

1 NOMADIC PASTORALISTS, AGRICULTURALISTS, AND THE STATE

Self-Sufficiency and Dependence in the Middle East

Historical data relating to massive migrations of pastoral nomads across the fertile valleys of the Middle East and nearby deserts provide vital insights into the issue of these groups' political adaptation.

I analyze these migrations from a pan-human perspective of dominance and control, rather than specifically one of animal husbandry. This perspective embraces the tripartite relationship obtaining between nomadic pastoralists, agriculturalists, and the State throughout historic times until recent decades.

Relationships between nomadic pastoralists and agriculturalists were based on the exchange of goods and services, and the latter, being of long duration, were affected by vicissitudes of climate and fluctuations in the fertility of soils and herds. Thanks to a superior political organization that guaranteed tribal cohesion and the peculiar nature of their capital (mobile herds), it has been easier for pastoralists to amass and demonstrate power enabling them to be recipients from sedentaries, rather than the reverse syndrome.

A third party, the State, came into being which not only protected the interests of food producers, its more submissive and compliant tax-paying

clients, but also supervised deals concluded between agriculturalists and pastoralists. Through the ages, the balance of power wielded by the three parties occasionally shifted, with the pastoralists or organs of the State sometimes gaining the upper hand. Three main phases can be discerned in the varying magnitude of the State's dominance: (1) a totally weak State; (2) a middle position in which the State is neither weak nor strong; and (3) a strong State. This third and last phase has, for instance, prevailed in Egypt and most of the Levant since the nineteenth century.

The solidarity of nomadic pastoralists lasted only as long as they enjoyed security in their peripheral locations away from the centers of settlement and beyond the reach of the State's military control. Modern means of transportation and, above all, the airplane, have, in the meantime, deprived pastoralists of their traditional places of retreat. Bedouin have maintained relative sovereignty in the steppes, and on a few occasions tilted in their favor the complementary relationships with the state authorities that controlled the cultivated zones. Since the early nineteenth century, the Negev Bedouin, the focus of my attention in the present work, have depended for their subsistence on the neighboring sedentary population located along the Fertile Crescent and the Nile basin.

Nomadic migration: Elliptical or Linear?

Seen in historical perspective, mass migration of populations is an intriguing phenomenon. What is the migrants' mind-set? Do people share a clear goal when they set out on such treks? Do their leaders have a well-formulated notion of a new and better environment, of group objectives attainable elsewhere, beyond the horizon? Population migration appears to be basically motivated by two primary forces. The first, which has tended to attract more historical attention, comprises a force propelling one from behind as a *vis a tergo*. In the second, the force draws one forward, operating as a *vis a fronte*. Migrations of nomadic pastoralists forefront the significance of *vis a fronte* forces in the course of the region's history. Unlike large armies proceeding from Egypt eastward or from the Fertile Crescent toward Egypt and then returning to their home base after attaining their military objectives, pastoralist intruders were usually migrants intending to stay only momentarily at their immediate destinations and then to move on. During the time spent among sedentaries, they usually maintained distinctive characteristics pertaining to their social (i.e., tribal) organization and affecting their social fit and role; and they were always ready to retreat with their herds to their deep-desert pasturelands.

Constraints imposed by foraging livestock, more easily observed by modern scholars, influenced the elliptical annual cycles of Bedouin migra-

tion between their desert retreats in the winter and the margins of sedentary zones in the summer, as well as the length of their residence on cultivated terrain (de Planhol 1970; 1979; Lewis 1987) before these nomads resumed migration. One-way migration of herders and permanent settlement in a village or town presupposes defeat in an intertribal struggle over pasture or water resources, or a preference for the inducements of urban life over the occupation of herding livestock on arid land.

Overgrazing, deterioration of climate, or both (Kedar 1985; Issar 1990) have been the main motives for migration imputed to Middle Eastern pastoralists in the literature. However, leading herds across the Sinai (approximately 200 km of desert tract), reflects the pastoralists' paramount concern for securing benefits as the states' partners in administrative deals, rather than a wish for immediate gain accruing from their livestock. From this perspective, regimes of Middle Eastern nomadism may be accounted for in terms of the region's states, and the degree of their appeal to tribal partners. It is here claimed that the factor of overgrazed pastureland motivating the shepherds to seek new pastures has generally played a secondary role. Although we possess no definitive knowledge of why pastoralists' migrations began, circumstantial evidence, mostly from the late eighteenth century onward, points in the direction of a *vis-a-fronte* incentive.

The latest tribal migrations across the Sinai occurred before and after the Ottomans regained control over the Levant in 1840. Since they are closer in time and have often been recorded historically and recalled orally by living generations, they can reveal trends previously overlooked. Most important is the pattern emerging from the triadic rapport between the pastoral inhabitants of the steppes, the agricultural inhabitants of the fertile districts, and the institutions of the Middle Eastern states. This concluding phase in the social history of the Middle East merits our attention as it can enrich the conventional "binary model" of desert and sown. Herdsmen accommodating themselves to the life patterns of sedentary neighbors are to this day still described (Lewis 1987: 8) as being lured by the prospects of good grazing and of raiding. The same view is espoused in a number of studies published in a recent anthology on the archaeology of pastoral nomadism in the Levant (Bar-Yosef and Khazanov 1992). In fact, the latest Asia-Africa migrations across the Sinai point to a more complex situation, requiring the observer to portray the historical phenomenon with greater precision.

In the present book we maintain that the conventional view that contacts between pastoralists and agriculturalists were merely based on economic modes of exchange falls short of accounting for a complex reality. Thus Middle Eastern archaeology has revealed the existence of

pastoralist sites (Rosen 1988,1992, 1993; Rosen and Avni 1993), though it has yet to show that the artifacts and other debris discovered there were produced by the nomads themselves.

Migration Patterns and Power Dynamics

Since ancient times, long-distance migration was largely a joint tribal affair. Peoples organized themselves into communities or tribes with a wide assortment of historically different patterns and modes of subsistence as they sought safety in numbers on these treks. Human cultural heritage since the Old Stone Age reinforced the link obtaining between common descent (with the concomitant heritage of shared customs) characterizing a group of people, and its possession and control of territory. These were apparently the earliest distinctive traits of tribes (Sahlins 1968). The ethnocultural background proper to Neolithic times, especially the emerging pattern of pastoral life, emphasized the instrumentality of tribalism for maintaining rights over grazing lands and water resources.

Nomadic pastoralists, like mobile hunters and gatherers, habitually "rotated" around an axis of renewable resources; the Bedouin Arabic terms *dawwar* (to rotate), and *dīra* (territory of rotation in search of pasture), encode this situation linguistically. Unlike traditional rotation, changes of foraging grounds were gradual and usually the result of flight away from impoverished, overpopulated territories to neighboring richer and relatively vacant lands. In order to survive, herder communities had to abandon their cycle of migration during the dawn of the Holocene. The new conditions that emerged at this point rendered possible the occupation of alternative districts hitherto frozen, too wet and harsh for human existence, or both. The general trend of population migration, therefore, was from Southern Asia northward and from mainland Asia westward.

The contrast between arid and non-arid lands greatly increased in areas south of latitude 40 degrees. Devastation of the former coincided with an influx of population to alluvial valleys watered by rivers. These migrants had come from former hunting and food-gathering areas which were now turning into deserts. Beginning in the third millennium B.C., river basins cultivated by hydraulic systems became the foci of attraction for inhabitants of nearby deserts. "Hydraulic societies" emerged and resorted to new organizational regimes enhancing perceptions of statehood and of definable societal resources. Such regimes induced obligatory collaboration of farmers reminiscent of "oriental despotism" (Wittfogel 1957), and the resulting communal effort enabled rural societies to face the threat of inundating rivers.

The danger presented by ravaging nomads as well as the threat posed by overflowing rivers can be assumed to have promoted the emergence of an all-powerful state. Armed conflicts with desert peoples are mentioned in Akkadian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Hebrew, and Greek sources. Hydraulic societies defended themselves by building border garrisons and waging campaigns against the nomads in order to extend their control deep into the wastelands (Eph'al 1982). Relatively small groups of pastoralists enjoyed strategic superiority over larger rural and urban populations for a variety of reasons. Their property, being livestock rather than real estate, allowed mobility, giving the nomadic peoples a major military advantage over sedentaries: a moving Bedouin camp is difficult to find and destroy, but it is relatively easy for the latter to sack an agricultural village, especially on horseback (Lattimore 1951, part 1, chap. 4). This greater mobility usually went with another strategic advantage of a structural nature, namely, the ability to align forces ad hoc enabling aggressive confederated tribes to vanquish static strongholds manned by regular forces.

Total eradication of nomadic pastoralists was beyond the reach or aspirations of peasant states since it could be accomplished solely through a combination of sustained assaults on encampments followed up by long-range pursuit of the survivors or, alternatively, via seizure of the tribes' vital water resources or grazing lands—measures necessitating total conquest of the desert. Furthermore, Bedouin campsites constituted enticing concentrations of livestock, mostly camels (Eph'al 1982: 86, 119–23, 171) and other valuable resources: gold and spices, which the tribes accumulated by engaging in commerce and raiding along caravan trade routes. Nomadic pastoralists also proved to be efficient customs' collectors, supervisors of desert caravans, resourceful combatants for desert garrisons and, most important, irreplaceable producers in arid zones where they transformed desert shrubs into livestock products. The relative economic advantage enjoyed by nomadic livestock breeders over peasants raising animals on fodder or stubble fields was the low cost of their livestock products. Full-fledged shepherding was usually practiced in the steppes where animals browsed on shrubs, the growth of which required no human investment.

However, in situations favoring close interaction with state organs over prolonged periods of time, the circuits circumscribing the Bedouin's foraging activities became restricted to relatively short distances from sedentary centers (averaging 50–100 km in Sinai and the Negev) and rendered feasible part-time cultivation of arable land supplementing their stock-breeding economy.

As already noted above, the historical symbiosis reached by Bedouin and *fallāḥīn* formed part of a broader configuration that also included the state. This constituted a triad of complementary relationships based on mutual interaction in two domains: economic and political. On the economic plane, for instance, the Bedouin exchanged their livestock products (meat, animal furs, and dairy items) for the peasant's agricultural produce, artifacts of sedentary culture, and the service of stubble clearance before the ploughing season. Bedouin could also ensure the peasant's security from the aggression of other Bedouin groups for an appropriate payment (*khuwwa* "protection money"). Thus, in due course, a shepherd would gradually draw closer to the peasant's life pattern and change into a semi-sedentarized nomad but, usually, his transformation into a peasant occurred, if at all, at a much slower pace (Salzman 1996). The temptation of shifting to full-fledged agriculture, entailing abandonment of the herd, was at best weak. Organizational inhibitions and merits of pastoral societies helped to maintain their stock-based economy together with some winter, dry farming. The net result of this development was a marked degree of symbiosis with the agriculturalists' economy.¹

The mutual interaction of state and peasantry is too well known to require detailed treatment here. Clearly peasants needed a well-organized social order but suffered whenever the state projected ambitious military expeditions and conscripted the menfolk; thus an overpowerful state can disrupt agricultural and commercial life.

The state also stood to benefit from the presence of Bedouin in the area by harnessing their potential military prowess in the form of a garrison against other Bedouin, and from their role as escorts for caravans and as tax collectors. This last function provided the Bedouin with rewarding financial emoluments such that the prosperity of central governments and a general state of *Ordnung* ultimately also benefited the Bedouin themselves.

Symbiotic interaction between peasants and Bedouin has been discussed time and again in the professional literature. Descriptions of the symbiotic coexistence of animal breeding and agricultural economies (Barth 1959; Cahen 1970; Khazanov 1984: 33–40) refute the assumption that constant strife must have prevailed between the two (Buber 1946: 24–32; Montagne 1947; Rosenfeld 1965; de Planhol 1970; 1979).² The assumption of ongoing political conflict between herdsmen and peasants over societal resources implies a zero-sum game in which the issue is the use of the same plots of land for either grazing or agriculture. We here maintain that this scenario is an unrealistic reconstruction.

Specific descriptive accounts of this symbiosis also argue convincingly against the image of the pastoralist as a self-sufficient "noble savage"

uncommitted to any patron, disdaining all authority, and looking down on sedentary luxuries. Instead, Bedouin life is more realistically portrayed as a phenomenon involving interaction with neighboring sedentaries. The shepherd constructs his network of relationships, thus finding an exchange for his products in the regional markets of the rural districts and cities. In addition, the peasant's stubble and orchards can, in times of drought, rescue the nomad's herds from annihilation.

The aspiration to draw closer to marketplaces and to the sown per se could explain the pastoralists' seasonal occupation of cultivated lands. However, after gaining full control over sown districts, it often happened that the pastoralists vacated them (Ibn Khaldun 1958: 303–305), leaving destruction in their trail. What occasioned their destructiveness in such cases as they pursued their march elsewhere?

The Near Eastern history of tribal migrations offers a rationale for the migrant's logic and his sense of destiny, as he heads for the neighboring field or city; this bears specifically upon interaction between states, agriculturalists, and pastoralists. Sociological observations in the region's records also yield some valuable insights in this regard. Thus one important objective of pastoralists' migrations was the quest for opportunities of employment in the service of the State. Since Middle Eastern states were inclined to value the pastoralist tribes for their skills in administration—at least, as long as they could be kept under control—pastoralist, for their part, were inclined to accentuate their tribalism. Tribalism was thus instrumental in the extraction from neighboring sedentaries of additional revenues or income and, because the number of available administrative positions was always smaller than the number of competing tribes, only the bigger and more cohesive qualified for consideration.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the power of the Ottoman administration was on the wane, the privilege of tax collection was auctioned to any person guaranteeing the Sublime Porte the largest amount of tax funds. A Bey and Bedouin sheikh employed in the administration were called *multazim* and enjoyed entitlement to a share of the taxes and of extra revenues; the system at large was called *iltizām*. As noted above, the number of posts available for *multazim*-sheikhs was small; this had the effect that conquest or reconquest of a land by regular armies opened the way for eventual restructuring of *multazim* positions, often resulting in a situation where many tribes came from afar to try to secure a portion of the controllable countryside. In Sinai, these included the Tiyāha and the Tarabīn, who, from a distance, accompanied the advancing French army led by Napoleon (1799), and the Rtaymāt and the Whaydāt, who were then the strongest tribes of southern Palestine (Oppenheim 1943: 95ff., 110ff.) and allies of the Ottomans. The last two

retreated temporarily eastward and returned after Napoleon evacuated his troops to Europe (1801). Stripped of their opportunities by the French occupation, the various Bedouin tribes now faced one another, having no central power to rely on for establishing peace and order. Inter- and intratribal struggles resulted in expulsion of the losers (Bailey 1980). A Bedouin proverb says: “*shattat al-‘arab b-al-fasād w-ath-thāni shattat al-‘arab b-al-maḥal*” (The dispersal of the Arab [viz., the Bedouin] is the result either of intra-tribal disputes or of drought).³ Hence, feuds in Bedouin society occur mainly over the issue of hierarchical positions, which means that they are not inevitably or solely the corollary of competition over grazing lands (see Kressel 1992). As hierarchical positions are important for determining relationships between tribes and sedentary populations, the incidence of feuding tribes increased as they poured into inhabited areas.

Over-congestion of rapacious tribesmen was another salient cause of fighting; and the losing side was constrained to vacate. Restriction of *Lebensraum* was a sufficient reason for war or voluntary migration (note the discourse of Abraham and his cousin Lot, Gen. 13: 8–10: “If you go north, I will go south; and, if you go south, I will go north.”). Concentration of herdsmen and their herds necessitated dispersal from pure grazing land and farmers’ fields. Just as overgrazing could jeopardize rejuvenation of flora, so overtaxing of sedentary peoples threatened the productive infrastructure and the carrying capacity of lands for peasants and herders alike. This and not vandalism (i.e., damage for its own sake) is the explanation for Bedouin tribes having to vacate lands they had impoverished.

As long as the collection of taxes was authorized and controlled as a service to superiors (viz., the *iltizām*), it reinstated the old Bedouin practice of raising “brotherhood” fees (*khuwwa*) on an orderly basis from sedentary peoples. However, once nomadic sheikhs levied “fees” without transferring funds to the Ottomans, they stopped being accountable to any master (Hütteroth 1985: 148–149) becoming, in due course, the cause of inter-tribal warfare. During the eighteenth century and its “rule of the sheikhs,” road taxes (*ghafar*) were collected at numerous points throughout the Levant. Bedouin would stop travelers and levy per capita payment (Lewis 1987: 10–11; Cohen 1973: 258–259). Though Bedouin could not be entrusted with keeping law and order, sufficiently powerful governments saw to it that they did not oppress the settled population or wage endless internecine wars. Their merits were utilized by the regional administrations, and so long as local lords (Beys⁴ or sheikhs) were responsible to Ottoman governors, they contributed to the protection of their subordinates. Wholesale bankruptcy of the Ottoman administration, however,

occurred together with renunciation of loyalties in an atmosphere of "catch as catch can." Weak central regimes sometimes altered their normal course of action and endeavored to regain power by promoting tribal dissension; thus the Ottomans encouraged the sheikhs to vie with one another for tribal leadership and the honors and financial remuneration that went with it (Lewis 1987: 8).

Theoretically, decentralization could have promoted the consolidation of local interests, as it put an end to the draining of the land's wealth to Istanbul. However, consolidation of regional interests required powers of organization, drawing on local patriotism, carrying cohesiveness beyond the confinements of the tribal (i.e., agnatic) *esprit de corps*. "The rule of the sheikhs" left no room for development as such and thereby hampered progress. Thus, as long as the Bedouin controlled Palestine and the Sinai, transportation along the *Via Maris* diminished. For a while, the sea routes became the main arteries of commerce between Egypt and the Levant. Gradually, the blighted countryside was unable to support the numerous sheikhs and their retinues. Rumors of potential gains to be made by the Bedouin, accruing from increasing international involvement in the region, lured even North African nomads to the Levant. Arab tribes from Near Eastern deserts, mostly those troubled by overpopulation and tribal conflicts, sought this source of income. The negative impact of the increasing density of tribes and of "the rule of the sheikhs" spread at a slower pace.

Reestablishment of fuller Ottoman control over the Levant in the decade following the Crimean War, paradoxically, encouraged the Bedouin's return. The Hatt-i Humayun (the Royal Decree) of 1856 committed the Ottoman administration to reorganization (*tanzīmât*) through reduction of local power centers and liberation of peasant communities from the burden of *iltizâm* (Maoz 1968); incidentally, this favored the Bedouin tribes as well. In order to improve the climate of investment, as well as promoting pilgrimage and trade, tribal wars had to be severely suppressed, and this was accomplished by use of military force.⁵

Symbiosis between pastoralists and agriculturalists via reciprocal exchange could in principle have enhanced the welfare of both, but since the conditions conducive to stable commercial relations between them were outside their control, a third agent, the state, was needed to ensure the desired outcome, for instance, by institutionalizing and supervising the marketplace (cf. Kressel & Ben-David 1995). Also the vicissitudes of the climate and fluctuations in the fertility of the range could affect the permanence of commercial dialogue between the two parties, since it determined the duration of Bedouin presence in an area. In practice this meant that mobile Bedouin could easily renege on their commitments to farmers by absconding. In this connection, Stewart (1994, *passim*) has

shown that the requirement to honor contracts and commitments binds the Bedouin in his dealings with his fellow Bedouin, but largely overlooks or simply ignores obligations to others.

Another factor meriting attention in this regard is an intrinsic lack of symmetry in the commercial interaction between agriculturalists and herders (cf. Lattimore 1951). In general, the former were largely self-sufficient in the economic sphere so that the state of dependence between the two was heavily weighted in favor of the farmer. Thus nomadic pastoralists required tools and weaponry which were only produced in settled communities, whereas agriculturalists were able to do without the luxury animal products of pastoralists.

It is equally plain that farmers could do without the commodities and services of urban producers, while townsmen needed food and raw materials only attainable from agriculturalists. However, in the face of problems relating to overflowing rivers, droughts, and raiding pastoral nomads, Middle Eastern agriculturalists had no better strategy than placing their trust in the state. In other words, the maintenance of state structures was contingent, to an extent, on surplus generated by farming communities.

We have already noted that states could at certain times derive advantage from the threat to farming posed by the pastoralists. The independence of the pastoralists was, in reality, restricted to "blessed" (e.g., rainy) seasons when they pastured in remote desert areas. During other periods, pastoral life implied: (1) a rather specialized vocation, never as self-sufficient as farming, entailing greater reliance on exchange markets of goods for services, or other accessory revenues to support stock breeding, and (2) a rather precarious social structure at the level of the tribal confederation, entailing occasional dependence on external foci of arbitrating power; thus nomadic pastoralists sought opportunities for transactions with states.

Ancient Historical Records

The earliest mention of Asian pastoralists as invaders of the Nile basin is thought to refer to the Hyksos. About 1730 B.C. the Semitic Hyksos tribes from Canaan and Syria drove into Egypt. After a steady, peaceful buildup of a kingdom over a thousand years, Egypt, flanked by deserts on three sides and the sea on the fourth, was taken by surprise. The Hyksos were warriors in chariots by the time they had arrived, but the secret weapon of chariots, then a great strategic advantage, cannot explain the lasting control by their big tribe over the vast population of Egypt. They were expelled back to the east by Ah-Mose (1570–1545), founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the new (Imperial) Kingdom after about a century and a half.

The first major foreign challenger to storm its gates ended Egypt's Seventeenth Dynasty, ushering in the interregnum (Middle Kingdom).

Although the Hyksos were pastoralists, their arrival in Egypt was not motivated by a yearning for its rich pasture. They sought contact with its state's organs and seized control of them, taking advantage of its momentary weakness. While in control over Egypt, the Hyksos did not mingle with the local population or adopt the local agricultural way of life, for by doing so, it seems, they would have jeopardized the source of their strength, the inherent strategic advantage they enjoyed by being a pastoral tribe, in contact with acephalous peasant societies. Thus there remained a profound cultural cleavage, despite centuries of coexistence. Impermeable barriers of tradition, reinforced by the ethno-vocational division of labor that had emerged between the two peoples, hampered amalgamation.

The organizational advantages of the tribe, however, did not suffice to enable pastoralists to overcome regular forces put in the field by "hydraulic societies." When led by kings of their own kind, Egypt's peasantry succeeded in defending its interests and did not allow nomadic encroachment upon its territory. Egypt was then concerned by the tribal attacks on native populations of "Retenu" (the Egyptian name of Palestine and Syria), since they endangered its eastward caravan route along the Mediterranean coast. Egyptian punitive expeditions had to bring these unruly elements to heel. The inscription on the tomb of the army commander Uni (Keller 1956: 58) demonstrates how one of these expeditions was organized about 2350 B.C. Thus by the third millennium B.C. we see Egypt preempting ravaging activities by Asian Bedouin of Asian lands. According to Uni, Bedouin—dwellers of the desert sands as they were contemptuously designated—made their first entry into the land of the Pharaohs as prisoners of war. With the campaign of Sesostri III (about 1850 B.C.) the whole of Canaan came under the suzerainty of Egypt's Pharaoh.

The "brittleness of pastoral despotism" (Wittfogel 1957: 206) with respect to the hated Hyksos kings is seen in their ascription as "rulers of foreign countries" (Wilson 1951: 135), or "the shepherd kings" (Hitti 1961: 44) in ancient Egyptian records. Egyptian hatred for the Asiatic herders, was naturally increased when they occupied the Nile Valley. Greater respect for pastoral rulers is reflected in the document of Sinuhe the Egyptian, dated 1971–1928 B.C. (cf. Keller *op. cit.*, 59–64), "respect them but be wary of them." From Sinuhe's document we also learn of the "Princes' Wall," a barrier built on the frontier of the kingdom of the Pharaohs as far back as 2650 B.C., approximately west of today's Suez canal, and was put up to prevent the Asians from forcing their way westward.

The next group of pastoral nomads to intrude into Egypt after the Hyksos and infiltrate, to some extent, its political power structure were

the Israelites, who were admitted into the area thanks to Joseph's intervention, despite the traditional distrust of shepherd tribes on the part of the Egyptian sedentaries: "every shepherd is an abomination upon the Egyptians" (Gen. 46: 34).

The Israelite shepherds retained their traditional patrilineal clan structure along with their pastoralism, and increased in numbers becoming a potential threat to the centers of authority. The state response was to combat their agnatic social structure through male infanticide and imposed vocational change, that is, *corvés* in construction works instead of shepherding.

Intensive contact with Egypt's sedentary culture and its power structure also altered the Israelites (cf. Freud 1955) to the extent that they imbibed a socially unifying idiom based on an older monotheistic ideology (that they tended to forget in Egypt) strong enough to motivate their mass trek to the land of Canaan associated, in their perception, with the symbolic figure of Jacob to whom the land had been promised. Thus the Israelites appear to have differed from other pastoral nomads as their prime impulse for movement was a striving for freedom and faith. They had a preconceived destiny (the "Promised Land"), and the "intent of vocational retraining" after the conclusion of their wandering. Only after arriving in Palestine, their Promised Land, did the Hebrews turn to farming.

Egypt was later conquered by Assyrians (7th century B.C.), Persians (6th century B.C.) and Greeks (4th century B.C.), but during the last millennium B.C. we read of no major mass migrations to the Near East or through it westward to Africa. Near Eastern kingdoms of the time did not seem to encourage such movements. The Persians entered Egypt after a memorable march through the desert (525). Cambyses the conqueror even intended to push westward to overrun Carthage, but the plan was frustrated by the refusal of their Phoenician allies, who were to provide the fleet, to bear arms against a daughter colony. Instead, Cambyses advanced along the Nile into the "dark continent" to add Ethiopia to his empire.

The first historical documentation of pastoral nomads on the Eurasian steppes relates to the Scythians, beginning in the second century B.C. (see Khazanov 1984). Their intermittent incursions from Inner Asia to the Near East, disrupted social orders and weakened the Parthian kingdom vis-à-vis the rising power of Rome. Although the Scythians reached the Mediterranean, they did not continue westward. The reasons for their appearance in the Near East are still unclear as are the reasons for their return to the steppes.

The wanderings of pastoral nomads were limited by the great empires of Mesopotamia, Egypt and, later on, Parthia, Greece, and finally, Rome,

when it dominated the Near East. Only such strong centralized states could extend control over the wasteland and in fact, often on each others' land, too. After the Hyksos' invasion, a thousand years elapsed before Egypt experienced another invasion from across the Sinai Desert.

Unlike the Hyksos, the Assyrians were not a pastoral tribe. Their prime objective was the subjugation of a rival; thus they did not proceed with their conquest westward beyond the Nile basin and did not prolong their hold on the land of Egypt. Memphis was their terminal, and after subduing both the Delta and Upper Egypt, the troops returned home. The route of Alexander the Great extended beyond the Nile basin westward to Cyrenaica and south of the Siwa oasis (330 B.C.). The kingdom of the Ptolemies (200 B.C.) reached Cyrenaica, but no farther west. The Roman Empire, for the first time, engulfed the entire shore of the Mediterranean Sea and, subsequently, Byzantium had control of Egypt and the shore leading to Cyrenaica.

The Greco-Roman age provided conditions favorable for population movement on the Asia-to-Africa axis. Because unity in sovereignty over the land stretched all along the *Via Maris*, there were apparently no political barriers in the way of the tribes on this route. All were subjects of the emperor. However, we do not hear of the nomadic pastoralists attempting such East-to-West migrations, and the authorities seem not to have encouraged their neighboring tribes to move for as long as their military was sufficient to exert control over the empire. Records of the last centuries of our era suggest some useful ideas as to why these historical herders retained their tribal identity and did not intermingle with neighboring peasant and urban communities.

For the Bedouin, the green valleys adjacent to their grazing territory and the standard of living in neighboring towns were objects of envy, but other, more powerful, drives must have come into play motivating them to cross the desolate Sinai Desert on their way to Egypt and to continue their migration across Egypt's western desert to Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.

The spell of Islam gave the pastoral tribesmen, otherwise dispersed and fragmented, a common idiom and a sense of mission motivating their mass migrations across the Sinai and Egypt's western desert, all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. In the early conquests of the late seventh century A.D., tribesmen constituted the rank and file of the Muslim troops while literate townsmen from Mecca and Medina provided the leadership. Both the tribal aristocracy and the "Hagarene legionaries" (Crone and Cook 1977: 125–126) disintegrated in due course, losing power to Umayyad, that is, Syrian and Mesopotamian—administrators (Donner 1981) and urban generals. Despite the presence of a literate cadre who left historical sources, depicting the internal processes of Arabization and Islamization in North

Africa, we find little mention of the vanguard's support echelons and routes of supply and reinforcement. Were they reinforced by fellow tribesmen and repatriated for recuperation after duty, or were they followed by their women and children, thus shifting their *dīra* closer to the battle fronts?

During the early days of the Arab conquest the southern littoral of the Mediterranean Sea was once again ruled by a single sovereign; however, in contrast with the situation in Roman times, the northern coast remained in different hands and tribal migrations westward were thus confined to the North African littoral.

Nomadic tribalism was thus introduced into North Africa and the agnatic family structure "untainted" by the luxuries of sedentary life and by the vices of civilization—proved to be their most precious asset and the key to Islam's overwhelming military success. Tribalism also proved an appropriate strategy for exercising control (Ibn Khaldun 1958).

There are no estimates for the size of the Asian population that emigrated to North Africa during the first centuries of Islam (650–850). Chronicles mention the combatant tribes, precursors of Islam in this region, but give no figures (cf. Ibn Khaldun *op. cit.*). After the formation of new sedentary communities along the North African resulting from the first wave of the Islamic invasion, the influx of tribes diminished following this first Arab invasion and was not resumed until the eleventh century with the massive intrusion into the Maghrib of Bani Sulaim and Bani Hilal from Egypt.

This diminution can probably be accounted for in two ways: the Near Eastern reservoir of tribes had probably been exhausted after the massive depletion of the preceding centuries. Second, as long as *jihād* justified mobilization of *Mashriq* tribes to *Maghrib* fronts, religious enthusiasm can account for the Bedouin's relinquishment of traditional orbits of pastoral migration and transfer of population to newer territories.⁶ Third, the process of state-building in Egypt constituted a palpable obstacle to migration of Asian tribes westward along the North African shore, also after Arabization at the beginning in the ninth century A.D., as in ancient times. The establishment of the Fatimid dynasty in al-Fustat (969) put an end to the phenomenon of nomadizing herders throughout the irrigated land of the Nile Valley, incidentally attracting to itself tribes seeking collaboration deals with the state. Among the Asian pastoralists dwelling on the outskirts of the Delta which they were now forced to vacate, we find the aforementioned Bani Sulaim and Bani Hilal. Considering their peninsular (i.e., Arabian) background, the question still remains—What made them prefer the longer road westward over the relatively short way leading to their homeland? Why didn't they follow the routes of the

Hyksos and the Children of Israel fifteen centuries earlier? Were they inhibited by bitter recollection of past wars, or by hostile relationships with other peninsular tribes? Or were they drawn westerward by the rumor of wealth attainable in the Maghrib? We do not know.

Turkish tribesmen were first employed as bodyguards of the Caliph in Baghdad in 833–842 (Hitti 1961: 293). As rude nomadic herders they moved westward from Turkestan, swarmed over Persia and Iraq, spilling into Syria and finally overran Asia Minor. Two petty Turkish dynasties had ruled Egypt and southern Syria from Al Fustat. The Fatimid dynasty which originated in al-Qairawan, Tunisia, in 909, displaced the Turkish dynasty of the Tulunids in Cairo in 973 (*ibid.*, 302). In the years 903–906, raiders of Qarmatian and Shiite tribes from the western shore of the Persian Gulf, together with Bani Kalb Bedouins of the Syrian desert, traversed the Delta and proceeded westward. Did they want to subdue the Maghrib or was their purpose more modest: the seizure of control over parts of Egypt in the service of its rulers? Again we do not know. At any rate, they did not venture beyond the Nile's western bank and once forced out of Egypt by its Tulunid rulers, they crossed the river again, and returned east.

The Fatimid dynasty put an end to the rule of the Tulunids by invading Egypt from the Maghrib, becoming the first and last group to launch an invasion from the west. Like most of their predecessors since Pharaoh Phiops I and his army commander Uni in 2350 B.C., and like the two Turkish dynasties that preceded them in Al Fustat, the Fatimid dynasties confronted the challenge posed by pastoralist invaders from the east by preempting the attack of the Asian tribes and striking at them before they could approach the Egyptian borders. Seen from a different angle, the Fatimids sought to extend control over Greater Syria and, indeed, they were the first Egyptian rulers since the days of the Pharaohs, to effectively control the Levant (Bachrach 1984: 65). While at their peak of power, the Fatimids dispensed with the collaboration of the tribes.

Beginning in the years 1024–1030, the Banu Jarh tribes of the Tayy confederation appear on the East-to-West trail of migration and encroached upon the eastern border of the Fatimid empire, defying the Egyptian army. They were then defeated by Ali Ad-Daher, appointed by Egypt to rule Palestine, and forced to withdraw east of the Jordan River. They returned in 1042–1043, led by Sheikh Hasan Ibn Al Mufraj but were subsequently defeated by the Fatimids and retreated temporarily eastward, only to return toward the middle of the twelfth century.

The Saljuq Turks made their first appearance in the region in 1071 and marched into Sinai, but the Fatimids drove them out of Egypt into Syria. Late in the eleventh century they moved from Southern Syria (i.e.,

Palestine) northward. Unlike the Scythians, a millennium earlier, and the Mongol-Tartars of Hulagu (in the second half of the 13th century) and of Timur (in the last decades of the 14th century), the Turks concluded their migration and laid the foundations of a Near Eastern empire. At the close of the eleventh century, reinforced by further Turkic tribes which poured in and settled, the "Turkification" of Asia Minor was completed. It seems that the Saljuqs, in contrast to other historical conquerors, such as the Tartars, did not spread havoc. The Ottoman Turks who superseded the Saljuqs also restored a great deal more than they destroyed.

The Egyptian Fatimid and the following Mamluk hold on Syria was precarious and unstable most of the time, but nevertheless sufficient to prevent pastoralist invasions of mainland Egypt. Those who failed to invade the Nile Valley were often able to wrest control of Syrian villages and towns, as long as the expeditionary forces were kept out of sight. They also gained control by acting as viceroys of Egyptian dynasties.

During the Crusades there is no mention of major tribal movements. Throughout the period of their sojourn in the Holy Land and the establishment of the Latin kingdom, however, they created a situation which temporarily interfered with the customary wanderings of Bedouin between the Euphrates and the Nile. If the pastoralists of these days were roaming back and forth across Sinai, this no doubt, was not the typical orbit of wandering within a *dīra*, but rather an oscillation between the two main regional power centers. Accordingly, the Crusaders established very close relations with the dwellers of the desert. They cooperated with the great Bedouin tribe of the Ta'ālba on the Egyptian border, with the Banu Tayy, and with numerous other tribes, and this factor rendered these nomads unpopular with their fellow sedentary Muslims. The special legal formula created by the Crusaders for the Bedouin (Praver 1972: 49–50) defined them as the "king's property." In this way, they could regard their collaboration as though it were a specific deal of exchange, according to which the Bedouin paid for pasture rights in livestock (Praver 1980: 224).

The first military feat of Egypt's armies, at the end of prolonged anti-Crusade activity (lasting until 1291), was the checking of the great Mongol population movements. After the fall of Baghdad in 1258, the Mongol invasions reached southern Palestine and swept as far as the Gaza district. Although they did not reach the Nile Valley, the Mongols posed the greatest Asian threat to Egypt since the waning years of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century. The economic or social pressure in the Inner Asian steppes that unleashed these Mongol waves of migration are unclear from the way they ended. The Mongols of Hulagu and of Timur (unlike the Saljuq and the Ottoman Turks who superseded them after 1300) did not exchange pastoralism for sedentary life in the Near-

East nor did they seek collaboration with or administrative positions in the service of the region's states.

Increasing Mamluk interference in the administrative affairs of Syria (which had become their buffer zone since the Mongols' arrival, strengthened to an extent the hold of a centralized regime and facilitated Bedouin control over arable lands, villages, and towns throughout the Levant. The decline of Mamluk control in the Levant following the Mongol retreat back to the east gave rise to the phenomenon of tribal regimes and Bedouins from the Syrian Desert beginning to encroach upon the land. The most important of them seized Aleppo and held it for over half of the fourteenth century. Uncontrolled by a sovereign, the Bedouin reduced the spirit of the victorious age that defeated the Crusaders and the Mongols by causing political anarchy and social decadence (Hitti op. cit., 305). The restoration of relative order to the Levant by the Mamluk state, with pastoralist tribes acting as its agents, would seem to be a paradox. However, as the Mamluks achieved only average power (being neither weak nor too strong), they found partnership with tribal sheikhs to be advantageous.

The Ottomans were no longer nomadic pastoralists by the time they occupied Egypt (1517) and the Barbary states. Clearly, they did not desire these lands for their rural potential. Ruling their fully evolved empire from Constantinople, the Turks did not designate the southern provinces for immigration. However, by extending their control over the Hijaz, the Ottomans could have facilitated further Bedouin movement from the Syrian and the Arabian deserts westward. Regardless of ostensibly favorable environmental conditions, there were no mass migrations throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Sufficiently powerful Ottoman garrisons who needed no tribal support, prevented attempts at crossing the Sinai desert, and frustrated Bedouin migration.

Recent Historical Records

Beginning in the sixteenth century the Ottoman empire declined, losing power to the rulers of distant provinces. Along with decentralization of the Ottoman administration, the *timar* (or *ziamet*) system, though it continued in form, went into decline (Hütteroth 1985). *Timar*-holders, deputies of the Sublime Porte for the collection of taxes, were at first *sipahis*, that is, distinguished Turkish-speaking soldiers (Gibb & Bowen 1950: 47) retired from service of the Ottoman army. However the task of tax collecting was taken over by local lords and eventually, mostly by Bedouin sheikhs. The Ottoman administration must have found it nearly impossible to raise taxes from out-of-the-way communities. Also in towns,

including Cairo, *beys* (i.e., local governors who had their own troops but acknowledged Turkish suzerainty by payment of annual tribute) had a clear advantage over Turkish viceroys. Viceroys—*pashas*—who served on temporary appointment, remote from their base, were ignorant of the language and customs of the people they governed (Hitti, op. cit., 430). Later on also these viceroys' capacity to control the countryside waned, and the system called "the rule of the sheikhs" emerged.

Even when the Near East was controlled jointly by the weakened Ottoman administration and the sheikhs, this did not, interestingly enough, lead to tribal migrations toward Egypt. We begin to hear about unrest in the deserts of Syria and North Arabia in the mid-eighteenth century. Tribal insurgencies, raids, and wars were staged throughout the area. Totally ineffective Ottoman control over *eyalet* Damascus resulted in repeated assaults of *hajj* caravans by the 'Aneza Bedouin, the biggest of them in Summer 1757 (Gibb & Bowen 220; Ben-Zvi 1960: 110). By raiding the caravans, Sheikh al 'Aneza, had signaled his discontent to the Pasha of Damascus, who then also held the coveted title "Amir al Hajj" (op. cit., 219), with the annual payment assigned him by the Sublime Porte as "protection money" (Vilna'i 1932: 215–216). Tribal groups moving along an east-to-west migratory track during this period of further deterioration of the Ottoman administration were the Turabay, 'Arab es-Sbayeh, 'Arab as-Sardiyya, Bani-Sakher, and the biggest and most important, the Bani Zaydan (Ben-Zvi: 38). As soon as they arrived, sheikhs of these tribe were appointed commissioners or governors of provinces acting on behalf of the waning empire (op. cit., 97–98). Led by their sheikh Zaher al Umar, the Bani Zaydan, who previously had seized control over Palestine's Galilee, eventually proceeded toward Egypt.

The march westward did not bring the Bani Zaydan, who were commanded by Abu Dhahab and allied with part of Egypt's army, much further than Gaza. Egypt's ruler Ali Bey first commissioned the rebel Abu Dhahab to occupy the Levant (1771) and then defeated him, together with his Bedouin supporters. Such treaties which allied *multazim* sheikhs with *beys* and *pashas* under the apparent auspices of the Sublime Porte, precarious as they were, may have reflected the spirit of the time and are indicative of the nature of the encounter between these two elements.

The Wahhabis made the last prolonged attempt at east-west migration by pastoral tribes (1805). Brought to a halt in southern Palestine after years of sojourn in the Hebron Mountains (Ben Zvi 1976), the Wahhabis were forcibly turned back to Arabia by Egypt's expeditionary troops of Muhammad Ali, commanded by his son Ibrahim Pasha (1811–1818).

Since the late eighteenth century, and especially after the Napoleonic military expedition from Egypt into Syria (1799), a change in orientation

of tribal migrations occurred. One of the first tribal groups of Egyptian origin to favor life in the eyalet of Damascus, reaching also Damascus proper was the Hanadi tribe, led by Musa al Hasi and later by his son, Aqil Aga (Scholch 1984). Aqil and his men formed a body of irregulars in northern Palestine and took service with various masters, including Ibrahim Pasha, conqueror of the Levant (1831–1849). The Tiyaha and the Tarabin, two of the largest tribal confederations of the province east of Egypt's Delta and the Sinai, migrated on a west-to-east axis during the same period as the Hanadi. Numerous segments of these tribes entered Palestine in the wake of the French (Bailey 1980: 37, 39), while other segments retained a foothold in their traditional *dīra* and did not relinquish their former territory. In 1813, representatives of the Tiyaha and the Tarabin jointly raided the returning *hajj* caravan between Suez and Cairo (Rustum 1940–1943: vol. 1, p. 9). Afterward, with the strengthening of Egypt's central authority, they were forced to move their encampments eastward.

Muhammad Ali forged Egypt's army into an efficient machine and thereby gained control over the neighboring deserts, even dislodging Bedouin inhabiting lands far away from the Nile Valley. Fragments of the Qatatwa of the north-west Sinai and the Wahaydat and Tawara of southern Sinai, and the Sawarka of the eastern Sinai began a retreat toward Syria and settled farther east of the Sinai and the western Negev. The period of loose control of the periphery after Muhammad Ali's rule enabled Bedouin of Egypt's western desert, Cyrenaica (e.g., the Sa'ada) and even of Tripolitania (e.g., the Tarhuna, Wurfalla, and Musrata) to migrate into Palestine and Syria. (On "Maghariba" i.e., Westerners or descendants of Libyan immigrants now living in Israel, see Kressel 1987.)

The relative might of Egypt's regime at various times may partly account for centripetal or centrifugal trends of nomadic migration along the Nile Valley. However, it does not explain what caused tribes to turn eastward after twelve centuries of prevalently westward tribal migration. In as much as the period of the *iltizām* intimates the weakening of the states' administration, the retreat of the tribes suggests, time and again, either enhancement of power within the state administration or bankruptcy, tribal wars, and hunger.

As historical records illustrate, the most fruitful transactions were made between pastoralists and states when the latter were moderately strong. The state entrusted the tribal chiefs (sheikhs) with administrative positions controlling distant rural districts. In this situation, relatively obedient Bedouin sheikhs could secure a supplementary income. In a different setup, extremely powerful regimes could extend control deep into the deserts, man garrisons on all frontiers, and collect taxes from peasants and Bedouin alike. These regimes were not partners for deals. At the other

extreme, fragile regimes were ineffectual, incapable of exacting dues from the collectors they appointed or of settling squabbles that arose among overly independent tribes who were their deputies. Then the Bedouin tribes did as they pleased and peasants suffered under the burden of arbitrary Bedouin rule. With the ruin of the productive infrastructure, there was no way to maintain the tribes, and they began vying with one another to collect the taxes from the peasants. The losers either migrated in search of alternative favorable relationships with farming communities and city-states, snatching all possible booty before they left, or had to adjust to a full-fledged agricultural way of life, and eventually merged with Egypt's peasantry.⁷ Vigorous, oppressive regimes, as well as feeble ones that failed to deter the tribes from looting or exploiting the villages, uprooted peasants from their land (note the term *fallāḥ mutasaḥḥib* in Baer 1982) and constrained them to migrate in search of a more profitable relationship with a stronger state.

Since the Red Sea and the Sinai Desert were obstacles to population movements between Asia and Africa, population transfers in the early historical periods of immigration usually occurred when small groups from one continent penetrated the other. Ever since the Holocene and the Neolithic Revolution, nomadic pastoralists were the most suited and therefore the dominant group of migrants.

Several Near Eastern kingdoms, distinguished by their capacity to employ neighboring pastoral tribes in their administration, and with vast reservoirs of semi-arid lands, that is, with ample space for livestock breeding across their immediate borders, enhanced the growth of herding populations. This optimal habitat for a grassroots outflow of pastoralists throughout the Fertile Crescent in comparison to Egypt's single state or two states⁸ had affected the trend of oscillation to and from its fertile zone. The meager margins of semi-arid land along the Nile basin, could not support herding for long and it forced tribes either into the Nile's farming areas or back East, into Asia. Overemployment of the range, after excessive use of resources, sometimes hampered the gains of the state administration and pastoralism in South-West Asia; a necessary outlet of hypertrophy then was migration. The mainstream of the migration headed northward from the Arabian Peninsula, and from East to West.

One obvious reason for migration into Egypt was the prospect of co-opting positions with moderately powerful regimes. On a more practical level, there was the need to purchase corn (Gen. 42) and to graze herds on stubble fields. Migration out of Egypt of full-fledged herders living only from their livestock can be interpreted as aversion to collaboration with overly powerful regimes. Overworked and underpaid tribes may reach the decision that herding free in the steppes without the fringe benefits