


I offer this last consideration more as a speculative reflection than a criticism. *Spiritual Subjects* is a masterful study of deep learning and analytical sophistication. It bridges Ottoman, Russian, Chinese, Islamic, and global history subfields with grace, style, and creativity, presenting novel and important insights on a strikingly wide and diverse set of themes.

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Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914. M. Talha Çiçek (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Pp. 256. \$99.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781316518083

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Talha Çiçek's recent monograph is an important archival achievement. Through meticulous attention to the British, French, and especially the Ottoman imperial archives, Çiçek uncovers important and previously unstudied dynamics of the relationship between the Ottoman government and two large bedouin groups, the Shammar and Anizah, who inhabited the Syrian interior and Iraq in the 19th century. The book illuminates crucial shifts in Ottoman policies and tactics, especially with regard to settlement, and bedouin involvement in and encounters with the Ottoman military. Çiçek's book contains an unprecedented level of detailed research in this field, especially around military and tax policies and the politics of their implementation.

The book includes three sections. The first and second lay out Çiçek's historical argument that Ottoman policy toward bedouin shifted fundamentally in the 1870s, especially after the Russo-Ottoman war and the Treaty of Berlin. In the first two-chapter section, Çiçek argues that in the 1840s, "when the modern Ottoman state began to function" (36), there was frequent conflict between the Shammar and Anizah on one hand and Ottoman officials on the other over pastureland, which Ottoman officials wanted to repurpose as agricultural land to increase tax revenue and finance the Tanzimat reforms. This conflict eventually led to a consolidation of the Ottoman military position on the desert fringe, including the construction of forts and the strengthening of regional military forces. Çiçek also shows that during this period the central government replaced irregular troops with regular military forces to guard new settlements, especially of immigrants and refugees.

The second section of the book focuses on the 1870–1900 period, in which Çiçek argues that the consolidated military position constructed after the 1840s as well as negative experiences with forced settlement led to official compromise on plans to push the Shammar and Anizah into the desert or fundamentally change their lifestyle by force. With the Ottoman position weakened on the global interimperial stage, the regime also was keen to retain the loyalty of important bedouin elites. In Çiçek's telling, it was in this context that Shammar and Anizah sheikhs became "partners of the empire," aiding in imperial expansion efforts while maintaining mobile lifeways and control over pastureland. In the context of this new configuration of power, most bedouin elites stopped collecting protection taxes from settled villages, supporting the Ottoman regime's revenue prerogative, but retained much of their control over land as well as their mobility.



The third and final section delves into specific aspects of the Ottoman regime's engagement with bedouin communities: taxation and judicial practice. Especially Chapter 6 on taxation is meticulously researched and includes important findings about both Ottoman policies of using military units to increase the efficacy of mobile tax collection and bedouin elites' attempts to secure agreements to pay their taxes in installments and take advantage of competition between adjacent provincial administrations over the lucrative animal taxes their communities generated.

This book is strongest in its enumeration of government policy. Çiçek's historical narrative and periodization rely almost exclusively on Ottoman and British central imperial archives, and it is the Ottoman imperial perspective, as represented in official correspondence and reports, that comes through most clearly. This is an important contribution: Çiçek shows that Ottoman officials were not uniformly focused on forced settlement of bedouin communities, which had been the implication in earlier scholarship, and offers a convincing periodization for changes in imperial policy. Çiçek's broad regional approach to the Syrian interior also is important, because he uncovers important parallels between Ottoman policy and rural social and political dynamics in southern Syria (contemporary Jordan) and regions of northern Syria and Iraq like Dayr al-Zor and Mosul. These parallels include increasing capitalist interest in land bedouin used in these regions in the mid-19th century, close ties between Ottoman officials and bedouin elites, and a generalized Ottoman policy of negotiation with bedouin groups toward maintaining alliances in the charged political climate following the 1870s crises. These cross-regional analyses focusing on bedouin groups that migrated over long distances reveal important and wide-ranging dynamics in rural policy in a field that has usually focused on provinces, districts, and cities as units of analysis.

Further, although Çiçek is concerned with discerning temporal shifts in an Ottoman policy conceived as unified, he does not hesitate to narrate the complexity and messiness of that policy and the constant political tension that produced it. For example, whereas Ottoman officials generally demanded that bedouin elites abandon their historical tax demands from villages in exchange for maintaining access to pastureland, Shammar groups in Mosul continued to collect payments from village communities into the 1890s with tacit Ottoman approval (200). Although they complicate Çiçek's periodization of a unified state policy, these examples reveal the depth and breadth of the archival research *Negotiating Empire* synthesizes.

With these important contributions noted, Çiçek's analysis of the role of bedouin individuals and communities relies heavily on conceptions of "tribe" and tribe-state relations that ultimately limit the historical questions he poses. In his introduction, Çiçek outlines a definition of the tribe that relies on a hierarchical version of segmentary lineage theory (15–18). The ideal type this theory posits of an isolated, autonomous, and functionalist tribe has remained ascendant in Middle Eastern studies even as other area studies fields have rejected it. This ideal type undergirds Çiçek's claim that the Ottoman state became a meaningful actor in the lives of autonomous tribes only in the 1840s Tanzimat period, eliding the much longer relationships between bedouin communities and the Ottoman regime, especially in relation to the pilgrimage. This periodization obscures the way the tribe as a political and social construct became connected to and defined by imperial administration over the *longue durée* of Ottoman sovereignty in Syria. The construction of the autonomous tribe also enables a state-centered historical narrative, originating with Ottoman officials, of the bedouin as a threat to imperial modernization efforts presented as necessary for "peace and security" in the countryside in the mid-19th-century Tanzimat era. In this narrative, the northern migrations of the Anizah and Shammar from Najd, their growing political power, and their demands for taxation eventually pushed settled cultivators out of the region, leaving much of the fertile land of the Syrian interior abandoned. This neatened story of a lengthy, nonlinear, and intermittent migration privileges the perspective of imperial officials and their merchant capitalist allies who wished to increase their landholdings in

the second half of the 19th century, and presents the violent dispossession of bedouin communities inhabiting those lands as a necessary corollary of political and economic progress.

Çiçek's description of the tribe also posits an "undisputed legitimacy" for those bedouin leaders with the martial strength and community respect to attain the position of sheikh (19). Çiçek grants these individuals, who appear most frequently in imperial archives, a high level of agency: they, rather than their wider communities, are the "partners of the empire" in his account. This claim of elite legitimacy works alongside Çiçek's reification of the socially constructed division between "pure nomads" who purportedly had no interest in agriculture and "sedentary" agropastoralist bedouin groups. This division between "pure" and "semi-sedentary" groups holds wide provenance among bedouin communities themselves and the anthropological literature associated with them, and many scholars have used it as an explanatory device rather than a social construct and object of analytical criticism. For example, when narrating the failure of an Ottoman project to settle Shammar communities in Mosul in the 1870s, Çiçek adopts the Ottoman official position that the Shammar refused to settle because they were "pure nomads." This argument precludes further historical inquiry into the internal dynamics of Shammar communities and the political tensions surrounding the land distributions settlement entailed.

Çiçek's monograph is a crucial contribution to a growing body of scholarship on Ottoman political economy outside the empire's cities and exclusively agricultural realms. His book gestures toward a future horizon of historical research on the political, economic, and social roles of the communities inhabiting the interior regions of the Arabic-speaking Ottoman world.

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The Unsettled Plain: An Environmental History of the Late Ottoman Frontier

**Chris Gratien (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022).
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Chris Gratien returns several times in his excellent new book, *The Unsettled Plain*, to the refrain "the mountains are ours," a line of poetry from 19th-century Cilicia, in what is now Çukurova in southern Turkey. Gratien uses this phrase to frame what he describes as "a battle over two competing visions of the future: one in which the people who lived on the land and knew it intimately should define their relationship with that land, and another in which that relationship should be subservient to the needs of the state and the desires of those with the money or power to influence it" (p. 228). While tracing the many changes that affected Çukurova between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, from settlement programs to the boom and bust of cash-crop agriculture to public health interventions and infrastructure construction, the author emphasizes the persistence of this opposition in the politics and daily life of the region.

One of Cilicia's defining features was a spatial division between mountains and plains that was temporal as well as seasonal. At the outset of this history, residents of Cilicia, across occupations and communal boundaries, moved seasonally to the *yayla*, or summer mountain retreat. This practice, which Gratien calls the "most important aspect of the ecology of