A Fort under Another Name

"Imperial" Architecture as a Tool of Bedouin Control in the British Mandate

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The desert and steppe regions of the Mashriq are populated with the architectural remains of empires past, from Roman military forts to Ottoman pilgrim hostels. These buildings are often interpreted as evidence of top-down imperial control of the "desert-dwellers" – the nomadic or semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes which for centuries have inhabited and migrated within the Syrian and Arabian deserts. "The tribal question" is one that a succession of rulers of this region sought to solve; highly mobile and therefore difficult to locate and control, and dwelling within a harsh landscape that was often inaccessible to outsiders, the Bedouin have for centuries been perceived as a thorn in the side of imperial police officers, census-takers, tax collectors, and military conscription agents.[1] There is an equally long history of architecture as a solution and as a means of imperial control and surveillance over Bedouin populations, from the Roman *limes Arabicus* to the Umayyad *quṣūr*.[2]

1 See Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated by Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015 [orig. 1377]) for an example of how the Bedouin have historically been represented as incompatible with empire-building and civilization, and as a problem for empires to reckon with and solve. For an in-depth discussion of "the tribal question" in the context of the interwar Mandate government, see Robert Fletcher: *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question": Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919–1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

2 The *limes Arabicus* represented one part of the Roman Empire's empire-wide system for boundary-marking, defense, and fortification. Spanning a distance of approximately 1500 kilometers from the Gulf of Aqaba in the south to Syria in the north, it consisted of a system of walls, roads, forts and watchtowers. It is hypothesized to have been built as defense against incursions and raids by the 'barbarian' Arab tribes to the east of this line, but recent scholarship has also argued for a more diplomatic or commercial function. For more on the *limes Arabicus* and imperial Rome's larger strategy for the *limes* system, see, for example, David L. Kennedy/Derrick Riley: *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); David J. Breeze: *The Frontiers of Imperial Rome* (Barnsley/Havertown: Pen & Sword Military, 2019); Hugh Elton: *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2012); Matthew Symonds: *Protecting the Roman Empire: Fortlets, Frontiers, and the Quest for Post-Con-*

This chapter focuses on architecture as a key pillar in Mandate Britain's strategy for control of the "desert periphery" of Transjordan and Iraq and its nomadic inhabitants. I identify how British administrators sought to deliberately imitate their imperial predecessors through this strategic approach. However, I also move beyond simplified narratives of top-down mechanisms of imperial control by highlighting Bedouin contributions to the built environments of Jordan and Iraq. I present evidence for the role of Bedouin tribespeople and sheikhs as builders and patrons of architecture, which not only sheds new light on the architectural history of the region but also interrogates the true nature and extent of British imperial control over the desert frontier and its indigenous inhabitants.

Notions of nomadic peoples and lifeways as being by definition opposed to the construction and use of permanent architecture predominate in the popular imagination.[3] In this chapter, I argue that such notions were at least in part solidified and perpetuated by British representatives of the Mandate government, for whom it was

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quest Security (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Rob Collins/Matt Symonds/Meike Weber: *Roman Military Architecture on the Frontiers: Armies and Their Architecture in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015); C.R. Whittaker: *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). The Umayyad *quṣūr* refers to the development and occupation by the elite of the Umayyad caliphate (661–750) of a network of primarily rural castles, forts, bathhouses, and hunting lodges throughout the Syrian desert. Approximately 100 such buildings are estimated to have been used by the Umayyad caliphs throughout Syria, Jordan, and Palestine; some were built entirely from scratch, while others were adapted from existing Roman or Byzantine-era constructions. After the fall of the Umayyad caliphate, their successors, the Abbasid caliphs, shifted away from spending time in the desert and steppe regions and towards large-scale urban development projects, with the consequence that projects of building in the sparsely-populated desert regions have been seen as unique to the Umayyads in the history of early Islam. In the historiography of Islamic art and architecture, Umayyad building projects have thus been grouped together homogenously under the umbrella of "the Umayyad *quṣūr*" (*quṣūr* being the Arabic word for "castles") or "the Umayyad desert castles". Both terms are misleading, as some of the buildings assigned to this category are not castles nor are they in the desert. Although the *quṣūr* have been understood and represented as a neatly defined category, no scholarly work exists to my knowledge that treats the *quṣūr* in their totality. Rather, scholars have focused individually on specific *quṣūr*, and usually solely on those which are best-preserved today. Examples of some of the most influential such publications include Garth Fowden's monograph on Qusayr 'Amra (Garth Fowden: *Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)), and Oleg Grabar's research on Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (Oleg Grabar: *City in the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East: An Account of the Excavations Carried out at Qasr al-Hayr East on Behalf of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan, with the Help of Harvard University and the Oriental Institute, the University of Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978)).

3 For a broader discussion of this phenomenon and its historiography, see Margaret Freeman: "Rendre Leur Âme Aux Fantômes: Nomadisme et Hantologie de l'architecture Chez Les Bédouins", in: *Perspective* 2 (2021), 221–238.

both politically expedient and symbolically significant to lay sole claim to the desert's built heritage and imperial legacies. As I will discuss further below, Mandate administrators saw architecture and its power to express imperial ideologies and continuities as being of particular strategic importance in the context of a predominantly nomadic landscape. They imagined that "the tribesman would be more impressed by the exhibition of solid unmovable strength within his midst," in the form of forts or other permanent structures, than by tentage or other "nomadic" installations.[4] Thus British officials arrived in the region with an entrenched perception of nomadism as being mutually exclusive with permanent architecture, and architecture as a tool which by its very presence would cow nomadic peoples into submission. In a curious case of imperial obliviousness (or perhaps something more insidious), this perception was not shaken even when the same officials had knowledge of Bedouin peoples building, sponsoring, and occupying desert forts and castles. Rather, as discussed in the final section of this chapter, internal reports by Mandate administrators as well as the books, articles, and presentations they produced for the consumption of the British public continued to insist that local Bedouin peoples had no relationship to the architectural heritage of the Middle East.

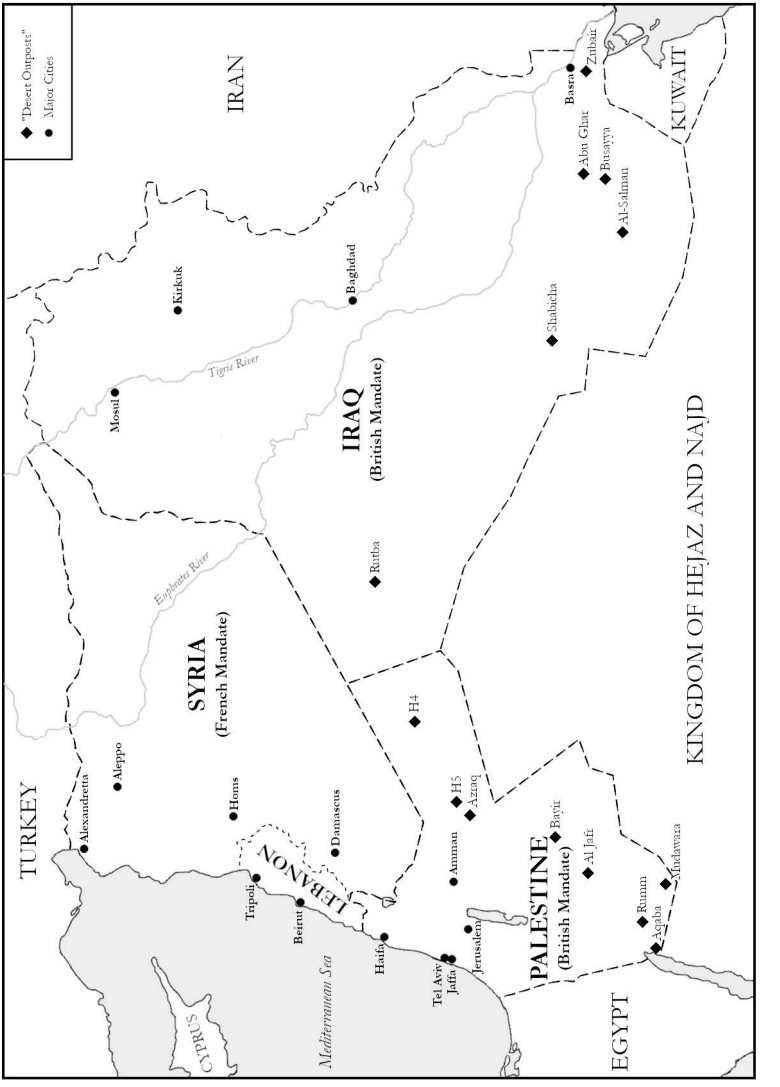
This archival corpus produced by British Mandate officials constitutes the majority of the sources utilized in this chapter. It is something of a trope in the study of nomadic peoples that their own perspectives, experiences, and histories are difficult if not impossible to locate in the documentary or material record, but at least in the case of the Bedouin in the modern Middle East, numerous scholars have proven this to be false.[5] By relying primarily on British archival sources, it is not my intention to privilege this perspective or suggest that it is the only one available to us. My aim is to illustrate the deeply entrenched ideas held by British administrators towards the nomadic peoples they sought to control; ideas that were not changed even in the face of conflicting evidence. British documentary sources reveal that such attitudes were held towards the Bedouin at the same time as evidence observed in the field belied them, and, furthermore, that policies were developed and enacted based on these Orientalizing stereotypes rather than on officers' direct experiences with the Bedouin. In my reading of these sources, I analyze this imperial mindset vis-à-vis the Bedouin and identify the evidence the sources present of Bedouin practices and history, offering an against-the-grain archival interpretation that both illuminates

4 W. Jennings-Bramley, note on the fort at Burg El-Arab, 24 August 1926, in: The National Archives, United Kingdom (TNA), FO 141/514/5.

5 Mélisande Genat: "Tribal Justice and State Law in Iraq", in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53:3 (2021), 507–511; Yuval Ben-Bassat: "Bedouin Petitions from Late Ottoman Palestine: Evaluating the Effects of Sedentarization", in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:1/2 (2015), 135–162.

the complexities of imperial rule and notions of control over subaltern peoples and situates the Bedouin as actors with agency within such systems.

Figure 3 Map of the borders of the League of Nations mandate territories with locations of British 'desert outposts', ca. 1930.



One of the most common imaginations of the Bedouin found in these sources is that of the Bedouin as a singular entity and a homogenous people. The Bedouin have traditionally lived as mobile pastoralists in the Arabian and Syrian deserts, Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula, and parts of North Africa, raising and herding livestock and living off the income from and products of their animals. However, we should understand that, unlike in the Orientalist imagination, peoples categorized as "Bedouin" can differ significantly from one another in terms of subsistence method, level of sedentarization, cultural and religious practices, etc. Until very recently, "Bedouin" was up a term imposed from the outside, whereas peoples thus designated often identified themselves simply as "Arabs" (in contrast with the *fallahīn*: Peasants or farmers) or more narrowly by their tribal affiliation or kin group.

In the late Ottoman period and into the interwar years, the desert and steppe regions of West Asia were home to a number of Bedouin tribes, which wielded varying degrees of political and economic power. Some of the larger and more prominent tribal confederations, such as the ʿAnazeh, ʿAmarat, Sakhr, and Shammar, were powerful stakeholders within the Ottoman empire, as well as, eventually, allies of the Ottomans' successors – the French in Syria and Lebanon, the British in Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, and the Saʿudi dynasty in the Najd and what would eventually become Saudi Arabia.[6] As I will now discuss, this chapter focuses primarily on the peoples, architecture, and history of the Jordan-Iraq-Saudi Arabia cross-border region (Figure 3), and where I refer to "the Bedouin" what is meant is the nomadic or seminomadic inhabitants of this region.[7] Although the peoples of this region were by no means culturally or societally homogenous, they were perceived as such by British administrators, resulting in a universalized "principle of desert control", in which the desert zones of the Mandate and its nomadic inhabitants were conceptualized as a singular, interlinked problem to be managed and solved.[8] While several other scholars have analyzed imperial Britain's tactics for desert administration, my focus here is specifically on the spatial element of this administrative policy and how the mere presence of architecture was conceived as a tool for control of nomadic peoples.[9] This narrower focus on a key pillar of Mandate desert administration re-

6 Robert Fletcher: "The 'Amarat, Their Sheikh, and the Colonial State: Patronage and Politics in a Partitioned Middle East", in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:1/2 (2015), 163–199; Yoav Alon: *The Shaykh of Shaykhs: Mithqal al-Fayiz and Tribal Leadership in Modern Jordan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

7 For an overview of the main tribes and their migration areas in this region during the interwar period, see Carl R. Raswan: "Tribal Areas and Migration Lines of the North Arabian Bedouins", in: *Geographical Review* 20:3 (1930), 494–502.

8 Glubb: "Note on Policy for the Control of the Transjordan Deserts", 19 November 1930, 33, TNA, CO 831/10/2.

9 For studies of Mandate Britain's general administration of the desert, see, for example, Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*; Priya Satia: *Spies in Arabia: The Great*

veals how Britain sought to construct a claim to imperial legitimacy and continuity through both the literal and symbolic appropriation of the desert's built environment, severing local Bedouin affiliations with this aspect of their cultural heritage in the process.

We begin in Transjordan in the first half of the 1930s, where the use of architecture as means of Bedouin control was strategically and organizationally perfected. I discuss how Mandate officials in Transjordan seemingly turned to their imperial predecessors in adopting architecture as a means of tribal control, the symbolic resonance of repurposing historical sites, and what such projects can tell us about imperial Britain's ideologies, aspirations, and self-representations. However, I also present the seldom-examined history of Bedouin use and occupation of some of these buildings and highlight evidence for Bedouin modes of inhabiting and interacting with their built environment. This evidence complicates our understanding of how such seemingly top-down systems of imperial control actually functioned on the ground, and the extent to which local actors participated in the development and modernization of their built and natural environments.

Next, moving to Iraq as well as back in time to the late 1920s, I examine the use of architectural fortifications along the border between Iraq and Najd, and the 1927–1930 conflict between Ibn Saʿud, the Ikhwān, and the British over these border fortifications. As I will discuss, the crisis was instigated over fundamentally differing perceptions among these actors of how architecture and built border regimes function within specifically nomadic contexts and landscapes.

Finally, we move to Great Britain itself, where I consider how Mandate officials contributed to contemporaneous knowledge production about indigenous and nomadic peoples, examining the flow of narratives and ideas about nomads and their histories and practices between England and the Middle East. British leaders marshaled the emerging scholarly fields of Near Eastern archeology and aerial photography to present British modes of desert architecture and desert control as directly indebted to imperial precedents. British presence in the Mashriq was legitimized as a result, but non-imperial (i.e. Bedouin) relationships to the material and architectural past were simultaneously erased.

This chapter is organized into three case studies, in order of outwardly expanding geographical scale. In the case of Transjordan, Britain's strategy of desert

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War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Priya Satia: "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia", in: *American Historical Review* 111:1 (2006), 16–51; Priya Satia: "Drones: A History from the British Middle East", in: *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 5:1 (2014), 1–31; Graham Jevon: *Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion: Britain, Jordan, and the End of Empire in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

architecture was primarily directed internally, towards controlling and surveilling Bedouin populations concentrated within the borders of Transjordan. In Iraq, the narrative scope shifts to include events and stakeholders on the Najdi side of the Iraq-Najd border, illustrating the wider ramifications across the region, not just within the borders of the Mandate territories, of British imperialism, its uses and reuses of architecture, and its strategies for control of nomadic peoples. In ultimately expanding the focus to include Great Britain itself, we see how and where imperial administrators' ideas of architecture as a reflection and symbol of empire and of nomadism as an inherently anti-architectural lifeway were shaped, and how these ideas informed and were mutually reinforced by decision-making in the field. These shifting geographical frames illustrate the extent to which, at all levels of this story, Orientalist myth-making about the Bedouin reigned supreme. Minoritized and considered 'other' both by foreign observers and by non-Bedouin Arabs, what we consider to be true about the Bedouin today has been largely shaped by a variety of externally constructed narratives that alternately vilify and romanticize Bedouin peoples, history, and identity.[10] This chapter strives to locate within these manifold narratives the complexities of Bedouin relationships with both imperial actors and "imperial" architecture during the Mandate period.

"Imperial" Architecture and Bedouin "Control" in Transjordan (1930–1936)

John Glubb and Britain's "principles of desert control"

The architect – figuratively as well as literally – of Britain's configuration of a spatial control of the Bedouin was John Bagot Glubb, a military engineer by training who volunteered for service in Mesopotamia towards the end of the First World War. He stayed in the region as a civil administrator under the Mandate government and was

10 For examples of how contemporaneous non-Bedouin Arabs imagined, idealized, and vilified the Bedouin and perceived the role of the Bedouin both in history and in the making of the modern nation-state, see, for example, Ameen Rihani: "Arabia: An Unbiased Survey", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 16:1 (January 1929), 35–55; B. Toukan: "Transjordan: Past, Present and Future", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 31:3/4 (1944), 253–264; Ja'Far Pasha El Askeri: "Five Years' Progress in Iraq", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 14:1 (1927), 62–72; Muhammad Fadil Jamali: *The New Iraq: Its Problem of Bedouin Education* (New York City: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1934). All of these texts were composed by elite non-Bedouin Arabs during the interwar period for European or American audiences, and reveal the extent to which Orientalizing stereotypes about the Bedouin were held and perpetuated by Arab observers in addition to foreign ones.

eventually transferred from Iraq to Transjordan in 1930, where he served first as an officer and later as commander of the Arab Legion until 1956.[11]

The primary responsibility of Britain's "desert administrators" at this time was to eliminate the practice of inter-tribal raiding, a long-standing subsistence method among Bedouin tribes in which they raided nearby tribes, villages, or caravans for livestock or other material goods. The economic necessity of raiding for pastoralist peoples living in arid climates has been undertheorized. Generally, Bedouin raiding practices have been used to justify a stereotype of the Bedouin as violent, predatory, and incapable of acquiring wealth through "honest" means. Raiding served not only an important economic, but also political and cultural, function among Bedouin tribes, however. Contrary to the image of bloodthirsty raiders, raiding was governed by a strict etiquette: Killing and physical violence were forbidden during raids, for example, as was the theft of property from widows and female heads of households. Raiding was also a key means by which Bedouin leaders established and maintained power.[12] The ability to successfully lead raiding parties and acquire wealth for their tribe was an essential quality of a Bedouin sheikh, and power dynamics, tribal alliances, and rights to land usage across the desert region were determined by the outcome of raids. In European eyes, however, raiding was unequivocally deemed a criminal activity that had to be eradicated in order to "civilize" the desert and desert-dwellers. In the words of John Glubb, "One of the first essentials if government control is to be in the desert, is the prevention of bedouin inter-tribal raiding."[13] Man-

11 John Bagot Glubb: *The Story of the Arab Legion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948); Imperial War Museum: "Glubb, John Bagot (Oral History), 26 March 1979", *Imperial War Museum Collections*, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80004370 (accessed 11 May 2022); Trevor Royle: *Glubb Pasha* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1992).

12 Maggie Freeman: "The Bedouin and the Formation of Iraq's National Borders: Interview with Dr. Carl Shook", *Digital Nomads*, 8 November 2021, https://digitalnomads.buzzsprout.com/1639870/9501095 (accessed 11 May 2022).

13 John Glubb: "Final Report of Defensive Measures Against the Akhwan, Winter 1925–1926", 18 May 1926, 16, TNA, AIR 23/302; Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*, 76, 96, 102, 110, and 113. Although Glubb appears to pride himself on his work to eliminate tribal raiding and the relative ease and swiftness with which this transition occurred, he also admits to causing unforeseen disruptions in tribal livelihoods and societies. By the winter of 1932, Glubb and his forces had established "complete control" over the desert of Transjordan and brought about almost a complete cessation of inter-tribal raiding. However, this coincided with a severe drought, which in turn resulted in famine. Unable to supplement their income through raiding, many tribespeople starved; Glubb describes parents being forced to abandon their children or selling their children in exchange for food. He concedes that, "Much of the responsibility for the famine rested on us. For we had not realized to what an extent raiding was a social-insurance scheme […]. The cessation of raiding at first brought hopeless despair to the poor, and indeed the risk of despair to every stockbreeder. For the desert life is full of risks, not only of raiders, but also of drought, epidemics or a sudden snow blizzard killing sheep in the thousands. In future there would be no hope of recovery from such disasters.

date Britain's strategy for internal Bedouin control was therefore designed first and foremost to eliminate tribal raiding, with its system of police presence and surveillance, described below, aimed at ensuring that tribespeople permanently ceased this newly criminalized activity.

John Glubb became the primary mastermind of Britain's conception of desert protection and frontier control, in which desert outposts were an essential link in a strategic chain of operations that combined displays of permanent force with Bedouin-inspired mobility and flexibility. His policy recommendation, laid out in the 1930 document "Note on Policy for the Control of the Trans-Jordan Deserts", proposed a frontier force made up of local Bedouin soldiers who would patrol the desert, gather intelligence, repel raids, and carry out punitive expeditions against raiders.[14] This force was formed in 1931 as the Desert Patrol. According to Glubb, however, certain conditions of modernity meant that imperial Britain could not rely solely on indigenous peoples and practices to self-police the border region and its inhabitants. First, "the existence of diplomatic frontiers" meant that when tribes in Transjordan or Iraq were raided by tribes from across the border in Najd or the Hejaz (a not uncommon occurrence, as will be discussed further below), any imperial desert police patrol was stymied by the inability to follow these raiders over the border to carry out punitive measures or retrieve captured loot.[15] Second, the modern British forces benefited from "the advantage of possessing scientific weapons which increase mobility and fire power."[16] These weapons included not only machine guns and the wireless telegraph but also, and most importantly, armored cars. Armored cars allowed mobile Desert Patrol Forces – in combination with air reconnaissance, another modern scientific weapon in Imperial Britain's arsenal – to respond quickly to threats of raids. While armored cars made desert patrol forces more efficient and quick-acting, they also required maintenance and supplies.[17] For this reason, therefore, desert stations where cars could be refueled and maintained and where soldiers could seek water and shelter became a necessary component of Britain's "principles of desert control".

We had though that the abolition of raiding would increase the serenity of desert life. But we discovered unexpectedly that raiding had been not only a pastime for the chivalry of Arabia but also a social-security system of which our ill-timed intervention had destroyed the balance." (Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*, 168–169).

14 Glubb, "Note on Policy for the Control of the Transjordan Deserts", 31–81.

15 Ibid., 33.

16 Ibid.

17 In a way that Glubb seemed to believe that humans did not; per Glubb, the advantage of a desert police force consisting of Bedouin tribesmen was that they carried their own supplies, could remain in the desert indefinitely, and were happy to drink the water from desert wells, in contrast with English soldiers (ibid., 35).

At the same time, these desert posts could also be used for the most important technique of desert control, which was, as Glubb saw it, "keeping touch with every area."[18] Glubb proposed that the posts be occupied by small garrisons of Bedouin constables – the Desert Patrol – who could use the posts as a base from which to venture out to local tribes and to receive tribal visitors. This was a key means through which the Bedouin officers could receive intelligence on raids from their fellow tribesmen, another essential part of Glubb's strategy. As Glubb frequently reiterated, "No non-Beduin can extract information from Beduins."[19]

The location of the posts was thus of paramount strategic importance, and Glubb and his superiors devoted significant attention to the question of where these posts should be located in order to best serve various stakeholder interests.[20] As with all life in the desert, proximity to water was an essential factor in deciding where to place a frontier fort. Proximity to wells and water holes was important not just to sustain the garrison of a given fort, but also because Bedouin migrations are oriented around sources of water. As Glubb put it:

> The desert of course depends on wells, most of the year […] so we built a fort on every well, with eight or ten men in it. The result was the tribes couldn't get water unless they came in under the control of the forts. And that also established not only complete control of the tribes, but friendly relations. Outside our forts, we always pitched a large tent, which was for guests. […] Any passer-by could step off in the guest tent where he would receive a meal and accommodation. And that made sort of friendship and inter-mixture between the police, who were themselves tribesmen, and the tribes who were outside. So before long we and our tribes were friendly cooperators, whereas before they had regarded the government as deadly enemies.[21]

By restricting water access, the forts ensured "complete control of the tribes." Glubb's description of the architectural layout of the forts is also telling; each fort was to be accompanied by a guest tent, a common feature of Bedouin encampments. Glubb imagined these tents as a sign of welcome and friendship to Bedouin guests, implying that the forts themselves would not be read as welcoming. In Glubb's design of the desert forts, the permanent installation of the forts was intended to be perceived by the Bedouin as a symbol of empire and governmental control, while the addition of the guest tent was a symbol of the government's friendship towards the

18 Ibid., 37.

19 Ibid., 35, 37.

20 Letter from J. R. Chancellor, 20 December 1930, 15–27, TNA CO 831/10/2; Letter from C.H.F. Fox, 12 December 1930, 28–30, TNA CO 831/10/2.

21 Imperial War Museum: "Glubb, John Bagot (Oral History)", minutes 18:24–19:57.

Bedouin. Differences between nomad and state were thus reinforced along architectural lines: The nomad in his tent, the government representative in his castle.[22] As I will now discuss, however, there is a long history of Bedouin occupation and patronage of permanent architecture, which was nonetheless rejected or ignored by administrators such as Glubb.

"New" desert outposts: Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq

When Glubb took up his post in Transjordan, one of his first responsibilities was to identify the locations of three new desert forts and oversee their development. However, none of these forts – located at Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq – was in fact new at all (figure 3). Rather, they were sites that had a long role in the history of frontier occupation and nomad-state relations. Mudawara in southern Jordan, for example, dates back to the 9th century, when it was first developed as a stopping place on the hajj route; home to a natural spring, it provided water and shelter to pilgrims. By the early 16th century, however, its function had changed, and it appears in Ottoman sources as the stronghold of a Bedouin sheikh, Jughayman, who, far from providing protection to passing pilgrims, instead used the fort as a base from which to launch raiding expeditions against pilgrim caravans.[23] A few centuries later it had changed hands again, and was further developed as a *hajj* fort by the governor of Damascus

22 This binary is of course complicated by the fact that the majority of Desert Patrol soldiers who occupied and manned the forts were themselves of Bedouin origin. The dynamics of co-opting indigenous peoples into colonial schemes for self-policing and internal control have been undertheorized in this context; although it is a complicated subject that would benefit from being fully explored in future research, I believe that Glubb saw the occupation of the desert forts as having a 'civilizing' effect on Bedouin soldiers in the Desert Patrol, which separated them from their peers who continued to practice pastoralism and live in tents. This is evident in Glubb's statement here juxtaposing the Desert Patrol with "the tribes who were outside", symbolically enforcing a psychic division between the Bedouin tribespeople who occupied the forts and those who inhabited tents. See also Glubb's discussion of the forts as places where Bedouin Desert Patrol soldiers underwent spiritual and moral improvements, in Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*, 103, 165–167.

23 In some sources the castle is called Khirbet Jughayman instead of Mudawara after this sheikh. Contemporaneous sources also describe that Jughayman as well as other sheikhs of tribes along the *hajj* route were paid subsidies from the central government as long as they refrained from robbing pilgrims. Sources also mention that, after military intervention when Jughayman still continued to rob travelers, Jughayman's sons and other members of the same tribe were among those who helped patrol the route and ensure its safety for pilgrims. This is just one of many examples in which parallels to British policies towards the Bedouin—subsidies as incentives against raiding, tribal members policing their own—can be detected historically. Andrew Petersen: *The Medieval and Ottoman Hajj Route in Jordan: An Archaeological and Historical Study* (Oxford/Oakville [London]: Oxbow Books; Council for British Research in the Levant, 2012), 122–126; Muhammad A.S. Bakhit: *The Ottoman Province*

between 1730 and 1733. Its period of Bedouin occupation has been largely forgotten; the first European traveler to visit wrote that "the fort is […] defended […] from the Beduins' hostility," implying that the site was constructed explicitly to keep the Bedouin out.[24]

While there is perhaps some truth to this, Ottoman *hajj* forts were, like the British Desert Patrol outposts, simultaneously sites of both military control and of diplomacy. In addition to being militarized fortifications, they were also places where the government mediated with tribes, distributed subsidy payments in the form of money or grain, and where tribes could meet with government representatives.[25] When *hajj* forts were no longer needed, either because routes changed or because their upkeep became too expensive, they were "left to the Bedouin."[26] Therefore, keeping in mind also the site's proximity to water and the discussion above about the importance of access to water in a desert climate, we should reconsider who, throughout the fort's 1000-year-long history, its most frequent visitors are likely to have been. As a 1930 report on the placement of desert forts describes Mudawara, it is "admirably situated for obtaining information from tribes moving from the West to the South East," a reminder that these sites were expediently located along migratory routes where tribes could benefit from the shelter and resources they provided.[27] These fluctuations over time in who used desert forts and for what purposes reveal the arbitrariness of identifying these sites solely as "imperial" in nature. Rather, Mudawara is just one example among many of an "imperial" site which over the course of time became subsumed into pastoralist lifestyles and migratory routes, complicating our perceptions of who such sites belong to and under whose auspices they were shaped.

Bāyir, a fort in central Jordan thought to have been developed under the patronage of the Umayyad prince al-Walīd II (r. 743–744), was similarly described as the "keystone of the corridor for raiding parties from the West and trade, car and camel routes."[28] Bāyir was also an important gathering site for members of the Banu Sakhr

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of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century (PhD dissertation, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1972), 24–26, 259–260.

24 Charles Montagu Doughty: *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, *Volume 2* (London: P.L. Warner, 1888), 56.

25 Petersen, *The Medieval and Ottoman Hajj Route in Jordan*, 211.

26 Ibid., 131.

27 P. Playfair, "Report on the Siting of Desert Intelligence Posts in Transjordan", 20 June 1930, TNA CO 831/10/1.

28 Ibid. See also Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*, 157–159. T.E. Lawrence also wrote about the strategic location of Bāyir and its wells in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, in which he described Bāyir as "a historic group of Ghassanid wells and ruins in the desert" (Thomas Edward Lawrence: *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (London: Cape, 1935), chapter 49)). Exploitation of this strategic location by the state may date back to the site's construction in late antiquity; see Stephen Urice's suggestion that it was part of a "series of service stations placed conveniently where couriers or small caravans might switch off

Bedouin tribe, not just because of its wells but also because it is said to be the burial place of the Sakhr's former leader, Sheikh As'ad.[29] Such landmarks – the grave sites of important figures in a tribe's history – constitute important nodes on pastoralist migration routes. They are often found near wells or other places which tribes would have occasion to visit on their seasonal migrations, and marked out in the landscape by burial cairns or other funerary installations.[30] Archaeologist Michael Frachetti describes the significance of continually revisited burial grounds in pastoralist societies: "Mobile pastoralists construct their social geographies through the practical employment of, and investment in, historically meaningful places that accumulate significance through a palimpsest of interactions."[31] Therefore, landmarks such as the graves of tribal notables constitute important sites not just in pastoralist geographies and interactions with the landscape but also in indigenous conceptions of history and cultural heritage. In the context of the desert, where tribal leaders were buried near wells and wells were located near forts, this matrix of grave-well-fort means that we should read the architecture of the desert as having significant cultural and historical meaning for indigenous populations. Control of water resources, as spelled out by Glubb above, is vital to imperial success in the desert. But rather than reading state-built installations to guard these resources solely as top-down mechanisms of control, we can also see how the built environment, by acting as a locus of tribal memory, serves Bedouin cultural practices and means of historical and cultural preservation.

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the major north-south trade route of the Wadi Sirhan into the settled regions to the west" (Stephen K. Urice: *Qasr Kharana in the Transjordan* (Durham: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987), 46).

29 Mairna H. Mustafa/Sultan N. Abu Tayeh: "Comments on Bedouin Funeral Rites in the Writings of Western Travelers and Explorers from the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries", in: *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 14:1 (2014), 4, 14. In her diaries, Gertrude Bell also wrote about Qaṣr Bāyir and its use by the Banu Sakhr, including as a watering-place and for burials; Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell: "Diary Entry 20 January 1914" and "Diary Entry 21 January 1914" (Newcastle upon Tyne: Gertrude Bell Archive, 1914).

30 Mustafa/Abu Tayeh, "Comments on Bedouin Funeral Rites in the Writings".

31 Michael D. Frachetti: *Pastoralist Landscapes and Social Interaction in Bronze Age Eurasia* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 24.

Figure 4 Sir Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell, General view of Qasr al-Azraq, photographed early 20th century.

Like Bāyir, Qasr Azraq (Figure 4) was described in British intelligence sources as "admirably situated from an intelligence point of view" and "the only place from which to feel the pulse of, and control, the whole district and its tribes."[32] First built as a fort by the Romans in the 3rd century CE, Azraq became famous in the modern era as T.E. Lawrence's base of operations during the Arab Revolt.[33] Lawrence's own descriptions of Azraq reveal that the Bedouin tribes who participated alongside him

32 P. Playfair: "Report on the Siting of Desert Intelligence Posts in Transjordan", 20 June 1930, TNA CO 831/10/1; Glubb: "Monthly Report for the Administration of the Trans-Jordan Deserts", March 1934, TNA CO 831/10/1.

33 G.R.D. King: "The Distribution of Sites and Routes in the Jordanian and Syrian Deserts in the Early Islamic Period", in: *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 17 (1987), 91–105; Mahmoud Bashir Alhasanat et al.: "Spatial Analysis of a Historical Phenomenon: Using GIS to Demonstrate the Strategic Placement of Umayyad Desert Palaces", in: *GeoJournal* 77 (2012), 343–359. Qaṣr Azraq captured the Western historical imagination in large part thanks to Lawrence's evocative and romanticized descriptions of the site's history in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: "Azrak's unfathomable silence was steeped in knowledge of wandering poets, champions, lost kingdoms, all the crime and chivalry and dead magnificence of Hira and Ghassan. Each stone or blade of it was radiant with half-memory of the luminous, silky Eden, which had passed so long ago" (Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, chapter 75).

in the Arab Revolt had a long history of engagement with and usage of the castle. They guided Lawrence to the castle and told him stories about the building's past, revealing the role of the site in local folklore and Bedouin conceptions of their own histories.[34] Azraq's significance in Bedouin cultures and its history of Bedouin occupation has been largely forgotten. Today, a tourist plaque outside the castle reads: "Qasr al Azraq: Built by the Romans, rebuilt by Arabs under Izz ed Din Aybak during the Crusades and used by Lawrence". The castle's imperial history and usage by the 'great men' of history, in this case Lawrence and Mamluk sultan Izz al-Din Aybak, are thus emphasized to visitors.

Bedouin presence at sites such as Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq over time is difficult to detect historically, as pastoralist peoples by definition occupy sites temporarily and leave relatively little archaeological trace. Nevertheless, both archaeological and documentary sources remain to suggest that these three sites, redeveloped under John Glubb's oversight into places meant to control and surveil Bedouin tribes, had throughout history been economically and culturally significant to local pastoralists. Despite having been originally constructed by imperial patrons, over the intervening centuries all three of these forts were used by Bedouin peoples in varying ways; for shelter, for the collection of water, for tribal gatherings, as landmarks and repositories of tribal memory. Acknowledging these histories belies the impression held by Mandate administrators that the mere presence of permanent architecture in a predominantly nomadic context would function as a symbol of imperial control and dominance. Rather, throughout the history of the Syrian and Arabian deserts such attempts at controlling nomadic peoples through permanent architecture have instead been adapted into and proved useful for pastoralist lifeways. This not only raises questions of the extent and effectiveness of imperial systems of nomadic control but also blurs binary oppositions between nomad and state. As I will now discuss, there is also evidence for Bedouin tribespeople as patrons of architecture, which further complicates the impression that all architecture in the desert is the creation of imperial patrons.

Qa al-Jafr and Bedouin sheikhs as patrons of architecture

The three Desert Patrol fortifications at Mudawara, Bāyir, and Azraq were completed by 1933. Another outpost, Qaʿ al-Jafr in southern Jordan, which had originally been built by ʿAuda Abū Tāyeh, a sheikh of the Banu Ḥūwayṭāt tribe, was also in use by the Desert Patrol by 1937. Abū Tāyeh, a powerful leader whose support T. E. Lawrence considered vital to the success of the Arab Revolt, commissioned the palatial Qaʿ al-Jafr after the revolt but died before it could be finished.[35] Qaʿ al-Jafr was the site

34 Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

35 Ibid.

of an important well and remained frequently visited by the Banu Ḥūwayṭāt tribe so, despite being incomplete and already worse for wear, "full of bugs and snakes", it was converted into a Desert Patrol post.[36]

Though it has since fallen into ruins, aerial surveillance photographs from the 1920s show that the fort was built conspicuously in the style of a Roman *quadriburgium*, the type of military fort found throughout the Levant.[37] Aerial photographs also show Qaʿ al-Jafr surrounded by rows of Bedouin tents. The *quadriburgium* form, usually square with large projecting corner towers and a free-standing central tower, was built across the southern and eastern frontiers of the Roman Empire.[38] John Glubb's proposed blueprint for the Desert Patrol outposts followed the *quadriburgium* model as well, albeit simpler and on a smaller scale.[39] However, Glubb's recommendations for the architecture of the desert outposts came with a key caveat, as already mentioned: That a tent be set up outside its walls to welcome and host passing pastoralists and travelers.[40] This, Glubb thought, was essential to collecting information and intelligence from nomadic peoples – to meet them in a space where they would be most comfortable. His recommendation evokes the image seen in the aerial photographs of Qaʿ al-Jafr, of a Roman-style fort surrounded by Bedouin tents. Glubb's design for the forts emulated Roman models but with a Bedouin architectural adaptation; perhaps unbeknownst to Glubb, however, this Roman model had already been adapted to a Bedouin context by a Bedouin patron. If we compare the image of Qaʿ al-Jafr – a Roman-style fort surrounded by tents – with Glubb's design for the Desert Patrol forts, we are presented with virtually identical images. Again, the idea of British "control" of Bedouin subjects through architecture is thus called into question. Glubb's "principles of desert control" were predicated on the assumption that permanent architecture was anathema in a pastoralist context, thus why he sought to make the forts more palatable to visiting Bedouin with the addition of a tent. The forts themselves were meant to be seen as a symbol of empire and reminder of British presence and control. As I have discussed, however, there is no evidence that Bedouin peoples were inherently opposed to the construction of permanent architecture, and in fact only evidence to the contrary exists.

In Qaʿ al-Jafr, we see a Bedouin patron responding to and emulating the surrounding ancient built environment. Likewise, the Desert Patrol forts at Mudawara,

36 Glubb: "Monthly Report for the Administration of the Trans-Jordan Deserts", June 1937, TNA CO 831/41/11.

37 "Photographs and blueprints: Palestine and Transjordan: typical country, 1930", 3 November 1927, TNA AIR 5/1157.

38 Collins/Symonds/Weber, *Roman Military Architecture on the Frontiers*, 2.

39 Glubb, "Note on Policy for the Control of the Transjordan Deserts", 81.

40 Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 116; Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 159–160.

Bāyir, and Azraq were all to varying degrees influenced by historical Bedouin occupation. Therefore, the architectural history of Jordan's desert region cannot be understood as one of a direct succession of empires, seeking to control recalcitrant nomadic subjects through their building projects. Instead, interventions on the part of the Bedouin, who shaped the location, function, and appearance of the buildings around them, should be inserted into this lineage as well. Reframing our conception of architectural history in this way reveals the idea of imperial control of the Bedouin through architecture for the mirage it is. For further evidence of this, we turn to Iraq, where British interactions with Ibn Saʿud and the Ikhwān shed further light on the use of architecture in policies for strategic control of the Bedouin and imperial conceptions of nomadic relationships to permanent architecture.

Architecture and the Ikhwān Crisis (1927–1930)

Ikhwān raids on Buṣayya

Glubb's approach to the architecture of frontier fortifications, as a symbol of empire that was also adapted to the needs and preferences of the local population, was a product of his earlier experiences in the administration of Iraq's frontiers with Najd, where British attempts to control and surveil tribal populations while remaining conciliatory toward Najdi ruler Ibn Saʿud had undergone a prolonged process of trial and error. The most infamous, and most instructive, episode in this process was the Ikhwān revolt of 1927–1930.

The crisis' instigating factor was the construction of a desert police outpost at the wells of Buṣayya in southeastern Iraq, approximately 80 km from Iraq's border with Najd. The fort's construction was controversial from the outset. Article 3 of the ʿUqayr Protocol, signed in 1922 to define the borders of Iraq with Najd and Kuwait, stated that, "The two Governments mutually agree not to use the watering places and wells situated in the vicinity of the border for any military purpose, such as building forts on them, and not to concentrate troops in their vicinity."[41] Ibn Saʿud complained to the British about the planned Buṣayya outpost in a letter in September 1927, arguing that the outpost constituted a military fort and therefore violated the terms of the ʿUqayr Protocol. The British responded that the outpost was "in no way offensive but is to check trans-frontier raiding to the mutual advantage of Iraq and Najd."[42] Moreover, they disagreed that the outpost violated the Protocol's requirement that the governments not use forts "in the vicinity" of the border, arguing that

41 Dobbs to Victor Cavendish, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 February 1923, The British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR) L/PS/10/937.

42 H. G. Jakins to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mecca, 24 October 1927, TNA AIR 23/30.

Buṣayya lay well outside of what could be considered the border's "vicinity". Construction of the outpost went ahead.

On the evening of 5 November 1927, a party of approximately 50 Ikhwān from the Muṭayr tribe attacked the Buṣayya outpost.[43] The six policemen manning the fort were killed, in addition to 12 construction workers and an Iraqi official.[44] Ikhwān raids into southern Iraq continued over the next months, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Iraqi tribespeople and the looting of tens of thousands of livestock.[45] When "strongly worded protests" were conveyed to Ibn Saʿud on the actions of his subjects, he admitted that the raiders, led by the Muṭayr tribe, had directly defied his instructions by conducting the raid, one of the first signs of the simmering Ikhwān rebellion against Ibn Sa'ud's authority.[46] Nevertheless, Ibn Saʿud also implied to the British that "that the fault really lay with the Iraq Government in constructing the police post […] adding that if the police post were abandoned the raids would cease."[47]

However, the British scheme for desert administration could not conceive of a policy in which forts were not used to control tribal mobility, prevent trans-border raiding, and express territorial sovereignty over the desert frontier. In a meeting of an Imperial Defence sub-committee set up to respond to the "Ikhwan situation", Sir Edward Ellington, Air Officer Commanding in Iraq, complained that, "until recently, there had been no administration in the desert. That, in fact, had been the cause of the whole trouble. Tribes from Iraq and Syria had raided into Najd; Ibn Saud had requested us to stop it; and the establishment of the Posts was our response to his

43 "Akhwan Raids", March 1928, 77, TNA CAB 24/193/20. The Ikhwān, Bedouin tribes that had converted to Wahhabism, were the core of Ibn Saʿud's power base in Najd and instrumental in his military conquests and eventual unification of Saudi Arabia. Ibn Saʿud and his Wahhabist clerics required the Ikhwān to sedentarize in agricultural settlements, *hijrah*, where they could be more easily controlled and surveilled and where bonds of allegiance forged within tribes could be broken in favor of solidifying fealty to Ibn Saʿud. Although the Ikhwān as a militant force ensured Ibn Saʿud's conquest of large parts of Saudi Arabia, their pacification did not go entirely according to Ibn Saʿud's plan. Many conformed to a highly orthodox strain of Wahhabism and came to resent Ibn Saud's more politically expedient and flexible interpretation of Wahhabist teachings, eventually leading to their revolt against Ibn Saʿud. In turn, Ibn Saʿud suppressed the dissident factions among the Ikhwān and whatever political or military power they might have wielded. For further discussions of the Ikhwan and their role in the formation of modern Saudi Arabia, see Anthony B. Toth: "Conflict and a Pastoral Economy: The Costs of Akhwan Attacks on Tribes in Iraq, 1922–29", in: *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 11:2 (2002), 201–227; Jeff Eden: "Did Ibn Saud's Militants Cause 400,000 Casualties? Myths and Evidence about the Wahhabi Conquests, 1902–1925", in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46:4 (2018), 1–16.

44 "Akhwan Raids", March 1928, 77, TNA CAB 24/193/20.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

request."[48] As in Jordan, desert outposts became a cornerstone of British "administration in the desert", and the British, and now also Ibn Saʿud, conceived of these outposts as a symbol of empire which was inherently at odds with pastoralist lifeways and practices. However, as was also the case in Jordan, in Iraq there is also evidence for Bedouin construction and uses of permanent architecture.

Bedouin architecture in Iraq

In 1924, Glubb first experimented with using an existing building as a station for controlling tribal movements at Abū Ghar, an Ottoman fort approximately 35 km north of the disputed police post at Buṣayya. As he would later repeat in Transjordan, he set up traditional guest tents outside the fort to welcome passing travelers and collect intelligence from them.[49] Once again, however, Glubb was emulating Bedouin models for architectural use. In the pre-Mandate period, the fort had been used as the site of a seasonal marketplace by local Bedouin tribes.[50] The market had been under the protection of the sheikhs of the Muntifiq tribe, but under Mandate authority and with the attempted cessation of raiding practices, the Muntifiq had lost their political sway and the ability to carry out retaliatory raids against tribes who might try to raid the marketplace. With the increased fear of Ikhwān raids, the bazaar had ceased to function. Glubb proposed to reinstate the market under the protection of British soldiers in order to "materially assist desert administration by transforming Abū Ghar into a common desert market and Headquarters, and a centre of information and gossip."[51]

Elsewhere in Iraq, British officials gave Bedouin leaders the material and political support to construct their own outposts and exert inter-tribal control. In the 1920s Fahd ibn Hadhdhāl, sheikh of the ʿAmārāt Bedouin tribe, constructed outposts at the wells of Ruṭba and Muhāywir, both approximately 150 km from the Syrian border. He did so under British authority, having been invited to establish and man the posts as a place from which to surveil and subdue his fellow tribespeople.[52] In exchange, his political authority over other Bedouin tribes in the region was validated by the British, and he controlled tribes' access to water and pasture. Although Muhāywir remained relatively undeveloped, Ruṭba eventually expanded into a full-fledged outpost (Figure 5), described by a visitor in 1934 as "practically the centre of

48 "The Akhwan Situation: Report of a Sub-Committee", 10 July 1928, 17, TNA CAB 24/196/17.

49 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 159; Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 115–116.

50 "Final Report of Defensive Measures Against the Akhwan, Winter 1925–1926", 24, TNA AIR 23/302.

51 Ibid.

52 Robert Fletcher: "The 'Amarat, Their Sheikh, and the Colonial State: Patronage and Politics in a Partitioned Middle East", in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:1/2 (2015), 163–199.

the desert…a remarkable junction for every kind of cross-desert traffic. […] Eight years ago Ruṭba consisted of a few wells visited by the Bedouin. To-day there is a masonry fort garrisoned by Iraqi police and containing within its walls a comfortable rest-house for travellers, a restaurant and a wireless station."[53]

Figure 5 "Air route to Baghdad via Amman and the desert. Rutba wells from lower altitude, showing desert track to Baghdad", American Colony of Jerusalem Photo Department, ca. 1932–1936.

Abū Ghar, Ruṭba, and Muhāywir are further examples of the phenomenon, already discussed above, of Bedouin adaptations of "imperial" architectural modes and practices for their own use, as well as the eventual absorption of sites historically created and used by the Bedouin into colonial systems for Bedouin control.

Architecture and the Ikhwān crisis

Underlying the Ikhwān crisis, however, was a perception on all sides that such architectural practices among the Bedouin did not exist, and that any architectural inter-

53 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 72; E.H. Keeling: "The Proposed Haifa-Baghdad Railway", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 21:3 (1934), 373–393, here 381.

ventions in the desert were anathema to its inhabitants. In a 1928 memorandum on the crisis, High Commissioner for Iraq Gilbert Clayton wrote that Ibn Saʿud had originally refused to agree to the ʿUqayr Protocol on the grounds that "such a frontier, with its inevitable corollaries in the forms of posts and fortifications in the open desert, would be repugnant to his tribes."[54] Ibn Saʿud had only agreed to the treaty when Article 3, restricting military presence and fortifications around the frontier, was added. For this reason, he was particularly infuriated by the British seeming to renege on Article 3, continuing to argue that

> the habits and the mentality of the nomad tribes were such that the erection of a post at a water-point in the desert, even if built for peaceful purposes, was equivalent in their minds to a denial, or at any rate a serious restriction, of access to the water. […] He kept repeating that it was precisely the question of desert fortifications which had dictated his refusal to ratify the Muhammerah Convention, until Sir Percy Cox had offered him a guarantee against the construction of posts in the desert.[55]

The British also continued to refuse to budge:

> Whatever form of organisation is adopted for the defence and administration of the desert tribes of Iraq, the maintenance of a certain number of desert Posts is essential, not only for the purposes of defence, but also in order to restrain the tribes on the Iraq side of the border. It should be impressed on Ibn Saud that we regard the right of Iraq to administer its own territory, and to construct posts within it, as essentially a British interest.[56]

They were willing to be conciliatory, to an extent, on the number and placement of the posts, proposing to limit the number of Iraqi frontier posts to six, with only four near the Iraq-Najd border.[57] While compromises in terms of logistics could be made, the principle of the matter could not be compromised: "The maintenance of Busaiyah and certain other desert posts is essential for the effective defence of Iraq by the existing garrison and that, therefore, it is impossible to give way to Ibn Saud on the principle involved in this question."[58]

As documentation of the Ikhwān crisis is primarily accessible in British archival records, it is difficult to detect the ideological truth behind Ibn Saʿud's statements to the British, or behind the Ikhwān's actions. For their part, the British believed that

54 "The Akhwan Situation: Report of a Sub-Committee", 10 July 1928, 17, TNA CAB 24/196/17.

55 Ibid., 12.

56 Ibid., 20.

57 "Cabinet Meeting 37 (28)", 11 July 1928, 118, TNA CAB 23/58/7; "Cabinet Meeting 38 (28)", 20 June 1928, 50, TNA CAB 23/58/3.

58 "Cabinet Meeting 30 (28)", 23 May 1928, 450, TNA CAB 23/57/30.

Ibn Sa'ud's "true motives probably lie deeper. He may well see in the Iraq posts, and in the increased efficiency of Iraq frontier administration, a check to his own dreams of territorial expansion."[59] The Ikhwān's true motives in defying Ibn Sa'ud and attacking Buṣayya are not speculated on in British records and are even more difficult to reconstruct historically. Nevertheless, there was a dominant perception from the authorities on both sides of the conflict – Ibn Saʿud on one side and British administrators on the other – that the outposts represented a form of occupation of the desert that was inherently alien to the Bedouin. For Ibn Saʿud, the majority of whose citizens at this time still lived (semi-) nomadically, this was sufficient justification to object to the posts' construction. For the British, this was an argument in their favor; desert outposts functioned as an "exhibition of solid unmoveable strength" centered at key points on nomadic migration routes.[60] The leaders on both sides of this conflict seem to have believed that Ikhwān attacks on Buṣayya were directed against the outpost as a matter of principle, based in objections to and an incompatibility with permanent architecture. The conflict, or at least how the conflict was perceived and responded to by authorities, was thus premised on the notion that nomadic peoples could not abide the presence of permanent architecture in their landscape. Again, this notion neglects to account for the millennia-long history of Bedouin peoples interacting with, occupying, and building their own forts or castles – despite the fact that both British administrators and Ibn Saʿud were well aware of this history.

Although they were surrounded by evidence to the contrary, in their responses to the Ikhwān crisis both the British and Ibn Saʿud perpetuated a broader perception of nomadic peoples as anti-architectural by nature. For the British, this served imperial ideological goals: As discussed throughout this chapter, separating the Bedouin from the cultural heritage of the desert's built environment legitimated the British as the rightful imperial heirs to past empires which had similarly built in and developed the desert and emphasized European rather than Arab imperial precedents. For Ibn Saʿud, the forts became a useful tool by which he was able to oppose British actions and profess his own Bedouin identity and affiliation with his Bedouin supporters. Glubb recorded Ibn Saʿud's comments to the British during a 1928 conference at Jeddah seeking to resolve the conflict: "At Uqair I understood from Cokus [Sir Percy Cox] that the protocol meant no forts in the desert. Now you say that the wording of the agreement does not mean that. How do I know? I am a Bedouin and that was what Cokus told me and I trusted him."[61] The image Ibn Saʿud presents of the Bedouin is one of a people fundamentally incapable of even understanding architectural terms and discourse. The conception held by outsiders of Bedouin identity

59 "Akhwan Situation: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", June 1928, 236, TNA CAB 24/195/37.

60 W. Jennings-Bramley, note on the fort at Burg El-Arab, 24 August 1926, TNA FO 141/514/5.

61 Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 144.

is thus predicated on their opposition to any engagement or affiliation with permanent architecture. In turn, desert architecture is conceptualized as belonging exclusively to empires and existing solely to control nomadic peoples, and the possibility of nomadic peoples engaging with and shaping their built environment is lost. In the final section of this chapter, we turn our attention to Great Britain and to understanding how and where narratives of imperial precedents to British control of the Bedouin were formed and disseminated.

Constructing the Bedouin as a Scholarly Subject, at Home and Abroad

British Mandate officials' ideas of Bedouin control as well as of Bedouin architectural practices were formed and disseminated not just in desert campgrounds and police forts, but also in British universities, museums, and lecture halls. Analyzing how figures such as Glubb, T.E. Lawrence, and their peers presented and packaged their work with the Bedouin and in the Levantine desert to a British audience illuminates the transcultural networks of thought, scholarship, and ideology contributing to British policies towards nomadic peoples.

Academic societies such as the Royal Central Asian Society, the Royal Geographical Society, and the Royal Asiatic Society served as key locations where discussions of Britain's modern policies in the Middle East coincided with narratives of the region's history, cultural heritage, and indigenous peoples.[62] These societies' membership rosters consisted of the type of men discussed throughout this chapter: The officers, administrators, explorers, and archaeologists at work in the frontiers of Britain's colonial territories, administering an arid zone that stretched from the Sinai to Balochistan. Despite the ecological and cultural diversity that Britain's desert frontier territories and their inhabitants represented, they were perceived as a cohesive unit: The desert corridor.[63] These societies operated to fulfill the needs of their members to share experiences and insights with one another, and to attempt to work towards a universal policy for desert administration and the control of nomadic peoples.[64]

Publications and lectures by Mandate officials for the audience of academic societies, more so than their governmental reports or meeting minutes, display these

62 For more on these societies' history, key figures, and political, societal, and academic influences, see, for example, Susan Farrington/Hugh Leach: *Strolling About on the Roof of the World: The First Hundred Years of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs* (London: Routledge, 2003); Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 19–66.

63 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 67–71.

64 Ibid., 19–66.

officials' engagement with the legacy of past empires in the desert. When publishing and presenting to an audience of their peers, many Mandate officers seized the opportunity to engage in their amateur interests in history and archaeology. Flight-Lieutenant Maitland of the Royal Air Force wrote in a 1927 article on his aerial observations of the Transjordanian desert while flying the Cairo-Baghdad air mail route that "this is the ancient frontier of the desert; and Kasr Kharana, Kasr Amra and Kasr Azrak shew that the raiding-Bedouin was as real a menace to the Romans and Byzantines as they are to the cultivator to-day."[65] Of the three buildings Maitland cites as constituting the "ancient" Roman frontier, however, only Azraq, discussed above, actually dates to the Roman period in construction.[66] Nevertheless, British officials mapped a distorted, ahistorical image of the Roman frontier and nomad-state interactions in the Roman period onto the contemporary landscape, simultaneously justifying British policies by claiming inspiration from ancient Rome and degrading the Bedouin by portraying them as unchanged since antiquity and therefore archaic and uncivilized.

Also in 1927, Commander Charles Craufurd, a Royal Navy officer who served for sixteen years on ships in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, presented a lecture hypothesizing to have found the Biblical "lost land of Ophir" in the Hadhramaut region of Yemen.[67] He drew an indirect comparison between King Solomon's supposed strategy for controlling his "Bedouin" subjects and modern British methods for Bedouin control, stating that Bedouin raiding along the eastern frontier of Solomon's kingdom inspired Solomon to provide the Bedouin with gainful employment in the facilitation of trade routes. Later, claiming that "the Palestine of today is closely comparable to the Palestine of [Solomon's] day," he suggested that the British military should look to Biblical precedents for the militarization and defense of the desert.[68]

65 Flight-Lieutenant Maitland: "The 'Works of the Old Men' in Arabia", in: *Antiquity* 1:2 (1927), 197–203.

66 Qaṣr Kharrāna and Quṣayr ʿAmra both date to the Umayyad period in construction; Kharrāna was likely built by al-Walīd I sometime between 705 and 715, while Quṣayr ʿAmra was likely built by al-Walīd II sometime between 723 and 743. The exact function of either building is unknown; while Quṣayr ʿAmra's primary function was as a bathhouse, the question remains as to why this elaborate, lavishly decorated fort was built in this particular area of rural eastern Jordan. The authors of the definitive texts on both Qaṣr Kharrāna and Quṣayr ʿAmra agree that, much like with the *hajj* forts, these *quṣūr* also served an important political function as meeting places between tribal leaders and government representatives. For more on Quṣayr ʿAmra, see Fowden, *Qusayr ʿAmra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* and for Qaṣr Kharrāna, see Urice, *Qasr Kharana in the Transjordan*.

67 C. Craufurd: "Lost Lands of Ophir", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 14:3 (1927), 227–237.

68 Ibid., 232.

He was far from the only one to portray British involvement in the Middle East in a prophetic, Biblical mold.[69] For example, in June 1931 a lecture was given by Captain Rees of the Royal Air Force to the Royal Asiatic Society on the perceived geographical parallels between the route traveled by T.E. Lawrence during the Arab Revolt and the route traveled by the ancient Israelites during the Exodus out of Egypt.[70] Titled "In the Footsteps of Israel and Transjordan: The Exodus and Lawrence of Arabia", Rees' lecture claimed that his aerial observations of the landscape had led him to the conclusion that many of the locations of Lawrence's travels and exploits in the region, recently made famous in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, were the same as Biblical locations described in the Book of Exodus, drawing a parallel between the Israelites' divine delivery to the promised land and Lawrence as a savior of the Arabs. In addition to the general ahistoricity of his argument, he identifies several of the later buildings used by Lawrence as having been used by the Israelites' on their flight. As these examples show, both Roman and biblical precedents for British activities and policies in the Middle East possessed significant cultural and political capital, premised on the perceived greatness of ancient Rome as the foundation of Western civilization and on the spiritual resonances of Judeo-Christian traditions. Throughout these sources, the British are presented as the modern heirs to bygone empires, while the Bedouin are portrayed as static and unchanging since the Biblical period. Therefore, the emulation of ancient modes for Bedouin control, in the form of militarized architecture and internal police forces, is rationalized and given legitimacy through the weight of seemingly successful historical precedent.

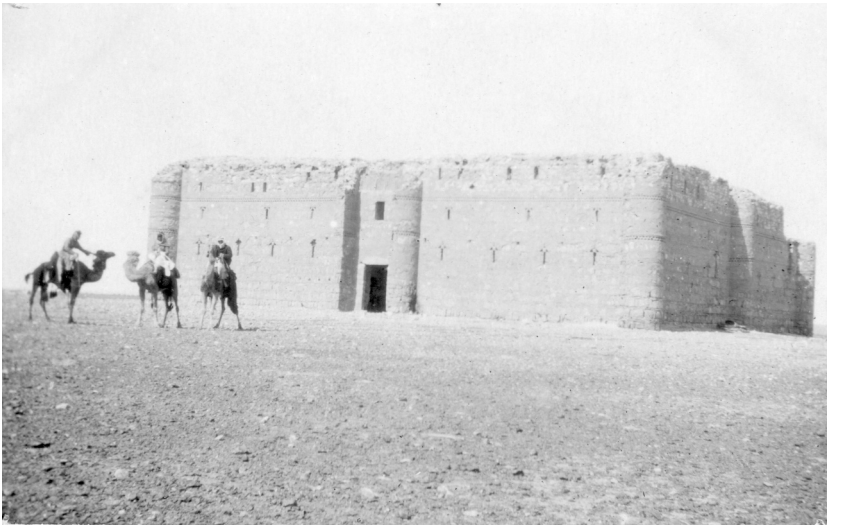
Renowned individuals such as T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell not only generated enormous popular interest in the history, archaeology, and ethnography of the Holy Land, but also set a precedent for the figure of the archaeologist-slash-administrator-slash-spy. The proliferation and popularity of academic societies for the study of Britain's colonies in the interwar period likewise gave rise to a class of scholarly administrators. In their publications and lectures, aimed both at colleagues and peers as well as a more general public audience, Mandate officials created an image of imperial Britain as heir to the material and architectural legacy of past empires.[71] The porous line between the roles of administrator and archaeologist meant that while officials could rarely publicly comment on policy or strategy, the realms of archaeology and history gave administrators an opportunity to formulate a connection between their work in the region and the precedents set by imperial forebears.

69 Michael Talbot/Anne Caldwell/Chloe Emmott: "Perceiving Palestine: British Visions of the Holy Land", in: *Jerusalem Quarterly* 82 (2020), 50–76.

70 V. C. Rees: "Notes of the Quarter", in: *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 4 (1931), 957–985.

71 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question"*, 19–66.

Figure 6 Qasr Kharana and men, photographed ca. 1920s by John Glubb.



In this context, the form and appearance of the desert outposts takes on a new light. While equipment such as planes and armored cars helped the British military to control nomadic subjects, they also helped propel the study of the archaeology of the Levant. Articles on archaeological findings made through aerial reconnaissance were widely disseminated, accompanied by photographs. When ancient buildings in the desert were discovered by these means and details of them published, they were assumed to be, and portrayed as, evidence of imperial fortifications against nomadic incursions.[72] Whether accurate or not, this assumption meant that the British desert outposts were perceived and received as following in the footsteps of previous imperial models. The architecture of Glubb's desert forts reinforced this impression: To a lay audience, photographs of a Roman fort or one of Glubb's newly-built outposts were virtually indistinguishable from each other. In the words of Glubb's biographer, his "photos of his men camping in the desert palaces of Transjordan or emerging line ahead from toy soldier forts were, like the Foreign Legion, the stuff of legend"[73] (Figure 6). The conjoined tools of archaeology, history, architecture, and photography were marshaled to validate British policy vis-à-vis the Bedouin. At the same time, the emphasis on imperial predecessors in the architecture of the desert severed Bedouin claims to the history and cultural heritage of such buildings.

72 "Trans-Jordan", in: *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 12:1 (1925), 116–119.

73 Royle, *Glubb Pasha*, 182.

When all forms of building in the desert look like empire, these buildings are thus placed in diametric opposition to the empire's subjects. British modes of Bedouin control through the use of permanent architecture were based on misconceptions both of nomadic peoples as inherently opposed to the construction and occupation of permanent architecture, and of historical architecture in the desert region as evidence of imperial precedents for Britain's "principles of desert control". As I have discussed throughout this chapter, there is an abundance of evidence from throughout history for Bedouin construction, repurposing, and occupation of desert forts. During the Mandate period itself, Bedouin tribespeople built and used an array of permanent sites. It is likely impossible to fully understand how and why Mandate administrators seemingly rejected this evidence that was readily available to them and continued to implement a strategy for Bedouin control which was predicated on the belief that the mere presence of architecture was incompatible with pastoralism. However, by unpacking the degree to which British policies for Bedouin control were based on Orientalizing stereotypes and false narratives both of nomadic peoples and of the desert's built environment, we can also begin to analyze the true nature and extent of imperial "control" of the desert and the Bedouin. By understanding the Bedouin both as architects and as creators of and heirs to material culture and architectural heritage, we can identify the role of the Bedouin in shaping the natural and built environments of the Middle East, a role that is typically only assigned to imperial actors. Through this lens, entrenched binaries between nomad and state, empire and subject, colonizer and colonized begin to break down, framing the Bedouin as actors with a significant degree of agency within and alongside systems of imperial control.