

# Bedouin on the Borders: The impact of political-geographical borders on settlement of Bedouin in the Galilee during the British Mandate, 1918-1948

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Tomer Mazarib\*  
Oranim Academic College

*This article examines the significance of political-geographical borders enforced by the British Mandatory government in Palestine between the years 1918-1948, and their implications for settlement of the Bedouin population in permanent locations in the Galilee, northern Israel. The British Mandatory government in Palestine enacted administrative agreements and laws aimed at controlling the local population, inter alia, in order to regulate the land resources and utilize them effectively for its interests. During the same period, Zionist institutions purchased land considered essential to the Bedouin, causing Bedouin to be pushed-off of their grazing and agriculture lands. All of these contributed to the settlement of Bedouin into permanent localities in the Galilee. This article is based on archival sources and research literature, as well as on 14 in-depth interviews with Bedouin residents of the Galilee conducted between 2013-2015.*

**Keywords:** *Administrative agreements and laws; Bedouin; borders; British Mandate; Galilee*

## INTRODUCTION

The Bedouin population in the Middle East and North Africa is undergoing a process of dynamic changes in their lifestyle (Eickelman, 1998; Peters, 1990). Traditionally, the Bedouin lived in a tribal framework (Stewart, 2012). Over time, ecological factors played a significant role in shaping the Bedouin lifestyle (Marx, 1978; Zakzouk, 2003). Traditionally (Ibn Khaldun, 2010), the Bedouins' main livelihood is raising livestock, such as camels, sheep, cattle, goats, bees, and even silkworms. In later periods, from the late Ottoman period mainly, they began engaging in agriculture alongside livestock (Al-Tamimi and Bahjat, 1987).

During this later period, a large portion of Bedouin began to settle in permanent localities in the Galilee. The vast majority of them established all-Bedouin villages,

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\* Department of History, Oranim Academic College, Israel. [tomer.mazarib@oranim.ac.il](mailto:tomer.mazarib@oranim.ac.il)

and the rest chose to settle within *Fellahin* [Arabic for “peasants”] villages and towns (Mazarib, 2022). This process was undergone by migration waves of nomadic populations, which were a common and widespread phenomenon in the Middle East (Eickelman, 1998; Marx, 1974; Mazarib, 2022). These waves were not unidirectional nor were they continuous, but rather were characterized by dramatic eruptions, usually in response to anomalous events.

One outstanding case thereof was the migration of large Bedouin tribes to the *Al-Sham* region – which includes the Galilee – which began with the conquest of the Fertile Crescent by Muslims from the end of 7<sup>th</sup> century (Ashkenazi, 1938, 2000; Zakariyya, 1983). It was a migration of peoples in micro, as Banu Amela and some Banu Judham settled in the Tiberias area; and Banu Judham in al-Lajjun, al-Yamun, and Acre; Banu Tay settled in the Haifa area; Banu Lukham settled in Ramle, Houran, and the Golan Heights; and Banu Dhubyan settled in the Beisan Valley (Al-Dabbagh, 1979; Zakariyya, 1983). In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the second great migration of nomadic Bedouin in macro occurred when the two great tribes Banu Hilal and Banu Salim migrated from Najd (central Arabian Peninsula) to Iraq, later migrating into the Levant, and reaching North Africa in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Ibn Khaldun, 2010; Sharon, 1971). This movement out of the Arabian Peninsula, termed the Arab Conquest, continued even more intensely with the third great migration that occurred during Ottoman rule (1516-1918), mainly at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, due to the wars between the Banu Shammar and Mawali tribes in Iraq (Peake, 1934), and the establishment of the first Saudi (Wahhabi) state in the Arabian Peninsula in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, which led to migration of many tribe members into the Al-Sham region (Lewis, 1955).

Upon arrival of the Bedouin tribes to the Galilee, they settled in sparsely populated areas. Their settlement was linked to Ottoman Empire policy in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, characterized by agrarian and administrative Tanzimat reforms, implemented by a series of edicts issued mainly between 1839 and 1876, intended to bring about order and organize the Ottoman Empire. Hence, the regime enacted new land registration laws in 1858, which regulated registration of land ownership in exchange for annual taxes and military conscription; the Trade and Punishment Laws of 1860-1863; Wilayats or Eyalets Law (State Law) in 1864; the Law of Administration of Wilayats (State Administration Law) in 1871; and the Mecelle (Civil) Code 1869-1876 (Ma’oz, 1968; Taqosh, 1995). The arrangements established by provincial regime laws between 1864 and 1867 divided the Ottoman Empire territory anew into provinces (*wilayats*, governed by *walis*); districts (*sanjaks*, governed by *sanjaks-beys/mutesarrifs*); sub-districts (*kazas*, governed by *kadis*); communes (*nahias*, governed by *kaymakams/mudirs*); and villages (*qarias*, governed by *mukhtars*) (Findley, 1986).

Palestine was divided into two provinces: Wilayat Beirut that included the Galilee and the coastal region between Acre and Haifa; and Wilayat Damascus that included

all of the mountainous areas bordering the Jordan River and Tiberias, Ma'an, and al-Karak district (Aytekin, 2012; Gerber, 1986). According to the Wilayats Law of 1864, a subdivision was implemented in Palestine: Acre district belonged to Wilayat Beirut, and included the sub-districts of Acre, Haifa, Safad, Nazareth, and Tiberias; Nablus district belonged to Wilayat Beirut, and included the sub-districts of Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm; and Jerusalem District (which was independent and directly related to the regime in Istanbul) included the sub-districts of Jerusalem, Jaffa, Gaza, Hebron, and Beer Sheva (Agmon, 1987; Findley, 1986; Touma, 1983). Evidence of the Tanzimat reforms' effect on Bedouin settlement in the Galilee and their partial transition to agriculture can be seen in 1915, from the two Turkish travelers Muhammad Rafiq al-Tamimi and Muhammad Bahjat (1987), who described the Bedouin tribes in Marj Ibn Amer and the Beisan Valley as barley and wheat growers who have sown about 10 kg of wheat, and at the end of the season harvested over 100 kg of wheat crop. In addition, these tribes sold about 30% of this crop in Beisan, while the rest was sent for wholesale in nearby towns such as Haifa, Nazareth, Jenin, Tiberias, and Nablus (*ibid*; Agmon, 1987).

After World War I, Britain perceived itself as having more experience than any other country not only in war, but also in ability to control and manage nomadic peoples (Fletcher, 2015). Accordingly, it employed a self-interested bureaucracy driven by an imperialist ideology that treated nomadic peoples as primitive, culturally exceptional, inherently violent, and basically a nuisance to the administration (Deringil, 2003; Falah, 1991; Glubb, June 5, 1926; Hobart, 1993). It therefore is no wonder that British policy toward the Bedouin population was aggressive, rigid, and expressed in the enactment of strict, coercive laws aimed at oversight of this nomadic entity.

In the context of Palestine, the British administration sought ways to increase supervision and control of land rights, in order to efficiently collect taxes from residents (Fletcher, 2015; Mazarib, 2022; for more details, see the discussion section).

As a preliminary part of implementation of ordinances and laws, the British Mandate in Palestine in 1922 conducted an initial census that estimated the Bedouin population at 71,000, which constituted about 12% of the total Muslim population of Palestine (about 590,890) (Barron, 1923). In the Galilee, the British census estimated the Bedouin at 16,969, which constituted about 23% of Palestine's total Bedouin population, about 29% of the Arab population of Galilee (estimated at 58,325) and about 2.2% of the total population of Palestine (about 757,182) (Mills, 1932).

This article's main arguments are: (A) Ordinances and laws implemented by the British Mandatory government in Palestine; alongside (B) Influence of the Zionist institutions, especially on the issue of land acquisition, caused Bedouin to be pushed-off of grazing and agricultural lands and move to permanent settlements, either all-Bedouin, or neighborhoods in Fellahin villages. While I do not deny other

factors such as Bedouin circumstances and internal pressures that urged Bedouin toward sedentarization (Mazarib, 2022), I focus more on the effect of borders on the Galilee's Bedouin population.

## **DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY**

Data used for the study is as follows:

- Archives: Valley of Maayanot/Beisan Valley Archives (VMA); State Archives of Israel (SAI) Jerusalem; the National Archives (NAL), the Colonial Office (CO), London;
- Historical literature;
- British Censuses of Palestine;
- Ethnographic in-depth interviews, conducted between 2013-2015, with 14 Bedouin, descendants of those Bedouin who sedentarized in the Galilee – as historical evidence of continuous, ongoing Bedouin settlement.

The study combines historical-geographical and anthropological perspectives. On the one hand, the archival and historical sources form an important empirical and theoretical basis for documenting the importance of the borders that restricted Bedouin's movement and even caused them to settle in permanent localities. On the other hand, the semi-structured, in-depth interviews enabled me to (1) obtain empirical evidence of the causes and circumstances of Bedouin sedentarization; (2) to corroborate the archival and historical sources. The interviews incorporate pre-prepared questions, in addition to spontaneous questions, that arose during the interviews. A record of the salient points of the conversations was made during the interview, to which I added later a detailed description of the interviewee's answers and my impressions in the field diary. Some of the interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee. At the end of the day, I returned home, listened to the recordings, and completed in the field diary everything I had seen, heard, and experienced. This was done out of a desire to produce as abundant a description as possible.

Interview analysis is based on life stories as a research tool (Kacen and Krumer-Nevo, 2010; Lieblich et al., 1998). This approach is part of qualitative research, based on an interpretive-naturalistic approach that seeks to reveal the meaning that people give to themselves and the phenomena that they experience during their lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). These stories are lengthy reports of life within a context, developing during a single interview or several interviews (Riessman, 2008). Analyzing life stories, as told to me in in-depth interviews, is another layer to complete the written literature. The combination of the various research methods opened for me a broad perspective that enabled me to attain a more abstract perception that helps understand this phenomenon.

The first section of the following analysis provides a historical overview on the British Mandatory policy that enacted new ordinances and laws. The second section

describes and examines the functioning of Zionist institutions and their effects on Bedouin sedentarization. The third section presents the tribes and family names of Bedouin who sedentarized in the Galilee. The fourth section is a discussion which describes the tension between political-geographical borders and the nomadic Bedouin.

## **MANDATORY GOVERNMENT POLICY AND ITS RELATION TO THE BEDOUIN**

When the British Mandate in Palestine officially began in 1920, its officials noticed that some Bedouin tribes were scattered over particularly large territories in the Negev, and less so in the Galilee (Ben-David, 2004). In Bedouin perception of they have the right to graze their livestock and cultivate land that lies in their territory (*dirab*) (ibid; Velud, 2000). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Galilee Bedouin tribes were characteristically smaller than Bedouin tribes in the Negev and were widely dispersed within the existing Galilee settlement system, with an approximate area size of 3-8 km long and 2-3 km wide (Falah, 1990; Sweitat, K., interview, July 17, 2014, Abu Snan). This pattern contrasted with British authorities' rigid bureaucracy which came to serve, primarily, mandatory rule (Rogan, June 3, 2021) and did not consider Bedouin's needs, indirectly caused and leading Bedouin to sedentarize.

An interwar-period debate between the British imperial government and desert administrators/Middle East British officers Claude Jarvis (Governor of Sinai, 1923-1936), Frederick Peake (Trans-Jordan, 1921-1939), and John Glubb (southern Iraq and Trans-Jordan, 1939-1956) was based on/underlain by techniques of coercion, prejudices, and exploiting relevant local resources and local personnel (Fletcher, 2015). British officers could not distinguish between nomads, farmers, villagers, or tribes, believing that these modes of life constituted social "types" that were not acceptable to British rule, thus, they drafted special administrative measures accordingly (ibid). This applies to what Eugene Rogan said in "Neither Pro-Zionist nor Pro-Arab, but Pro-Empire: A Re-assessment of British Policy in the Palestine Mandate" (Rogan, June 3, 2021). In other words, the British Empire cared only for its own interests of being a powerful, occupying power vis-a-vis other European countries.

Accordingly, the British adopted new strategies and enacted new ordinances and laws that served their interests and advanced their goals, regardless of those of the local inhabitants such as the Bedouin. The absurdity of these strategies lay in some of them forcing Bedouin to sedentarize, i.e., form Bedouin settlements or join *Fellahin* villages.

## ***Ordinances and Laws Relating to the Bedouin***

### *Ghor Mudawwara Lands Agreement in 1921*

This agreement allowed Bedouin inhabitants of the Jordan Valley to purchase state land permanently (Gavish, 1992; Palestine Gazette: Government of Palestine, September 14, 1933).<sup>1</sup> These lands extended from *Samakh* in the northern Jordan Valley up to about 5 km to southern Beisan. This agreement extended the Bedouin residing therein the legal right to purchase land and settle thereon, alongside land allotted to their grazing land. To encourage Bedouin sedentarization, land could be purchased for a nominal fee, payable in installments over 15 years (*ibid*). The area included in this arrangement, completed in May 1924, totaled 381,096 dunams (1 dunam=0.25 acre) of state land (Kark and Frantzman, 2010) encompassing 18 areas of villages that received about 202,361 dunams, and 3 tribal areas (Saqer, Ghazzawiyya, Bashatwa) that received about 179,545 dunams, to which this arrangement applied (*ibid*).

However, some of this land was purchased by wealthy Arab landowners such as the Alami and Husseini families of Jerusalem, as well as by Jews through the JNF (Jewish National Fund) (*ibid*). Nonetheless, the period from 1935 to 1947 offers a wealth of material that shows the continued settlement of Bedouin in the Beisan valley. During this period, and as per aerial photographs, more new houses were built by Bedouin, as seen both on pasturelands and in Fellahin villages in Beisan valley (*ibid*, see maps pp. 63-64).

### *Border Pass Agreement, February 2, 1926*

(SAI, NAL: *Government of Palestine, February 2, 1926*)

The Sikes-Picot Agreement (1916) between the United Kingdom and France, and the negotiations between the two countries that lasted seven years (and ended in the Paulet-Newcombe Agreement of 1923), drew the international borders in the Middle East (Figure 2 below). As a continuation thereof, on February 2, 1926, an agreement was signed between the United Kingdom and France concerning border crossing, which required a certificate (*ibid*). This agreement obliged every tribe, whether nomadic or semi-nomadic, desiring to move to another territory, to obtain approval of the district commissioner of that area. In correspondence between Commissioner of the Galilee district in Nazareth, Charles Tunstall ("C.T.") Evans, and High Commissioner of Palestine in Jerusalem, Harold MacMichael on March 27, 1943, the former stated his concern about Bedouin border crossings in the Beisan Valley area:

There are four tribes affected, so far as Galilee District is concerned, namely the Sager [Saqer], Ghazzawiyya, Bawati, and Bashatwa. At present when a member of any of these tribes living on one side wishes to pass to the other side of the [Jordan] river, he is supposed to be in possession of a passport and have it visa'ed for entry into the other territory (*ibid*: SAI: M. 4349/34; NAL: CO 733/60/5).

Another example of border control is found in the correspondence between Safed's sub-Governor *Kaymakam* (Musa Nasser) dated May 31, 1945 (e.g., on Safed sub-Governor *Kaymakam* Musa Nasser, see Abbasi, 2015) to the Galilee District Commissioner in Nazareth, C. T. Evans, wherein the former demands implementation of the Collective Punishment Ordinance on Al-Hamdun tribe, who violated the Border Pass Agreement. He (Nasser) testifies as follows:

The tribe [Al-Hamdun], which numbers some 260 persons, inhabits the area along the Palestine-Lebanese frontier in the Safad sub-district. The tribesmen are notorious cattle thieves and smugglers and are constantly implicated in thefts on Lebanese territory. The Lebanese authorities recently produced to the Assistant District Commissioner, Safad, a list of twenty-four crimes [...]. It is frequently difficult to bring charges against specific individuals' cases of raiding across the frontier. I, therefore, request that the High Commissioner will order Collective Punishments Ordinance should apply to Arab Al-Hamdun (ibid, May 31, 1945, NAL: CO. 733/60/6).

The response of Galilee District Governor (Evans), dated June 23, 1945:

I do not consider that employment of the Collective Punishments Ordinance presents a satisfactory alternative to scheduling under the Bedouin Control Ordinance. The former Ordinance contemplates punishment after the crime, but the objective sought in the present case is primarily prevention or rather limitation of the opportunity for crime, easy escape, and hampering of the police, which free movement across the frontier affords. This objective can most easily be attained by the exercise of general supervision over movement and the taking of advance precautions (ibid: June 23, 1945, NAL: CO 733/60/7).

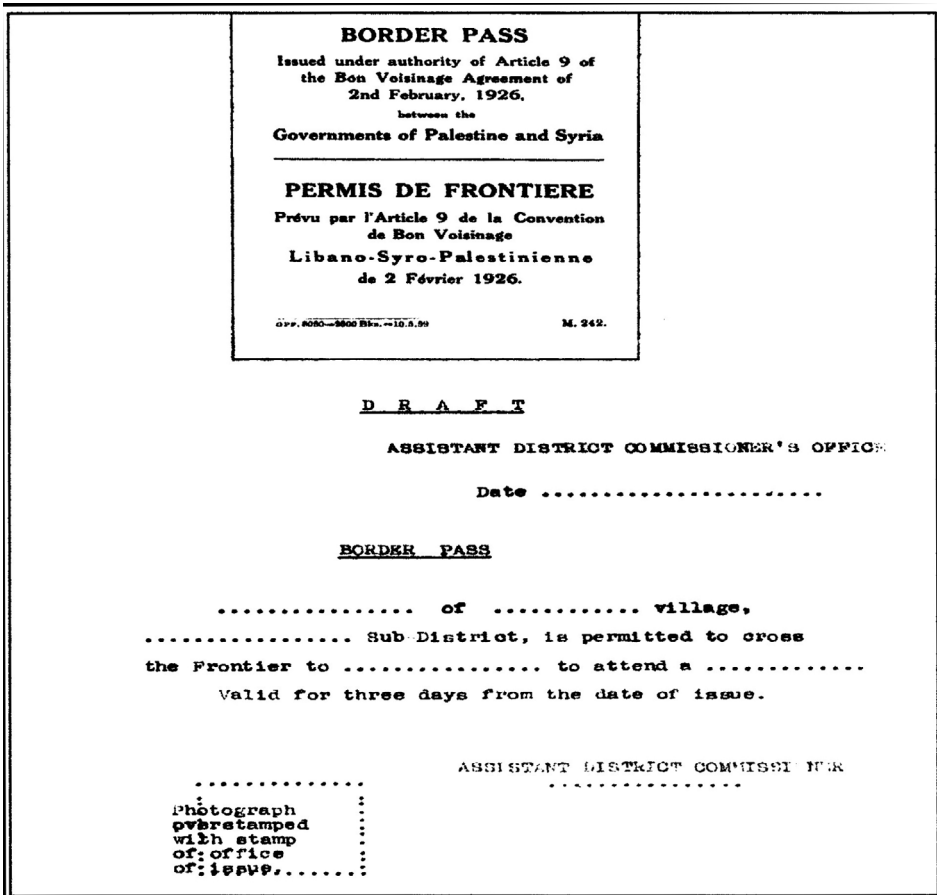
It may be concluded from the Galilee District Governor's words, that movement of Bedouin should be restricted, i.e., let them cross only with an official border pass.

Figure 1 below shows an example of a border pass related to an agreement signed on February 2, 1926, between the United Kingdom and France concerning border crossings between Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, obliging anyone wishing to cross into a territory to obtain approval of the district commissioner of that area.

#### *Ordinance of Expropriation of Land, 1926*

Expropriation of land for British public purposes (NAL: Government of Palestine, 1926), included purposes such as construction of an airport in 1934 in Haifa, and King David-Lloyd George airport in Marj Ibn Amer in 1937 (today, Ramat David Airbase); construction of new roads in the Galilee (ibid, 1937); establishment of schools (such as expropriation of 3,000 dunams from Al-Subayh tribe and transferred to the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), for establishing Khadoorie Agricultural School next to Mount Tabor, in 1933) (Government of Palestine, 1933).

Figure 1: An example of a border pass



(Source: Government of Palestine, February 2, 1926)

*Forest Ordinance, 1920, 1926*  
 (NAL: *Government of Palestine, 1920, 1926*)

The British came to Palestine with experience in India and Cyprus. However, Palestine was characterized by a varied climate, soils, and topography, and its total area of 26,000 square kilometers – 11,000 being desert, and the rest, 8,250 sq. kilometers of hills, and 6,750 sq. kilometers of plains – and a variety of agrarian and land regimes. This complicated British forestry plans (El-Eini, 1999), the purpose of which was to reserve a “closed forest area” for protecting endangered trees or for any other British purposes. In addition, this ordinance obliged Mukhtars (sing. Mukhtar: a village chief) to provide district governors a list of livestock numbers owned by the residents in each village (NAL: Government of Palestine, 1926).

This ordinance in fact caused the Bedouin to lose their mobility, for instance, by afforestation in 1944 of uncultivated land within the borders of the two adjacent



German communities of Waldheim and Bethlehem, both in Haifa Sub-District (ibid). The land in question is 4,146 dunams (of 9,225 dunams of taxable and arable dunams of construction-zoned land) in Waldheim; and 2,382 dunams (of 7,526 dunams of taxable and arable construction-zoned land) in Bethlehem of Galilee (ibid). This forced most of the Bedouin tribes living therein, especially semi-nomadic tribes such as Sawaed, Al-Hajajra, Al-Saida, Al-Mazarib, Al-Ghrefat, Al-Jawamees, Al-Heib, and others, out of these wooded areas (Masarwa, M., interview, July 25, 2014, Hajajra).

In an interview with Bedouin from these tribes, A. Mazarib, (b. 1936), who remembers these restrictions, testified:

When I was a child, we lived in a tent near Hajajra [a Bedouin village]. I was grazing my family's goats in Al-Ghabah [a forest area] west of Bethlehem [of Galilee]. They [the authorities] had fences and they had not allowed us to enter the forest. Authorities recruited a Bedouin guard from the Hilf-Tabash tribe to guard this forest reserve. The Bedouin guard would not allow anyone to bring his herd into this wooded area. He even caught his father grazing the goats and sent him an order to appear in court in Nazareth, and he [the guard's father] was fined (interview, July 14, 2015, Zarzir).

In correspondence between Ahmad Hilmi (head of the "National Fund to Save Lands" and vice-president of the Arab Higher National Committee) and Jerusalem High Commissioner, Alan Cunningham, dated March 19, 1946, Hilmi complains to Cunningham of discrimination against the Al-Subayh tribe manifested in afforestation of some of the tribe's lands (about 1,200 dunams) in the Mount Tabor region (SAI: Government of Palestine, March 19, 1946). From this correspondence, as well as from research conducted on afforestation of land during British rule and its impact on the local population (El-Eini, 1999; Falah, 1990), it appears that these restrictions reduced grazing areas and mobility of these tribes in wooded areas, and even caused some to settle in permanent localities that eventually became Bedouin villages. Others, such as Al-Nujeidat tribe, a sub-tribe of the Al-Subayh tribe, settled in the Fellahin village Bu'enie (Nujeidat, S., interview, August 6, 2014, Bu'enie-Nujeidat; see table below).

*Collective Punishment Ordinance (CPO), No. 36 of 1926-1936*  
(NAL: Government of Palestine, 1926-1936)

This ordinance provided for levying of fines and other penalties on the inhabitants of villages and tribal areas. Therefore, in the High Commissioner's opinion, when any area or portion thereof was in a "dangerous and disturbed" state, he was authorized to order the police to arrest "invaders" therein. According to the schedule list (ibid), most such entries were of Bedouin tribes, so this ordinance was enacted against Bedouin suspected of "invading" state lands. The punishment therefore was decreed collective, i.e., applying to all members of the tribe (ibid). However, punishment for violation of this law became individual under the "Bedouin Control Ordinance" (BCO) enacted in 1942 (see below: Government of Palestine, No. 18

of 1942). The purpose of the CPO was to enable Bedouin sedentarization, which served Mandatory policy of maintaining stability and quiet in Palestine. This was expressed in correspondence between Evans, Galilee District Commissioner in Nazareth, in his complaint on September 3, 1943 to Harold MacMichael, High Commissioner of Palestine in Jerusalem, about the movement phenomenon of Al-Subayh and Al-Mazarib tribes from one place to another in Marj Ibn Amer. The High Commissioner's responded on September 21, 1943, to Galilee District Commissioner:

You will appreciate that the Bedouin Control Ordinance is intended to be applied only to nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes and only in cases of real necessity, but not ad-hoc in every case where there is only a small community of tent dwellers. In these circumstances, I ask you to be good enough to confirm that you are satisfied that the tribes mentioned in your letter do in fact fall within the category of nomads or semi-nomads for whom the Bedouin Control Ordinance is designed (ibid, SAI: PI: 552/15, original symbol: Y/58/42).

It may be concluded from the High Commissioner's words that he encouraged Bedouin to sedentarize. In other words, punishment, whether collective or individual, for Bedouin who crossed borders, also limited their overall mobility.

#### *Land Settlement Ordinances, 1928-1930*

*(Palestine Gazette: Government of Palestine, 1928-1933)*

These ordinances, begun by a survey in 1928, produced village maps featuring blocs to facilitate the taxation of rural property. These maps then served as a basis upon which registration blocs were parceled and surveyed. Consequent thereto, some Bedouin were dispossessed of their lands, as they were present in grazing areas during the survey, and not in the encampment area (*dirah*). Moreover, some of the land was registered in names of *effendis* and *Mukhtars* (ibid; Ramih, M., interview, August 27, 2014, Maghar; Sweitat M., interview, July 27, 2015, Isfiya).

#### *Bedouin Control Ordinance (BCO), No. 18 of 1942*

*(NAL, SAI: Government of Palestine, 1942)*

The purpose of this ordinance was to confer upon District Commissioners general control over nomadic tribal communities in Palestine, including the power to investigate and punish offenses committed by members thereof. Evidence thereof can be found in the correspondence between District Commissioner of the Galilee district Evans and High Commissioner of Palestine in Jerusalem, Alan Gordon Cunningham, on February 7, 1947, wherein the former notified the latter of Bedouin movement from one place to another in the Tiberias region, and sought to implement the BCO on these tribes:

It will be possible to take action under Section 4 [general power, control, and investigation] of the ordinance to exercise general control of their movements, as and when desirable. The tribes are Arab Wahib, Dalaika, Masha'ra, Nujeidat, Samkia, and Khawaled. I accordingly request that the

High Commissioner exercises his power under Section 3 [Application of ordinance to certain nomadic tribes] of the ordinance as amended, to declare that the provisions of the ordinance apply to the tribes mentioned (NAL: CO 733-448).

While the purpose of this complaint was to prevent Bedouin movement from one place to another, there were likely other goals, such as ensuring Jewish settlement in Palestine. Nonetheless, the Bedouin movement restrictions contributed to their sedentarization (Abu Shahab, H., interview, July 10, 2014, Shafa-Amer; Mazarib, 2022).

In an interview with one of the Bedouin from these tribes, Nasir Heib al-Fawawza (b. 1941), who remembers these restrictions, he testified:

We came from the Hauran region to Tiberias Valley during the late Ottoman period, and later, we camped in Al-Batuf Valley [western Eilabun], where we grazed our goats. During the winter we moved to live in the Eilabun Mountains – it was our lifestyle. The British [Mandate], as I knew and as my father told me, saw the Bedouin as invading their lands and the Jews' lands, so they prevented us moving from one area to another (interview, August 27, 2014, Eilabun).

All of these ordinances and rules curtailed Bedouin mobility and increased their sedentarization. In fact, these agencies change both influenced and forced these tribes to move to nearby Bedouin or Fellahin villages (Ghazalin, M., interview, February 16, 2013, Yafa; Manasra, K., interview, October 23, 2014, Reina; Masharqa, Y., interview, October 23, 2014, Nazareth).

## **LAND PURCHASE BY ZIONIST INSTITUTIONS**

At the end of Ottoman rule in Palestine in 1918, lands began to become valuable not only economically but also as an important national symbol. During the British Mandate in Palestine, many land purchase transactions were entered into by Jewish organizations and individuals, both Zionist and non-Zionist (such as JCA, JNF, PLDC, PJCA, American Zionist Community, Yehoshua Hankin, and Arthur Ruppin),<sup>2</sup> and by wealthy Lebanese landowners such as the Sursock and Khoury families.

Mandatory authorities amended land ownership registration, which entailed issuing certificates of ownership to individuals, in contrast to the practice up until then, wherein the land was in sheikhs' names only. These actions helped Bedouin to purchase lands, but they also helped Jews to purchase Bedouin lands via the *Mudawwara* or “revolving door” method, wherein a Bedouin would buy state land and then sell it to Jews (Kark and Frantzman, 2010), which greatly affected Bedouin mobility, causing them to adopt a more sedentary lifestyle.

### ***Examples of Land Purchases by Jews in the Galilee***

#### *Marj Ibn Amer (Jezreel Valley)*

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Sursock family sold about 200,000 dunams in Marj Ibn Amer to Jewish activists and companies (Oren-Nordheim, 2005; Naor, 1993). These purchases constituted about half of the lands of Marj Ibn Amer and restricted Bedouin movement therein, such as Al-Subayh tribe dwelling on land that was partly owned by the tribe, while in the other portion they grazed their flocks.

In 1944, the JCA purchased Al-Subayh tribal territory, which covered 3,000 dunams in northern Mount Tabor. This transaction was a continuation of land purchase process by the JCA that began in 1927, when about 2,175 dunams were purchased on which Kh/Kadoorie School was built in 1933 (Government of Palestine, August 20, 1933). This process led to reduction in tribes' ecological sphere, forcing tribes into Al-Subayh village or some of them (Nujeidat) to Bu'enie, a Fellahin village.

#### *Lower Galilee, including Yavne'el Valley*

Upon the establishment of the JCA in 1891, it acquired about 80,000 dunams in Lower Galilee (Seltenreich, 2006), causing some Bedouin tribes therein to move into permanent localities. We know of Al-Wahib tribe (800 inhabitants) in Tiberias Sub-district in the 1940s settling in Bedouin and *Fellahin* villages: Wadi al-Hamam (12 inhabitants), Wadi Salameh (50 inhabitants), Tiberias (10 inhabitants), Manara and Nasser al-Din (15 inhabitants), Malha (15 inhabitants), Samakh (25 inhabitants), Ghuwayr Abu Shusha (north of Tiberias) (35 inhabitants) (NAL, SAI: Government of Palestine, No. 18 of 1942).

In addition, following the land sale to Jews in Yavne'el Valley in the 1940s, other Bedouin tribes were expelled from their lands such as: Masharqa tribe (15 inhabitants), who moved to Sarona (a *Fellahin* village), and five years later, to Nazareth (SAI: Government of Palestine, May 18, 1947; Masharqa, Y., interview, October 23, 2014, Nazareth; Mazarib, 2022); Maslama and Khalidi tribes (55 inhabitants) moved to Al-Naora and Nazareth (Maslama, Y., interview, October 16, 2014, Nazareth; Mazarib, 2022); Al-Dalaika tribe (80 inhabitants), which camped in western Tiberias, was forced to leave and became nomadic in the mountain ranges west of Tiberias when in 1939, some of them settled in Sarjuna (see Figure 2 and Table 1 below). Following the Arab Revolt (1936-1939), the families in Sarona were forced to move to Ubeidiya village, southern Tiberias (Bitan, 1969).

#### *Hula Valley*

In 1872, Yaakov Chai Abu purchased about 3,000 dunams from Al-Zubeid tribe, and established the first Jewish colony in this area, Mei Marom (Citrin, 2001/2; Ilan, 1984). In so doing, the Abu family laid the foundation for Jewish settlement in Hula Valley, such as the purchase of 2,000 dunams by the *Hovevei Zion* ["Lovers of Zion"] emissaries and the establishment of Yesud HaMa'ala in 1883 (Citrin, 2001/2). These purchases continued through the British Mandate, causing some

Bedouin tribes in this region to move to permanent locales. For example, the move of Al-Samiria tribe (see Figure 2) from its land in Ghuwayr Abu Shusha (today, Migdal), as most of their land (about 1,500 dunams) was sold to the JCA. In a letter sent by Al-Samiria tribe on February 9, 1947 to the Arab Higher Committee, they stated that they numbered 500, and most of their land had been sold to Jews about 5 years earlier by Said Abd al-Aziz and Gamil Al-Irany, and now they own only 23 dunams, and are forced to settle in Ghuwayr Abu Shusha (SAI: Government of Palestine, February 9, 1947; Shawahdeh, H., interview, August 6, 2014, Eilabun).

In addition, from the 1930s, ties between Bedouin and Jewish settlers grew even stronger against the backdrop of land purchases. During the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, Sheikh Hussein Ali of Tuba-Zangariah sold about 500 dunams of his tribal land to the JNF, upon which Kfar Hanassi was later built (Dagan and Kozviner, 1993). At the same time, the expulsion of Bedouin from their lands caused them to take an active part in the Arab Revolt, wherein they acted against both British and Jewish targets (Marisat, J., interview, August 28, 2014, Iblin; Mazarib, 2022).

To sum up this section, land purchases by Jews expanded during the Mandate, affecting Bedouin mobility, sequestering them, and leading them to adopt a more settled lifestyle and even sedentarizaion in Bedouin communities, or moving to nearby Fellahin villages and towns.

## **BORDERED BEDOUIN: EVIDENCE OF BEDOUIN SETTLEMENT**

All of the aforementioned factors surrounding borders – Mandatory governmental pressures; continued land acquisition by Jewish organizations –became an epistemological issue, which led Bedouin in the Galilee during the Mandate to begin to occupy lands as a primary source of livelihood and housing needs. Most of them purchased small plots from Fellahin, especially near built-up areas. These purchases were intended for construction of stone houses for residential purposes, nearby Fellahin houses (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 below shows the locations of nomadic and semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes in the Galilee, and as can be seen, some of them settled near Fellahin villages and towns. The map also shows movement of some nomadic and semi-nomadic Bedouin to Fellahin villages and towns during British Mandate rule in Palestine, 1918-1948.

Table 1 below presents Bedouin tribe names, their geographical locations, and the moves of some of them to Fellahin villages and towns in the Galilee during the British Mandate (table prepared by the author).<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 2:** Galilee Bedouin tribes in permanent Bedouin localities, some having moved to Fellahin villages and towns in the Galilee under British rule, 1918-1948.<sup>4</sup>



Table 1: Bedouin tribes/families who settled in permanent localities during the British Mandate, 1918-1948

Beisan Sub-District		Tiberias District		Safad District	
Tribe name	Settlement location	Tribe name	Settlement location	Tribe name	Settlement location
Banu Saqer	Al-Sakhneh, Ashrafia	Al-Kharanbeh/Rmihat	Maghar	Azizat	
Al-Ghazzawiyya	Ashrafia	Masharqa	Sarona	Krad	Al-Ghannama

Al-Bashatwa	Ublah, Al-Shouk, Jabul	Al-Samkia	Northern Tiberias	Krad Al-Baqqra	
Al-Bawatiya	“	Wahib	Netzer Din, Ghuwayr Abu Shusha	Al-Hamdun	
Al-Zinati	“	Sawilat	Balad Al-Sheikh	Hamam	
Jisr al-Majam'a	“	Nuqib Tazawia Samiria	Ghuwayr Abu Shusha	Heib Al-Itha Kaosh Mawasi	
		Talawia		Al-Muhameidat	
		Tabiqa Manara		Heib Rasatma Al-Sayyid	
		Mawasi (Shawahdeh)	Eilabun	Zangariah	
		Seragnah Al-Kaddish		Shamlana Umm Sa'id	
		Al-Dalaika	Lubya, Sarjuna, Yamma	Sawaed	Maghar
		Heib Al-Fawawza	Southern Eilabun	Sweitat	Eilabun, Deir Hanna
				Numeirat Al-Qdirat Al-Malha Al-Rmihat	Maghar
				Al-Nujeidat	Bu'enie

Acre District		Nazareth Sub-District		Haifa District	
Tribe name	Settlement location	Tribe name	Settlement location	Tribe name	Settlement location
Al-Aramsheh		Al-Jawamees	Marj Ibn Amer	Al-Shkirat	
Al-Heib		Al-Mazarib	Marj Ibn Amer	Al-Saida	Umm Al-Ghanam and Manshiya Zabda
Al-Ramil		Al-Heib		Sweitat	Balad Al-Sheikh
Al-Ghawarna	Acre	Al-Subayh	Marj Ibn Amer	Al-QLitat	Balad Al-Sheikh

Al-Howeitat		Al-Sabarja	Marj Ibn Amer	Al-Samniyya	
Al-Sweitat	Abu Snan	Al-Ghazalin	Marj Ibn Amer and Yafa	Al-Towaqia	
Al-Qlilat		Al-Hujeirat	Eastern Shafa-Amer	Al-Na'im	
Al-Towaqia		Al-Ka'abiya	Southern Shafa-Amer	Beni Semran	
Al-Hmeirat		Maslama	Al-Naora and Nazareth	Al-Tawatha	
Al-Samniyya	Al-Bassa, Shafa-Amer, Tarshiha	Khalidi	Al-Naora and Nazareth	Al-Hujeirat	Uzair
Al-Sawaed (Abu Shahab)	Shafa-Amer			Turkmens (villages on Mount Carmel)	Al-Mansi, Lydd Al-Awadin, Al-Ghubayya Al-Fawqa, Al-Tahta, and Abu Shusha
Al-Mawasi	Tamra			Al-Nafi'at	
Al-Tawalha				Al-Zubeidat	
Al-Hamdun				Al-Hamdun	
Al-Hujeirat	Shafa-Amer				
Al-Jenadi					
Al-Marisat	Iblin, Tamra				
Al-Na'im					

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**DISCUSSION: THE TENSION BETWEEN POLITICAL GEOGRAPHICAL BORDERS AND THE BEDOUIN**

The term “border” in general is defined in various ways, depending upon scientific discipline. In the context of this article, its meaning is an edge of a territory, a line that delimits authorities or states, and indicates the interface between them. The border itself is often devoid of independent space, essence, and function, and its meaning derives from the entities that it demarcates. The functional strength of the border lies in its permanence and rigidity, as border changes are relatively rare events, involving official and formal processes, usually following dramatic events such as wars and/or agreements.

Empires throughout history have conquered regions they considered vital, such as controlling economic resources, territorial expansion against other empires, etc. disregarding indigenous people’s needs (Schumpeter, 1952). In their conquest and



control of the local peoples of the Middle East and North Africa, the empires such as the Ottoman (1516-1918), the British (1882-1946), and the French (1830-1946) viewed the nomadic peoples as a threat to governmental centralization and the continued survival of these empires in the territories occupied by them (Kark and Frantzman, 2012; Fletcher, 2015). Accordingly, especially the British administration's policy toward Bedouin in the Middle East was "a more progressive policy" toward the nomadic Bedouin (Glubb, June 5, 1926).

The British Empire, also colonial, came to the Middle East with a new bureaucracy, reflected in new ordinances and laws (as described above) that served their interests. These included borders for demarcating the "newly created territory" that characterizes modern countries, and that is not only contrary to territorial borders of the nomadic Bedouin, but also invades their traditional lifestyle. The best empirical evidence of controlling borders and restricting Bedouin movement is expressed in Mazarib's account concerning the Forest Ordinance, 1920, 1926: "I was grazing my family's goats in Al-Ghabah [forest area] west of Bethlehem [of Galilee], they [the authorities] had fences and they did not allow us to enter the forest" (interview, July 14, 2015, Zarzir).

More evidence of controlling borders is the BCO ordinance of 1942, the purpose of which was to prevent Bedouin movement from one place to another. This not only ensured the continued acquisition of territories by Zionist organizations – the purposes for which is analyzed below – but it also "indirectly" caused Bedouin settlement in permanent localities.

In addition to British influence, Zionist institutions played an important role in setting new borders for the Bedouin. Zionism was a product of 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalism arising in other nations in Europe (Gelber, 2011), which in turn arose from modernity (Gellner, 1983). Nations formed through national political movements, and fueled by "ideological movements" (Smith, 2003: 24), began to look for ways to establish autonomies (Gellner, 1997, 1983; Smith, 2003), and this extended legitimacy to the Zionist movement – mainly at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – to initiate the establishment of "national home" for the Jewish people in Palestine (Gelber, 2011; Widzer, 2015). The Zionists established Jewish organizations whose purpose was to purchase territories in Palestine, leading to a scarcity of vacant land and invasion of Bedouin territories. In other words, the nomadic phenomenon in Palestine was viewed as jeopardizing the establishment of the Jewish home endeavor that manifested itself in Jewish settlement.

Culturally, nomadic Bedouin organized themselves based on common kinship, descent, or alliance, giving priority to mapping social and political relationships rather than geographical space. According to Ibn Khaldun, their loyalty was to kinship, "*al-asabiyah al-qabaliyah*", literally, "a sense of solidarity" between tribe members, and not to the territories wherein they happened to reside (Ibn Khaldun, 2010). Nonetheless, each tribe has a territory with its own borders [*dirah*] (Ben-David, 2004; Falah, 1983; Marx, 1974, 1978; 1988). Whenever the tribe moves to

another locale – especially due to ecological conditions or wars – it seeks an exchange territory that matches their economic and social, and livestock needs. Accordingly, pastoralism is a subsistence strategy that exploits domesticated grazing animals to provide meat, milk, and animal byproducts, i.e., skins, wool, and hair. Restricting these conditions by setting territorial borders, for example, causes tension and resistance from the Bedouin tribes.

Therefore, these two opposing approaches – expansionism/imperialism and nomadic culture – created tension and struggle between the occupying state (Britain) together with the Jewish organizations acting under the auspices of the occupying state, and the Bedouin. Meir (1988) used the terms “centripetal” (state) and “centrifugal” (nomadic) to describe these two opposing forces. The Bedouin viewed as illegitimate the new political-geographical borders, resulting from implementation of governmental administrative laws and/or purchase territories by Zionist organizations, as they divided the *dirah* which they viewed as unified by their own historic habitation thereon, a history sometimes far older than the claims of more recently established states (Barfield, 2020; Levin and Carvalho et al., 2020).

While large Bedouin nomadic tribes remained powerful players in regional politics until the end of the 18th century, and remained significant political actors in the Middle East into the early 20th century, the Bedouin tribes during the British Mandate in Palestine were not able to resist forces stronger than them. The external forces, or “centripetal forces” (Meir, 1988) compelled the Bedouin to sedentarize. This does not mean that the phenomenon of nomadism has disappeared from the Middle East, as it continued during and even after the Mandate, but on a smaller scale.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper presented and examined the border effects on Bedouin lifestyle, which restricted this population’s mobility in the Galilee and even caused them to settle in permanent localities. The Mandatory British government enacted several new ordinances and laws that constrained Bedouin to within their territorial borders, and the implications thereof, in the long run, contributed to their sedentarization in the Galilee. This took place alongside land acquisitions by Zionist individuals and organizations from wealthy Arab landowners causing a reduction in tribal territory. All of these caused Bedouin to be pushed-off of their grazing and agricultural lands, indirectly contributing to the settlement of large portion of Bedouin into Bedouin-only villages, or to *Fellahin* villages and towns.

The conclusion reached herein is that there was significance to setting territorial borders for the nomadic population. The various regimes under which they have lived have not considered their unique needs, and the consequences thereof are manifested in settlement of nomadic populations into permanent localities, as the article presented: settlement either in Bedouin-only localities, or in *Fellahin* villages and towns in Galilee.

## NOTES

- 1 This agreement refers to the Sultan's land of Jordan Valley, also classified as *Jiflik* lands, or lands privately owned by the Sultan, who purchased them after 1840 from Ibrahim Pasha of Beisan Valley.
- 2 JCA: Jewish Colonization Association, established in 1891; JNF: Jewish National Fund, established in 1901; PLDC: Palestine Land Development Company, established in 1909; PICA: Palestine Jewish Colonization Association, established in 1924.
- 3 This data is based on the literature in this article and interviews with 14 Bedouin residents of these localities (conducted between 2013-2015). Moreover, the author is familiar with the oral histories and sources of those families.
- 4 This map was drawn by Avigdor Orgad, based on data provided by the author, using special computer software. The author processed new data and added it to the maps of Claude R. Conder (1880) *Palestine Exploration Map*. London: Committee of Palestine Exploration Fund; Tovia Ashkenazi (1938) *Tribus Semi-Nomades De La Palestine Du Nord*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.

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