conquest and Control . . . . .	883
STEVEN C. DINERO	
Sedentarization and Changing Patterns of Social Organization amongst the Tuareg of Algeria . . . . .	916
JEREMY H. KEENAN	
Heroic Faces, Disruptive Deeds: Remembering the Tribal Shaykh on the Syrian Euphrates . . . . .	940
KATHARINA LANGE	
Permanent Values in a Changing World: Bedouin Women's Tales from North-East Syria . . . . .	966
LIDIA BETTINI	
The Inappropriate Voice: Introducing Bedouin Women's Oral Poetry from the Arabian Peninsula . . . . .	994
MONEERA AL-GHADEER	
Cassettes and the Shifting Politics of Awlad 'Ali Love Poetry . . . . .	1013
LILA ABU-LUGHOD	
Index . . . . .	1035