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Abstract

The redrawing of Middle East boundaries by colonial powers following World War I, and the discovery of oil in the Persian Gulf region from the 1920s to 1950s ushered in more change in two generations than the Bedouin tribes had experienced since the founding of Islam. Urban centres rapidly expanded and new national boundaries created a class of stateless urban and desert peasants (*bidoon*), and interrupted migration patterns of the pastoral nomads (*beddu* or *badu*, the "desert-dwellers") who have migrated throughout the region for thousands of years. As Bedouin lifestyle shifted in the face of urbanisation throughout the Arabic speaking world, Arabs of Bedouin heritage sought to memorialise a romanticised past by constructing heritage villages and tourist destinations designed to deliver an exotic, authentic Bedouin experience for visitors. Competing conceptions of history have characterised this culture's interactions with newly emergent post-World War I political realities. Their concept of memory contrasts sharply with Western "documentary" memory, which relies on the written word, photography, and an objectivist vision of historical truth. Oral history is still one of the few avenues of memory available to present-day Arabs of Bedouin heritage due to low literacy rates. This fact, in conjunction with their adaptability to the harsh desert environment, allows for creative re-interpretation of a memorialised past both by the Bedouins themselves and the Arab national states. The case studies below present vignettes of how creatively reinterpreted memory has impacted the politics, culture, and social organisation among the Bedouin of the Negev, Egypt, Arabian Gulf (Saudi Arabia), and southern Jordan (Petra and Wadi Rum).

Keywords: Bedouin, *beddu*, memory, identity politics, Middle East, history and social customs

Introduction: who are the Bedouin?

The Arabic word *badawi* (plural *badu or beddu*) means someone who lives in the open steppe desert *(badiyah)*. The Bedouin are ethnic Arabs, almost entirely Muslim, who speak various Arabic dialects and who have led a traditional pastoral or nomadic lifestyle based on camel and goat raising, the iconic black goat hair tent, and migration to follow seasonal rains. However, they have also historically settled around oases and engaged in farming and date production. The mythologising of their past and heritage by various groups, including by the Bedouins themselves, obscures the reality that they have always been subject to a "mixed economy, which combines pastoralism, agriculture, trade, and wage labour … camel-herding Bedouin communities were never exclusively pastoralists but relied on a multi-resource economy".[1]

The fluidity of Bedouin social organisation and their oral-based memory plays an important role in their self-identity, specifically in how their past was memorialised by themselves and the centralised governments that increasingly restricted their power and movement in the early to mid-twentieth century. Bedouin memory is characterised by its malleableness to different conditions, just as the harsh environment in which they live necessitated flexibility and inventiveness in the face of the constant challenges of drought, disease, conflict, and modernisation.

For example, during times of shifting tribal alliances or in conditions of drought it was often expedient for tribes in close proximity to one another to remember and emphasise times of cooperation and peaceful co-existence rather than periods of conflict. Bedouin memory represents a very different species from Western "documentary" or "photographic" memory which relies on text, documentation, and permanence of recording. These two world views clashed violently during the period of forced sedentarisation of migratory tribes across Egypt, the Levant, and the Gulf between the 1950s to 1980s before reaching equilibrium.

The congruence between the political rhetoric of Western colonial powers and Arab national leaders in the 1950s in their views of the Bedouin as antiquated nuisances is astonishing. However, the idea and structure of the nation-state is in fact a Western creation. Arab leaders in building modern states were necessarily forced to impose the socio-political norms of the nation-state on everyone who fell within its geopolitical boundaries.

Today, most of the Bedouin tribes in the Arab world are now settled in houses, drive trucks, and engage in small-scale ranching and herding or wage labour. Poverty, joblessness, and the lack of modern services are endemic in their communities. In many cases their former ranges *(dirat)* have been appropriated by the state or individual large landowners for airbases, agricultural projects, mining, and along Egypt's north-west coast (governate of Mutrah) and Red Sea areas, holiday resorts. An unknown number of *beddu* across the Middle East, possibly tens of thousands, have resisted efforts at sedentarisation. In addition, an unknown number, again possibly ranging from thousands to tens of thousands, of *bidoon*

(from Arabic "*bedun jinsiyya*" which means "without citizenship papers"; not etymologically related to *beddu*) are trapped within state borders with no passport, birth certificate, and no possibility of gaining citizenship or official identity due to strict and harsh citizenship laws.[2]

The first extended sociological discussion of the Bedouin appears in the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, a fourteenth-century Tunisian historian sometimes called the father of Islamic sociology. He established an important dichotomy of nomadic pastoral life *(badawah)* and settled life *(hadarah)* that became part of an ethnographic discourse that would resurface centuries later. Although a Muslim with personal knowledge of the Berbers and the Bedouin, as well as a North African and an Andalusian, Ibn Khaldun may have contributed to European orientalist discourse about Bedouins. His ideas concerning the growth and decay of civilisations, and the purity and simplicity of primitive peoples ("noble savages"), sound very similar to Greek and Roman Stoic and later scholastic writings on the subject. Stephen Dale has called Ibn Khaldun "the last Greek and the first Annaliste historian" because of the obvious influence Aristotelianism had on him.[3]

Ibn Khaldun believed that Arab culture had evolved naturally from the primitive to the settled, with the Bedouin representing a primal, earlier form of pre-agricultural development: "Compared with sedentary people, they are on a level with wild, untamable animals and dumb beasts of prey."[4] In Ibn Khaldun's analysis, a picture emerges of an impetuous and violent race ("They plunder whatever they are able to lay their hands on"). Additionally, he set Bedouin behaviour in direct opposition to the fundamental principles of civilisation and the rule of law: "all the customary activities of the Bedouin lead to wandering and movement. This is the antithesis and negation of stationariness, which produces civilization".[5] Given the chance, they will tear down civilised buildings, using the stones for cooking stands and the wood for fires and tent poles.

However, Ibn Khaldun also admired the purity of lineage of the Bedouin *(nasab),* and their courage and loyalty. In contrast he portrayed city dwellers as weak, corrupt, and sinful as part of his general thesis that civilisations move from an original simple purity towards refinement and then to moral weakness and corruption. He also believed that the current city dwellers of the Arab world were derived from Bedouin, and that this transformation followed a natural course of evolutionary progression. This view will resurface in the twentieth-century land disputes between the Bedouin and the Egyptian and Israeli states; the state-sponsored idea that the Bedouin can be easily persuaded to become modern city dwellers and are eager to abandon all aspects of their former lives to enjoy the benefits of the modern state.

States tend to view economic production as the defining characteristic of citizen subgroups. While the Bedouin's economic organisation has changed—the tent has been abandoned and mass migrations have ceased—their culture is still firmly established in poetry and proverbs (for example, see the collections of Holes and Abu Lughod).[6] Traditional law ('*urf*), and marriage and family customs (such as first cousin marriage which has actually increased in the last decade in Jordan

and Qatar) are still firmly rooted in contemporary Bedouin culture. Modern state officials in the Middle East have been surprised by the tenacity of this culture and their inability to deracinate traditional Bedouin practices.

Bedouin identity and land disputes: settlement of the Negev Bedouin

In the mid-nineteenth century European colonisation and Ottoman land policy caused the displacement of Bedouin from desirable lands, the privatisation and concentration of land into large estates, and consequent social stratification. These trends, acutely visible in Algeria and to a lesser extent across the entire Arabic-speaking world, were exacerbated by the creation of the State of Israel and the 1948 War, resulting in the designation of the Negev Desert as Israeli government land.

The expulsion and re-settlement of the Negev desert Bedouin in modern southern Israel follows an identifiable pattern also repeated in Egypt and carefully documented by Cole.[7] This demonstrates that the ways in which historical discourse, memory, and stereotypical rhetoric about their culture were negotiated between nation-states and these tribes were not strictly based on religious differences since both the Israeli and Egyptian governments enacted very similar policies. The primary Bedouin tribes of the Negev region (including the Azazmeh, Jibarat, Sa'idiyin, Hanajira, and Tiyaha) ruled the desert semi-autonomously under both the Ottomans (who set up an administrative centre at Be'er Sheva in 1900) and the British Mandate.

Both the Ottoman *(daftar khana)* and British land registration systems did not reach into the southern Negev. It is doubtful whether these colonial powers were very much interested in the semi-arid area, except in the case of the British securing it as a land bridge for deployment of British troops to their Indian possessions and Gulf protectorates. After the 1948 War, the Israeli government forcibly moved the Bedouin into a 1,000-square kilometre area called the *siyag* (fence) triangle near Be'er Sheva. In 2000, about 60% of them had been resettled in this area in government towns designed to provide them with electricity, water, and sewage facilities. This was with the ultimate aim of ending their nomadic sheep-herding practices and transforming them into wage labourers. However, substantial numbers of Bedouin live in the technically illegal "unrecognised towns" and a few in traditional tents. Steven Dinero argues that the aim of the resettlement plans was:

… to actively alter not only the geography of the bedouin communal structure, but their economic, political and social bearings as well in an effort to 'debedouinise' the community, converting it into a de-politicised, non-threatening, proletariat class.[8]

In published state reports and Israeli scholarly literature in history, sociology, and ethnography concerning the Negev resettlement, Ibn Khaldun's evolutionary

hypothesis can frequently be uncovered, as Dinero further argues in a recent study of the Negev Bedouin:

… [settlement] efforts were based in part upon assumptions, expressed throughout the literature, that the passing of nomadism is a "natural" phenomenon, as peoples move from the pole of "traditionalism" to the pole of "modernity".[9]

Dinero's thesis that the resettlement was a well thought out government plan to transform Bedouin culture is borne out in a statement by Moshe Dyan while he was serving as Israel's Minister of Agriculture in 1963:

We should transform the Bedouins into an urban proletariat—in industry, services, construction, and agriculture. 88 per cent of the Israeli populations are not farmers, let the Bedouins be like them. Indeed, this will be a radical move which means that the Bedouin would not live on his land with his herds, but would become an urban person who comes home in the afternoon and puts his slippers on. His children would be accustomed to a father who wears trousers, does not carry a Shabaria [the traditional Bedouin knife] and does not search for head lice in public. The children would go to school with their hair properly combed. This would be a revolution, but it may be fixed within two generations. Without coercion but with governmental direction … this phenomenon of the Bedouins will disappear.[10]

Several phrases in this statement should be underscored: the privileging of the urban Western lifestyle (*hadarah*), the planned incorporation of the Bedouin into Israel as workers for the state (an economic as opposed to humanitarian motivation for resettlement), and the relinquishing of coercion (they can be coaxed into following their natural evolution into settled lives).

The discourses and rhetoric about Bedouin primitiveness, found both in Ibn Khaldun's sociological analysis and Dayan's statement, are so strikingly similar that there must be some relationship between them. A determinist might argue that both Ibn Khaldun and Dayan had accurately uncovered essential characteristics of their culture (i.e. biological, racial or environmental determinism). However, another explanation is that Ibn Khaldun and Dayan are simply drawing on the same pre-modern orientalist Greek and Roman discourses of the barbaric other (*barbaroi*), implicit in much nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western ethnographies. Also, the sedentary/nomadic dichotomy and primitivism labels have always been to some extent politically motivated, beginning with the Arab conquests and the establishment of centralised Caliphates in Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad to contain the Bedouin's military and political power, occupy their lands, and extract tribute or taxes.

Although the immediate sources of Ibn Khaldun's thought cannot be determined, he was certainly familiar with Aristotle via his reading of the Arab scholastics, Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. In Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics,* barbarians are described as child-like, naturally possess the disposition of the beast and slave, and are therefore ruled (according to the law of nature) by superior races. Also, standard Roman historiography, such as Ammianus Marcellinus's *Roman History* (380 AD), describes Arab tribes (Saracens) to the same effect, such as their plundering nature ("like rapacious hawks").

In turn, the Arabs in their North African conquests adopted the Romanised Greek term, Al-Barbar (modern Berber, from Greek *barbaros*) for various non-Arabic speaking tribes. From 1949 to 1952, when the Arab League (soon joined by international development experts at WHO and UNESCO) began calling for sedentarisation as the solution to the "Bedouin problem" of nomadism, the discourse of the primitive "other" or barbarian provided a convenient intellectual framework. Analysis of Bedouin culture in international development reports was not based on modern ethnographical field work or consultation with their leaders. Instead it was coloured by Western orientalist conceptions of the nineteenth century, having been impacted by earlier classical writings and the historiography of the Arabs themselves.

This ethnocentrism, and the attitudes of both Western experts and the Arab leaders who penned the proposals and studies for the sedentarisation of the Bedouin, were based on commonly-shared biased, outdated, or romanticised historical notions. The style, imagery, and subtexts in these reports were also remarkably similar: "the divide opposing Western experts to bedouin populations is mirrored in the gulf separating the Arab intelligentsia from the rural people of their own countries".[11]

The Bedouin had a traditional system of land rights management and ownership, some of it documented in bills of sale (*saned*), in addition to oral agreement, cultural memory, and tradition. They also held mutual unspoken understandings between tribes and individuals. Unlike the Ottomans and the British, who often respected their land management practices and traditional boundaries, the current Israeli government does not recognise the Bedouin system of law and tradition with respect to land rights:

This position was explicitly stated by the head of the Israeli Land Title Settlement Unit, who asserted "the Bedouin ownership claims are not based on legal grounds but rather on their own tradition and the period of time they occupied the land, with limited documentation".[12]

Here we see explicitly how the Bedouin's oral and memory-based system of customary law (*'urf*) is de-legitimised in a clash of historical perspectives and representation. The desert is represented in Israeli and Western academic literature as empty and barren, where tribes wandered with no fixed abode, as Kram points out:

Israel recognised virtually no indigenous land rights, both because most Bedouin did not have the written land ownership documentation which was required by the Israeli legal system, and because in most popular and academic Israeli accounts of the Negev desert, it was depicted as an empty space in which the Bedouin were only rootless nomads.[13]

As one Negev Bedouin recently remarked in an interview:

The Bedouins were here during the Ottoman and British area [era]; no one told us this is not your land. We lived here before the state was established. The Ottomans purchased land from the Bedouins to establish the city of Be'er-Sheva … The tribes knew the boundaries between different matot [groups of tribes]. The tribes among

the matot knew all the boundaries, similarly the chamulut [groups of families] and the family. It worked like this for hundreds of years.[14]

In addition, the recurrent discourse of primitiveness was often invoked by Israeli courts in specific land disputes to demonstrate that the Bedouin lacked any conception of individual property and were wandering opportunists, who "never resided permanently in any place whatsoever",[15] using and seizing land or property by brute force.

These disputes were in part fuelled by Israel's self-perception as a modern European-style democratic state in contrast to the autocratic, pre-modern, lawless culture which they ascribed to the Bedouin. Nomadic tribes were frequently criticised for overgrazing and degradation of the land because, as primitive peoples stuck at the pre-agricultural stage of human development, and without modern education systems, they could not have any conception of the sciences of ecology, biology, or scientific farming and ranching methods. In this patriarchal discourse, land could not be entrusted to child-like peoples who did not know how to care for it properly.

Where memory coalesces: integrating the Bedouin into military service

Loyalty and fierceness in war is a common theme of *beddu* poetry which often celebrates military prowess and exploits.[16] However, as we have seen, to their detractors the Bedouin were dishonourable and deceitful opportunists who stole whatever they could grab furtively without direct confrontation. Even in modern scholarship, their superior military abilities have been dismissed. Jean Poncet, for example, has attributed the successful eleventh century North African invasions of the Bedouin tribes of Bani Hilal to the weakened political situation, not to any intrinsic military superiority or racial essentialism (valour) of this group.[17]

Pasha Mehemet Ali (reigned 1805-1848), who ruled Egypt under the Ottomans, was compelled to address the troublesome military problem of the Bedouin tribes living in the desert areas since they would periodically disrupt trade routes or harass settled peasant villagers (*fellahin*) of the Nile Valley. Bolstering and flattering the war-like image of the Bedouin warrior, Ali embarked on a policy to employ Bedouin tribes such as the Hawwara in his wars in the Sudan, Hejaz, and al-Sham to spark and quell revolts, execute hit-and-run raids, and maintain supply lines.

By courting the Bedouin as loyal retainers, and then distancing them in special irregular units established specifically for them, he could control them so they did not unite and directly confront his power base in Cairo. As Aharoni points out, "the main motive of the bedouin for joining the army was economic", not a sense of nationalism or loyalty to the Pasha or to Egypt. Thus the trope of loyalty based on a past which the *beddu* memorialised in their songs and poetry was convenient for Mehemet Ali and the Bedouin alike.[18]

Through the manipulation of their self-image and their memorial history as possessing *sharaf* (honour), *nasab* (undiluted bloodline), and unwavering loyalty to the kin group, Mehemet Ali was able to successfully prevent the internal raiding of tribes such as the Awlad ‘Ali. This tribe distinguished its purity from the *bani pharoan*, or the Nile Valley farmers and merchants, whom they scorned for their mixed birth. One contemporary European military observer remarked that the Pasha’s decision to recruit 12,000 Bedouin to fight in al-Sham was specifically motivated by his desire to rid the interior of nomads who were harassing settled farmers.[19]

Similarly, Abdul al Aziz Ibn Saud recruited the religious and military brotherhood of the Ikhwan Bedouin warriors in the same manner to subdue the Arabian peninsula and create the modern state of Saudi Arabia in the 1920s. Ibn Saud creatively reinterpreted the central Islamic concept of *hijra* (migration) to mean that the Ikhwan should “move away” from nomadism by selling their herds, joining the military, and settling in the new villages (*hujar*).[20]

However, as the Ikhwan became increasingly critical of Ibn Saud and more uncontrollable the king was forced to destroy them at the battle of Sibilla in 1929. The remaining Bedouin were incorporated into the al-Haras al-Watani (Saudi Arabian National Guard), which is separate from the regular Saudi army forces, and is specifically tasked with internal security and protecting Medina and Mecca, and preventing internal coups against the royal family. In reintegrating the Ikhwan into the Saudi state, the image of Bedouin loyalty and military prowess was again invoked.

This same scenario was also played out in many of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that maintain elite corps of guards comprised primarily of Bedouin soldiers. These military groups are often separate from the national army and receive more advanced training and access to higher levels of military intelligence; they are designed in part to fend off internal military coups and rival sheikhs and directly protect the royal family who reinforces their traditional Bedouin self-image of fierceness, military prowess, and honesty while simultaneously flattering them with royal favour and lucrative salaries. The social contract between the state and the Bedouin is therefore at its root economic, but accompanied by elaborate ceremonial trappings and imagery by mutual manipulation of memorial attitudes.

Commodifying heritage: the Bedouin of Petra and Wadi Rum

As the modern material conditions of most Bedouin have shifted dramatically towards wage labour, sedentarisation, and ranching, the specific customs of their past existence (all within living memory) have ironically become fetishised. As Roger Webster, who carried out extensive ethnographic research on Bedouin in the Rub’ al Khali (Empty Quarter) of the Saudi Arabian peninsula, observes:

… as the traditional life of the desert becomes more irrelevant to the needs of a

growing industrial society so it becomes more highly valued for its symbolic and sentimental significance, at least in the eyes of the traditional elites. Therefore the cash value placed on camels, falcons, poetry and hunting skills is elevated to levels quite out of proportion to any practical economic usefulness.[21]

Even for non-Bedouin urban Arabs of the Gulf who have historically been engaged in pearl trading and shop-keeping, Bedouinism has developed into a mutually shared and fiercely protected false memory and unifying identity to present a united front to an increasingly non-native workforce. For example, expatriate workers constitute between 75-80% of the workforce in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. Hawker argues that in the UAE, “Bedouinism provides a trope around which a collective national identity can be assembled and presented to outsiders as a clear encapsulating image of who the people of the Emirates are.”[22]

Jordan has been particularly successful in packaging and commodifying its Bedouin memories. Bedouinism is big business in Jordan; the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Petra received 813,267 visitors in 2008, and tourism accounted for 14.7% of Jordan’s total GDP for that year.[23]

Hospitality is also an important feature of all Bedouin tribes; guests are treated as sacrosanct and injuring or insulting a guest could have serious consequences for inter-tribal relations. The Jordanian state, in attempting to resolve the “Bedouin problem” in the Petra Park, drew on the same primitivist and more recently “green” (eco-tourism) rhetoric also used in handling the Bedouin of the Negev, Sinai, and Mutrah region of Egypt.

The archaeological site of the Nabataean civilisation at Petra has been inhabited for hundreds of years by such tribes as the Bdul, Ammarin, Liyathna, and the Sa’idiyyin. They lived in hollowed-out tombs and caves at the site using the still partially functional water cisterns of the Nabataeans, grazed goats, searched for ancient artefacts for sale, and provided donkey, camel, and horse transportation into the site for European tourists who began arriving in the nineteenth century. From 1975-1985, the Jordanian government moved the Bdul and other tribes out of the Petra Park area based on a 1968 USAID report that complained that the:

… *sedentary Bedouin tribes who with their goats, guns, plows, and their endless quest for antiquities are, without malice, quickly converting this area to a wasteland ultimately fit for neither Bedouin nor tourist*.[24]

The subtext is familiar: the Bdul and Liyathna as pre-modern, pre-agricultural, and historically unaware peoples had neither any proper land management practices (which would eventually lead to their own demise or forced migration) nor any respect for the cultural heritage of the ancient Nabataeans (a child-like self-centeredness and a-historicity). The housing plans proposed for the Petra Bedouin relocation were consequently beset with a number of problems based on basic misunderstandings about their culture such as the lack of pens for herd animals, and offering them farming tools despite the fact that these tribes were primarily shepherds. As seen earlier, powerful state agencies with written reports

and experts will enforce their version of reality over any oral, memory-based, knowledge of an indigenous culture.

Wadi Rum, a desert area south of Petra, is another significant tourist destination in Jordan, known for its association with Colonel T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") who encamped in the area during the Arab Revolt of 1916-18 and wrote about his experiences in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Lawrence was popularised in David Lean's 1962 film, *Lawrence of Arabia*, filmed in Wadi Rum. Many tourists travel to the area specifically in search of the visual images of Lawrence's Arabia or vestiges of stories and memories of him among the local population.

Among many Bedouin and Arab intellectuals, however, Lawrence is dismissed as a "liar" for his promise to Sherif Hussein and Faisal that a large Pan-Arab state would be supported by Britain in return for Arab assistance in harrying Ottoman possessions during World War I. However, unknown to Lawrence, the secret Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 had divided the Levant and Bilad al-Sham into French and British zones of influence. This ended dreams of Arab independence and provoked angry reactions of betrayal and suspicion throughout the Arab countries.

Tourists at Wadi Rum can stay at a Bedouin camp, ride camels, smoke sheesha, and participate in traditional life. For Lawrence of Arabia aficionados, part of the allure of the experience manufactured for Western tourists involves searching for authentic memories from elders whose fathers or grandfathers may have known or fought with Lawrence against the Ottomans. In response, the Bedouin produce fictional memories of him, not so much for commercial gain or in the hope of larger tips, but as a way of augmenting the tourist experience and fulfilling their expectations. Tourists crave an exotic "other" experience filled with romance and adventure, and the Bedouin become obliging hosts, drawing on their tradition of pleasing and protecting the guest and fulfilling all their needs. Géraldine Chatelard calls these invented memories "white lies", or *kedhb abyad* in Arabic, designed to obscure some of the negative local attitudes towards Lawrence:

Bedouin create fictive links with the hero so as not to confess the breach in the transmission of memories that would testify to the historically secondary nature of the character, demystify him, and displease the visitors.[25]

The UNESCO Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity for 2005 clearly recognised that this invented neo-Bedouinism in Wadi Rum and Petra was threatening to efface and obscure their orally-transmitted culture. The organisation therefore included the *beddu* of Petra and Wadi Rum in their groups of protected peoples. They also specifically warned that "the increase of desert tourism and its demand for 'authentic Beddu culture' may lead to its distortion".[26]

Conclusion

Memory—specifically the oral memory of the Bedouin that transmitted not only cultural and social norms but also legal systems that the West encodes in written

form (inheritances, property rights, customary law, and legal, and political agreements between tribes)—remains one of the unique features of their culture. The fluidity of this memory, as I have shown, is closely analogous to the flexibility of their way of life and means of production. The memorialised past has been a frequent site of contestation between centralised Arab governments and colonial powers and the Bedouin. It has been used both to create social cohesion or sadly, in other forms, as a tool of de-legitimisation, oppression, and appropriation. That this memory has been subjected to evasions, forgettings, misappropriations, and realignments in their history is not new in human experience. However, the oral and strikingly fluid aspect of Bedouin memory as it was re-negotiated in the twentieth century creates an interesting study in politics and culture.

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Biographical note

Dr Alan Weber, Assistant Professor of English, teaches writing and the history of medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar. He previously taught at Cornell University, Ithaca and the Pennsylvania State University. Alan is editor of *19th Century Science* (2000), and the author of publications on Shakespeare, women's medicine, and seventeenth century medicine. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of the *Middle Eastern Journal of English Studies* (MEJES).

Email: alw2010@qatar-med.cornell.edu