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

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

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

**The Tanzimat state**

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

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

system. Over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Western European states had followed a trajectory from absolutism to what is generally referred to as the modern state. The distinctive features of this new mode of socio-political organization, as Max Weber argued, included a differentiated set of institutions manned by the state’s own personnel, whose authority radiates from an administrative center to the limits of a territorially demarcated area. Within this territory, the modern state seeks exclusive control over both the making of rules and the means of upholding those rules through the use of physical violence.

Modern states were better suited to extract taxes and to mobilize their populations into standing armies, particularly as they developed what Michael Mann has termed infrastuctural power — “the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.” The infrastructural power of the modern state derived from its bureaucracy, its capacity to make and store records, standardization of coins, weights and measures to facilitate commercialization, and rapidity of communication for the transfer of people, goods and intelligence. The penetration of society which infrastructural power permits allowed for an even greater share of production to be collected in taxes, which was essential for the maintenance of large standing armies.

While such changes were more characteristic of the nation-states of Western Europe, even multinational Empires such as Russia and Austria had developed the infrastructural power to finance the modern armies which menaced Ottoman domains.

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

2 Patricia Crone, Pre-Industrial Societies (Oxford, 1989).
central treasury. The scribal bureaucracy suffered “disadvantages implicit in the craftsmanlike approach of the scribal officials to training and the conduct of affairs, in their tendency to harness the interest of the state to personal and familial interests, in their lack of experience in finance, and in their small numbers.”

The geographic reach of the Empire was no longer an asset. Spread across North Africa, Western Asia and Eastern Europe, the Ottoman state was increasingly incapable of asserting its sovereignty across the extent of its territory. Local leaders in the Balkans, Eastern Anatolia and the Arab provinces maintained militias which made a mockery of the central government’s claim to a monopoly over rule-making and armed force. And where the Ottoman state could not impose its rules, its claims to sovereignty were tenuous.

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

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

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

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

Ottoman frontiers

Frontiers

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

Tribal society

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


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

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

13 Andrew Shryock, Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination (Berkeley CA, 1997), pp. 40–42.
16 Mustafa Hamarneh has argued for a linkage between wealth and tribal economic
to live in tents. Indeed, such town-based social organizations as *hamulas* or “clans” fit a general definition of tribes.¹⁷ Nor were tribes exclusively Muslim; many societies in Syria and Iraq counted Christians among their tribes.

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

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

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

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

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

Opening the frontiers

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

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

19 van Bruinessen, Agha, Shaykh and State, p. 133.
hammad of Rawanduz (northeast of Mosul in modern Iraq) as his first target. Over the previous two decades Mir Muhammad had followed a brutal course of expansion which raised Ottoman fears of a mini-state in the making within their territory. Mir Muhammad surrendered to the governor, tendered his submission to Istanbul and died during his return trip to Rawanduz in 1835. The second major Kurdish chief was Badr Khan Beg of Buhtan who, over the years 1821–45 had come to rule a territory which stretched from Diyarbakir to Mosul. Considered “the last paramount chief to present a serious challenge to the Ottoman reformers,” Badr Khan declared his independence from the Ottoman Empire, minted his own coinage, and defeated the first Ottoman expedition sent to bring him to heel.20 Badr Khan was defeated by a second Ottoman army in 1845 and was exiled to Crete. From this point on, the Ottomans considered Kurdistan as an area under their direct rule, though “direct Ottoman rule was to prove very ineffective indeed. Near the cities, the governors had some power; nowhere did they have authority.”21

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

The return of direct Ottoman rule to the Hijaz in April 1841, after the province’s occupation by the Sa’udi-Wahabi confederation and then by the Egyptian forces of Mehmed Ali Pasha, initially met with no resistance. Ottoman rule in the Hijaz had always brought more benefits than liabilities to the local inhabitants. Rather than extracting taxes, the Ottomans had traditionally distributed cash gifts to the Hijazis as privileged inhabitants of the holy cities of Mecca and Madina. The powers of the Ottoman governor were matched by the Amirs of Mecca,
local descendants of the Prophet Muhammad of the Hashemite family who served as the state-appointed chief religious functionaries in the province. So long as Ottoman rule meant "the reinstallation of an ancien régime based on shared power [and] religious legitimacy" the Hijazis were all too willing to comply.\textsuperscript{23} However, the governor's attempts to introduce reforms, such as the election of advisory councils to assist in local government (1853), or the abolition of slavery under European pressure (1855) led to riots, rebellions and even a massacre of Europeans and their protégés in Jidda (June 1858).\textsuperscript{24} Ottoman rule in the Hijaz was reliant on the cooperation of the Amirs and lacked the institutional means to impose change on the local inhabitants; clearly military force was insufficient for the task.

The Ottomans relied on the support of the Hijazi notability in their attempts to renew direct rule over Yemen, first occupied by the Ottomans in 1515 but left to its local rulers since 1636. In 1849, the Ottomans responded to the request of the Zaydi Imam al-Mutawakkil for assistance in his complex rivalries by sending a campaign force. Shortly after the army entered San‘a’ a riot broke out when Friday prayers were recited in the name of the Ottoman Sultan rather than their Imam. The Ottomans withdrew from the Yemeni highlands after only a three-week occupation and, for the next two decades concentrated on the ‘Asir district, which lay between Yemen and the Hijaz. The Ottomans faced armed resistance in ‘Asir in 1850 and 1860, dispatched three expeditions against rebels in 1865, and were forced to withdraw from garrisons in 1867 before obtaining the "complete subjugation" of ‘Asir with a major campaign in 1870.\textsuperscript{25}

These early efforts to incorporate frontier zones to the direct rule of the Ottoman state failed because they were over-reliant on military power to force submission. Initial military success against tribal forces provided little guarantee for subsequent acceptance of Ottoman rule. The indigenous societies had little interest in cooperating with a state that used coercion instead of creating a system of incentives to gain adherence to the Ottoman rule of law. Furthermore, military campaigns were expensive and tended to disrupt the local economy, making it difficult to cover the costs of the campaign through taxation. Troops left in remote garrisons were difficult to supply and harder yet to reinforce, leaving them vulnerable to attack once the initial respect for the invading

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., pp. 137–49.
army had worn off. In Kurdistan, Yemen, Hijaz and Libya the Ottomans were forced to send relief forces time and again to reassert their presence in what was clearly a losing battle. The situation was made all the more acute by growing concern over European (primarily British) strategic interests in its eastern frontiers in the late 1860s.26

**Ottoman modernity**

Starting in 1867, the Ottoman government undertook a new round of initiatives in its frontier zones which, drawing on new Tanzimat legislation, developed the state's infrastructural power to create an enduring administrative apparatus at the periphery. The new administrative structure of the 1864 Provincial Reform Law was introduced in Syria in 1866, in Libya in 1867, in the Hijaz in 1868, in the Eastern Provinces of the Arabian peninsula in 1871, and in Yemen in 1872. These reforms reflected prevailing European norms of modern statecraft which sought to establish a clear hierarchy of authority and accountability which could be reproduced and applied consistently across the Empire. Rather than a wholesale importation of European modes of political and social organization, Ottoman modernity involved a process of mediation and translation to adapt new ideas from the West to radically different settings across the Empire.

The elements of the modern Ottoman state created by the Tanzimat were applied to the frontier zones in stages, as local acceptance of Ottoman rule became generalized and the state developed the means to intensify its presence. The fundamental unit of provincial administration within the Tanzimat state was the juridical district, or kaza, which brought together a district governor, a treasurer and a judge, as well as the clerks needed to keep the books and armed forces to keep the peace. Thus the creation of a kaza introduced the institutions of a state bureaucracy and judiciary manned by civil servants who were moved among similar posts in different provinces of the Empire. The Provincial Reform Law also called for the election of local representatives to administrative councils, municipal councils, and the court systems to enable members of the local community to consult with the district governor and represent communal interests. In this way, the state introduced new notions of political participation through elections and public office which gave local communities an interest in the new forms of state rule. As these instruments of state took root and provincial authorities succeeded in raising taxes from the frontier districts, the

state began to extend its infrastructural power through communications networks which included ports and shipping, roads, post and telegraph connections, and railway lines. The state also began to provide important social services by opening schools and hospitals. These institutions combined provided the Ottoman state with numerous channels to penetrate frontier society and assert the primacy of the Ottoman rule of law which arguably led to the closure of the frontier in a number of districts. Each of these innovations, which enabled the state to intervene more directly in the life of the individual Ottoman subject than ever before, was applied to the frontier districts as part of the extension of direct government rule.

In addition to these institutions, direct Ottoman rule set in motion a number of processes which helped incorporate peripheral zones to the central government’s rule. Foremost among these was the process of individuation which the new bureaucratic methods made possible. When the Ottoman government last kept regular registers for the Arab provinces in the early seventeenth century, villages, town quarters and religious communities were the unit of assessment for the burdens of taxation and conscription. The Tanzimat sought to individualize responsibility to the state. A census department was established in 1835 to register individuals both for the census and for military conscription. The 1858 Land Code gave individual title to landholders, establishing personal responsibility for the payment of taxes on land. Military conscription was similarly personalized, as the individual was registered and conscripted by name, where previously villages would be asked to produce a certain number of soldiers. The tremendous demands posed by this ambitious shift in book-keeping from collectivities to individuals gave rise to the need for a vast bureaucracy with a modern education, and an extensive new school system was developed to meet this need.

The extension of direct Ottoman rule also led to a series of transformations in the economic life of frontier districts. Enhanced security, regulation of weights and measures and growing monetarization encouraged the development of markets which, in turn, attracted merchant participation in the state’s project of direct rule. In economic terms this


30 Shaw and Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, pp. 106–13.
meant changes in agricultural production away from subsistence and barter exchange in local markets to cash crops destined for external markets. The commercialization of frontier societies led to major social changes as well, as the importance of kinship groups in tribal societies was eroded by new forms of patron–client relations dominated by wealthy merchants or tribal leaders coopted by the state. What were once largely egalitarian societies underwent a process of social stratification headed by a small elite of rural powerholders, creatures and allies of the state, “who act as intermediaries and limit the independent participation of their clients,” the great mass of producers in local society, who were “more easily exploited and more dependent than they had been before the extension of the bureaucratic state apparatus.”

A third process involved the transformation of individuals in autonomous communities into Ottoman subjects, or tribesmen into Ottomans. The government actively sought to gain adherence to the state through the Sultan’s dual role as legitimate ruler and religious leader, or Caliph. The message of loyalty was promoted through the state school system whose “main aim was to produce a population which was obedient, but also trained into espousing the values of the centre as its own.” Mosques and the Friday prayer were another institution used to mobilize the Ottoman public behind their Caliph. One aspect of the extension of Ottoman rule to peripheral societies was thus the construction of schools and mosques. Certain institutions were created particularly to foster loyalty among frontier communities. Sultan Abdülhamid II opened a school in Istanbul to indoctrinate the sons of leading tribal shaykhs from Kurdistan, Arabia and North Africa, appropriately named Aşiret Mektebi, or “the tribal school.” Successful graduates of the tribal school were sent on to special training programs offered by the Mülkiye civil service academy and the Harbiye military academy and into state service. The military was another institution which served to promote loyalty to the state. Special Hamidiye cavalry units were created in Kurdistan and Hijaz, named after Abdülhamid II, in an attempt to harness the martial energies of Kurdish and Arab tribes to advance state security in the frontier districts. Such indoctrination certainly brought about changes in the political life of frontier communities. Not all of the changes, however, had been anticipated by the central government. Ottoman subjects also became more aware of the rights which accom-

31 Anderson, State and Social Transformation, pp. 28–32.
33 Ibid., pp. 101–104; Rogan, “Aşiret Mektebi.”
34 van Bruinessen, Agha, Shaykh and State, pp. 185–86; Anscombe, Ottoman Gulf, p. 150.
panied new responsibilities in the modern state’s contract with its subjects. Increasingly in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, frontier subjects availed themselves of modern communications such as the telegraph to send assertive messages to provincial and central government authorities using the language of the law to protest maladministration and to assert their rights.35

The introduction of the new institutions of the Ottoman state and the processes which they set off in frontier societies led to very different results in different parts of the Empire. Several factors influenced the effectiveness of direct rule in frontier districts, including the extent of local systems of rule and/or the legitimacy of local rulers; the potential for agricultural expansion, in terms of land and water resources; proximity to established administrative centers and/or urban cultures accustomed to Ottoman rule; and the extent of the state’s investment in manpower and infrastructure in a given district. Much depended on the alternatives to Ottoman rule, as many local leaders successfully played European powers against the Ottomans to bargain for the best deal. Time, too, was to play an important role, as the kinds of institutions which the Ottoman government sought to establish took time to become effective and gain acceptance. There were no quick solutions to the problem of extending the state’s sovereignty to peripheral zones.

Incorporating the periphery

The Ottomans made a strong entry into Eastern Arabia when Tanzimat reformer Midhat Pasha led a campaign force to Hasa in 1871 and established an administrative center in the town of Hufuf. Through the Hasa region (sancak) the Ottomans sought to extend their authority to Qatar and the inland district of Najd. Ottoman officials were posted to the local bureaucracy, where no local elites were strong enough to challenge the state’s bureaucratic role. Indeed, the Ottomans were successful in coopting the local notability to their rule by creating an economic environment which enabled them to prosper through trade and cultivation. This was not the case in Qatar, where the Al-Thani family were keen to protect their family’s rule and played the British against the Ottomans. Nor did it apply to the Najd, where the Ottomans

35 Discussion of this assertive political voice appears in later chapters of this work; see also Eugene L. Rogan, “Instant Communications: The Impact of the Telegraph in Ottoman Syria,” in Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schaeble, eds., The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation in Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th Century (Stuttgart, 1998), pp. 113–28.
were displaced by the Rashidi-Sa‘udī rivalry. And though the government made substantial investment in Eastern Arabia, building schools, mosques, garrisons and government buildings, they failed to lay an adequate communications infrastructure to bind Hasa to the rest of the province of Basra. Matters were not helped by the autonomous Kuwaiti state under the Sabah family which separated Hasa from the rest of Basra. Decline in state spending in Hasa and a reduction in the government presence doomed Ottoman efforts in Eastern Arabia, which ended with Qatari independence in 1913 and the Sa‘udī occupation of Hufuf that same year.\(^{36}\)

Ottoman rule in Yemen was compromised by the long-established system of local rule under the Zaydi imams and the complex politics of rival local leaders. Also, the caliphal authority of the Sunni sultan was less effective among the Shiite Zaydis than other frontier communities. The second Ottoman occupation began in April 1872 when a campaign force marched from the coast to San‘a’. The government managed to extend its authority over the bulk of the highlands by November of that year. San‘a’ was made the capital of a new province with four regions, each headed by a government-appointed governor (mutasarrif). Between 1872 and 1904, the imams submitted to Ottoman rule, though the province was frequently troubled by revolts against taxation and accusations of maladministration. In 1904, Imam Muhammad al-Mansur rose in revolt against the Ottomans and was succeeded by his son, Imam Yahya upon his death that same year. The Yemeni revolts of 1904–1906 and 1911 were extremely costly in human and material terms – costing the Ottomans by one estimate as much as 10,000 soldiers and £500,000 per year.\(^{37}\) In both instances, Imam Yahya sought British assistance before coming to terms with the Ottomans. In the settlement of 1907, the Ottomans sought to initiate a number of reforms designed to intensify Ottoman rule, including the reorganization of the police, replacement of corrupt officials and greater equity in tax collection, the expansion of the school system and the building of railway lines. Certain authority was also to be delegated to the Imam, particularly in the justice system, who was put on a sizable stipend of T£25,000 in July 1911.\(^{38}\) As Paul Dresch has concluded, “the political reality was complex, and at most points up to 1918 the Turks found support from Yemenis, not least from certain northern shaykhs whose fortunes were bound up with the Turkish presence. . . . None the less there was sustained resistance in the north. Tribes and Imams fought the Turks repeatedly.”\(^{39}\)

\(^{36}\) Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, introduction, chapters 2, 3, 4 and 7.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp. 188–89.  
\(^{39}\) Dresch, *Tribes, Government and History*, p. 219.
Libya was designated as one of the first five provinces to come under the 1864 Provincial Reform Law, and was formally reorganized in 1867 into four sancaks under the provincial center in Tripoli. Benghazi, or Cyrenaica, was attached to the province of Tripoli only between 1871 and 1879; the rest of the time it enjoyed a status similar to Jerusalem and Mount Lebanon as an independent regional governorate. Municipal structures were applied to the Libyan provinces in the 1870s, and by the mid-1890s there were some sixteen towns with municipalities. The registration of land encouraged settlement and a shift from pastoralism to agriculture. “By the turn of the century, much of the coastal agriculture was a cash economy, particularly in the regions around the large market towns, and merchants and landlords routinely provided cultivators and sharecroppers with monetary advances against the harvest, with which they purchased wheat and paid the government’s taxes.”

Indeed, Lisa Anderson’s analysis of Ottoman Libya before the Italian occupation of 1911 suggests that the central government had achieved more of its objectives here than in its Kurdish or Arabian frontiers:

The state-making reforms of the sixty years preceding European occupation had profoundly altered the bases of political organization in both Tunisia and Libya. The purview of the central governments had been extended, and their administrations had penetrated the hinterlands to collect taxes, recruit soldiers, and extract resources. The autonomy of the tribes had eroded: they were no longer independent political units outside the control of the state and government.

In these respects, Libya would seem to have been the closest example of the process of change initiated by the extension of Ottoman rule to Transjordan.

Ottoman Transjordan

The Ottoman experience in Transjordan stands to contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of the late Ottoman state. The reforms of the Tanzimat are all too often dismissed as desperate measures to prop up a collapsing state. Viewed from the Balkans, where European intervention and national movements rendered all attempts at reform futile, the Tanzimat were ineffectual. Viewed from the Syrian periphery in Transjordan, where the European presence and Great Power strategic interests were at a minimum, and the Ottoman state enjoyed a relatively free hand in local rule, the reforms would appear to have laid solid foundations for a viable administration.

40 Anderson, State and Social Transformation, pp. 89–90. 41 Ibid., p. 107. 42 Ibid., pp. 131–32.
As in other frontier zones, the Ottomans first attempted to extend their rule over Transjordan in the 1850s through military campaigns which sought to assert the state’s despotic power with little or no follow up. It was not until 1867 that the provincial governor in Damascus extended the administrative structures of the Tanzimat to the northernmost districts of ‘Ajlun and the Balqa’, and 1893 before the southernmost districts of Karak and Ma’an were incorporated. The state entrenched its position in the southern extremities of its Syrian province by infrastructural development and an intensified security presence. These developments are discussed in Chapter 2.

One of the top priorities of the governors in Transjordan was the subordination of the pastoral nomads and encouragement of agriculture in what might be termed a settlement policy. The state employed two tools to advance these aims. Uncultivated lands were awarded to settler communities such as the Circassian and Chechen refugees. Though perhaps uncultivated, these lands were claimed by the tribes of the districts, who petitioned in vain for the government to recognize their rights to traditional tribal domain. The 1858 Land Law did not recognize “traditional” claims, but only upheld rights to lands registered with the cadastral authorities that were cultivated and whose titleholders regularly paid their taxes. The application of the 1858 Land Law in Transjordan set in process the registration of land and encouraged a market in landed property. Between the threat of confiscation of lands for settlers and the rents which registered title-holders stood to gain from their lands, pastoralists and cultivators came to accept the new Ottoman land regime, much to the benefit of local agricultural production and tax revenues, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Merchants were drawn to Transjordan by the state’s presence. Cautiously at first, more extensively as Ottoman rule became more entrenched, merchants from surrounding cities expanded their operations in what they took to be an economic frontier. The primary attraction was the agricultural production of the region. In time, merchants diversified their economic activities to include money-lending and the accumulation of agricultural property. Merchants’ activities drew Transjordan into the regional economy of Ottoman Syria and the Mediterranean world beyond. The social role of merchants was as influential as were their economic activities. Merchants emerged as a distinct social elite. This was reflected in their relations with Ottoman officialdom and in ostentatious displays of wealth and hospitality. The homes which leading merchants built in the last decades of Ottoman rule still stand as a testimony to their social position, imparting an urban sophistication which set them apart from the other residents of Trans-
Jordan. The role of merchants in the commercialization of Transjordan is treated in Chapter 4.

Christian missionaries were another major catalyst of change. Missionaries were the only European residents in Transjordan, primarily Britons of the Church Missionary Society and the French and Italian priests of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Frustrated by Ottoman authorities and the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in their work in the rest of Syria and Palestine, Western missionaries were attracted to Transjordan precisely because of its frontier isolation, which meant that Ottoman and Orthodox influence were at a minimum. Here the missionaries could hope to make extensive conversions not only among local Christians but Muslim tribesmen as well. These ambitions were reduced as the state extended its presence in Transjordan. Missionary activities worked on the minds and bodies of the local inhabitants as well as their souls. In addition to building churches, missionaries introduced modern education and medicine through the opening of schools and clinics. Both had radical, often destabilizing consequences on the population. Students for the first time were exposed to the subjects and pedagogy of European education: the sciences and humanities, drill and public examination. In medicine, modern diagnostic techniques and pharmacology were made available to (and readily exploited by) the local inhabitants. These aspects of modern science displaced local practices and upset norms of authority and privacy, as discussed in Chapter 5.

These three agents of change – the Ottoman state, Syrian merchants and European missionaries – did not work in isolation from one another. The Ottomans sought to encourage the merchant presence and merchants sought positions in local government. Missionaries provoked a defensive reaction from the government, which sought to regain the initiative in providing education, health care and even religious instruction and mosques in Transjordan. Nor did they find the indigenous inhabitants passive before the onslaught of Ottoman modernity. Those innovations which benefited the populace were readily accepted, such as modern education, medicine and rapid communications. Society changed under the impact of these innovations, as discussed in Chapter 6. However, the government provoked resistance whenever it made demands that put local communities in jeopardy of hunger or vulnerable to attack. When these two critical features of the local moral economy were violated, peasants and tribes were equally prone to rebellion. In 1910 this led to the greatest challenge to Ottoman rule when the Karak district erupted in a major revolt. Following major revolts among the tribes of Iraq, the Druzes of Syria, and the Zaydis in Yemen, the Ottomans viewed the Karak Revolt with great suspicion and anticipated
some form of unified tribal uprising. Rumors circulated in the cities of Ottoman Syria during the Karak Revolt of a major tribal uprising which impressed on public imagination the power of the united tribes of Arabia. When the “Karak Rebels” won the sympathies of Damascene Arabists, who objected to the harsh punishments meted out by a special Ottoman military tribunal, the Karak Revolt became an Arabist cause, and in some ways a precursor to the later Arab Revolt of 1916 (Chapter 7).

The severity of Ottoman repression after the Karak Revolt and wartime mobilization following the outbreak of World War One led most of the natives of Transjordan to remain loyal to the Ottoman government throughout the difficult years of the war. While the residents of Transjordan were spared the worst of the war, such as the famine which devastated the Syrian coastal region, they suffered economic hardships (rationing, requisitioning) and personal dislocation such as conscription and exile. The government encouraged the loyalty of Bedouin and Muslim notables, and mobilized local militias to assist in the fight against the Arab Revolt. Both the Arab Revolt and Allenby's Palestine campaign spilled into Transjordan, with major battles fought in Ma’an, Tafila, Salt and Amman. However, the poor performance of the British and Sharifian troops confirmed the local inhabitants in their loyalty to the Ottoman state. The subjects were thus as surprised as their rulers when the Ottomans were driven into retreat in September 1918 (Chapter 8).

In the Epilogue, the enduring state legacy which the Ottomans left behind is examined in the experience of Faysali rule (1918–20) and the brief period in which the districts of Transjordan experienced independence as “national governments.” It is clear from the interregnum between Ottoman and Hashemite rule that while the Ottomans had in no sense made a nation of Transjordan, they had succeeded in imposing the modern state on a rural society. It was an important legacy which would enable the Hashemites to resume the process of state formation within the boundaries introduced by the Transjordan mandate.