Frontiers of the State in the
Late Ottoman Empire
Transjordan, 1850–1921

Until the mid-nineteenth century, Transjordan was a frontier region of the Ottoman province of Syria. In a time of European challenges to Ottoman integrity, the region’s strategic location, linking Syria to Palestine and Arabia, motivated the Ottoman state to extend direct rule over this region. Using new archival material from Ottoman Arabic and European sources, Eugene Rogan documents the case of Transjordan to provide a theoretically informed account of how the Ottoman state restructured and redefined itself during the last decades of its Empire. In so doing, he explores the idea of frontier as a geographical and cultural boundary, and sheds light on the processes of state formation which ultimately led to the creation of the Middle East as it is defined today. The book concludes with an examination of the Ottoman legacy in the modern state of Jordan.

Eugene L. Rogan is university lecturer in the modern history of the Middle East, University of Oxford, and Fellow of St Antony’s College, Oxford. His publications include (with Tariq Tall) Village, Steppe and State: The Social Origins of Modern Jordan (1994) and (with Alan Bowman) Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Times (1999).
Cambridge Middle East Studies 12

Editorial Board
Charles Tripp (general editor)
Israel Gershoni  Roger Owen  Yezid Sayigh

Cambridge Middle East Studies has been established to publish books on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Middle East and North Africa. The aim of the series is to provide new and original interpretations of aspects of Middle Eastern societies and their histories. To achieve disciplinary diversity, books will be solicited from authors writing in a wide range of fields including history, sociology, anthropology, political science and political economy. The emphasis will be on producing books offering an original approach along theoretical and empirical lines. The series is intended for students and academics, but the more accessible and wide-ranging studies will also appeal to the interested general reader.

A list of books in the series can be found after the index.
Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire

Transjordan, 1850–1921

Eugene L. Rogan

University of Oxford
To Ngaire
Contents

List of tables  page viii
List of illustrations  ix
Acknowledgements  xi
Conventions  xiii
List of abbreviations  xiv

Introduction  1
1 The Transjordan frontier in 1850  21
2 Ottomans: establishing a permanent presence in Transjordan  44
3 Settlement: colonization, the application of the 1858 Land Law, and their fiscal consequences  70
4 Merchants  95
5 Missionaries  122
6 Accommodation: rapid social change in Ottoman Transjordan  160
7 Resistance: popular rebellion and the 1910 Karak Revolt  184
8 The First World War  218
9 Epilogue: an interregnum  241

Select bibliography  256
Index  267
Tables

4.1 Wool exported from Damascus by type, quantity and price, 1882–85  
5.1 Numbers of students and schools in Transjordan c. 1890  
6.1 The population of Transjordan, by district, c. 1890, 1914  
6.2 Exchange rates for Ottoman and European currencies, by district, c. 1900  
8.1 Tribal leaders decorated by the Ottomans following the outbreak of the Arab Revolt
Illustrations

Plates

1.1 ‘Ajlun, 1923. Photograph taken by H. St. John Philby. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Photographic Collection, the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford. 25

1.2 Ma’an, 1918. Photograph taken by H. St. John Philby. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Photographic Collection, the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford. 33

2.1 Salt, 1867. Two-plate panorama taken by Henry Phillips, Warren expedition. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Palestine Exploration Fund. 50

7.1 The Soldiers of the Druze Campaign near Deraa station [1910]. Anonymous photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Palestine Exploration Fund. 193

9.1 Salt, 1921. Two-plate panorama taken by H. St. John Philby. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Photographic Collection, the Middle East Centre, St. Antony’s College, Oxford. 248

Figures


List of illustrations


5.1 Architectural drawings for the Ottoman mosque in Karak, 1894. Prime Ministry State Archives, Istanbul, BBA, Y.Mtv 89/130. 153


Maps

1 Administrative divisions of Ottoman Transjordan. xv

Acknowledgements

This book has been written over a number of years, in a number of great institutions. The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, and Sarah Lawrence College, provided congenial and supportive environments for the initial doctoral project. I am particularly grateful to Zachary Lockman and Philip Khoury for their supervision and guidance. The book project was conceived and completed in the University of Oxford. I have enjoyed the benefit of an encouraging and supportive faculty in the Oriental Institute. The Middle East Centre at St Antony’s College has been my intellectual home since 1991. My greatest debt has been to the fellowship of the Centre: Mustafa Badawi, Derek Hopwood, the late Albert Hourani, Celia Kerslake, Geoffrey Lewis, Robert Mabro, Roger Owen, Philip Robins and Avi Shlaim. From the broader Oxford community I would have to add Michael Gilissen and Nadim Shehabi to that list. One could not hope for a more inspiring community of colleagues.

The original research for this study, conducted in Jordan, Syria, Jerusalem and the United Kingdom, was supported by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship. Subsequent research in the French archives and writing support was provided by a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship of the U.S. Department of Education. My research in the Ottoman documents of the Prime Ministry Archives in Istanbul was made possible by a grant from the Hayter Fund of the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, and an award from the Skiller Centre for Ottoman Studies of Newnham College, Cambridge. I am also grateful to the Faculty of Oriental Studies and the Jordan Studies Fund of the Middle East Centre of St Antony’s College, Oxford, for assistance in covering the costs of the index and the reproduction of plates.

The secrets of Ottoman Transjordan were opened to me by the many helpful historians, archivists and librarians I encountered over the years. In Amman, I was fortunate in every way to work with Professor Muhammad Adnan al-Bakht, now President of Al al-Bayt University but then serving as Dean of Academic Research at the University of
Acknowledgements

Jordan and director of the Center for Archives and Manuscripts which he established in that university. Dr Nawfan al-Humoud, now Director of the Centre for Archives, was equally generous with his time. Dr Muhammad Salim al-Tarawna showed enormous patience in quite literally teaching me how to read Islamic court registers, for which I will always be in his debt. In the Department of Documentation and National Archives in Amman, I am grateful to Ms Majd al-Ma‘aya. In the Center of Historical Documents in Damascus, Sitt Da‘d al-Hakim gave generously of her time and resources. Father Pierre Mécébielle opened the otherwise inaccessible archives of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem to me. Thanks also to Rupert Chapman and Felicity Cobbing of the Palestine Exploration Fund. I am grateful to Clare Brown, archivist of the Private Papers Collection of the Middle East Centre of St Antony’s College. I also wish to record my debt of gratitude to the staff of the Jordanian Department of Land Registration, the Prime Ministry State Archives in Istanbul, the Haslop Room of the University of Birmingham Library, the National Archives and Research Administration in Washington, D.C., and the Diplomatic Archives of Nantes for their assistance.

Two unpublished memoirs were most important to this work. Mulhim al-Tall of Amman generously shared the memoirs of his grandfather, Salih al-Tall. Mustafa Hamarneh made available a copy of a handwritten text of the memoirs of ‘Awda al-Qusus, and Tariq Tell kindly gave me a typescript copy of the same memoir, as well as a second autobiographical text by Salih al-Tall. The Revd. Lu’ay al-Haddad, pastor of the Protestant Church of the Good Shepherd in al-Salt, provided me with copies of the earliest records of the church’s congregational council. Deborah Rogan painstakingly transcribed the communal records of the Latin Church of al-Salt. Henry Laurens generously shared the fruits of his own research and provided the complete intelligence reports of Antonin Jaussen from World War I from Vincennes, Nantes and the Quai d’Orsay archives. Norman Lewis and Martin Bunton contributed important documents from the Public Records Office.

In writing and revising my work, I benefited from the comments and criticisms of friends and colleagues. For their comments on part or all of the manuscript I would like to thank Yoav Alon, David Coleman, Jim Gelvin, Hasan Kayali, Josua Landis, Norman Lewis, Karma Nabulsi, Thomas Philipp, Terry Ranger, Margaret Rogan, Avi Shlaim, HRH Princess Basma bint Talal, and Ngaire Woods.

I will always be grateful to Marigold Acland, Middle East editor, for making the process of publishing with Cambridge such a pleasure. Thanks also to Jo North, copy editor, and Jayne Matthews, production controller, for seeing the book through from manuscript to publication.
Conventions

**Place names**

Ottoman provincial boundaries little corresponded to those of the twentieth-century successor states. Where appropriate, Ottoman administrative names are used in the text. For convenience, I have used the terms and approximate boundaries of the League of Nations mandates to refer to broader territories: *Transjordan* to refer to the lands east of the Jordan Rift Valley and south of the Yarmouk river; *Palestine* to refer to the lands to the west of the Jordan Rift Valley; *Syria and Lebanon* to the respective territories put under French mandate in the interwar years. I have used the term *Greater Syria* to refer to that territory known in Arabic as *Bilād al-Shām*, which includes the territories of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan combined. In using these place names I do not mean to imply any notion of national identity adhered to them, but believe they are more readily recognizable to readers more familiar with the twentieth- than the nineteenth-century geography of the area.

**Transliteration**

Ottoman Turkish has been rendered in modern Turkish following the *New Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary, 8th edition* (1986). Turkish spellings have been used for all Turkish proper nouns (personal and place names), all administrative terms, and all passages cited in Turkish. Arabic has been transliterated in keeping with a modified form of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system: no under-dots and no special diacritals for long vowels. ‘*Ain* is marked by ‘*’, *hamza* by ‘*’. The definite article *al*- is given in the first appearance of all proper nouns in a given chapter and in the index, but is left off in all other points of the text. Arabic transliteration has been used for all Arabic proper nouns and all passages cited in Arabic.
The Ottoman administrative apparatus

The following English terms are used consistently throughout the text to refer to specific administrative units and administrators of Tanzimat provincial government:

Vilayet  Province
Vali  Provincial governor
Sancak or Mutassariflik  Region
Mutassarif  Regional governor
Kaza or Kazmakamlık  District
Kazmakam  District governor
Nahiye or Müdürülık  Commune
Müdür  Communal head

Abbreviations

AAE  Archives des Affaires Étrangères, Paris
AB  The Arab Bulletin
ADN  Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes
ADN, CCE Constantinople: Correspondence avec les Echelles
BBA  Başbakanlık [Prime Ministry] Archives, Istanbul
CMS  Archives of the Church Missionary Society
DLR  Department of Land Registration, Jordan
HDC  Historic Documents Centre, Damascus
ICR  Islamic Court Register
IJMES  International Journal of Middle East Studies
IWM  Imperial War Museum, London
MW  Mirza Wasi Papers, Department of Documentation and National Archives, Amman
NA  National Archives, Washington, D.C.
PBFQS  Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement
PRO  Public Records Office, Kew
Qusus  Mudhakkirat [Memoirs] of ‘Awda al-Qusus
SAC  The Private Papers Collection, the Middle East Centre, St. Antony’s College, Oxford
Tall  Mudhakkirat [Memoirs] of Salih al-Tall