Introduction

Among the Arab states to emerge from the post-war partition of the Ottoman Empire, Transjordan is frequently dismissed by modern scholars as the most "artificial", neither nation nor state in a post-war order of nation-states. The map of modern Jordan, with its ruler-straight lines and pan-handle link to Iraq, betrays the colonial convenience which lay behind its creation. The political history of Jordan is traced back to the arrival of the Hashemite *Amir* ʿAbdullah b. Husayn and the creation of a colonial state in his meetings with Winston Churchill in Jerusalem in March 1921. Yet the inhabitants of Transjordan had been introduced to the demands of a centralizing government decades earlier. It was the Ottomans who introduced the registers of a modern bureaucracy, a regular system of taxation, a codified system of law, and a communications infrastructure to the southern extremities of their Syrian province which came to be known as Transjordan. The modern state was introduced in Transjordan by the Ottomans in the nineteenth century, not the British or Hashemites after the First World War.

If 1921 makes a problematic starting point for the political history of Transjordan, this periodization is even less tenable in social and economic terms. After centuries of diminishing population and agricultural decline, the Ottomans fostered a series of new settlements, expanded the area under cultivation, and began the sedentarization of Bedouin tribesmen which would preoccupy many Middle Eastern states in the twentieth century. Many of Jordan's largest cities, including the capital Amman, were founded under Ottoman initiatives in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The development of an immigrant merchant elite, primarily from neighboring Palestinian towns, was a consequence of the advent of direct Ottoman rule. All of the communities that settled in Transjordan in the Ottoman period – Circassian and Chechen refugees, agricultural workers and urban merchants from the other provinces of Greater Syria – were still there when the Mandate was established. The agricultural activity and markets which they created provided the only foundation for a national economy. These

social and economic formations represent an important continuity across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries too often presented in terms of rupture between the Ottoman and Mandate periods. To understand the dynamics of modern Jordanian society it is thus necessary to trace its origins back to transformations wrought under Ottoman rule.

The extension of direct Ottoman rule to the diverse districts which lay to the east of the Jordan river occurred in a period of reform and retrenchment in Ottoman history. At the same time, the Ottomans worked to extend their sovereignty over a number of peripheral or frontier lands in Eastern Anatolia and other parts of the Arab provinces. Following centuries of imperial disinterest and local rule, the pastoralists and peasants of Transjordan were incorporated to Ottoman rule through the instruments of the *Tanzimat* state.

The Tanzimat state

External and internal challenges put the very viability of the Ottoman Empire in jeopardy by the outset of the nineteenth century. The territorial expanse of the Empire was challenged by ambitious neighbors. A string of defeats to Russian and Habsburg armies forced the Ottomans to withdraw from the northern and eastern Black Sea regions between the Treaties of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) and Bucharest (1812). France invaded Egypt in 1798 and occupied Algeria in 1830. Added to these external threats were internal challenges to Ottoman sovereignty. Secessionist movements rocked the Balkan provinces. Encouraged by the Austrians and Russians, the Serbians initiated a series of revolts against Ottoman rule in the 1810s, while in 1821 Hellenic nationalists launched a revolt which, after Western intervention, led to Greek independence in 1830. And in Egypt, the Ottoman-appointed governor Mehmed Ali *Pasha* (r. 1805–48) had set his province on a course of autonomy from the central government's authority. Between 1831 and 1840 Mehmed Ali's army twice crushed the Ottoman forces sent to contain the *Pasha* and, but for European intervention, would very likely have marched on Istanbul to threaten the Sultan's government directly.[1]

This combination of challenges revealed the inherent shortcomings of the Ottoman state, to keep pace with its external enemies as well as to contain internal challenges to its sovereignty. At the start of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire showed all the weaknesses of a pre-industrial society confronted by the menace of the European state

[1] Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, vol. II* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 1–35.

system.[2] Over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Western European states had followed a trajectory from absolutism to what is generally referred to as the modern state. The distinctive features of this new mode of socio-political organization, as Max Weber argued, included a differentiated set of institutions manned by the state's own personnel, whose authority radiates from an administrative center to the limits of a territorially demarcated area. Within this territory, the modern state seeks exclusive control over both the making of rules and the means of upholding those rules through the use of physical violence.[3] Modern states were better suited to extract taxes and to mobilize their populations into standing armies, particularly as they developed what Michael Mann has termed *infrastructural power* – "the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm."[4] The infrastructural power of the modern state derived from its bureaucracy, its capacity to make and store records, standardization of coins, weights and measures to facilitate commercialization, and rapidity of communication for the transfer of people, goods and intelligence. The penetration of society which infrastructural power permits allowed for an even greater share of production to be collected in taxes, which was essential for the maintenance of large standing armies.[5] While such changes were more characteristic of the nation-states of Western Europe, even multinational Empires such as Russia and Austria had developed the infrastructural power to finance the modern armies which menaced Ottoman domains.

The Ottoman state and its elites still relied on *despotic power* – characterized as the range of actions which states and their elites had the power to take at will without reference to standard procedures or negotiations with society[6] – though with dwindling means to impose their will. The main institutions of state had evolved into interest groups that were increasingly incapable or unwilling to carry out the central government's commands. The standing Janissary army was a corporate group keen to preserve its own interests. The land regime had given way to life-tenure tax farms (*malikâne*) in which tax farmers were more concerned to preserve their profits than to remit regular taxes to the

[2] Patricia Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies* (Oxford, 1989).
[3] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York, 1964), pp. 154–57.
[4] Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in John A. Hall, ed., *States in History* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 109–36.
[5] Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-making," in C.Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton NJ, 1975).
[6] Mann, "Autonomous Power of the State," p. 113.

central treasury. The scribal bureaucracy suffered "disadvantages implicit in the craftsmanlike approach of the scribal officials to training and the conduct of affairs, in their tendency to harness the interest of the state to personal and familial interests, in their lack of experience in finance, and in their small numbers."[7] The geographic reach of the Empire was no longer an asset. Spread across North Africa, Western Asia and Eastern Europe, the Ottoman state was increasingly incapable of asserting its sovereignty across the extent of its territory. Local leaders in the Balkans, Eastern Anatolia and the Arab provinces maintained militias which made a mockery of the central government's claim to a monopoly over rule-making and armed force. And where the Ottoman state could not impose its rules, its claims to sovereignty were tenuous.

Starting in the late eighteenth century, a series of reforming sultans recognized the need to change the basic institutions of state. Abdülhamid I (1774–89) was the first to seek European advisers for upgrading the Ottoman army.[8] Selim III (1789–1807) pushed military reform further yet, inaugurating a new standing army dressed and drilled along European lines – the *Nizam-i Cedid*.[9] Internal resistance to these reforms led to Selim's overthrow, though his successor Mahmud II (1808–39) took the process of reforms yet further, destroying the Janissary corps to protect the *Nizami* army from further opposition, and initiating the first of the modern administrative reforms to the Ottoman state. At the time of his sudden death in 1839, Mahmud and his foreign minister Mustafa Rešid *Pasha* had put together a programme of reforms which would be promulgated after the Sultan's death in the 1839 Gülhane Rescript, the cornerstone of the period of Ottoman reforms known as the *Tanzimat*.

The *Tanzimat* set in motion a series of administrative reforms designed to bring the Ottoman state into the nineteenth century. To consolidate and advance the gains made in modernizing the military, a more efficient land order was needed to replace the out-dated system of tax-farming (explicitly criticized in both the 1839 and 1856 reform decrees). In 1858, a new land code was promulgated which gave individual title to land and established a direct fiscal relationship between landholders and the state tax agents, members of a bureaucracy who were responsible for collection but whose income was not in any way linked to what they collected. To standardize Ottoman administra-

[7] Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton NJ, 1980), p. 110.
[8] Robert Mantran, *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman* (Paris, 1989), pp. 422–25.
[9] Stanford Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge MA, 1971).

tion and the rule of law, a rationalized administrative and judicial structure was established in the 1864 Provincial Reform Law, which created a clear hierarchy of authority. The manpower demands raised by the new state structures were met by an expanding bureaucracy, trained in growing numbers by a modern school system, whose authority was not personal but inherent to their office. Through the public bureaucracy, the Ottoman state extended its infrastructural power by new systems of accounts and book-keeping. Government officials were able to exchange information with increasing ease along new roads, shipping connections and telegraph lines. In effect, the *Tanzimat* reforms had extended the infrastructural power of the Ottoman state and replaced the interest groups in the military, land regime and bureaucracy with salaried professionals. By the 1850s local elites no longer posed a challenge to the central government's rule in the provincial centers of the Empire.

Beyond the provincial centers, Ottoman authority was more limited. The infrastructural power of the *Tanzimat* state was confined to those regions under direct rule. By contrast, vast stretches of territory within recognized Ottoman boundaries were, in the mid-nineteenth century, still under various forms of local rule: in Eastern Anatolia, in the Arabian Peninsula, in the Syrian steppe, and in North Africa. With the Empire contracting in the Balkans, the Ottomans came to place a new premium on their frontier regions as untapped resources which could contribute taxes and manpower if put under direct rule. Ottoman control had a strategic imperative as well. European imperial interests were increasingly at variance with Ottoman sovereignty. Britain sought to secure its communication routes to India across both the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 had raised Ottoman fears for the security of Syria and Palestine. French and Italian rivalry in Tunisia also raised concerns for Ottoman holdings in North Africa. Consequently, the Ottoman government launched a number of initiatives to secure its position in Kurdish and Arab frontier zones by extending the instruments of the *Tanzimat* state to the periphery.

Ottoman frontiers

Frontiers

Though Ottoman rule was tenuous in Eastern Anatolia and the Arab provinces generally in the mid-nineteenth century, a real distinction existed between urban centers which had extensive experience of Ottoman administration, and more remote rural areas, many of which

first came under direct rule at this time. These more remote areas are treated as *frontiers* inasmuch as they represented socio-political orders apart from the institutions of the Empire at large. This notion of frontiers has been developed by scholars of North America and Southern Africa, who have defined frontiers as a "zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies," one of which is indigenous to the region and the other intrusive. "The frontier 'opens' in a given zone when the first representatives of the intrusive society arrive; it 'closes' when a single political authority has established hegemony over the zone."[10] The opening of a frontier may result in many different outcomes. The intrusive state might fail to establish its hegemony, in which case the frontier remains a frontier. The frontier might even consolidate into a state in its own right as a consequence of repelling the intrusive society. The "closed" frontier, on the other hand, might take a variety of forms. The indigenous people might be exterminated or expelled. Alternatively, the intruders might be assimilated into the indigenous society. Ottoman experiences varied widely in their frontier districts, shaped by a number of factors such as the autonomous power of local elites, the degree of European intervention in a given area, and local perceptions of the benefits of Ottoman rule.

Tribal society

The "indigenous" societies which the Ottomans encountered in frontier lands ranging from Kurdistan through Arabia to North Africa had one thing in common: the frontier was a contact zone between the state and tribal society.[11] It is hard to lend consistency to a term meant to describe complex societies in such diverse places as Kurdistan, Yemen and Libya. As a survey of the anthropological literature reveals, tribes as a social group elude general definition. For the purpose of this study, a tribe is a

[10] H. Lamar and L. Thompson, "Comparative Frontier History," in H. Lamar and L. Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven CT, 1981), pp. 3–14.

[11] On Kurdistan see Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London, 1992), chapter 2; on the Persian Gulf, see Hala Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf, 1745–1900* (Albany NY, 1997); on Eastern Arabia see Frederick F. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar* (New York, 1997); on Syria see Norman Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800–1980* (Cambridge, 1987); on Yemen see Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen* (Oxford, 1993); on Libya, see Lisa Anderson, "Nineteenth Century Reform in Ottoman Libya," *IJMES* 16 (1984), pp. 325–48 and *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830–1980* (Princeton NJ, 1986); on the Ottoman discourse on tribes in all of these regions see Eugene L. Rogan, "*Aşiret Mektebi*: Abdülhamid II's School for Tribes, 1892–1907," *IJMES* 28 (1996), pp. 83–107.

social group defined in genealogical and territorial terms.[12] Genealogy is taken here in a political rather than biological sense. While not necessarily linked by DNA, fellow tribesmen acknowledge a common ancestor as part of a shared foundation myth and history. Tribal family trees are permeable, and individuals or groups could attach themselves to a tribe by writing themselves into the collective genealogy. Many of the branches of a tribe probably trace their links to the greater collectivity by such a political act of genealogical union. One anthropologist recently compared two contemporary Jordanian tribes, describing the ʿAbbad as "a confederation of unrelated clans" whose "lack of consensus" is commonly attributed to their "diverse genealogical origins." The more compact ʿAdwan tribe, on the other hand, linked their "legacy of power" directly to their "unified genealogy."[13]

Tribes were also linked to specific territories, at specific times.[14] A given tribe was known to exploit a certain territory seasonally (known as *dira*), and to allow access to other tribes by negotiated agreement. Unauthorized entry into a tribe's land could be construed as a hostile act. In fact, tribes frequently challenged their neighbors' hold over their lands, which led to shifting boundaries in tribal lands. In some cases, tribes challenged by stronger neighbors were driven off their lands, to resettle elsewhere or be assimilated into other tribes. Thus tribes were not static. Of the five tribes from the district of Salt listed in Ottoman fiscal registers at the end of the sixteenth century, only the Bani Sakhr survived into the nineteenth century.[15] Presumably the others had either been displaced, assimilated to other tribes, or confederated under new names. Tribes were not linked to specific economic activities. Indeed, one of the dynamics of tribal society was the diversification of economic activities. Camel herders might shift to sheep and goat herding, small livestock herders might expand into cultivation, and some pastoral tribes settled into full-time cultivation.[16] Similarly, tribes did not need

[12] Aspects of this discussion have drawn on Patricia Crone, "The Tribe and the State," in Hall, *States in History*, pp. 48–55; William Lancaster, *The Rwala Bedouin Today* (Cambridge, 1981); Jibrail S.Jabbur, *The Bedouins and the Desert: Aspects of Nomadic Life in the Arab East* (Albany NY, 1995); John C.Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman* (Cambridge, 1987); Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Berkeley CA, 1990).

[13] Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination* (Berkeley CA, 1997), pp. 40–42.

[14] W. Lancaster and F. Lancaster, "Land Use and Population in the Area North of Karak," *Levant* 27 (1995), pp. 103–24; Lars Wåhlin, *Tribal Society in Northern al-Balqa'*, *Jordan* (Stockholm, 1993) maps the most detailed link between tribes and land in the ʿAllan area of the Salt district over the years 1867–1980.

[15] Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth and Kamal Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and Southern Syria in the Late 16th Century* (Erlangen, 1977), p. 169.

[16] Mustafa Hamarneh has argued for a linkage between wealth and tribal economic

to live in tents. Indeed, such town-based social organizations as *hamula*s or "clans" fit a general definition of tribes.[17] Nor were tribes exclusively Muslim; many societies in Syria and Iraq counted Christians among their tribes.

To claim that Ottoman frontier zones in Eastern Anatolia and the Arab provinces were a contact zone between tribes and the state is not to suggest there were no peasants or townspeople apart from the tribes. Towns and agricultural villages were a common feature of these frontiers. Indeed, the Ottoman government sought to encourage and to tax their produce and commerce through the extension of direct rule. Towns and villages were integral parts of frontier society, in many cases bound to the region's tribes in a common socio-political unit known as *chiefdoms*.[18] The head of a chiefdom might be based in a town or in a predominant Bedouin tribe. A social contract existed between cultivators and pastoralists within a chiefdom. The tribes of the district protected cultivators' fields and village property in exchange for a share of cultivators' harvests, access to markets for the exchange of pastoralist products for town goods, and hospitality when tribesmen called on cultivators. Rivalries between chiefdoms made for a tenuous balance of power frequently disrupted by territorial ambitions, competition for pastures, access to productive villages, or raids and feuds. These rivalries made for a dynamic history, in many cases preserved only in oral traditions.

Beneath this schematized description of chiefdoms there lay a diversity of social and economic groups which made Ottoman attempts at control all the more challenging. A wide range of lifestyles existed, combining varying amounts of agriculture and pastoralism. At one end of the spectrum were village-dwelling farmers who practiced intensive agriculture in hillside terraced plots and extensive grain cultivation in the surrounding plains. At the other end of the spectrum were camel-herding pastoral nomads who traveled great distances between summer and winter pastures. Between these two groups were farmers who kept small herds, semi-sedentary pastoralists, and villagers who encamped in distant fields during the cultivation season. Culturally, the gap between Bedouin and peasants in a given district was often quite small. A shared environment, common history, customs of dress, speech and diet, as well as institutions of self-rule and conflict resolution gave all members

activity; cf. Mustafa B. Hamarneh, "Social and Economic Transformation of Trans-Jordan, 1921–1946," Ph.D. diss. (Georgetown, 1985).

[17] Abner Cohen, *Arab Border Villages in Israel* (Manchester, 1965), pp. 2–3.

[18] Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, "Tribes and the Complexities of State Formation in the Middle East," in Khoury and Kostiner, *Tribes and State Formation*, pp. 7–10.

of a chiefdom a common interest in the local order. Yet distinctions were significant, with pastoral nomads expressing belief in their superiority and disdain for all other lifestyles. Intermarriage between different sectors of a chiefdom were rare.

This frontier order of tribes and chiefdoms was the single greatest barrier to direct Ottoman rule. In effect, tribes performed many of the same functions which the state claimed as its prerogative. Foremost was taxation. The Ottomans frequently sought to extract taxes from agricultural communities only to find that the cultivators had already paid a large part of their surplus to the dominant tribe in the region. Such double taxation frequently provoked peasant flight and village abandonment. The military strength of tribes also challenged the state's monopoly of coercive force. Ottoman attempts to subordinate tribes by military means were costly and seldom effective, as soldiers were forced to pursue tribesmen on their own terrain. Tribes provided a system of justice which proved effective at resolving disputes and preserving order. In effect, a functional chiefdom provided security and a system of justice all defined in indigenous terms in return for taxation, making the state redundant in a frontier.

While the frontier might not have needed the state, by the second half of the nineteenth century the state needed the frontier. The Ottoman Empire faced a real need to extend its sovereignty to the limits of its recognized territorial boundaries.

Opening the frontiers

Between the 1830s and 1850s the Ottoman government undertook a number of initiatives to reassert its authority in Transjordan as well as other frontier zones in the Asian and African provinces. Coming before the main administrative reforms of the *Tanzimat* had been promulgated, these campaigns relied primarily on the despotic power of the state – and foundered because the state lacked the reach to enforce its will at such distance.

The process began in Eastern Anatolia when, in the aftermath of the first Egyptian campaign (1831–32), the Ottoman government moved to destroy the major Kurdish chiefdoms. "These emirates consisted of a number of tribes (often two loose tribal confederacies) held in check and balanced against each other by a ruling family (dynasty) with its own military and bureaucratic apparatus."[19] In 1834 the governor of Sivas led a campaign force against the Kurdish chiefs and took Mir Mu-

[19] van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, p. 133.

hammad of Rawanduz (northeast of Mosul in modern Iraq) as his first target. Over the previous two decades Mir Muhammad had followed a brutal course of expansion which raised Ottoman fears of a mini-state in the making within their territory. Mir Muhammad surrendered to the governor, tendered his submission to Istanbul and died during his return trip to Rawanduz in 1835. The second major Kurdish chief was Badr Khan *Beg* of Buhtan who, over the years 1821–45 had come to rule a territory which stretched from Diyarbakir to Mosul. Considered "the last paramount chief to present a serious challenge to the Ottoman reformers," Badr Khan declared his independence from the Ottoman Empire, minted his own coinage, and defeated the first Ottoman expedition sent to bring him to heel.[20] Badr Khan was defeated by a second Ottoman army in 1845 and was exiled to Crete. From this point on, the Ottomans considered Kurdistan as an area under their direct rule, though "direct Ottoman rule was to prove very ineffective indeed. Near the cities, the governors had some power; nowhere did they have authority."[21]

The Sublime Porte turned next to Libya. The French occupation of Algeria and the breakdown of the Qaramanli Regency into a state of near civil war raised fears in Istanbul that a European power might take advantage of the instability to occupy the North African territory. In May 1835 the government dispatched a military governor at the head of a small force to take over Tripoli and assert Istanbul's direct authority. The new governor received the recognition of the town notability, though it would take decades to extend Ottoman rule to the countryside, which broke out in a series of revolts. "It was not until after commander Ahmad *Pasha*, also known as al-Jazzar, was allowed to undertake the complete pacification of the country in the late 1840s that the population was to be subdued."[22] Here as in Kurdistan, Ottoman rule initially was imposed by force of arms, at some expense, without the means to extend the state's influence beyond the last garrison.

The return of direct Ottoman rule to the Hijaz in April 1841, after the province's occupation by the Saʿudi-Wahabi confederation and then by the Egyptian forces of Mehmed Ali *Pasha*, initially met with no resistance. Ottoman rule in the Hijaz had always brought more benefits than liabilities to the local inhabitants. Rather than extracting taxes, the Ottomans had traditionally distributed cash gifts to the Hijazis as privileged inhabitants of the holy cities of Mecca and Madina. The powers of the Ottoman governor were matched by the *Amir*s of Mecca,

[20] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London, 1996), pp. 45–47.
[21] van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, p. 176.
[22] Anderson, *State and Social Transformation*, p. 72.