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Sultans of the Open Lands (1858–1890)

In the mid-twentieth century, the Syrian doctor, politician, and writer ʿAbd al-Salam al-ʿUjayli collected oral histories in the Jazira. Some of the stories explained the migration of the Jarba branch of the Arabic-speaking Shammar nomads to the region from the Najd, in what is now Saudi Arabia. According to one story, in the early nineteenth century it was at first only the shaykh of the Shammar, his unnamed wife, and an unnamed enslaved person who made the journey. Attempting to conceal his wealth so as not to rouse the suspicions of locals, the shaykh told those who asked that the enslaved man was in fact his cousin from a Black mother.[1] Convinced of the bounty of the Jazira's grasses, the shaykh dispatched the enslaved man to return to the Najd, carrying a saddlebag filled with "dried out grasses and roots of plants of varied colors and wilted flowers of buttercups, chamomile, milk thistles, haloxylon, and milfoil."[2] When he reached Najd and the shaykh's followers, they asked, "Where is the paradise whose riches these are?" And so, as the story goes, they left Najd behind, bound for the fertile lands at the foot of the Anatolian plateau between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Al-ʿUjayli described the matter ominously, utilizing an insect metaphor: "The crawling locusts of the Shammar ... entered the Jazira as ruthlessly acquisitive invaders."[3] Al-ʿUjayli's presentation of the Shammar as locusts was part of a long legacy of dehumanizing descriptions of pastoralists.

Scholars have complicated such disparaging depictions of mobile people. The historian Sarah Shields summarized a significant approach in the study of these groups when she wrote that "the nomads were

[1] Al-ʿUjayli, *Ahadith al-ʿAshiyat*, 30. [2] Ibid., 33. [3] Ibid., 36.

important to Mosul's economy *because they were nomads*."[4] In other words, she suggested how scholars might inquire about what nomadic pastoralists did, rather than how they diverged from teleologies of civilizational stages or modernization theory, whether used by state officials or by scholars themselves. Subsequently, many have examined nomadic pastoralists on these terms and revealed how they were not simply objects of Ottoman reform but, indeed, active agents of those processes.[5] This literature has further challenged conventional wisdom about divisions between the state and tribe, as well as nomadic pastoralism and cultivation.[6] In many situations – as was the case of the Shammar – people who lived in tents relied on wool, yes, but also agriculture, toll collecting, and state subsidies.

While the comparison of locusts to the Shammar obscures these nuances, it nevertheless calls attention to the perhaps-unexpected ways that both insects and people were enmeshed in the Jazira. In the wake of defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the 1858 Land Code, the Ottoman state renewed its endeavor to clarify its governing mechanisms and simplify the relationship between subjects and the state. But the mobility of groups like the Shammar and locusts made this task difficult in the Jazira. Indeed, the seasonal motion of both locusts and people was entangled as they similarly crossed various provincial borders across the arid Jazira, leaving quarreling officials in their wake. Locusts in Urfa could be blamed on negligence in Mosul; the Shammar could avoid a strict governor in Diyarbekir by fleeing into Aleppo. The locusts and Shammar also both made out well in the midst of the American Civil War, when the Shammar benefited from booming wool prices, and the locusts again and again consumed the cotton popping up on the outskirts of the region. Yet despite the intersections and even causative links between locusts and nomadic pastoralism, state officials largely viewed the issues separately. With the Shammar, the state attempted to co-opt them or coerce them. They envisioned a number of schemes of these sorts, which included charging a Shammar shaykh with protecting a telegraph line, creating a line of cordon across which nomads could not pass so as to promote settlement by Kurdish tribes, settling Chechen refugees to act as

[4] Shields, "Sheep, Nomads and Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Mosul," 782; emphasis original. See also, Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq*.

[5] Amara, "Civilizational Exceptions"; Barakat, "Marginal Actors?"; Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East*; Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*.

[6] Barakat, "Making 'Tribes' in the Late Ottoman Empire"; Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan*.

a bulwark against the desert, and, finally, forming the special administrative district of Zor in 1871 to bring together desert edges of various provinces that the Shammar exploited. The last measure instigated a violent revolt, which Ottoman officials largely presented in terms of civilizational backwardness rather than any material conditions. Indeed, the insistence on seeing the mobile people of the Jazira as distinct from the buzzing insects or scorching summers derived from the fact that officials had fewer options with the locusts and the weather. Because the insects emerged from vast, sparsely populated regions, extensive control policies were largely out of the question. Prayers for the intervention of the insectivorous starling seemed like the most reliable policy. As locusts persisted, though, so, too, could the ambiguity of the desert and human motion in it, meaning the edge – whether of an environmental or political sort – could be a place of power, even as state officials tried to close the gap between environmental and political borders.

THE SHAMMAR AND THE TANZIMAT

ʿAbd al-Salam al-ʿUjayli may have compared the Shammar to destructive locusts when they entered the Jazira toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, but in the decades that followed, the Shammar gradually became part of the region's fabric and a key part of Ottoman governance. The region had historically been a part of overland trade networks linking the Indian Ocean world with the Mediterranean. But overseas trade and, later, steam travel increasingly cut into the profits afforded by the route. Commerce, of course, did not disappear. And the status of the region as a transit zone was in fact quite harmonious with the way the Shammar utilized the space as an environmental margin useful for the production of sheep and camels. Through both conflict and alliance with local populations, the Shammar came to cement their control over the Jazira. Many groups – including the ʿUbayd, Dulaym, and Jabbur – fled the appearance of the Shammar.[7] With the Arabic-speaking Tayy nomadic group, meanwhile, the Shammar solidified their alliance through the marriage of Shammar leader Sufoq to ʿAmsha, the daughter of the Tayy leader. In the words of British archaeologist and diplomat Austen Henry Layard, ʿAmsha was the "queen of the desert," her body covered in the "tattooed ends of flowers," her nose weighed down by "a prodigious gold ring" so large she had to remove it to eat, and her camel saddle possibly confused

[7] Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq*, 125.

with "some stupendous butterfly skimming slowly over the plain."[8] She would go on to play a crucial role in Shammar political power.

Like many places in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Jazira, too, witnessed Ottoman reliance on local intermediaries. The Shammar were perhaps not as famous as the notable families of cities such as Aleppo or Mosul, but they occupied similar places of power. Sufoq had spent several years under arrest in Istanbul with his son Farhan, and upon returning to the Jazira, he ensured that the Shammar backed Ottoman governors in military campaigns on a number of occasions, including against the rebellious governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Pasha.[9] The Shammar also acted as government functionaries in some towns.[10] The Ottomans had long relied on the office of "Lord of the Desert" – historically held by a member of the Mawali confederation – to project power in the region.[11] It seems the Shammar took up this title, if not the office itself. Their leader was hailed in the region as "Sultan of the Open Lands" (*sultan al-barr*), which Layard understood as "the King of the Desert."[12] As they collected taxes on their lands, the realm of the desert may even have expanded, as cultivators in some cases abandoned their lands and fled to cities.[13] Of course, Shammar power in the margins did not mean that they remained there or were somehow not connected to cities. Rather, they seasonally migrated to the edges of cities, with a moving population that rivaled the population of the very same cities. In many cases, they took care of animals owned by urban residents. In addition to relying on their vast flocks of sheep, the Shammar also collected taxes on villages and goods in transit through the region, though periodically they would suspend their collection of taxes in return for a salary from the Ottoman government, which they disparagingly referred to as "the Roumi," meaning those from Anatolia – but literally "the Romans."[14]

[8] Layard, *A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh*, 69–70, 72.

[9] Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, 40, 45; Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq*, 126; Williamson, "A Political History of the Shammar Jarba Tribe," 49, 63.

[10] Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq*, 32–33.

[11] Winter, "Alep et l'émirat du desert (*çöl beyliği*) au XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle," 93–98; Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire*, 97.

[12] Al-Zakariyya, *ʿAshaʾir al-Sham*, vol. 2, 617; Layard, *A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh*, 66.

[13] Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire*, 70–71, 97; Pehlivan, "Abandoned Villages in Diyarbekir Province."

[14] Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, 139; Centre des archives diplomatiques, Nantes (CADN), 166PO/D7/14, October 24, 1860.

And what of those heirs of Byzantium and, before that, Rome? By the middle of the nineteenth century, the empire was in the midst of a decades-long effort at chipping away at the power of local notables. The power of the notables had allowed the empire to incorporate vastly diverse geographies, but it had also left the Ottoman state struggling to maximize production and tax revenue so as to meet the existential challenges of nineteenth-century nationalist revolutionaries and European imperialists alike.[15] The empire-wide reforms known as the Tanzimat attempted to remedy these challenges in a number of ways. One such measure to circumvent local notables was cancelling tax farming in 1839, only to have to reinstate it due to revenue shortfalls (a practice that would be repeated several times in the nineteenth century). The Ottoman state also worked to settle nomadic groups, so as to clarify their revenue obligations to the state.[16]

The Crimean War of 1853 to 1856 added further complications to an empire working to settle accounts. A conflict ostensibly over Russian custodianship of holy places in Jerusalem, the war quickly embroiled Britain, France, and Sardinia, which fought on the side of the Ottomans for the sake of preserving the territorial integrity of the empire. The war's impact was disastrous. Not only did it hasten the first instances of Ottoman foreign borrowing and, subsequently, onerous debt arrangements, but it also led to nearly 1,000,000 people leaving Crimea and the Caucasus as refugees.[17] To respond to this challenge, the empire established its first Immigration Law (Muhaceret Nizamnamesi) in 1857, which, in addition to codifying existing practices, also offered incentives for expanding cultivation in less developed portions of the empire.[18] Immigrants received tax exemptions for six years on lands in the Balkans and twelve for those in Anatolia. Following this promulgation was the momentous Land Code (Arazi Kanunnamesi) of 1858. The impact of the instrument varied over the years and across the empire. But one of its main aims was to register lands in the empire with title deeds, thereby clarifying tax responsibilities while also promoting cultivation.[19] In an 1859 display of the twin necessities of refugee settlement and expansion of cultivation, the empire formed the Refugee Commission

[15] On the importance of local notables, see Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire*; Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*.
[16] Barakat, "Making 'Tribes' in the Late Ottoman Empire," 484.
[17] Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*. [18] Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 110–111.
[19] Quataert, "The Age of Reforms," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, ed. İnalcık, 856–861.

(Muhacirin Komisyonu) to coordinate on these matters. The Jazira would prove to be a key part of this effort at expanding cultivation and state power in marginal areas of the empire. As the minister of religious endowments Suphi Pasha wrote, it was time for a new policy among the "several million Arabs [*urbân*] ... in the vast and fertile deserts ... between the lands of Damascus, Aleppo, and Iraq."[20]

THE LOCUST AND THE STARLING

By the middle of the nineteenth century, two half-brothers were at the center of Shammar leadership. ʿAbd al-Karim and Farhan were the grandsons of the first Shammar shaykh to decamp to the Jazira, and the sons of Sufoq, "the King of the Desert," who had been killed by Ottoman troops in 1847.[21] With about 50,000 tents and 15,000 horsemen by one estimate, their motion stretched between Urfa in the west and Baghdad in the southeast, with the Jazira as the heart of their power.[22] The brothers had different reputations, ʿAbd al-Karim – the son of ʿAmsha – as a "man of action" and Farhan as a "man of politics," owing, perhaps, to the time he spent in Istanbul during his youth.[23]

At the beginning of the 1860s, the Ottomans saw Farhan and ʿAbd al-Karim as potential allies and hoped to coax them in the direction of "civilization." But such simplistic formulations were often more complicated in practice. For example, in 1860, hostilities broke out between the Shammar and branches of the ʿAnaza, an Arabic-speaking tribe that typically stayed southwest of the Euphrates and thus outside of the Jazira.[24] After clashes near Harran, Ottoman troops from nearby Urfa arrived on the scene. According to consular records, the Shammar insisted that the state forces remain out of the engagement. As the Ottoman forces stood down, the Shammar defeated the ʿAnaza. They bribed the Ottoman officer with several thousand sheep and camels and then headed east into the Jazira. Reports in state newspapers, however, transformed the clash into an unambiguous victory for the Ottoman state. By this account, the victor of the "brilliant raid" was the Ottoman commander, and the vanquished not simply the ʿAnaza but also the Shammar, who were

[20] "Suphi Paşa Hazretleri'nin Layihası'ndan," 21.
[21] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 86.
[22] CADN, 166PO/D7/14, Consulate in Baghdad to Marquis de Lavalette, October 24, 1860.
[23] CADN, 166PO/D7/14, Consulate in Baghdad to Marquis de Lavalette, October 24, 1860.
[24] CADN, 166PO/D7/14, Consulate in Baghdad to Marquis de Lavalette, October 24, 1860.

erroneously presented as having fought on the side of the ʿAnaza.[25] Thus reform efforts were not a simple process of state versus tribes, but this narrative nevertheless had power.

Internal Ottoman deliberations, meanwhile, spoke of other motives, particularly with respect to the Shammar chief ʿAbd al-Karim, whom Ottoman officials wished to enlist in their efforts to control the Jazira more effectively. In the coming decade, ʿAbd al-Karim would use the Jazira to challenge Ottoman efforts to divide it up. But in 1860, he appeared redeemable to Ottoman officials. The Ottoman commander of Urfa declared that in the fighting with the ʿAnaza, ʿAbd al-Karim had displayed "good service, manliness, and trustworthiness," which seemed to be a surprise given that "he had never met with a government official before."[26] There was thus hope that ʿAbd al-Karim and the 4,000 to 5,000 tents he led – somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people – might be used for the "protection of the desert." In hoping to use ʿAbd al-Karim as a way of expanding Ottoman control into a sometimes-difficult environment, Ottoman officials also hoped to affect a change within ʿAbd al-Karim, from "savagery" (*bedeviyet*) into "civilization" (*medeniyet*). In sum, the Ottoman administration used one nomadic group against another and planned to use ʿAbd al-Karim as a protector of Ottoman interests in the peculiar environment of the desert. In the process, they hoped to transform ʿAbd al-Karim himself.

But transforming ʿAbd al-Karim could only go so far without managing the locusts that regularly ravaged the region. Although the barley had been harvested by the time the insects arrived in Mosul and developed wings in 1860, the locusts did cause "considerable damage to the standing wheat."[27] Ottoman officials – as they did most years – impressed peasants on the edges of the Jazira into forced labor brigades. They collected some 100,000 okka (283,000 lb) of locust eggs before the insects had developed wings, and another 50,000 okka (141,500 lb) of locusts after they began to fly.[28] People then dug holes in the ground in which they snuffed out the insects by burying them. The Ottoman governor of Mosul Veysi Pasha noted that

[25] CADN, 166PO/D7/14, Consulate of France in Baghdad to Marquis de Lavalette, December 19, 1860. See *Journal de Constantinople*, October 17, 1860, pp. 2–3.

[26] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), İ.DH 462/30764, Mehmed Takiyüddin to the Grand Vizier, 9 Safar 1277 (August 27, 1860).

[27] TNA-UK, FO 195/603, Rassam to Bulwer, May 14, 1860.

[28] BOA, MVL 756/36, Governor of Mosul Veysi Pasha to the Grand Vizier, 9 Şevval 1276 (April 30, 1860).

government efforts to include "tribes" in the effort to collect locusts and locust eggs contributed "incalculable" (*hesapsız*) numbers to the cause, too.

In case human labor would not be enough, Veysi Pasha had utilized a different kind of relationship with the environment. After all, even if he took precautions within the territory under his control, locusts could always appear, as they had in previous years, "from the direction of the desert."[29] For this dilemma, there was one prescription: "the famous locust water [*meşhur olan çekirge suyu*] of Konya province." Many believed that hanging containers of the substance from mosques would attract birds and then instigate "a war." The birds attracted by the substance – also known by its Arabic name of *maʾ al-jarrad* – were starlings (Turkish: *sığırcık*, Arabic: *samarmar*; Figure 6).[30] The locust-eating birds were described as

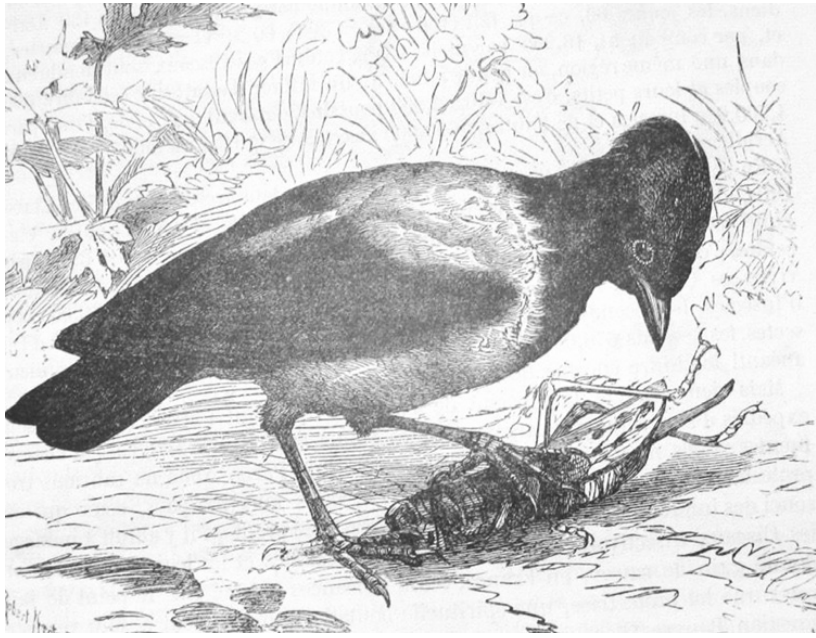

FIGURE 6 The starling. D'Herculais, *Les Sauterelles*

[29] BOA, A.}MKT.UM 354/56, Governor of Mosul Veysi Pasha, 27 Şevval 1275 (May 30, 1859).

[30] BOA, MVL 756/36, Governor of Mosul Veysi Pasha to Grand Vizier, 9 Şevval 1276 (April 30, 1860).

far back as Pliny the Elder.[31] The belief in a holy water attracting them was widespread, though stories differed. According to various accounts, those afflicted by locusts in different parts of the Ottoman Empire procured holy water alternately from Iran, Khorasan, or the foot of Mount Ararat.[32] Historian James Grehan has written about this phenomenon, describing the *samarmar* as a "magical bird" owing its power to Sufis intent on "perpetuating its lore" rather than any actual reality or ecological relationship.[33] But the reputation of the starling as both reality and legend persisted into the nineteenth century and beyond.[34] Indeed, in Mosul in 1860, the Tigris flowed with locusts. Veysi Pasha explained that starlings had appeared north of the city and relentlessly slaughtered the swarms of insects. The locusts had no escape from the birds but by "throwing themselves into the water," and so the mighty river flowed with the vanquished insects that wielded such power in the region. Thus as with mobile people, so, too, with mobile locusts. The Ottoman state managed to harness the power of yet another moving group – starlings – to protect itself. Still, Veysi feared that the locusts might return, laying waste to the region's rich summer crops of "cotton, sesame, onions, tobacco, and vegetables."

The connections between nomads and locusts were both discursive and material. The British consul in Aleppo dated Aleppo's decline to the emergence nearly eighty years before – by his estimation – of "swarms" of nomads in the region.[35] Ottoman officials used the adjective of "damaging" (*muzirre*) to describe the Shammar and the annoying insects alike, while various British consular officials similarly termed them "a pest to the country" and "worthless hordes."[36] Beyond language, there were also more direct connections between insects and mobile people. In the spring of 1861, the locusts struck and devastated agriculture. "Devouring every particle of vegetation on their road," they left the land between Nusaybin

[31] Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, 39.27.
[32] Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World*, 178; Parrot, *Journey to Ararat*, 144–145; Niebuhr, *Description de l'Arabie*, 154.
[33] Grehan, "The Legend of the Samarmar," 125.
[34] Göçen, "Sığırcık Suyu Şeyhleri"; Hızlı, "Çekirge İstilasına Çözüm Sığırcık Kuşu."
[35] TNA-UK, FO 195/55, Skene to Bulwer, May 12, 1860.
[36] BOA, MVL 613/25, Council of Kurdistan to Grand Vizier, 9 Zilhicce 1277 (June 18, 1861); TNA-UK, FO 195/676, Rassam to Bulwer, December 9, 1861; FO 78/1607, Taylor, Report on Trade in Diyarbekir Pashalik, December 31, 1861.

and Urfa bare.[37] It was only the "natural obstacles" of the mountains near Mardin and Mount Karaca (also known by its Turkish name of Karacadağ) that stopped the locusts' unprecedented march, it having been many years since they had struck the fertile lands around Diyarbekir. If this was the degree of suffering on the edges of the Jazira, it was even worse in its heartlands. With no pasture left for their animals thanks to the locusts, the Shammar – led by ʿAbd al-Karim – moved northward to the very same region whose elevation had stopped the march of the locusts.[38] The Shammar sought pasture, but also to purchase grain out of concern that prices might increase due to famine.[39] Local government officials called for Ottoman troops to maintain order, while foreign onlookers predicted that soldiers in the field "will destroy what little cultivation the locusts have left."[40] In other words, it was imperial troops that may well have seemed like locusts for their destructive capacities in this case.

The volatile situation gave way to conflict. Disputes between the Shammar and seminomadic Kurdish groups in the region – among them the Kiki and the Millî – escalated. Reports suggested that the Shammar had used the crops of these groups as "pasture for their animals."[41] In response, the Kurdish groups struck the Shammar, and allegedly took many of their camels.[42] Overlaying the tension with respect to land usage was ethnic difference, as Mount Karaca functioned not only to stop locusts and signify a changing geography, but also, albeit in a somewhat blurry way, a sense of changing ethnicity. While no clear dividing line existed, to the north of Mount Karaca, Kurdish became more commonly spoken, while to the south Arabic was more commonly used. The interconnected motion of locusts and nomads structured all of these clashes and interactions. The moving people and animals also had an environmental impact. According

[37] TNA-UK, FO 78/1607, Taylor, Report on Commercial Conditions of Diyarbekir Pachalik, May 29, 1861.
[38] BOA, MVL 613/25, Council of Kurdistan to Grand Vizier, 9 Zilhicce 1277 (June 18, 1861).
[39] TNA-UK, FO 78/1607, Taylor, Report on Commercial Conditions of Diyarbekir Pachalik, May 29, 1861.
[40] BOA, MVL 613/25, Council of Kurdistan to Grand Vizier, 9 Zilhicce 1277 (June 18, 1861).
[41] Centre des archives diplomatiques, La Corneuve (CADC), 60CPC/3, Aleppo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 14, 1861.
[42] BOA, A.}MKT.UM 498/35, Governor of Harput to Grand Vizier, 9 Safar 1278 (August 16, 1861).

to the British consul in Diyarbekir, the locusts and nomads together had turned the region into "literally desert."[43]

The depredations of both also invited speculation on how the Ottoman state might resolve the tensions between different nomadic groups. British observers emphasized several kinds of lines. The consul in Aleppo called for the "formation of a line" of settled nomads to end these circuits of motion.[44] He subsequently added another evocative detail to his plans for nomadic control. He called for the placement of "light guns" on "the numerous artificial mounds" dotting the Jazira.[45] In other words, the distinctive ruins of the Jazira's past civilizations would be used as a base for state violence in the effort to resurrect these civilizations. The British consul in Diyarbekir took a different view, complaining instead of the "destructive and antagonistical effects" of nomads moving between various provinces. He thus proposed aligning the particular environment of the Jazira with the political borders through which it was managed. More specifically, he called for Baghdad province to be extended such that it include "the desert limits" of the districts of Urfa, Diyarbekir, and Mardin and extend all the way south to the Euphrates.[46] He also saw an ethnic logic at work in such an arrangement, noting that Mount Karaca ended the Jazira's plains and also served as a "natural barrier between the Arab and the Turks and Koord." Drawing a neat border around the desert, in his view, would enable control of all of these different currents.

Ottoman officials would take the same view in coming years, but they were not ready in 1861, when they preferred to co-opt the nomadic motion of ʿAbd al-Karim's brother Farhan for their own purposes. Urfa district governor Mehmed Takiyüddin – he who had taken credit for the Shammar defeat of the ʿAnaza in 1860 – restated his hopes for "gradual transition from savagery to civilization [*bedeviyetten medeniyete*]."[47] Indeed, at the same time as many complained of the depredations of nomads, the Ottoman state also entrusted to nomads the protection of what was arguably the empire's most important technological project: the telegraph line. Having reasoned that "no body of horsemen" from the government "would suffice to protect the line," the Ottomans entrusted security of the line to the Shammar chief Farhan, ʿAbd al-Karim's

[43] TNA-UK, FO 195/676, Taylor to Bulwer, August 5, 1861.
[44] TNA-UK, FO 195/55, Skene to Bulwer, May 12, 1860.
[45] TNA-UK, FO 195/55, Skene to Bulwer, December 11, 1860.
[46] TNA-UK, FO 195/676, Taylor to Bulwer, December 12, 1861.
[47] BOA, A.}MKT.UM 505/13, Mehmed Takiyüddin to Grand Vizier, 9 Rabiaülevvel 1278 (September 14, 1861).

brother.[48] Farhan had often shown a greater willingness to negotiate with Ottoman officials than his brother, and this pattern would continue in years to come. In the meantime, the collaboration bespoke the mutual reliance of Ottoman officials and mobile populations in marginal environments. It was the protection of Farhan and the Shammar, then, that enabled the first telegraphic communication between Istanbul and Baghdad in late June of 1861, which carried news of the death of Sultan Abdülmecid and the ascension of his brother Abdülaziz.[49]

LOCUSTS, SHAMMAR, AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Locusts did not catalyze the same questions about provincial borders as the Shammar did. But they could have. In late May of 1862, the insects arrived again. The French consul in Baghdad wrote, "I was told that in the memory of man no such thing had been seen at Baghdad."[50] The insects "devastated pasture" and destroyed all vegetables except for "onions and some roots." They did not stop there, spreading to Mosul, and then so far west that they crossed the Euphrates by late May. In Aleppo, so many locust bodies accumulated in the city's stores of drinking water that residents had to rely on well water, as if they were under siege.[51] Clearly, the locusts moved with little regard for provincial borders. But provincial borders were the administrative units through which Ottoman officials managed the vast region of the Jazira. The Ottoman district governor of Urfa explained that all of the ills of locusts in 1862 could be attributed to provinces to the east.[52] Though local officials had gone to great lengths to destroy locust eggs left over from the previous year's invasion in Baghdad and Mosul, the district governor explained that nevertheless "winged" locusts appeared in great quantities from the direction of Mosul, Baghdad, and Diyarbekir. Their "winged" nature was especially significant, because before the insects developed wings about forty days after hatching, they could be destroyed much more easily. But after the insects developed wings, they were essentially impossible to stop. As they flew, they devastated crops and laid more eggs, which would then

[48] TNA-UK, FO 195/676, Kemball to Bulwer, April 15, 1861.
[49] CADC, 23CCC/12, Consul General in Baghdad to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 3, 1861.
[50] CADN, 166PO/D7/14, June 18, 1862.
[51] TNA-UK, FO 195/717, Rassam to Bulwer, May 26, 1862; CADC, 4CCC/32, Consul General in Aleppo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 10, 1862.
[52] BOA, MVL 764/15, Governor of Urfa, 5 Eylül 1278 (September 17, 1862).

become their forward operating bases for the next year. And they did so while crossing provincial borders, blurring the neat division of the administrative responsibility through which the Jazira was to be controlled.

Like locusts, nomads also presented spatial challenges in 1862 for Ottoman officials by taking advantage of the discrepancy between the environment and Ottoman political borders. But the Ottoman campaign of that year actually began with government officials working to use the Jazira – so long the environmental refuge of the Shammar – for their own ends. In response to Shammar raids and failure to pay taxes, Ottoman officials planned on "surrounding" the Shammar "in the desert of Mesopotamia" in the springtime when snowmelt and rains ensured high water levels that would make it difficult for the Shammar and their animals to cross the Euphrates.[53] The plan also attempted to transcend the Ottoman division of the region, by sending military detachments from all of the districts that divided up the Jazira from east to west, an arc stretching from Baghdad to Kirkuk, Mosul, Diyarbekir, Urfa, and, finally, Aleppo. It was this crescent-like formation that would enclose the nomads in the desert and, they hoped, restore the Fertile Crescent.

Yet Ottoman hopes were dashed as the environment – and Shammar movement within it – once again defied official efforts at control. After reportedly stealing some 8,000 sheep near Mount Karaca, the Shammar fled into the desert. It was then that the torture of the military commenced.[54] In the sparsely inhabited area, the troops struggled to find supplies. They "spent entire days deprived of food," and rumors abounded that they "fed on the flesh of camels that had died in the famine."[55] They pursued the Shammar all the way to the Khabur River as part of orders to capture Farhan, but, as the French consul in Baghdad intoned, locating the "rebel chief" was difficult given his "wandering nature [*humeur ambulante*]." By April, the troops returned to their bases for fear of the onset of summertime heat.[56] The British consul in Mosul called the expedition a "total failure."[57] The Ottoman troops had, he wrote, "cut a bad figure before the wild sons of the desert." A campaign that began with plans to enlist the environment against the Shammar had resulted in the opposite occurring, a reminder that even when Ottoman

[53] TNA-UK, FO 195/717, Rassam to Constantinople, March 3, 1862.
[54] TNA-UK, FO 195/717, Taylor in Diyarbekir, March 11, 1862.
[55] CADC, 62CPC/5, Baghdad to Chouvenel, MAE, May 7, 1862.
[56] TNA-UK, FO 195/717, Rassam to Bulwer, April 28, 1862.
[57] TNA-UK, FO 195/717, Rassam to Bulwer, April 28, 1862.

administrations transcended provincial division, the Shammar could still use the environment as a weapon against the state.

The unruly spatial bounds of locusts and nomads had especially harsh consequences given the way they undermined the Ottoman effort to expand cotton cultivation amidst the global shortage caused by the American Civil War. As elsewhere around the world, in the Ottoman Empire, too, opportunistic landowners increased cultivation of the distinctive fiber (or at least hoped to) everywhere from Thessaly and Izmir on the Aegean to the Nile Delta.[58] In the Jazira, however, locusts intervened again and again to thwart these attempts. In Baghdad, locusts ravaged the cotton crops, of which British trading houses had encouraged cultivation.[59] In Mosul, locusts forced delays in the planting of the crop, which then put the cotton at risk of maturing so late in the fall that rain might destroy it.[60] North of Aleppo in the cotton fields of Kilis, the French consul described how "in twenty-four hours all of the plantations of this valuable plant were devoured."[61] In Aleppo, the British consul explicitly blamed the insects, noting that Britain could not rely on Aleppo to compensate for the global cotton shortfall "on account of damage caused by locusts."[62] But the insects were not alone. Nomads also played a role. The British consul in Aleppo claimed that nomads were the "great obstacle" to cultivation of the crop because of the way they would "turn their flocks into cotton fields."[63] Indeed, just as locusts were a seasonal affliction on cotton, so, too, were nomads. It was precisely when cotton began to emerge from the ground that nomads and their hungry flocks arrived close to cities.

Despite the deleterious impact of locusts and nomads on cotton, the promise of the crop still held an allure for cultivators. Typical cotton production in Aleppo province was about 1,000 bales, 500 of which were exported. But in 1862 the amount exported from Aleppo's port on the

[58] On the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East, see Kurmuş, "The Cotton Famine and Its Effects on the Ottoman Empire," 160–169; Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy*, 89; Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 49; Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 12; Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, 64. On the rest of the world, see Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 253–257.

[59] CADC, 23CCC/12, Baghdad to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 18, 1862.

[60] TNA-UK, FO 195/717, Rassam to Bulwer, May 26, 1862.

[61] CADC, 4CCC/32, Consul of France in Aleppo to Minister of Foreign Affairs, July 10, 1862.

[62] TNA-UK, FO 78/1689, Skene to Bulwer, July 31, 1862.

[63] TNA-UK, FO 195/761, Skene, Report on the Trade of Aleppo during the Year 1862, December 31, 1862.

Mediterranean was 29,000 bales.[64] In the coming years, cotton cultivation would remain afflicted by volatility. The 1863 cotton crop in Aleppo was "completely destroyed" by locusts.[65] Other problems could emerge, too, such as lack of labor to collect the crop when it was finally ready for harvest, as was reported in Diyarbekir in 1863.[66] Officials worried about similar problems in the next year, given the way that even settled populations fled locust invasions. As one Muslim merchant of Diyarbekir allegedly predicted, "If the locusts do come this year the pasha will find himself alone in the Province."[67] Still, the benefits seemed to outweigh the costs for many. In Mosul, cultivators would respond to the destruction of locusts by replanting cotton "up to two and even three times in the span of three months."[68] In 1864 in Aleppo, some five times the usual amount of land was devoted to cotton.[69] Despite these efforts, the cotton-growing center of the late Ottoman Empire would end up near Adana, a region that was largely not afflicted by the Moroccan locust.[70]

Rising prices for fibers extended not only to cotton but also to wool, one of the key products of groups such as the Shammar. Numerous observers remarked on this dynamic. The French consul in Mosul called wool "the principal business" of the city in 1863, thanks in no small part to high prices instigated by the American Civil War.[71] The British consul in Diyarbekir went further. Of wool, he wrote, "Former prices and yields were nothing in comparison to those in the present day."[72] Nomads evidently recognized the opportunity. According to the British consul, they previously "had no idea of the real value of their produce," but with the infusion of money, pastoralists began to "fight for the last farthing." The effects were felt in Aleppo, too, where people who had been "starving a few years ago" were allegedly "in possession of L1,000 each by the sale of cotton and wool."[73]

[64] TNA-UK, FO 195/761, Skene, Report on the Trade of Aleppo during the Year 1862, December 31, 1862.
[65] TNA-UK, FO 195/761, Skene to Bulwer, June 30, 1863.
[66] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Report on Trade and Agriculture in Diyarbekir in 1863, March 31, 1864.
[67] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Taylor to Bulwer, January 11, 1864.
[68] CADC, 214CCC/1, Mosul to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 16, 1866.
[69] TNA-UK, FO 195/800, Report on the Trade of Aleppo during the Year 1864.
[70] See Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 12.
[71] CADC, 214CCC/1, Mosul to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rapport Commercial sur l'année 1862, November 20, 1863.
[72] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Report on Trade and Agriculture in Diyarbekir in 1863, March 31, 1864.
[73] TNA-UK, FO 78/1828, Skene to Bulwer, June 30, 1864.

While cotton and wool could both mean riches for some, the geography of wool production fit much more easily with the choreography of locusts and nomads that defined the Jazira. The sheep of the Jazira essentially constituted movable farms with which the Shammar could respond to environmental variation. There were of course limits to this flexibility, especially in the instance of epizootics or cold winters that killed off herds, as historian Zozan Pehlivan has detailed.[74] But if locusts arrived, nomads could find pasture elsewhere; cotton cultivators had no choice but to attempt to plant the crop again. And if cotton cultivation occurred on the edges of the Jazira, wool production derived from the space in between the region's great cities, the seemingly empty lands whose "luxuriant pasturage" offered value to those who knew how to move.[75] Typically, merchants from a place like Aleppo or Mosul would spread out into the Jazira beginning in February.[76] At that point, they would pay for fleeces. Of course, great risk was involved in fronting large sums of money, and low profit margins prevailed for exporters, even in boom years. But part of the appeal was how they paid for the fleeces. In addition to using currency, they also used "European cotton goods" as advances.[77] In fact, it was this latter connection in particular that often made wool worth it.[78] The real payoff was in the opening up of markets among nomads for European consumer goods.

But there were also ways of expanding the profit margin, and these patterns undermine many of the common remarks of denigration made toward nomads. To cut down on transport costs, export houses tried to lure the nomads and their flocks as close to cities as possible prior to the shearing of fleeces in April.[79] The purchasers would then export the wool onward to other parts of the Ottoman Empire or to Europe. It was at these times that conflicts between cultivators and nomads would often occur, occasioning categorical statements such as one by the French consul in Aleppo that "nomads ... constitute the principal, and until now insurmountable, obstacle to the current of civilization."[80] Yet the types of

[74] Pehlivan, "El Niño and the Nomads."
[75] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Report on Trade and Agriculture in Diyarbekir in 1863, March 31, 1864.
[76] CADC, 60PC/3, Mosul to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 8, 1862.
[77] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Report on Trade and Agriculture in Diyarbekir in 1863, March 31, 1864.
[78] TNA-UK, FO 195/800, Report on the Trade of Aleppo during the Year 1864.
[79] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Report on Trade and Agriculture in Diyarbekir in 1863, March 31, 1864.
[80] CADC, 4CCC/33, Consul in Aleppo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 21, 1863.

conflicts that prompted him to make this comment actually occurred because of the nomads' integration into long-distance trade networks. They may have appeared to be enemies of civilization when they destroyed cotton crops in 1862, for example, but they were also doing something else: destroying their economic competition.

The Shammar in particular seized the opportunity to maximize their economic power. They had occupied an ambiguous place with respect to Ottoman authorities. On the one hand, officials decried their lack of civilization and led campaigns to discipline them. But at the same time, state officials relied on them, not only for their economically productive capacities, but also for their ability to offer security in marginal environments. When the French consul in Baghdad ventured toward the Jazira in 1863, for example, he encountered Farhan, the very same chief who had been charged with protecting the telegraph in 1861 and who had been the target of the 1862 campaign. Of his interaction with the Shammar chief, the consul recalled, "I took the opportunity to compliment him on the immense quantity of sheep, camels, and horses that I had encountered since my departure from Baghdad."[81] So great were the flocks and so rich the animal products they sustained that the French consul called the region the "Normandy of Asia." In response, Farhan laughed and told the consul, "You have not seen anything. All of Mesopotamia is covered with sheep and camels belonging to my people. That is their only wealth." By October of 1863, Farhan even journeyed to Baghdad, where he brought the consul of France "a sample of camel wool."[82] The consul wrote that Farhan "assured me ... that it would be possible to export a great quantity, all the more since this wool has never before been demanded by commerce." In other words, Farhan was marketing a new product. It is unclear if anything came of this connection. But the consul's report evidently caught the attention of one of his higher-ups – perhaps in Paris – as someone had scrawled in the margin "where is the camel sample?"

THE LINE OF CORDON

In response to these interconnected dynamics, Ottoman officials announced a new plan in 1864 to control pastoralist motion and to spur agrarian improvement. A March memo summarized many of the swirling discussions

[81] CADC, 62CPC/5, Delaporte to Drouyn de Lhuys, January 21, 1863.
[82] CADC, 23CCC/12, Delaporte to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 30, 1863.

of environment, mobility, and ethnicity. Much like European observers, the Ottomans saw the region as one of "ruins," and an "empty desert that had not seen a trace of development for a long time."[83] With the Ottomans as with the Europeans, blame fell on the effect of nomads like the Shammar. Seminomadic Kurdish tribes had once been in the process of "civilization and settlement" (*temeddün ve tavattun*), but thanks to the depredations of the Shammar "the taste of settlement and civilization disappeared from their minds." The Kurds, the Ottomans explained, would cultivate in the summer. After the harvest, they would move to the Khabur River with their flocks, perched "on the edge of the desert." From this vantage, the desert was the locus of disorder. It was in the desert in particular where the language of mobility and ethnicity blurred. "With the taking of horses, camels, sheep, and cattle," explained the memo, the Kurds "became accustomed to wandering like Arabs [*arap gibi*]." The term "Arab" in this context referred not to the language that they spoke but rather to their practices of nomadism. Indeed, in the same context, Kurds became described as "seminomadic" (*mütearrib*), which literally meant "Arabized" because of the prevailing understanding that "Arab" and "nomad" were synonymous. It was the land to which the seminomadic or Arabized Kurds moved in the winters that constituted the Shammar's "old home" (*vatan-i kadim*), tantamount to "an independent . . . wandering ground."

To convey their control of motion, Ottoman officials used the language of public health. They envisioned their plan on a map, which almost seemed to look southeast from Anatolia (Figure 7). The map depicted a number of forts and villages across the region at Mount ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, Ras al-Ayn, and Viranşehir. It also depicted a "line of cordon" across which the Shammar could not cross.[84] Thus, to address the Shammar's contagious example for the seminomadic groups on the edge of the desert, Ottoman officials proposed spatial controls fit for disease. The sanitary cordon stood as the technology par excellence for fighting epidemics in this period of interconnection, so much so that numerous port-city neighborhoods across the empire took this name, everywhere from Izmir to Salonica.[85] The sanitary cordons of port cities were intended to stop diseases like plague. The sanitary cordon of the Jazira aimed to stop

[83] BOA, İ.MVL 520/23021, Memorandum from Governor of Kurdistan Mustafa, 27 Şubat 1279 (March 10, 1864).
[84] BOA, İ.MVL 520/23021, Memorandum from Governor of Kurdistan Mustafa, 27 Şubat 1279 (March 10, 1864).
[85] Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman Izmir*, 27.

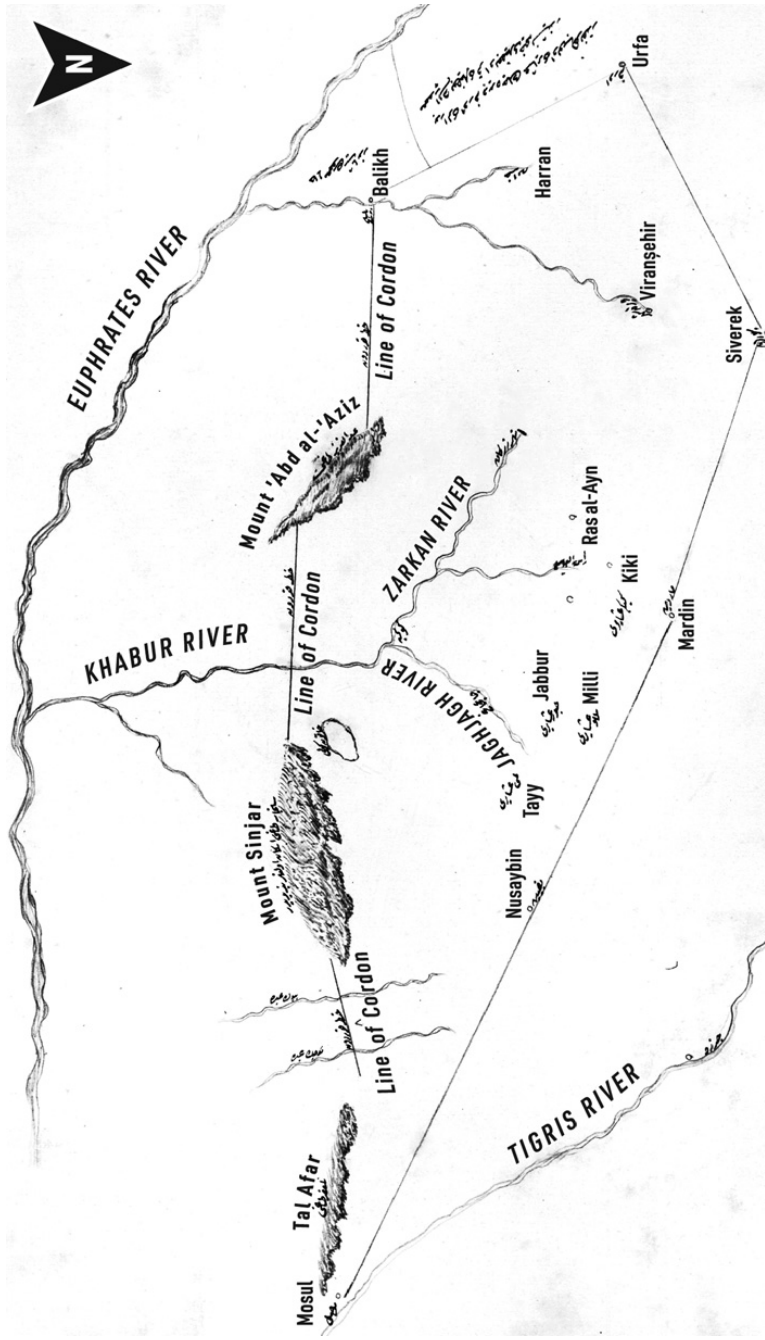

FIGURE 7 Line of cordon. BOA, İ.MVL 520/23021

nomadism by depriving the Shammar of their "summer pastures."[86] Unable to cross into the Jazira, and unable to move further south for fear of their long-time enemies the ʿAnaza, the Shammar would consequently choose to "abandon savagery and choose settlement." And thus, the Shammar's nearly 11,000 tents (as estimated by Ottoman officials) would become houses that rivaled in sum the population of cities like Diyarbekir and Mosul. Or at least so Ottoman officials hoped.

The region's various nomadic and seminomadic leaders were far from passive in these proceedings, and their correspondence with the Ottoman government in fact offered divergent accounts for their interest in settlement. Whereas Ottoman officials emphasized the singular role that the Shammar played in the destruction of the region, the chiefs of seminomadic groups like the Millî blamed nonhuman forces. They explained that "the locusts had attacked the edges of the desert for the past five or six years" and left their lands in "a miserable state."[87] Consular reports told the same story. The British consul of Diyarbekir had traveled in the region and noted that he could not obtain rice or wheat bread in much of the province.[88] In its place, locals used a flour made from millet or acorns, which, the consul grumbled, "produces obstinate constipation." The Kurdish chiefs added that the harsh winter of the previous year and lack of rain in the current year had left their animals with little forage, and many had died off.[89] In other words, the seminomadic chiefs presented their problems as not solely stemming from the Shammar, but rather from the environmental dynamics that ensured that it made sense to be a nomad in the first place.

Similarly distinctive explanations surfaced in correspondence between Eyup Bey of the seminomadic Kurdish Kara Keçe tribe and the Ottoman state. In an Arabic-language letter, Eyup Bey gave thanks that "our domain" (*dayratuna*) – as he termed it – "is safe from bandits."[90] In its Ottoman translation, Eyup Bey's expression of territorial possession became something else, as "our domain" transformed into "the cultivated and desert areas" (*mamur ve çöl havalisi*). In other words, a phrase that in

[86] BOA, İ.MVL 520/23021, Memorandum from Governor of Kurdistan Mustafa, 27 Şubat 1279 (March 10, 1864).
[87] BOA, İ.MVL 510/23021, Letter from heads of Aliyan, Dakura, Kiki, and Millî, 12 Zilkade 1280 (April 19, 1864).
[88] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Taylor to Bulwer, January 11, 1864.
[89] BOA, İ.MVL 510/23021, Letter from heads of Aliyan, Dakura, Kiki, and Millî, 12 Zilkade 1280 (April 19, 1864).
[90] BOA, İ.MVL 510/23021, Letter from Eyüp Bey, 10 Şevval 1280 (March 19, 1864).

Arabic conveyed a sense of power over place became anodyne environmental description in Ottoman translation. When Kurdistan governor Mustafa carried news of Eyup Bey's potential settlement near Viranşehir, he returned to the monocausal explanation that the Ottoman state had previously emphasized, suggesting that the cause of upheaval in the region could solely be attributed to "the noxious Arab tribes" (*aşair-ı muzirre urbân*).[91] As in 1860, when a Shammar defeat of the ʿAnaza became a triumph of the Ottoman state over recalcitrant tribes, lost in the bureaucratic chain of communication in 1864 were the more complicated causes – among them, locusts – and vocabularies – "our domain" as opposed to "the cultivated and desert areas" – that characterized the Jazira on the ground.

While Ottoman officials cleaned up messy complexity communicated by local actors, local actors also seem to have used language in line with Ottoman discourse as a way of consolidating their own power. In May of 1864, a chief of the Shammar by the name of Jazaʿa wrote a letter in Arabic to the governor of Kurdistan, in which he emphasized Shammar power on the margins while also praising the region's ambitious governor.[92] "We are the people of the tent in this desert, and we have been moving in this vast desert since long ago." Perhaps hoping flattery might be a pathway to power, he wrote, "We have never seen an official like you." In the otherwise Arabic-language letter, Jazaʿa used the Ottoman word *çöl* for desert – a word that includes a letter not commonly used in Arabic – signifying how the Ottoman term for the Jazira's environment made its way into the other languages of the region.[93] The Shammar chief continued using this Ottoman word when he threw his support behind what he perceived to be the Ottoman plan for the region, amounting to "improvement of the desert" (*ʿamarat al-chul*). Clearly, Jazaʿa had a plan, too, namely, to use his praise of Ottoman plans to gain a kind of control within the Shammar like that of Farhan and ʿAbd al-Karim. To achieve this aim, he vowed to protect the region from "the people of the tribes," including "the Shammar Arabs." The response of Mustafa, the governor of Kurdistan, contained both denigration and pragmatic estimation. On the one hand, Jazaʿa had never seen a city before, having spent his life in the desert.[94] His lifestyle of "savagery" was rather like being an "animal," in Mustafa's words. But the

[91] BOA, İ.MVL 510/23021, Memorandum from Kurdistan Governor Mustafa, 19 Mart 1280 (March 31, 1864).
[92] BOA, MVL 678/88, Letter from Shammar Chief Jazaʿa, 2 Zilhicce 1280 (May 9, 1864).
[93] The usage apparently prevailed into the post-Ottoman period. Lange, "Shawāyā," 108.
[94] BOA, MVL 678/88, Letter from Shammar Chief Jazaʿa, 5 Muharrem 1281 (June 10, 1864).

chief might also be of use to the Ottoman state. Whatever the plans for stopping Shammar motion, it was always handy to have someone who could exert power in the environment that Mustafa described as "the mouth of the desert," which stretched from Derik to Nusaybin. This was precisely the environment that repeated locust invasions of the previous years had revealed to be essentially outside of state – or perhaps even human – control.

COFFEEHOUSE ON THE KHABUR: THE CHECHEN SETTLEMENT AT RAS AL-AYN

The political ecology of the Jazira in the 1860s revealed a connected relationship. Locusts and nomads empowered each other. They both came from places without many people. Locusts destroyed cotton planted to capitalize on the commodity's global shortage, while nomads sold wool at high prices thanks, in part, to the cotton shortage. Ottoman officials largely ignored how the movement of people, commodities, and insects fit together as a flexible response to environmental and economic imperatives. Instead, they viewed motion as a reflection of virtue, and a factor in destroying the environment. In the coming years, yet another group of people would be classified in these disparaging terms. Expelled from the Russian Empire, Chechens were just one group of many Muslims – amounting to hundreds of thousands in total – who fled conflict and ethnic cleansing on the edge of the Ottoman Empire to seek safety and security within the empire over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were referred to in Ottoman as *muhacir*, which might be translated as "refugee," though of course the meaning would change in the twentieth century in accord with international law. The Ottoman state worked to manage them while also using them as catalysts for the expansion of cultivation everywhere from Libya to Amman to Ankara.[95] Such was to be the case with the Chechens who ended up in the Jazira.

But very early on, it became clear that the Chechen refugees would not act as Ottoman officials hoped. In fact, local officials described the refugees in many of the same ways they had described the nomads of the Jazira. When several thousand households of refugees arrived in Muş and

[95] Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees*; Fratantuono, "Producing Ottomans"; Gratien, "Ottoman Quagmire"; Hamed-Troyansky, "Circassian Refugees and the Making of Amman"; Lorenz, "The 'Second Egypt'"; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*.

Erzurum in late 1865, the local council of Diyarbekir dismissed them as hailing from "savage nations."[96] As in the case of the nomads of the Jazira, the refugees' agile responses to difficult conditions became coded as lack of civilization. The council thus decried the disorder caused by the group as they sought safety. Some attempted to return home, while others "went among the tribes" in order to survive the "severity of the winter." The Ottomans hoped to move the Chechens from more densely populated regions and toward the edge, using them to bolster the seminomadic settlements envisioned in 1864. In this way, Ottoman officials believed that they would better take advantage of the uninhabited lands near Ras al-Ayn. On the edge of the provinces of Aleppo and Kurdistan, the land had previously been targeted as part of the plan for a cordon of settlement. At the source of the Khabur River, the site boasted ruins of ancient civilization and sulfurous springs.[97] One military officer described the land as "extremely fertile and productive," terms that would become a formulaic refrain over the coming years.[98] Left out of these rosy pronouncements was how Ras al-Ayn was also part of the strip of territory that had been devastated by locust invasions in the previous years.

The idea was to place the Chechens as bulwarks of sedentary cultivation in the midst of a geography of motion. But different visions of the space still persisted, and they would affect the settlement's prospects. One encapsulation of this dilemma appeared in correspondence between Ottoman officials and the Shammar chief ʿAbd al-Karim, the leader eyed by Ottoman officials in Urfa as being ripe for civilization in 1860. In a letter written in Arabic from the nomadic leader to the governor of Kurdistan, ʿAbd al-Karim declared of the Shammar, "We are the shaykhs of the Jazira from Aleppo to the gates of Baghdad."[99] In doing so, ʿAbd al-Karim explicitly invoked the regional bounds of the Jazira that extended beyond Ottoman provinces like Aleppo and Baghdad. It was this discrepancy between the provincial map and the broader environment that in part underwrote Shammar mobility and power. The translation of the letter into Ottoman, however, revealed a different description of the space, one that left out the term "Jazira" altogether. Instead, the text rendered the space solely in terms of Ottoman provinces, merely

[96] BOA, İ.DH 546/38018, 21 Kanunuevvel 1281 (January 2, 1866).
[97] Taylor, "Journal of a Tour in Armenia, Kurdistan, and Upper Mesopotamia," 349.
[98] BOA, İ.DH 546/38018, Derviş Paşa to the Fifth Army Command, 19 Kanunusani 1281 (January 31, 1866).
[99] BOA, MVL 723/41, Shammar Chief ʿAbd al-Karim to Governor of Kurdistan Mustafa, undated.

describing it as "from Aleppo to Baghdad."[100] The omission in translation underscored the tensions at work in the region, between a mobile geography and an administrative infrastructure that split this space up. The discrepancy made it seem at times that the term "Jazira" did not even translate into the language of the Ottoman bureaucracy.

Mobile forces defying jurisdiction would haunt Ottoman efforts at reform even as new steps were taken. To this end, the famed Ottoman reformer Cevdet Pasha arrived in Aleppo in April of 1866. Born in Lovech (in today's Bulgaria), he became a scholar, statesman, and military officer. Cevdet wrote his own magisterial history of the Ottoman Empire and translated Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimat* into Ottoman Turkish, both of which exhibited a vision of progress in line with Ottoman notions of civilizational uplift at work in the Jazira.[101] He also helped to write the Land Code of 1858.[102] And prior to his arrival in Aleppo, Cevdet served as the military commander of forces charged with subduing local notables, settling nomads, and making these reforms into a reality in the Adana region.[103] They were so committed that they renamed a local city – Islahiye – after the Turkish word for reform.[104] Yet when this formidable figure arrived in Aleppo to enact change in April of 1866, he had to deal with first things first. Cevdet Pasha, famed Ottoman reformer, estimable intellectual, had to grapple with "an invasion of locusts . . . threatening the harvest with complete destruction."[105] The great Ottoman statesman's initial actions in Aleppo were thus against the small insect that had bedeviled Ottoman efforts to transform the region. In fighting the locusts, it is unclear if Cevdet mimicked the actions of a previous ruler of the region – Mehmed Ali's son Ibrahim Pasha – who met the locusts in the 1830s by catching them in his fez.[106] But once again the connected nature of the region and the fractured nature of its governance meant that Cevdet, and the residents of Aleppo, could not breathe easy even after

[100] BOA, MVL 723/41, Translation of Shammar Chief ʿAbd al-Karim to Governor of Kurdistan Mustafa, 14 Mayıs 1282 (May 26, 1866).
[101] Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, 23; Thomas, *A Study of Naima*, 2; Tekin, "Reforming Categories of Science and Religion in the Late Ottoman Empire," 131–158.
[102] Karpat, "The Land Regime, Social Structure, and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire," 87.
[103] On the devastating epidemics that occurred as a result of and in the wake of these campaigns, see Gratien, *The Unsettled Plain*, 56–93.
[104] Ibid., 71.
[105] CADN, 166PO/D/1/62, Consul General in Aleppo to Marquis de Moustier, April 12, 1866.
[106] CADC, 4CCC/33, Aleppo to de Lhongs, April 25, 1863.

their efforts ended. After all, as the French consul suggested, it "remained still to be seen ... if the locusts had also been destroyed in surrounding provinces."

The location of the site of the Chechen settlement at Ras al-Ayn was roughly the center of the landscape that had been devastated by locust invasions in 1861, and insects and nomads had an impact there again. Ottoman officials struggled to locate supplies to provision the Chechen refugees in the wake of three years of "constant destruction of their crops ... by the locusts."[107] Nomads also affected the fate of the Chechen settlement. American missionaries in Mardin reported that the Chechens could not immediately reach Ras al-Ayn in accordance with the plan because nomadic groups had heard "of the intent to locate them there" and hence "came up earlier" to the region than usual.[108] In the words of the missionary, when the nomads reached Ras al-Ayn, they "took possession and keep possession." Whether the nomads had moved to the edge of the desert because of the locusts or because of the threat of settlement on their pastures, it was clear that the Ottoman state would have to contend with complicated dynamics of motion to install the Chechens. The nomadic occupation of the space left "the Pasha and all the troops ... on the edge of the mountains overlooking the plain." In other words, Ottoman administration of the Jazira looked much like the map of 1864, which rendered Ottoman administration looking to the southeast from the Anatolian highlands. The grasslands of the Jazira had offered nomads like the Shammar sustenance for decades, and their ability to make value out of these margins had afforded them a kind of power. It would not be crowded out easily.

The settlement of the Chechens finally began to move forward in late 1866 and 1867, occasioning great optimism for agrarian and civilizational change, at least among some. Perhaps the most enthusiastic booster of the Chechen settlement was the British consul Taylor. Having previously been an agent of the East India Company in Basra, he occupied much of his time with archaeology.[109] Accordingly, he took a long (if not accurate) view of the importance of the settlement. He boasted in early 1867 that "for the first time for several hundred years Northern Mesopotamia is comparatively free from thieving Bedouins, is again traversed by carts, and its

[107] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Taylor to Lyons, 30 July 1866.
[108] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, 30 July 1866, Taylor to Lyons, Copy of Extract: 9 July 1866, Walker to Taylor.
[109] Sollberger, "Mr. Taylor in Chaldaea."

comparatively virgin soil has been broken down and sown with seed."[110] In short, he viewed the Chechen settlement as world historical, and he blithely deemed the Shammar a relic of the past, predicting that they would "forever be effectively excluded from this part of Mesopotamia, so long a useless desert under their blighting domination." With the Shammar gone, Taylor crowed that the Ottomans would restore "the proverbial fertility of the vast space" that had "been successively attested by all ancient and modern authors down to Marco Polo." In place of the Shammar, he imagined "thousands of acres of rich virgin soil" turned over to cotton cultivation.[111] Lockean notions of utility shaped Taylor's pronouncements, as he deemed improvement to be the most important factor in determining value. Left out of his judgment was the idea that there was actually a logic and value to exploitation of the region by pastoralists.

In reality, the harsh conditions of settlement likely made a life of nomadic pastoralism appealing to the Chechens. As the Chechens ran out of provisions, they had to rely on animals to supply their nutritional needs, and "they devoured every four footed beast that fell into their hands."[112] Typically, people in the region relied on animal manure as fuel, but because the Chechens lacked animals, they also lacked manure to use as fuel, and so they chopped down some of the area's few trees, including fruit trees that lined the Khabur River.[113] Meanwhile, for housing, many spent the winter living in what Taylor described as "a species of covered holes they have burrowed in the ground."[114] Boosters had envisioned the Chechens as catalyzing a transformation of the land, turning pastures considered wasteland into ordered rows of wheat and cotton fields. Instead, the Chechens entered the ground itself. The American missionary in Mardin, Augustus Walker, conveyed the impact of the Chechen refugees in a perhaps-overdetermined way, given their mobile nature and impact on the region's resources. He wrote that they were "worse than [a] locust invasion."[115]

In the years to come, the hopes attached to the Chechens of transforming the nomads gave way to fears that it would be the nomads who would

[110] TNA-UK, FO 195/889, Taylor to Lyons, January 15, 1867.
[111] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Taylor to Lyons, December 28, 1866.
[112] TNA-UK, FO 195/799, Taylor to Lyons, December 28, 1866.
[113] Taylor, "Journal of a Tour in Armenia, Kurdistan, and Upper Mesopotamia," 350.
[114] TNA-UK, FO 195/889, Taylor to Lyons, January 15, 1867.
[115] *The Missionary Herald, Containing the Proceedings of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions with a View of Other Benevolent Operations for the Year 1866*, vol. 62 (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1866), 362.

transform the Chechens. In March of 1867, Kurdistan governor Mustafa decried how the Shammar continued to wander in the desert, making them seem more like "birds and beasts" than human beings.[116] Yet at the same time, Ottoman soldiers could make little impact on them in the difficult environment of the Jazira. While Mustafa did not deploy the metaphor of the locusts, he did describe the impact of the Shammar through figurative language that packed a particular punch. He declared that the Shammar had turned all the lands on the edge of the desert into "disorder," but he conveyed this point by literally saying that they had turned this region into "Arab hair." The racist idiom uses stereotypically curly Arab hair to signify lack of control. In Turkish, the term "Arab" also often meant "Black."[117] Accordingly, the term had a particular connotation with the Shammar, given that a significant number of enslaved and formerly enslaved people of African descent lived among them, as had been highlighted by the prominence of an enslaved person in the story of their initial migration to the region.[118] In the same spring, Cevdet Pasha in Aleppo carried a similar if less specific message of denigration, calling all of the inhabitants of the "exact center of the deserts" at Deir ez-Zor "savage."[119] Environment, mobility, and race came together in these characterizations of the Shammar and other nomadic groups of the Jazira.

Further complicating matters was the threat of the locusts, which forever loomed on the horizon, beyond human settlement and, seemingly, control. In 1867, as in 1860, however, nonhumans intervened to lessen the locust burden once again. The British consul from Diyarbekir Taylor warned that even though rains seemed to augur a good harvest, locusts were "still dreaded."[120] He moreover disparaged Ottoman locust-control efforts, which only consisted – by his account – of "sprinkling a few drops of holy water" from Konya, the same substance believed to have attracted the starlings in Mosul in 1860 that left the Tigris flowing with locust

[116] BOA, MVL 734/59, Governor of Kurdistan Mustafa to Aleppo province, 4 Mart 1283 (March 16, 1867).

[117] Boratav, *100 Soruda Türk Folkloru*, 51, 69, 102; Willoughby, "Opposing a Spectacle of Blackness"; Wingham, "*Arap Baci'nın Ara Muhaveresi*."

[118] It was a Black member of the Shammar named Dathan who led Layard to the archaeological site at Hatra in 1846. Layard was surprised by the warm embraces Dathan exchanged with all Shammar along the way. Layard, *A Popular Account*, 72. See also Jwaideh and Cox, "The Black Slaves of Turkish Arabia during the 19th Century," 48.

[119] BOA, İ.MVL 571/25663, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha to Grand Vizier, 2 Mart 1283 (March 14, 1867).

[120] TNA-UK, FO 195/889, Report on Commercial Conditions of Consular District of Kurdistan, 18 April 1867.

carcasses. Yet Taylor also witnessed the power of the starlings west of Mardin just at the foot of the Anatolian plateau.[121] There were no clouds in the sky on the spring day in 1867 when he visited, but suddenly he was met with the "instantaneous obscurity" produced by an "impenetrable swarm" of locusts. The wheat survived, since it was already sufficiently mature that it was "unsuited to the delicate tastes of these insects." Still, the locusts posed a threat to summer crops. It was not government officials that met the locusts, however, but rather a natural enemy, namely the starlings referred to in Arabic as, in Taylor's transliteration, "Sammirmed." The fight between the vaunted birds and the swarming insects could be fierce. Taylor had witnessed insects even bring their avian enemies to the ground, starlings "having been completely nibbled by the locusts." But in this case, the birds prevailed. They appeared to so enjoy killing the locusts that they did not even bother to eat them, instead snapping them in two, and washing their beaks out with water from a nearby stream anytime locust carcasses began to clog them. The murderous starlings' flight in the spring of 1867 pointed to how processes beyond human control persisted in the Jazira.[122]

As enmity prevailed between starlings and locusts, the Ottomans attempted to ensure the same dynamic between refugees and nomads. Some reports emerged suggesting that the Chechens had sided with Shammar chief ʿAbd al-Karim in attacks against the ʿAnaza.[123] Taylor wrote that in this regard the Ottoman state might have more to fear from the Chechens than the Jazira's nomads, given the military training many of the refugees had received during their time in the Russian army. He warned that stationing imperial troops near Nusaybin would do little, seeing as the nomads would simply move elsewhere. Taylor claimed that Ottoman officials handled the situation by encouraging the Chechens to raid the Shammar. Allegedly, Derviş Pasha had given his imprimatur, remarking during a visit to the Chechens, "There is a great deal of sport in the desert," before specifying, "I don't mean gazelles and hares but camels, horses and sheep and you can amuse yourselves as you like." Derviş Pasha clearly referred to the animals of the Shammar that had for so long been the lifeblood of the group's mobility and opportunistic

[121] Taylor, "Journal of a Tour in Armenia, Kurdistan, and Upper Mesopotamia," 359.

[122] Later British officials were less suspicious of the impact of the starlings, but they were circumspect on whether they should introduce the birds to Cyprus given that "the manner in which [the starling] attacks grapes and other fruit almost counterbalances his use as a locust destroyer." TNA-UK, FO 424/132, Wilson to Earl of Dufferin, February 21, 1882.

[123] TNA-UK, FO 195/889, Taylor to Elliot, April 20, 1868.

defiance of Ottoman officials. In May of 1868, reports suggested that the Chechens themselves had pulled off raids against the Shammar, having taken some 14,000 sheep.[124] They also allegedly struck against ʿAmsha, the queen of the desert, whom they "despoiled of all her ornaments and clothes." In protest, she dispatched "her own riding camel housed in black" to the various branches of the Shammar in the hope of uniting them against the Chechen raids.

While tension simmered between Chechen refugees and Shammar nomadic pastoralists, the Jazira came within the sights of a much broader Ottoman reform effort focusing on the relationship between central and local administration. The stationing of Cevdet Pasha in nearby Aleppo – once he got past the locusts, of course – represented one mark of this shift. So, too, did the transfer of Midhat Pasha to the governorship of Baghdad in 1868. On the other edge of the Jazira, Midhat Pasha embodied the dynamics of reform in a similar way. Like Cevdet, Midhat had also spent some of his early years in Lovech.[125] Like Cevdet, too, Midhat had also helped to pen a significant piece of Ottoman legislation in the form of the 1864 Vilayet Law, which clarified the relationship between local administration and the central government, with the aim of preventing foreign intervention.[126] He subsequently served as the governor of Danube province, widely seen as a test run for many of the reforms he championed.[127] Midhat would go on to write the Ottoman constitution and serve as the grand vizier overseeing its implementation, for which he was hailed by many as "the father of the free and the deposer of sultans."[128] But before these events, he found himself governor of Baghdad, forming a pincer movement with Cevdet Pasha surrounding the Jazira.

With less esteem and more infamy than Cevdet and Midhat were several local officials who both took their names from carnivorous predators and derived their power from extracting value from the land in violent ways. Arslan ("Lion") Pasha had distinguished himself as the district governor of Mardin. During this time, he had arrested a number of villagers from the Midyat region because they had failed to pay taxes "owing to losses occasioned by locusts and general poverty consequent

[124] TNA-UK, FO 195/889, Taylor to Elliot, May 28, 1868.
[125] Chambers, "The Education of a Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Alim, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha," 441; Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 144.
[126] Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 146–147.
[127] Petrov, "Midhat Paşa and the *Vilayet* of Danube."
[128] Saliba, "The Achievements of Midhat Pasha," 307.

upon high prices."[129] After a brief skirmish, Arslan took prisoners and returned them to Mardin, where they "were exposed in the July sun to the attacks of myriads of insects abounding at that time." Another of Arslan's enforcers "bound" men "in the sun" and put "syrup" on their faces "to attract the vermin and flies." Still another killed a woman who had complained of his violent ways and then "quartered the body and hung the pieces up on the trees near the high road." Arslan reportedly tolerated the behavior because the official was good at collecting taxes, pointing to the ways that extracting value from the environment in the form of taxes was also occasioned, sometimes, by the use of the environment itself as a weapon.

Some of the same practices were rumored to be associated with a figure named Ismail Pasha but more widely known as Kurt ("Wolf") Pasha, who, too, used environmental violence.[130] An ally of Cevdet Pasha, the illiterate Kurt Pasha was appointed governor of Diyarbekir in 1868 (it had previously been a part of Kurdistan province, which was broken apart in 1867). When an official in Ras al-Ayn was charged with embezzlement, Kurt Pasha punished him by tying a hungry greyhound to the alleged corrupt official's back and placing a basket of bread around the official's neck. The official was to climb the hill up to Mardin in this state, marching from the fertile soil at its foot to the stony hilltop city while the angry dog repeatedly bit him. Taylor concluded, "The numerous acts attributed to him are so vindictively atrocious that I even having some knowledge of the man would fair believe them exaggerated or the acts of a demented being, but the Pasha's antecedents unhappily are too notorious for such suppositions." The lurid tales of violence coupled with the presence of Tanzimat luminaries such as Cevdet and Midhat underscored the stakes of reform in the Jazira. At issue were questions of government efficiency, while the means of violence was the environment itself.

Alongside the Jazira's leonine and lupine administrators was a more mundane technology aimed at conveying the message of civilizational uplift and news of agrarian transformation: *Diyarbekir Gazetesi*, a state-published newspaper inaugurated in 1869. It trumpeted, for example, the familiar lament of how for many years there had been "six hundred villages at the foot of the mountains from Urfa, Siverek, and Mardin all the way to Nusaybin."[131] The very same geography had been described by

[129] TNA-UK, FO 195/889, Taylor to Lyons, March 6, 1867.
[130] TNA-UK, FO 195/889, Taylor to Elliot, September 30, 1868.
[131] *Diyarbekir Gazetesi*, 28 Ağustos 1285 (September 9, 1869).

consuls as being devastated by locusts throughout the 1860s. Kurdish chiefs had similarly suggested how the locusts had pushed them to seeking government support for their settlements. But as in 1864, officials focused on people to blame for the environment, rather than environmental variations such as locusts or drought. By this familiar argument, the region had turned to "ruins" and "the main cause of the ruins were the Shammar Arabs" (*Şamar urbânı*). Government publications thus made clear who was the target of the reform efforts.

But they also signaled how this campaign was part of a movement around the world, both in time and in space. With respect to time, one article in *Diyarbekir Gazetesi* declared that in "the age of prosperity" (*mamuriyet*) such "ruins" as marred the Jazira had to be improved.[132] With respect to global currents, another article in the publication observed that in America and Europe, there were many places comparable to "our desert," yet, in contrast to the Ottoman case, they had been transformed thanks to government diligence.[133] The implication was that the same could occur in the plains south of Diyarbekir. And the newspaper emphasized signs that were cause for optimism. The organ did not speak of Ras al-Ayn in the way that someone like the British consul Taylor had. But its articles nevertheless noted that the fertile soil beside the Khabur River south of Ras al-Ayn had produced enormous watermelons weighing fifteen to twenty kiyye (forty-two to fifty-six pounds), a sign of "the extent to which the lands were fertile and productive."[134] Perhaps even more impressive than preposterously large cucurbits, the Chechen refugees – who had survived the ethnic cleansing on the empire's borders with Russia to be called savages and compared to locusts in the Ottoman Empire – had a coffeehouse. Its windows overlooked the Khabur River. In honor of such developments, Ras al-Ayn's mosque witnessed a prayer to Sultan Abdülaziz, who, it was declared, "revived the desert that had once been ruins."

FROM WANDERING GROUND TO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT

Locusts had played a key role in developments for much of the previous decade, but environmental factors beyond the insects would shape the region's fate in the coming years. In the 1860s, locusts had devastated

[132] *Diyarbekir Gazetesi*, 28 Ağustos 1285 (September 9, 1869).
[133] *Diyarbekir Gazetesi*, 23 Teşrinievvel 1285 (November 4, 1869).
[134] *Diyarbekir Gazetesi*, 27 Teşrinisani 1285 (December 9, 1869).

agriculture, and cotton cultivation in particular during the global cotton shortage instigated by the American Civil War. In the process, locusts ensured that it made sense to remain a nomadic pastoralist in the Jazira. The insects had also chewed away at provisions necessary for refugee resettlement. They even proved so symbolically powerful that Chechen refugees had been compared to them. In 1870, they made yet another appearance in late February in Mardin.[135] Snowfall and a quick turn from cold to warm weather succeeded in wiping out the insects, a reminder that nonhuman factors figured as much into the absence of locusts as human effort. Yet the absence of locusts did not mean an easy season in the Jazira. Drought had afflicted the region beginning the previous winter, and many villages surrounding Aleppo did not even harvest enough to recover seed for the following year.[136] In Mosul, too, crops failed, with some 130 villages emptied, as their populations fled to the mountains where they worked vineyards and the famine crop of maize.[137] Meanwhile, in the deserts of the Jazira, the Shammar found their pastures withered and received special permission to migrate north into Diyarbekir province and the largely Kurdish region of Mount Karaca, so that they and their animals did not die of "hunger and thirst."[138]

It was in this context of drought and human mobility that Ottoman officials once again reconsidered the geographic frame through which they governed the Jazira. A memorandum described a situation in which the Shammar – like other nomadic groups in the empire – adeptly took advantage of all of the "provinces of Baghdad, Aleppo, and Diyarbekir that surrounded the country of the desert."[139] If the Shammar received punishment from any of these provinces, they would right away head for another province. No one was better at this, the memo noted, than the Shammar chief ʿAbd al-Karim, who had long been eyed by Ottoman officials as both a threat and – if reformed – a possible ally. His movement and that of others threatened the broader Ottoman plan for the region, too. The fact that Ras al-Ayn was directly on the edge of the desert – with the land between it and Nusaybin and Deir ez-Zor "empty of any improvement" – made it especially vulnerable to such depredations.

[135] *Diyarbekir Gazetesi*, 23 Nisan 1286 (5 May 1870), p. 3.
[136] CADC, 4CCC/34, Bertrand to Duc de Gramont, 12 August 1870.
[137] TNA-UK, FO 195/949, Rassam to Elliot, 13 June 1870.
[138] *Diyarbekir Gazetesi*, 2 Temmuz 1286 (July 14, 1870).
[139] BOA, İ.MMS 40/1654, Mehmed Rüşdi, 12 Şeval 1287 (January 5, 1871). On similar dynamics on the "internal Ottoman 'border' between Benghazi and Egypt," see Ellis, *Desert Borderland*, 123–128.

Thus the settlement that had been intended as a "wall" against the "desert" seemed close to transforming into part of the desert. All of these observations prompted Ottoman officials to note that "bringing the desert country under a unified administration would produce many benefits."

The plan offered a variation on the Ottoman translation of ʿAbd al-Karim's letter in 1864. That letter represented the way that Ottoman administration did not or could not take account of broader regional connections beyond Ottoman provinces. But the deliberations of 1871 pointed to the ways that Ottoman officials hoped to ameliorate this problem. The orders of the Ottoman grand vizier Mehmed Emin Ali to Arslan Pasha – he of the voracious tax collectors in Mardin – underscored this awareness.[140] The grand vizier began by explaining the area of administration that he had in mind for reform. The region was referred to as Zor, and because of its capital city of Deir on the Euphrates, it was sometimes referred to as Deir ez-Zor. In Ottoman usage, however, Zor typically referred to the district generally, whereas Deir or Deir ez-Zor referred to the city on the Euphrates. According to the grand vizier, Zor encompassed "the desert country between Baghdad, Diyarbekir, and Aleppo." The region extended "from the places close to Mosul," stretched from there to the Euphrates, and on another axis starting from "the places called Sinjar and Khabur and ending with the place named Ras al-Ayn in Diyarbekir." The extensive district would still not perfectly fit with the environment. Mehmed Emin Ali admitted that the desert went beyond the confines of Zor. But he still hoped that the new arrangement would help to bring about change in a region "empty of agriculture." In other words, the highest state official was convinced that the gap between environmental and political borders had to be closed.

As part of this plan to remedy the situation, the grand vizier called for Zor to be designated with a special status in the Ottoman provincial scheme. Like many before him, the grand vizier blamed the region's nomads for this state of affairs, accusing groups such as the Shammar and the ʿAnaza of "destroying traces of prosperity" and turning the area into a "wandering ground" (*cevelangah*). The way to fix it, Mehmed Emin Ali explained, would be to turn it into a "special administrative district" (*mutasarrıflık*; Figure 8). The possibility of this new administrative category stemmed from Midhat Pasha's work on the Vilayet Law, which offered a special status for some places, such that their governor reported

[140] BOA, ŞD 2434/69, Orders from Mehmed Emin Ali to Arslan Pasha, 3 Mart 1287 (March 15, 1871).

FIGURE 8 The special administrative district of Zor, 1871

directly to Istanbul and could allow for greater oversight on all decisions. Over the years, entities that obtained this status included Mount Lebanon, Jerusalem, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica.

At the same time as officials utilized this instrument to rethink administration of Zor, they also looked to reform administration of the eastern portions of the Shammar domains. There, Midhat Pasha went to work. He echoed the rationale put forward by other Ottoman officials about an unruly space ruined by nomads. In Midhat's reckoning, the region from Aleppo to Baghdad – including places such as Urfa, Siverek, Diyarbekir, Mardin, and Mosul – had once been home to "prosperous villages" but fell into "ruins" when their inhabitants either "fled" or "entered a state of savagery" by joining the nomads.[141] Other officials had described the space in terms of existing Ottoman provinces, but Midhat Pasha saw the region that crossed all of these lines, referring to the space in question as "the Jazira."

To achieve reform where others had failed, Midhat hoped to exploit the division of power between the half-brother leaders of the Shammar, ʿAbd al-Karim and Farhan. The Shammar may have frequently used Ottoman borders for their own interests, but Midhat observed that the half-brothers "do not cross the borders of each other."[142] While Farhan wintered near Baghdad and summered near Mosul, ʿAbd al-Karim moved around the Khabur and Zor more commonly. The fraternal borders posed an opportunity. So, too, did the hardship that the nomads had experienced over the previous year. The drought of 1870 had given way to the harsh winter of 1871, which had wiped out many of their animals and left the Shammar in a state of "despair." Midhat believed they might be enticed to settle. He proposed forming a district named "Shammar" near Mosul and allowed that in the future it might extend all the way to the Khabur River, which fell in the district of Zor in the lands of ʿAbd al-Karim to the west. An Arabic proclamation on the matter specified that the state would cede all uncultivated land on the right bank of the Tigris between Tikrit and Mosul to the Shammar.[143]

A REVOLT AGAINST BORDERS

With the Shammar in such a condition Ottoman officials hoped to align the borders of the state with those of the arid environment. In another memo to Arslan Pasha from the grand vizier, the goal was once again articulated as

[141] BOA, İ.DH 630/43847, Midhat Pasha to Grand Vizier, 3 Mart 1287 (March 15, 1871).
[142] BOA, İ.DH 630/43847, Midhat Pasha to Grand Vizier, 3 Mart 1287 (March 15, 1871).
[143] BOA, İ.DH 630/43847, To Farhan, 19 Zilhicce 1287 (March 12, 1871).

"an administration of the desert."[144] Zor had always been "by virtue of its place" the most sensible "center of a desert administration." But in addition to the already existing district of Zor (which had previously been part of Aleppo), officials added Ras al-Ayn and Nusaybin (previously in Diyarbekir), and Sinjar (previously in Baghdad). The proposed district was also to include a number of tribes previously affiliated with Aleppo. Ottoman officials clearly believed that borders were at the heart of their effort to transform the Jazira, to make its administrative borders look more like human mobility in its environment and, thus, easier to govern.

The Shammar understood the plans to be a threat. In the summer of 1871, a portion of the Shammar revolted. There is some dispute on what immediately precipitated the uprising, whether it was an insult by an official from Nusaybin of ʿAbd al-Karim or something else.[145] But as historian Oktay Karaman has suggested, the broader issue was ʿAbd al-Karim's anger at the "linking of Ras al-Ayn and Nusaybin to the district of Zor," and, he believed, the plot behind it to force him and other nomads of "the Jazira to build houses and work the land."[146] Such plans meant an end to the motion that had allowed ʿAbd al-Karim to carve out a space of autonomy on the edges of Ottoman administration.

As the revolt began, likely exaggerated reports of violence gave Ottoman officials the pretext they needed to paint the Shammar as the kind of savages they had long been presented as. Consular officials described widespread destruction in cultivated areas around Mardin and Nusaybin.[147] They took as much "wheat, barley, and objects of all sorts" that "their camels" could carry.[148] Midhat Pasha likened ʿAbd al-Karim to "a savage dog."[149] In his memoir, Midhat referred to the Shammar chief as Genghis Khan.[150] Whether an animal or a destructive scourge, ʿAbd al-Karim was – by Midhat's description – not only an enemy of the

[144] BOA, ŞD 2434/69, Grand Vizier to Arslan Pasha, 29 Haziran 1287 (July 11, 1871).
[145] TNA-UK, FO 195/939, Taylor to Elliot, August 6, 1871; CADN 166PO/D/1/66, Bertrand to Comte de Vogüe, July 29, 1871; 166PO/D/7/15, French Consul in Baghdad, July 19, 1871.
[146] Karaman, "Diyarbakır Valisi Hatunoğlu Kurt Ismail Paşa'nın Diyarbakır'daki Aşiretleri Islah ve İskan Çalışması (1868–1875)," 242; CADN, 166PO/D/54/5, Consul in Mosul to Comte de Montebello, July 29, 1871.
[147] CADN, 166PO/D/1/66, Bertrand to Comte de Vogüe, July 29, 1871; CADN, 166PO/D/54/5, Consul in Mosul to Comte de Montebello, July 29, 1871.
[148] CADN, 166PO/D/54/5, Consul in Mosul to Comte de Montebello, July 29, 1871.
[149] BOA, ŞD 2148/36, Governor of Baghdad Midhat Pasha to Grand Vizier, 8 Eylül 1287 (September 20, 1871).
[150] Midhat Paşa, *Tabsıra-ı İbret*, 111.

state but also an enemy of agriculture. Midhat claimed to have intercepted correspondence between ʿAbd al-Karim and other nomads attempting to incite a broader revolt against the Ottoman administration, which, the Shammar chief insisted, was intent on "demolishing the tent [*bayt al-shaʿr*]" that was symbolic of their nomadic lifestyle.[151] Midhat also evidently wanted to use the conflict to ensure that "no hope remained" for the Shammar "to live in the country of the Jazira."[152]

Agriculture and the Jazira were central to Midhat Pasha's actions, as they were to ʿAbd al-Karim's brother Farhan's decision to stand down during the revolt. Midhat offered amnesty to ʿAbd al-Karim's followers, on the condition that they join Farhan and till the earth.[153] British consular reports suggested that Farhan apologized for his brother's revolt and sought state support for his own control of the Shammar "and the country they inhabit," specifically outside the jurisdiction of the provinces of Baghdad and Diyarbekir.[154] Though the Ottoman side of this correspondence is unclear, Farhan's request would not have been unreasonable, not only given the previous arrangement for the Shammar to settle along the Tigris but also in light of various local actors' – nomadic or otherwise – ability to turn imperial reform in the direction of their particular interests.[155] Moreover, Farhan's proposal pointed to a more complicated use of borders by the Shammar than simply as a portent of oppression or means of escape. For Farhan, the changing borders of the Tanzimat presented an opportunity of a different kind: becoming an Ottoman official.

While presented as illogical avatars of violence and destruction by European observers and Ottoman state officials alike, ʿAbd al-Karim and the Shammar actually employed much the same tactics that they had in the past. They utilized both state borders and the Jazira environment as part of their challenge to the Ottoman effort to make these units align. According to the French consul in Baghdad, the Shammar had actually taken care to attack only the lands of Mosul and Baghdad rather than Urfa and Diyarbekir so as to "show that it is not the authority of the Sultan against

[151] BOA, ŞD 2148/36, Governor of Baghdad Midhat Pasha to Grand Vizier, 8 Eylül 1287 (September 20, 1871).
[152] Ibid.
[153] BOA, ŞD 2148/36, Arabic language proclamation of Governorate of Baghdad to the People, undated.
[154] TNA-UK, FO 195/939, Taylor to Elliot, August 6, 1871.
[155] Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, 142; Fattah and Badem, "The Sultan and the Rebel," 680; Petrov, "Everyday Forms of Compliance"; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 78–81; Saraçoğlu, *Nineteenth-Century Local Governance in Ottoman Bulgaria*, 56.

whom they make war, but against Midhat Pasha."[156] In addition to being conscious of Ottoman borders, the Shammar also adeptly used the environment. Initially, the Ottoman governor of Diyarbekir – the famed Kurt ("Wolf") Pasha – had pursued ʿAbd al-Karim, but the Shammar slipped away into the desert.[157] Left with a disappearing enemy in a harsh environment, Kurt Pasha attacked any nomads he encountered and duly reported his strikes against unaffiliated groups as victories against the Shammar. In reality, however, his troops not only failed to defeat the Shammar in battle, but also even failed to face them. As of early September, according to one report, Kurt Pasha's troops remained sequestered south of Mosul where they were "suffering seriously from deprivations and illnesses" thanks to the late-summer heat.[158] Meanwhile, ʿAbd al-Karim remained to the west between Sinjar and the Khabur, safe in the desert.

But the desert only provided a temporary shelter. The Shammar may have known how to survive in the Jazira more effectively than government troops, but their life in the Jazira had never been one of isolation. The Shammar and Midhat Pasha alike both called upon clear divisions between nomadic and settled life as part of the conflict. But such distinctions had always obfuscated the ways that both groups were interconnected. The so-called civilized cities and villages relied on nomads for animal products, while the so-called uncivilized nomads relied on cities and villages for wheat, barley, and other provisions. ʿAbd al-Karim brought his forces out of the desert and to the southeast toward Baghdad in search of supplies. Then, seeking environmental refuge once again, he crossed the Euphrates and headed for the desert and what he assumed to be the safe confines of the Muntafiq nomadic group. He was mistaken. The Muntafiq promptly captured him and handed the Shammar chief to Midhat Pasha, further evidence of how the civilizational conflict presented between nomads and the state was not so simple. It was the reliance of the Shammar on the world outside of the desert for supplies that prompted ʿAbd al-Karim to leave more familiar territory, and it was connections between the Muntafiq nomads and Midhat Pasha that ensured ʿAbd al-Karim's capture.

A Baghdad court sentenced him to death, and he was transported to Mosul.[159] He had built his power by taking advantage of the disjuncture

[156] CADN, 166PO/D/7/15, July 19, 1871.
[157] CADC, 4CCC/35, Bertrand to Favre, August 19, 1871.
[158] CADC, 4CCC/35, Bertrand to Favre, September 5, 1871.
[159] Williamson, "A Political History of the Shammar," 115.

between the environment of the Jazira and the provincial borders that divided it up. He had been called a "savage," his actions had been said to turn the land into something like "Arab hair." His movement required cordons to stop, as if it were a disease, and, ultimately, a special administrative district with borders meant to encompass the entirety of the desert, denigrated by Ottoman officials as wasteland. But ʿAbd al-Karim knew better. The formation of Zor carried with it a plan to make him settle. And wasteland was a misnomer, if only one knew where to look for the fresh green grasses of springtime, or the white chamomile flowers of June. If he looked west from Mosul, he would have seen the ruins of Nineveh, the immense mounds of the city of antiquity whose excavation prompted the Ottomans to imagine transforming the Jazira. Maybe in the distance beyond, ʿAbd al-Karim could have seen the grasses of the Jazira expanses that in stretching across provincial boundaries, had for so long offered him opportunities for refuge as one of the "Sultans of the Open Lands." But these grasses would not save him that autumn. He was executed on the bridge over the Tigris.

Although the revolt involved a blurring of distinctions between nomadic and settled, state and savage, Midhat Pasha and his allies celebrated the execution of ʿAbd al-Karim as an unambiguous victory of settled agriculture and state control over an unruly environment. Conflicts between states and nomadic groups all around the world at this time took on a distinctly agrarian character. In the United States, seizure of Native American land was used to seed the endowments of the country's land-grant universities, whose research on agriculture would radically transform the land of which Indigenous nations had been dispossessed.[160] A similar dynamic occurred in the Jazira, though on a different scale. Midhat sold ʿAbd al-Karim's camels and purchased "agricultural implements" with the proceeds.[161] The Diyarbekir provincial yearbook carried a similar message of stark contrast between nomadic and settled, suggesting that most of the Shammar shaykhs had never even seen a house before, and now their "savageness had been annihilated."[162] Midhat also took the opportunity to display power across provincial borders. He boasted that the Shammar had underestimated Ottoman

[160] Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone, "Land-Grab Universities," *High Country News*, March 30, 2020.
[161] BOA, İ.DH 639/44468, Baghdad Governor Midhat Pasha to Grand Vizier, 20 Eylül 1287 (October 2, 1871).
[162] *Diyarbekir Salnamesi* 1288, 187.

forces, believing that – as in the past – provincial borders and climate would act as their ally. Not so in 1871, Midhat insisted, noting that not only had Kurt Pasha of Diyarbekir pursued ʿAbd al-Karim across "the border of Baghdad," but so too had troops in Mosul chased the nomads "into the desert . . . in the month of July."[163] Kurt Pasha happily contributed to this narrative of environmental mastery. In direct contradiction of reports of his soldiers' struggles, he declared that troops all across "the desert region" had united against the Shammar and had surmounted not only the nomadic threat but also the environmental challenge of "poisonous air."[164]

For years, the Shammar had taken advantage of the Jazira's status stretching across Ottoman provinces, but Midhat declared that the region would no longer provide refuge. In a rejoinder to his promises of a Shammar district, Midhat crowed that "the name of the Shammar would not remain" and "there was no hope" for "the bandit" ʿAbd al-Karim "to live . . . in the Jazira."[165] Nor would any nomads live in the Jazira, Midhat declared. If the nomads needed land, they could be content with the Shamiyya desert, southwest of the Euphrates. In that way he hoped the "country of the Jazira would obtain the previous degree of prosperity" that it had once possessed.

But Midhat Pasha's promises of agricultural reawakening would come up short in the wake of the conflict. Farhan Pasha – the brother of ʿAbd al-Karim, who did not revolt – was remunerated handsomely for standing down. Midhat arranged to allocate to the chief a salary of 5,000 kuruş and another 20,000 at the disposal of an administrative council.[166] Ottoman authorities even set up the Shammar chief in a castle at Shirqat on the Tigris, with some 170 water pumps operating within the first year.[167] Yet from the very beginning, there were cracks in the edifice of the agricultural foundation Midhat attempted to construct. Almost all of those who had settled with Farhan at Shirqat were gone by January 1872 because their camels "needed a peculiar pasture" that they could not find in the

[163] BOA, ŞD 2148/36, Baghdad Governor Midhat Pasha to Grand Vizier, 8 Eylül 1287 (September 20, 1871).
[164] BOA, İ.DH 642/44656, Diyarbekir Governor İsmail Hakkı, 12 Teşrinievvel 1287 (October 24, 1871).
[165] BOA, ŞD 2148/36, Baghdad Governor Midhat Pasha to Grand Vizier, 8 Eylül 1287 (September 20, 1871).
[166] BOA, İ.ŞD 24/1057, Council of State Decree, 18 Cemazeyilahir 1289 (August 22, 1872).
[167] Midhat Pasha, *Tabsıra*, 113; TNA-UK, FO 195/1479, Howden to Richards, June 15, 1884.

immediate vicinity.[168] Midhat Pasha envisioned Shirqat as a way of transforming the lives of the Shammar morally and materially. But they treated the settlement of Shirqat not unlike their other seasonal sites of residence, convenient only insofar as it offered the resources that their animal property required to survive. Moreover, in a mark of the itinerant nature of Ottoman officials as well as the nomads they were charged with managing, Midhat Pasha would not stay either. He was bound for bigger things. In 1872, he took up the position of grand vizier of the empire.

Although the Shammar of Farhan might not have remained in one place in exactly the way authorities wished, Ottoman provincial officials happily hailed the new borders of the Jazira that had prompted ʿAbd al-Karim's revolt. Arslan Pasha had died of poisoning shortly after clashes elsewhere in Zor with the ʿAnaza.[169] His successor Ömer Şevki described how the absence of the "chief bandit" ʿAbd al-Karim had changed the region, giving the administration the ability to entice other nomads to settle, as had occurred in the case of some 2,000 households of the Arabic-speaking Baggara on the Euphrates.[170] He would later boast that lands that had once been home to nothing but "birds and beasts" on the Khabur were becoming home to nomads keen on taking advantage of "fertile and bountiful" soil on the riverbanks.[171] Ömer Şevki even called for Zor to be transformed from a special administrative district (*mutasarrıflık*) to a full province (*vilayet*) in its own right.[172] Officials in Nusaybin and Ras al-Ayn – districts that had been lopped off of other provinces in order to form Zor – also praised their connection to the district formed in 1871.[173] After nearly a decade of considering how to reform the region of the Jazira, it seemed that Ottoman officials had achieved something.[174] They had aligned the scales through which they governed with the environment, or at least made them closer to one another. Provincial reorganization provided fertile ground

[168] TNA-UK, FO 195/949, Rassam to Elliot, January 4, 1872.
[169] Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire*, 118.
[170] BOA, ŞD 2213/19, Military Detachment Commander and District Governor of Zor Ömer Şevki, 11 Kanunusani 1287 (January 23, 1872).
[171] BOA, ŞD 2213/29, Ömer Şevki to Grand Vizier, 13 Recep 1289 (September 16, 1872).
[172] BOA, ŞD 2149/17, Ömer Şevki to Grand Vizier, 4 Şaban 1289 (October 7, 1872).
[173] BOA, ŞD 2213/38, Nusaybin District Report, 13 Kanunusani 1288 (January 25, 1873); Ras al-Ayn District Report, 24 Zilkade 1289 (January 23, 1873).
[174] Not everyone agreed. Damascus governor Suphi Pasha, for example, complained that no one had ever settled in Zor and, echoing many, added that when "soldiers went to the east side of the district, [nomads] went to the west side, and when [soldiers] headed to the west side [nomads] went to the east." He also called for Zor to be attached to Damascus province because of nomadic pastoralists from Zor settling around Hama. BOA, ŞD 2270/15, Abdüllatif Suphi to Grand Vizier, 5 Recep 1289 (September 8, 1872).

for high hopes. In 1873, the administrative council of Zor wrote that their region once could not be "crossed from any side without a military detachment."[175] But recent developments had made it "close to being compared to Cairo." Unspoken in all of these pronouncements about provincial borders and agricultural improvement was the absence of locusts following their ravages in the 1860s.

THE FALL AND RISE OF ZOR

Yet even after a revolt over borders, and even after pronouncements praising these new borders, the status of the Jazira was not stable. And border-crossing nomads were not always to blame. In fact, sometimes at fault were the state officials whose administration was supposed to transform the region. For example, a number of disputes arose between the province of Aleppo and the special administrative district of Zor over where precisely the border between the entities existed, and where Zor could collect taxes on sheep in 1874. Because of the "border chaos" (*hudut karışıklığı*) – as it was termed – the treasury lost a significant amount of revenue on sheep, with people claiming the tax had been collected by those on the other side of the border as a means of tax evasion.[176] Such disputes pointed to the difficulty of dividing connected geographies and accounting for itinerant herds. Eventually, due to the malfeasance of local officials, the administration of Zor returned to Aleppo, with the special administrative district dissolved and the land relegated to the larger province's authority. Rather than functioning as an independent special administrative district, the region became part of the chain of command based in the large city far to its west.[177] Meanwhile, parts of the region that had once constituted Zor were returned to neighboring entities, with Nusaybin reattached to Diyarbekir, and Sinjar to Mosul.

The figure who had attempted to transform the Jazira – Midhat Pasha – continued to shape the empire as it entered a period of tumult. In 1875, the empire defaulted on loan repayments, which would eventually lead to European creditors having considerable power over the empire's finances.

[175] BOA, İ.MMS 46/1973, Administrative Council of Zor to Grand Vizier, 20 Mayıs 1289 (June 1, 1873).
[176] BOA, ŞD 2214/20, Mehmed Reşid to Grand Vizier, 28 Eylül 1290 (October 10, 1874).
[177] Al-Shahin, *Ahdath Khalida fi Tarikh Dayr al-Zur*, 23; BOA, A.}MKT.MHM 481/33, Meclis of Zor to Grand Vizier, 11 Teşrinevvel 1292 (October 23, 1876); ŞD 2219/3 Mehmed Reşid to Şura-yı Devlet, 11 Haziran 1300 (June 23, 1884).

Subsequently, two sultans were deposed, first Abdülaziz in favor of his son Murad (shortly after which Abdülaziz committed suicide), and then Murad on the claim of insanity in favor of his brother Abdülhamid II, the sultan who would define some of the empire's final decades. In the aftermath, Midhat Pasha served as grand vizier. In December of 1876, he managed to secure approval for an Ottoman constitution and parliament. The adoption of these measures was accompanied by shouts in the streets of "Long live the Sultan and Midhat!"[178] But the optimism did not last.

Midhat's power and the dream of a unified desert administration further receded in 1877 when the Ottoman Empire went to war with the Russian Empire as a result of simmering tensions in the Balkans. The squeeze on resources meant that the Ottomans could no longer maintain the military stations up and down the Euphrates that they had once hoped would guarantee the region's transformation.[179] Gone was the mule-mounted cavalry that had been "the terror of the Bedouins" and had vitiated their ability to "vanish into the desert at first sign" of soldiers.[180] What was more, there was no telegraph line between Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo. Given that the distance between the places was some eight days, the delays in receiving orders from Aleppo were consequently "interminable."[181]

While the Russo-Ottoman War (1877–1878) affected Zor, the conflict's results would also greatly shape the future of the empire. Abdülhamid used the conflict as justification for dissolving parliament and suspending the constitution that Midhat Pasha had helped to create. Meanwhile, the Treaty of Berlin, which concluded the war, transformed the empire's land and people. Having lost Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro in southeastern Europe as well as Kars, Batum, and Ardahan in eastern Anatolia, the empire not only had less land, but also fewer Christians. By one estimate, the losses amounted to "two-fifths of its entire territory and one-fifth of its population."[182] At the same time, the empire was obligated to offer special protections to Armenians in eastern Anatolia, which would come to be a frequent source of friction between outside powers, local people,

[178] Saliba, "The Achievements of Midhat Pasha," 317.
[179] Ababsa-al-Husseini, "Mise en valeur agricole et contrôle politique de la vallée de l'euphrate," 463.
[180] CADC, 4CCC/36, Consul in Aleppo to Saint Hilaire, September 12, 1881.
[181] TNA-UK, FO 424/123, Earl of Dufferin to Earl of Granville, July 29, 1881, Inclosure: Report by Captain Stewart on the Deir Sandjak and on Some of the Neighboring Districts, July 14, 1881.
[182] Shaw and Shaw, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic*, 191.

and the Ottoman state in the coming decades. In response to these and other measures, Abdülhamid oriented his rule increasingly toward the Muslim populace of the multiethnic empire while also aiming to maximize its resources.

In the Jazira, the Shammar maintained the opportunism they had practiced ever since 1871. The British traveler Lady Anne Blunt visited the tribe's branches in 1878. Like British officials in the future, she seemed to project her own anxieties about the demise of the English countryside onto the local landscape.[183] Regarding Farhan's settlement at Shirqat, she wrote, "Of all the wretched places, this, I think, is the wretchedest."[184] She decried the state of the environment, noting how "every blade of grass has been eaten down, and every inch of ground trampled and bemired for miles round."[185] Farhan's own quarters were "on the side of a bare heap of refuse, one of the mounds of Sherghat." In other words, Farhan's settlement was perched atop one of the region's distinctive *tall*, the archaeological sites that bespoke the region's potential for glory. By Blunt's accounting, however, Farhan's settlement could not be further away from the flourishing past. For all these reasons, Lady Anne Blunt declared that unlike Farhan, "I would not give up life in the desert" and "neither would I condescend to handle a spade, even in make-believe."[186] As a member of the English nobility – Lord Byron's granddaughter, in fact – Blunt could feel comfortable in such a pronouncement.[187]

But in her posturing Lady Anne Blunt may well have missed what was actually going on at Shirqat. It is telling that Farhan was not even around when she visited, suggesting that he had not entirely given up his life in the desert, as it were. Shirqat may have appeared grim, but it was also an opportunity for Farhan to obtain rent from the state. Government stipends and designated settlements did not bring about an existential change in virtue like reformers hoped. Rather, they constituted yet another strategy for gathering resources in the region. When locusts struck, one might move to another pasture. When drought struck and pastures disappeared, one might rely on a government subsidy. And in doing so, Farhan moreover managed to maintain connections much further afield. Part of Blunt's frustration at not meeting Farhan derived from the package that she had been entrusted to deliver to him: a basket of oranges and pomegranates from the Nawab of Awadh in Baghdad, who considered Farhan a "brother."[188]

[183] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 69. [184] Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, 188.
[185] Ibid., 187. [186] Ibid., 188. [187] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 63.
[188] Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, 159–162.

When Blunt visited the other branch of the Shammar, she described matters in environmentally distinct ways. At the head of the other branch of the Shammar was ʿAbd al-Karim's successor and brother Faris, who had fled the Jazira with his and ʿAbd al-Karim's mother ʿAmsha in the wake of ʿAbd al-Karim's defeat, only to return in 1875. Blunt drew a stark contrast between the Shammar of Farhan and the Shammar of Faris, symbolized, it would seem, by the different environments that they inhabited. Farhan's camp had been a site of ruin. In contrast, Blunt described the area around Faris's camp as "white as snow with chamomile in full flower" and "new-born camels which every here and there peeped out of the herbage."[189] The verdant environment mapped onto Faris's virtue. In Blunt's terms, "a better-bred man would be difficult to find."[190] Faris moreover endeared himself to Blunt by insulting Farhan as "not a Bedouin at all" but rather "a mere fellah," or peasant.[191] Yet for all of Blunt's esteem for Faris, it was not he whom she deemed "the most important personage."[192] Rather it was ʿAmsha, "a sort of holy personage, and object of veneration with all the tribes of Northern Mesopotamia." In honor of her deceased son, she was still referred to among the tribe as "Mother of Abd ul Kerim."

But as pure as the encampment of Faris and ʿAmsha may have seemed to Blunt, the Shammar were not free of state influence. Indeed, the division between the Shammar fundamentally reflected the campaign of 1871, with Faris in Zor and Farhan in Mosul. In fact, Blunt herself described the border between the groups as being "the heart of Mesopotamia," which she meant specifically in cartographic terms, seeing as the dividing line was located "just at the top of the second O in our map."[193] In addition to both drawing salaries from the Ottoman state, Farhan and Faris were both involved in revenue collection. In what historian Talha Çiçek calls a "re-manifestation of the old tax farming system," the state compelled nomadic leaders – including the Shammar – to collect taxes in return for a share of the proceeds.[194] Among the Shammar, a racial division of labor took place, as enslaved and formerly enslaved Black men began to occupy new roles as tax assessors and collectors for the Shammar all across the Jazira.[195]

[189] Ibid., 227. [190] Ibid., 228. [191] Ibid., 231. [192] Ibid., 228. [193] Ibid., 218.
[194] Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire*, 222.
[195] Jwaideh and Cox, "The Black Slaves of Turkish Arabia during the 19th Century," 48.

Both Midhat and Blunt presented nomadism as more or less a question of virtue, a reflection of level of civilization. Midhat denigrated it, and Blunt praised it. Lost in these declarations was the pragmatism of these approaches. This value appeared in the winter of 1879 and 1880, when a horrible cold and devastating famine set in across the Jazira and beyond.[196] In these difficult circumstances, a German traveler named Sachau spoke of the benefits of the tent. Sachau pointed out how tents were actually quite "justified," since they were "much better suited than the house" for managing heat and avoiding vermin.[197] More immediately, in the midst of the cold winter, they allowed nomads to move, leaving, for example, the Khabur valley a "deserted, snow-covered desert."[198] The flexibility of the tent perhaps also helped to enable the kind of bravado Sachau encountered when he met Faris. The chief may have been more or less resident within the confines of the district of Zor, but upon welcoming Sachau, he gestured toward a broader space, telling the German that he was welcome in all of the Shammar domains, stretching from Mosul to Mardin to Urfa in the north and Raqqa to ʿAna to Hit in the south.[199] Sachau duly described Faris as "the desert king" (*Wüsten-König*).[200] The provincial borders pointed to change, but Faris's boast and environmentally specific title offered a reminder of how "the memory of ʿAbd al-Karim is very alive in the desert of Mesopotamia," Sachau wrote.[201]

The spring of 1880 witnessed reports of great suffering from the famine of the winter months. When the English artist Tristram J. Ellis passed through Shirqat on his way down the Tigris, he inspected the ancient ruins beside the erstwhile campground of Farhan. Inside, he found "dried locusts" that smelled "horribly."[202] The leftovers of invasions from nearly a decade before thus scented the spring in some places. Yet it was not the powerful insects that had shaped the region's suffering this time around, but rather unexpected cold. The historian ʿAbbas ʿAzzawi recalled how "the dead were witnessed in the streets, and girls and boys were sold" in Mosul and Baghdad.[203] But the bounds of suffering went much further. Bread riots emerged in Aleppo in March.[204] Outside of Aleppo, deaths among sheep were great, too. One traveler described how outside of the city he found "their skeletons at frequent intervals."[205]

[196] Ertem, "Eating the Last Seed"; Ghazarian, "Ghost Rations."
[197] Sachau, *In Syrien*, 265. [198] Ibid., 273. [199] Ibid., 266. [200] Ibid., 267.
[201] Ibid., 303. [202] Ellis, *On a Raft and Through the Desert*, 117.
[203] Al-ʿAzzawi, *Tarikh al-ʿIraq bayn al-Ihtilalayn*, vol. 8, 49.
[204] TNA-UK, FO 195/1305, Aleppo Consulate to Henry Layard, March 10, 1880.
[205] Ellis, *On a Raft and Through the Desert*, 40.

There were some 2,500 beggars in Diyarbekir out of a total population of 25,000 in the city.[206]

Reports from the Jazira's deserts underscored great suffering there, too, though it seems the flexibility of nomadism may have softened the edge to some extent. In May, one official suggested that "between Mosul and Mardin . . . more than one half the sheep . . . had perished during the past winter and spring."[207] The animals died in most cases from lack of pasture, but because they could ultimately be eaten, they also afforded their owners sustenance of last resort (rebuilding herds, of course, was a different matter). Across the Jazira, people sought what little food the land provided, with some searching for truffles in the desert and others "living on the wild thistle."[208] It seems people became nomads out of want. As one British official wrote, "From Aleppo to Diarbekir, from Diarbekir to Mosul . . . it is the same everywhere . . . ruined bridges, ruined barracks, ruined villages and towns, and a decreasing permanent population, a nomad one increasing at any rate in the proportion of its numbers." In response to famine, the geography of the Jazira and the significance of motion within it once again became apparent.

Ottoman officials in the region followed the famine by reverting to the idea of the special administrative district of Zor as a way of governing the region more effectively. In April of 1880, the local council of Zor called for their region to return to how it was "during the time of . . . Arslan Pasha," the local official notorious for his tax collection practices.[209] The council resorted to a familiar argument. They called Zor the "natural" place for ruling what amounted to "the midpoint of the deserts of four provinces" (*dört vilayet çölleri mutevassıtı*). By bringing the edges together, the council argued, the Ottoman state could better protect the cultivated regions of those four provinces from nomadic depredations. In June of 1880, the grand vizier echoed these sentiments.[210] He explained that there had been no "benefit" from the attachment of Zor to Aleppo. Exacerbating the shift in borders was the lack of troops. He predicted that "returning" Zor's "independence" (*istiklaliyet*) and outfitting it with the proper number of troops would ensure "the gradual frightening of the

[206] CADC, 60CPC/6, Aleppo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 12, 1880.
[207] TNA-UK, FO 195/1316, Trotter to Layard, May 3, 1880.
[208] TNA-UK, FO 195/1316, Trotter to Layard, March 22, 1880; TNA-UK, FO 195/1316, Trotter to Layard, May 3, 1880.
[209] BOA, ŞD 2434/69, Council of Zor to Grand Vizier, 3 Nisan 1296 (April 15, 1880).
[210] BOA, ŞD 2434/69, Mehmed Seyyid to Interior Ministry, 14 Haziran 1296 (June 26, 1880).

Arabs [*urbân*] into settlement." And so in 1880, Zor returned to its independent status, once again distinct from Aleppo province. European officials such as the British consul in Aleppo applauded the changes, declaring that "at present the greatest confusion is produced by the Arabs passing from the jurisdiction of one Governor General to that of another."[211]

The return to independent administration of Zor meant a return to borders that – crafted with the intention of containing nomadic migration and the desert – surprised some. A traveler by the name of Captain Stewart journeyed through the region and acknowledged that the reestablishment of Zor might be considered "absurd" given its "huge and unwieldy" proportions.[212] By design, it was close to almost everywhere: "within 21 miles of Mardin, 18 miles of Urfa, 30 miles of Aleppo, 36 miles of Hama, 72 miles of Damascus . . . and to within 12 miles of the Sinjar Dagh." The strange proportions, though, were in deference to the region's unique political ecology. "The so-called desert is singularly rich," he wrote, and while one encountered plenty of "deserted villages," at certain places too, as "far as the eye can reach the country appears alive with herds of camel and sheep." In these dynamics, Captain Stewart understood the goal as so many others from Mustafa to Midhat to Arslan had explained it: "to pull all the districts through which the Bedouin wanders under one command."

Whatever high hopes were attached to the new borders, the Shammar continued to move in ways that contradicted the plans that people like Midhat Pasha and Cevdet Pasha had violently attempted to imprint on the map nearly a decade before. As the French consul in Aleppo observed, "the nomads who occupy the uncultivated plains of Mesopotamia are all in motion" and constituted "the plague [*le fléau*] of the country."[213] Later that same year he worried that if nothing were done, other nomads would follow "the contagious example" of the Shammar.[214] Altogether, he predicted that new borders would do little unless they included provisions for more troops in the region.

Left out of the pronouncements about the destructive nature of the nomads, however, was the devastating impact of the famine on them, and

[211] TNA-UK, FO 78/3128, Henderson to Granville, November 3, 1880.
[212] TNA-UK, FO 424/123, Earl of Dufferin to Granville, July 29, 1881, Inclosure: Report by Captain Stewart on the Deir Sandjak and on Some of the Neighboring Districts, July 14, 1881.
[213] CADC, 4CCC/36, Aleppo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 6, 1881.
[214] CADC, 4CCC/36, Aleppo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 1, 1881.

how the loss of so many animals in 1879 and 1880 had left them needing to recoup their losses in any way they could. Similar dynamics could be observed later in the year, when the British consul in Baghdad journeyed to the north. His visit was not only an occasion to comment on the "extraordinary perversity" of the Ottoman failure to develop the Tigris.[215] He also described Shirqat – long to be the centerpiece of Shammar settlement, complete with water pumps and a castle for Farhan – as merely "the principal summer encampment of the Shammar" and home to some "1,000 black tents." As he returned south, he claimed that the question of every cultivator for him was "Where are the Shammar?" He understood the comment as demonstrative of the "dread of them" that was "real and universal." Their unknown location may have frightened local residents (or, indeed, the British consul), but it was movement that likely allowed them to survive the famine. The harsh winter no doubt reminded them why Midhat's schemes on the Tigris were a threat to them perhaps even more than the Shammar were a threat to settled agriculture.

At the same time, events in the empire ensured that two of the key forces in the history of the Jazira would have their paths intersect once more. In 1881, Abdülhamid II ordered his minister of justice to arrest the governor of Aydın for the murder of Sultan Abdülaziz in 1876, even though the deposed sultan's death had been deemed a suicide; the minister charged with the arrest was Cevdet Pasha, and the governor to be arrested was Midhat Pasha.[216] The two men had seen the parts of the empire where their families hailed from lost in war, its populations torn apart by violence that brought new forms of sectarianism into being. They had served in numerous capacities all around the empire to prevent further losses through reform. It was not enough for Midhat, whom Abdülhamid deemed sufficiently a threat to deserve the trumped-up charges he faced. Cevdet voted for his execution.[217] Abdülhamid commuted the sentence and exiled Midhat and the other convicts to Ta'if in the Hijaz, where Midhat would be murdered three years later.

While Midhat found his life in question, the issues of commerce and governance that had consumed him were still very much up for debate in the Jazira. In 1882, a plan from Zor's local commander predicted that the establishment of "cordons" and the stationing of "regular troops mounted on mules" would restore security to the region that had so many ancient

[215] TNA-UK, FO 195/1409, British Resident in Baghdad to Grand Sec. of India, Calcutta, November 24, 1881.
[216] Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 500. [217] Ibid., 501.

witnesses to its glory.[218] The plan echoed those of many over the years, but also spoke to the new urgency of collecting tax revenue in the wake of the Russo-Ottoman War, apparent in Libya as well.[219] The members of the Special Council (*Meclis-i Mahsus*) echoed these sentiments, calling for a return to the times of Arslan Pasha, whose accomplishments had turned to "ruins" thanks to the district's attachment to Aleppo again.[220]

Meanwhile, the Shammar continued to leverage their place on the edge into a kind of power. The French consul in Mosul wrote in the spring of 1883 how the Shammar found themselves in the "desert situated between the Mesopotamian part of the province of Mosul and its neighbors."[221] Because livestock traders in Mosul could only find pasture for their animals "in the desert" for part of the year, they had to negotiate with the Shammar. Farhan had been collecting taxes on them, and when government forces threatened to challenge him or other Shammar, the French consul noted that the nomads ably used the environment: "they flee into their deserts, where it is impossible to follow." An expedition against them later in the summer was judged to be "very mediocre."[222] The state apparently secured some restitution for sheep thefts, but it paled in comparison to the sheep possessed by the Shammar, estimated at some 150,000, which they paid very little tax on. The Shammar mastery of the environment on the edge of both provinces and cultivation enabled them to maintain some measure of power for themselves.

In the following years, the disjuncture between provincial borders, nomadic migration, and the environment persistently vexed Ottoman officials. The shariʿa court judge of Zor wrote in 1884 of the beauty of the land.[223] Like so many others, he praised its promise and mourned the remnants of past civilizations strewn across the region. But he also added that the ruins were not necessarily of ancient vintage. He complained, instead, of how the Khabur had been settled and consisted of some thirty villages as recently as a decade before, but the motion of the Shammar had upended these settlements. Further north, officials of Diyarbekir protested that efforts to register people of the Kara Keçe nomadic group near

[218] BOA, İ.MMS 71/3295, District Governor of Zor, 15 Nisan 1298 (April 27, 1882).
[219] Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire*, 203; Ellis, *Desert Borderland*, 121.
[220] BOA, İ.MMS 71/3295, Meclis-i Mahsus, 6 Haziran 1298 (June 18, 1882).
[221] CADN, 166PO/D/54/7, Siouffi to Marquis de Noailles, May 24, 1883.
[222] CADN, 166PO/D/54/7, Siouffi to Marquis de Noailles, July 5, 1883.
[223] BOA, Y.EE 11/11, Zor shariʿa court judge to Yıldız Palace, 21 Cumayziülevvel 1301 (March 19, 1884).

Siverek had prompted the people to flee into the "desert."[224] They were not simply fleeing into the desert; they were also fleeing across the provincial border into Viranşehir, a district of Zor. Viranşehir was some seventy hours from the district capital at Deir, while only ten from Diyarbekir. Yet it had been included in Zor because of the decades-long effort to encompass the desert and nomadic groups in a single provincial administration. As flight of people into other districts underscored, the dream of drawing borders precisely around the environment and thereby more effectively managing the region's population remained a fraught one, not least because deciding where the desert ended was challenging, if not impossible. Officials hoped borders would enable them to control the region, but as the Kara Keçe demonstrated, the same borders could be used for very different purposes, indeed, dividing and ruling the empire itself.

THE DESERT PROVINCE

Locust swarms were missing from the Jazira for most of the 1870s and early 1880s. But by the mid-1880s, the insects were back. And the dilemma of how to control them remained much the same as it had been in previous years, as locusts flew across provincial borders and emerged from places without settled populations to devour cultivation. In March of 1885, an archaeological expedition under the leadership of the American clergyman and scholar William Hayes Ward reached ʿAna on the Euphrates as part of the hunt for remnants of the ancient Assyrian Empire in the region. When the group tried to call on the Ottoman district governor, they could not find him. He was "gone with soldiers and people to kill locusts."[225] In March of 1886 when the locusts began to hatch, several thousand men together with the governor of Mosul journeyed an hour away from their city in order "to hunt down the larvae."[226] Yet however many locusts they destroyed, "it was nothing in comparison to how many remained." By mid-March, the locusts had wings, and there was little one could do to protect the fields. This did not mean humans could do nothing with regard to locusts. The French vice consul in Mosul, for example, seized the opportunity to study the insects. In the name of

[224] BOA, ŞD 1461/5, Council of Diyarbekir to Interior Ministry, 27 Teşrinisani 1301 (December 9, 1885).

[225] Peters, *Nippur*, vol. 1, appendix F: A Portion of the Diary of William Hayes Ward, Director of the Wolfe Expedition to Babylonia (1884–1885), 361.

[226] CADN, 166PO/D/54/7, Siouffi to Comte de Montebello, "Recueil d'observations sur les sauterelles, lors de leur passage à Mossoul, en 1886," October 2, 1886.

science, he even timed their periods of copulation (his conclusion: more than eighteen hours and forty-five minutes based on the nine couples and one "polyandrous threesome" he captured in bottles in his courtyard and observed).[227]

But for those with less time on their hands, the locusts presented a frightful spatial dilemma. Officials in Urfa, for example, sounded much like their colleagues from previous decades, as they blamed the locust invasion on the ineffectiveness of locust-control measures in other provinces.[228] They sought explanations from all points east, including the administrations of Baghdad, Mosul, and Zor. In Baghdad, officials candidly noted that despite "exceptional effort" against the locusts, control – especially when the locusts grew wings – was simply "beyond human ability." It was not just their wings that made them vaunted but their origins, which the Baghdad officials described as "places that people could not go to." By emerging from places that people could not normally go, the locusts proceeded to move in ways that people could not move. The entanglement of accessibility and locusts was even more clear in October of 1886. It was at this time that those charged with a road-building project in Diyarbekir province were sent back to their homes near Mardin. The reason for their departure was that they were ordered to collect locust eggs there.[229] The locusts thus catalyzed a circular dynamic. People did not work on the roads because of locusts. Yet people could also not reach the places where locusts laid eggs because they were difficult to reach.

The consequences of the insects' depredations were significant. In 1887, the insects crossed the Euphrates, consumed 35 percent of the grains of Urfa, and totally destroyed Aleppo's summer crops of cotton, sesame, and melon.[230] The invasion caused what the French consul in Aleppo called "touching scenes," as "men, women, and children roamed the fields under threat, some with a branch in hand, others waving kitchen utensils, all letting out cries ... foreshadowing the misery to come." He even suggested that this "scourge of Asia Minor" was perhaps as deleterious for Aleppo as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had been, which rerouted trade via the sea that had once traveled overland. Aleppo wheat had in recent years developed a reputation

[227] Ibid.
[228] BOA, DH.MKT 1357/93, Interior Ministry to Grand Vizier, 17 Temmuz 1302 (July 29, 1886). On Mardin, see TNA-UK, FO 424/143, Devey to Thornton, June 22, 1886.
[229] BOA, DH.MKT 1373/108, 11 Teşrinievvel 1302 (October 23, 1886).
[230] CADC, 4CCC/37, Consul Gilbert in Aleppo, September 24, 1887.

with French and Italian merchant houses for use in pasta production. Though perhaps with less damaging consequences than in the case of cotton two decades before, locusts once again swooped in for a taste of products bound for export.

Amidst the devastation, even settled people had to use mobility to survive. In 1888, American missionaries in Mardin described how for three years in a row the insects had cut a swath of between fifty and a hundred miles all the way from Mosul to Urfa.[231] The French vice consul of Diyarbekir blamed the locusts in that district for causing "the depopulation of this country."[232] In other words, the apocalyptic prediction of the Diyarbekir notable in 1864 – that if locusts arrived again the governor would be the only person remaining in the province – appeared to have come true. The consul estimated that the population was barely a quarter of what it had been twenty years before.[233] Like nomads, settled populations had found mobility to be a practical solution, and as a result "one of the most fertile countries" of the empire stood "uncultivated."[234] Banning export of grains and facilitating its import from other districts helped to avert famine in some cases.[235] But still, in the early months of 1888, thanks to the "ravages of the locusts" people were selling "bedding, cooking utensils, and the rugs on which they sleep" in order to afford some millet and avoid starvation.[236] As of May 1888, 1,500 people were living on the streets of Diyarbekir, and Ottoman officials blamed the locusts of the previous year.[237] Missionaries in Mardin estimated that there were some 10,000 people starving across the region.[238] The band of fertile land stretching to the east and west of Mardin had been viewed as a bulwark against nomadism and the desert in the 1860s, most notably with the settlement of Ras al-Ayn. But the region had been overrun once again, this time by locusts.

[231] American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) 76, Box 2, Alpheus Andrus, The Famine at Mardin, January 28, 1888.
[232] CADC, 5CCC/1, Consul in Diyarbekir, July 25, 1888.
[233] CADN, 166PO/D/22/1, Bertrand to Minister of Foreign Affairs, January 30, 1888.
[234] CADC, 5CCC/1, Consul in Diyarbekir, July 25, 1888.
[235] CADC, 214CCC/2, French consul in Mosul, July 2, 1886; June 2, 1887; July 5, 1888; BOA, A}MKT.MHM 490/21, Report of Meclis-i Mahsus, 5 Şaban 1303 (May 9, 1886); DH.MKT 1372/78, Interior Minister to Grand Vizier, 4 Teşrinievvel 1302 (October 16, 1886); DH.MKT 1379/116, Interior Ministry to Rusumat Emanet Aliye, 9 Teşrinisani 1302 (November 21, 1886).
[236] TNA-UK, FO 424/145, Boyajian to Wratislaw, February 6, 1888.
[237] BOA, A.}MKT.MHM 497/39, Diyarbekir Governor Sirri to Grand Vizier, 5 Mayıs 1304 (May 17, 1888).
[238] ABCFM 76, Box 2, Alpheus Andrus, The Famine at Mardin, January 28, 1888.

Even as Ottoman officials worked to fight locusts, they acknowledged that success in the matter required a good amount of luck. Officials charged with destroying locusts in Aleppo in 1888 were commended by the provincial governor because "the greater part of the crops" had been "saved."[239] However, their accomplishment derived not just from their own diligence, but also from, as the governor who commended them admitted, the absence of locusts coming from the "desert and the East." After all, the "inaccessible," "rocky," or "desert" regions that locusts came from remained difficult to control for even the most conscientious Ottoman officials.[240] As a result, it sometimes seemed like only a miracle could deliver people from their insect tormenters. In Mosul in 1889, officials wrote that they destroyed some 3,000,000 okka (8,500,000 pounds) of locust eggs in an effort to prevent another year of devastation.[241] Nevertheless, in the surrounding desert, "nothing was visible except locusts." People were saved, however, when stunningly the locusts began to move "as if driven by a spiritual leader or driver, attacking and storming the Tigris with strange, awesome movements ... and in a billion not one was able to be rescued, and all were destroyed." Thus, nearly thirty years after Veysi Pasha boasted of the Tigris flowing with locust carcasses thanks to the depredations of starlings, the mighty river once again formed a watery grave for the insects. In both cases, little that humans did seemed to matter, apart from prayers.

As with locusts, the management of nomads involved real limits to government control, in large part thanks to the spatial bounds of nomadic migrations across difficult environments and provincial borders. Nomads continued to move all across the locusts' geographic territory, including "Mosul, Baghdad, Basra, Mardin, Urfa, Deir, and the Euphrates," according to the French consul in Baghdad.[242] And though groups such as the Shammar continued to observe a rough boundary between Faris in Zor and Farhan around Shirqat, the groups' mastery of the desert more broadly remained an advantage.[243] When Ottoman troops attempted to pursue them in instances of sheep theft, they not only failed to retrieve the

[239] BOA, DH.MKT 1589/91, Aleppo Governor to Interior Ministry, 19 Kanunusani 1304 (January 31, 1889).
[240] BOA, DH.MKT 1699/57, Interior Ministry to Commerce and Public Utility Ministry, 3 Şubat 1305 (February 15, 1890); DH.MKT 1719/101, Aleppo Imperial Estates Administration to Interior Ministry, 27 Mart 1306 (April 8, 1890); DH.MKT 1721/67, Interior Ministry to Grand Vizier, 14 Nisan 1306 (April 26, 1890).
[241] BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 15/27, Notables of Mosul to Grand Vizier, 21 Nisan 1305 (May 3, 1889).
[242] CADN, 166PO/D/54/7, 2 May 1889; Siouffi in Mosul to Montebello, May 16, 1889.
[243] CADN, 166PO/D/7/17, Pognon to Comte de Montebello, October 17, 1888.

stolen sheep, but – as in years past – sometimes even failed to get close to the nomads.[244] If what made control of locusts difficult was the way they appeared from "places that people could not go to," the same might be said of nomads.

Locusts and nomads were not simply taking advantage of similar spatial dynamics. Their movement was also reinforcing each other. In a dispatch to the grand vizier in April of 1890, the Ottoman interior ministry noted that the locusts in the "cultivated [*mamure*] and uncultivated places of the desert [*çöl*]" of Diyarbekir were beginning to emerge from eggs.[245] Though they remained "very small," it was difficult to manage the locust populations because of the way human populations continued to move in the region. "As for the people," the dispatch explained, it would be impossible to conscript them into locust-collection schemes because of how they were "scattered" (*dağınık*) "in this season." In response to the dilemma, officials called for a bounty system, in which twenty para were paid for the first okka (2.83 pounds) of locusts, and ten para for every subsequent one. The monetary rewards were an attempt to incentivize different responses to locusts and thereby produce a new relationship between people, insects, and the environment.

The summer of 1890 witnessed further reminders of these intersections. On June 23, 1890, the Shammar chief Farhan Pasha died of tuberculosis in Baghdad.[246] The British consul in Baghdad recalled him as "diplomatic," a quality evident in 1871 when Farhan stood down while ʿAbd al-Karim revolted. Yet the consul also described Farhan in terms similar to those applied to locusts, noting his penchant for "preying on settled people," an occupation all the more straightforward given his place in the "Jazira." Around this same time, another infusion of locusts appeared in the region. Just like the Shammar originally came from the Arabian Peninsula, these locusts did too.[247] Arriving from the south, the locusts were a species distinct from the variety of locust that always lived in the Jazira, appearing later in the year and having a different life cycle and appearance. The Ottoman governor of Baghdad complained in July of 1890 of the Najdi invaders as

[244] TNA-UK, FO 195/1647, Tweedie to White, July 20, 1889.
[245] BOA, DH.MKT 1721/67, Interior Ministry to Grand Vizier, 17 Nisan 1306 (April 29, 1890).
[246] TNA-UK, FO 195/1682, Tweedie to White, June 26, 1890.
[247] It would later be recognized as an instance of an invasion of *Schistocerca peregrina*, also known as *Schistocerca gregaria*. NHMA, Syria and Lebanon 6211 – 158, Subhi Hasibi, Report on the Anti-Locust Fight Effected in the Territories of States Adhering to the International Accord of 20 May 1926 during 1929.

"untimely" (*mevsimsiz olarak*) and "unprecedented."[248] Although they caused no damage to winter crops such as wheat and barley (which had already been harvested), the insects had a huge impact on summer crops and dates. And since they were already winged, there was little hope of fighting them. The governor noted that they were eventually "destroyed" not because of humans combating them but rather because "there was nothing to eat on the edges of water in the desert." In other words, it was the aridity of the Jazira that killed the locusts. Even in death, though, the locusts were believed to have had an impact. There was some suspicion that the insects played a role in the cholera epidemic in Iraq that had begun that year, since "thousands of them had drowned" in local well water.[249]

It may have seemed like there was nothing humans could do about these invaders, whom it appeared only the Jazira could kill (and even in death might communicate an often-lethal ailment). Yet in some cases, it does seem that pastoralists used their mobility and knowledge of the local environment to fight the insects. In 1890, one French diplomat making the journey between Damascus and Baghdad reported seeing "locusts as big as bees" within sight of Mount Sinjar.[250] That night he encountered "five bedouins from the Jabbur tribe" who had apparently "dedicated their day to killing the locusts." They did so – in a reminder of the fact that some pastoralists cultivated the land too – in order to save their harvests. They would continue "to make war against the pests" the following day, and so they preferred not to return all the way home and instead joined the camp of the consul and his party. It being Ramadan, they eagerly awaited the sunset, after which they ate mushrooms they had collected, alive to fight locusts another day.

But these instances were rare. Indeed, Ottoman administrators expressed a sense of futility when it came to locust control in the Jazira as opposed to other places in the empire. In December of 1890, the ministry of commerce and public works suggested that the province of Aydın – perched on the Aegean Sea – might serve as a model for locust destruction in Aleppo.[251] But Aleppo officials chafed at this effort at

[248] BOA, Y.PRK.A 5/80, Governor of Baghdad Sirri to Grand Vizier and Finance Ministry, 5 Haziran 1306 (July 17, 1890).

[249] CADN, 166PO/D/7/17, Pognon to Comte de Montebello, May 26, 1890. On cholera in Ottoman Iraq, see Bolaños, "The Ottomans during the Global Crises of Cholera and Plague."

[250] CADC, 79CPC/3, De Damas à Mossoul par le désert, Voyage effectué par Mr. Siouffe, Consul de France, August 8, 1890.

[251] BOA, DH.MKT 1789/2, Interior Ministry to Aleppo Province, 21 Teşrinisani 1306 (December 3, 1890).

imperial comparison. Aleppo, they argued, was "not comparable to Aydın province" (*orası Aydın vilayetine makis olmayıp*).[252] Aleppo, they said, was "surrounded by the desert and devoid of people," very different from Aydın's high population density and largely cultivated lands.[253] In other words, even if locusts afflicted different parts of the Ottoman Empire, divergent political ecologies ensured that locusts meant different things – and had to be killed in different ways – in different places.

Both locusts and nomads, then, presented particular spatial dilemmas for the Ottoman state in relation to regional ecology and in relation to the provincial division of the broader Jazira region. Both locusts and nomads emerged from places in between, arid areas where people moved but plows rarely ventured. Moreover, both locusts and nomads emerged from these ecologies on the edge to move across provincial borders, making their management difficult in an empire that had pinned hopes for centralization and reform on newly efficient provincial administrations. These spatial realities had vexed Ottoman authorities for decades and prompted them to imagine different borders for managing the region. Indeed, even in 1890, some observers saw fit to praise these boundaries as catalysts of development. The British consul in Aleppo in 1890 stated that "inroads made by the Shammars of Mesopotamia . . . practically came to an end some years ago."[254] He attributed the change in part to the creation of Zor and the way its borders encompassed a "vast extent of country practically uninhabited save during certain seasons by Bedouins." It was, he added, "the true and only centre of nomad politics."

The esteem of the British consul, however, did not stop Ottoman officials from continuing to imagine how to better draw borders around the Jazira and its moving people. There had been previous proposals, such as one in 1888 that aimed to resettle refugees and put nomads within the bounds of one province in the area "foreigners" called "Mesopotamia."[255] According to the plan, the province was to be called Hamidabad in honor of Sultan Abdülhamid II. A similar proposal emerged in 1890 when two officials named Ahmed Tevfik and Şevket called for consolidating the special

[252] BOA, DH.MKT 1797/37, Interior Ministry to Commerce and Public Utility Ministry, 18 Kanunuevvel 1306 (December 30, 1890).

[253] Locusts nevertheless had an impact on the Aegean region and elsewhere in Anatolia. On impact on Ottoman revenue generally, see TNA-UK, FO 424/109, Goschen to Earl Granville, November 23, 1880. On more general impact, see TNA-UK, FO 424/132, Wilson to Earl of Dufferin, February 21, 1882.

[254] TNA-UK, FO 195/1690, Report on the Vilayet of Aleppo by Consul Jago, June 1890.

[255] BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 13/54, 29 Zilhicce 1305 (September 6, 1888).

administrative district of Zor and raising it to the full status of province (*vilayet*). They suggested returning the districts such as Sinjar, Nusaybin, Viranşehir, and Raqqa that had in previous years been removed from Zor.[256] They also proposed a name change. What had once been known as Zor would, in their vision, come to be known by its defining natural feature: it would be called Desert province (Figure 9). The Desert province was to be home to settlements of refugees and nomads coaxed toward sedentary life. Of course, the goal was to transform the region's environment in such a way as to make the province's name obsolete. They envisioned it eventually becoming home to some one million people, who would presumably find a way to make a life in the land that had for so long been described as "places that people could not go." The officials did so because the Desert province was, in their opinion, a "natural governing point" (*nokta-i hakime-i tabiiye*).[257] Many Ottoman officials had made a similar comment over the years. It was as if they had learned from the locusts and nomads of the Jazira, who for so long had used these realms in between to evade and afflict the Ottoman state's efforts at modernization. Yet Ottoman administration of the region would ultimately go in a different direction.

CONCLUSION

The continued challenges on the edges demonstrated how borders worked both as a tool of governance and a means of resistance. The environment functioned as an object around which borders were to be established, and a setting that incubated motion beyond the bounds of borders. In a variety of ways, the Ottomans had attempted to make borders into a reality as a means of controlling and transforming the Jazira in the wake of the reforms of the 1858 Land Code and the 1860s. They had envisioned cordons across which nomads might not migrate, and behind which seminomadic Kurdish groups might cultivate the land. They also attempted to use Chechen refugees as a bulwark of cultivation expanding into the desert. Then in 1871, they planned a district built specifically to encompass the desert, a project so controversial that it incited a revolt and

[256] BOA, Y.A.RES 55/38, Report of Commander of Military Reserves at Urfa Lieutenant General Şevket, 25 Teşrinievvel 1306 (November 6, 1890); Report of District Governor of Zor Ahmed Tevfik, undated.

[257] BOA, Y.A.RES 55/38, Report of Commander of Military Reserves at Urfa Lieutenant General Şevket, 25 Teşrinievvel 1306 (November 6, 1890).

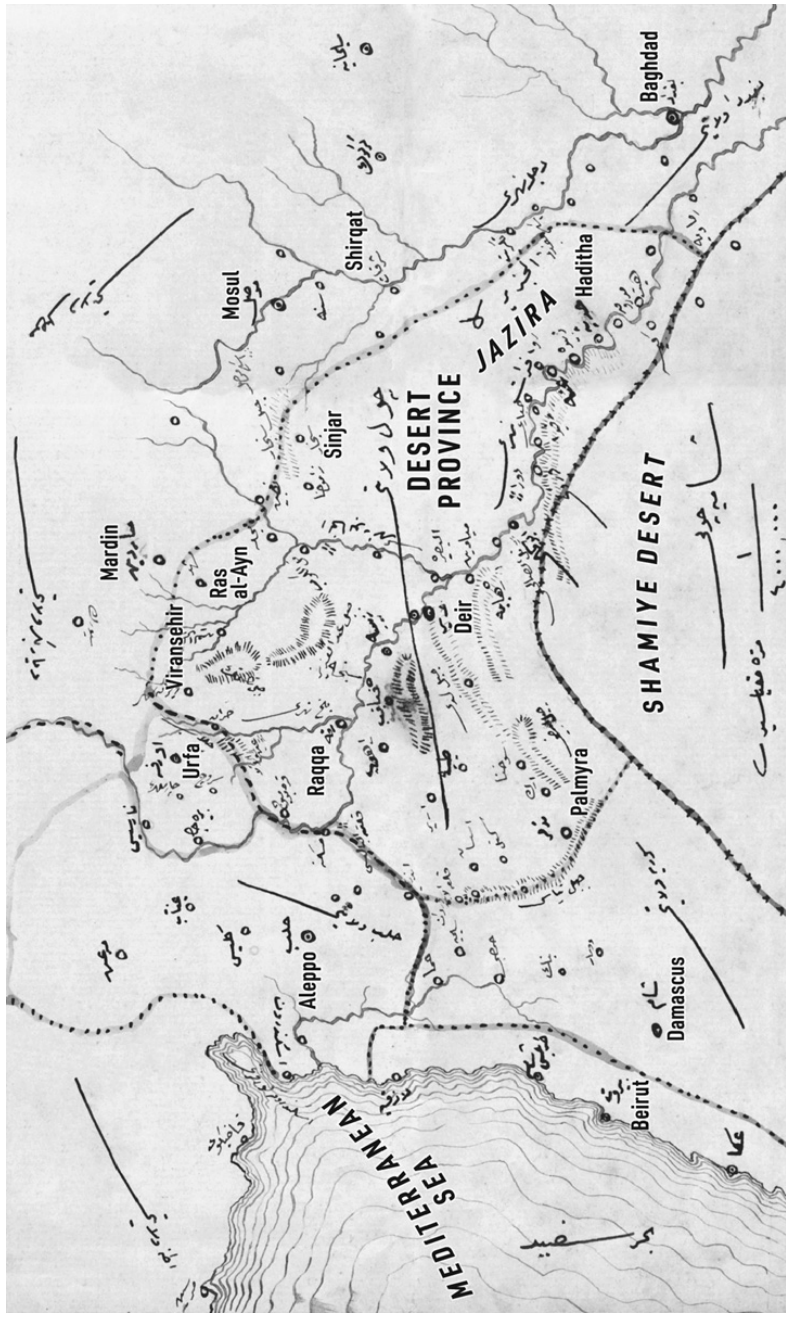

FIGURE 9 Proposed Desert province, 1890. BOA, Y.A.RES 55/38

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a march on Baghdad, with the foremost Ottoman reformer of the late nineteenth century hanging the revolt's ringleader over a bridge in Mosul. Even after this apparent victory, control on the edges remained blurry, as tax collectors and census officials alike struggled with how to define where exactly their jurisdiction began and ended. Accordingly, officials pitched many alternative provincial borders, including both Hamidabad and Desert province.

Locusts animated nomadic motion. They prompted some like the Shammar to seek pasture away from the swarms of insects. They prompted others like the Kara Keçe to give up cultivation and practice pastoralism instead. But locusts were of course not the only reason. Motion was also in response to drought or cold, not to mention opportunism driven by the very same borders that were supposed to solve the dilemma of nomadism in the first place. Indeed, locusts seem to have been absent from the Jazira after the 1860s, when they had decimated cotton crops that many hoped to export in the midst of the global cotton shortage and ravaged provisions intended for Chechen refugees. Locusts' disappearance likely did not derive from effective control efforts. Ottoman officials were limited in their control of territory, so much so that the starling – believed to be attracted by a Sufi-blessed holy water – seems to have presented the most reliable deterrent to the insect swarms. By the mid-1880s, the insects were back, leaving famine and displacement in their wake by moving from the desert and across provincial borders.

The Shammar may have seemed like locusts in some ways, but they were treated quite differently. There was, for example, no plan for a cordon across which locusts would not pass. But there was such a plan for nomads. The failure to see locust motion as connected to nomadic motion bespoke a larger problem. Ottoman officials largely saw nomads as creatures lacking civilizational virtue. They could be redeemed through practices, such as tilling the land. But there was little attention to how it made sense to be a nomad both in relation to flows of capital and swarms of insects. These dynamics would persist even as Ottoman officials changed their policies in the Jazira in the coming years.