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Introduction

"Egypt is determinable with unusual ease and little or no dispute," Charles Wendell argued in 1972. He did so to prove that such "geographical or territorial factor" greatly facilitated the rise of Egyptian national consciousness.[1] This concept, as Matthew Ellis brilliantly expounded in his groudbreaking history of Egypt's western borderland (relying among other archives on the collections housed at Durham Unviersity), was long-lived and had deleterious effects on later historiography. The scholarship produced in Egypt has approached the country's territoriality as untouchable and timeless, not to be questioned. Western scholarship has ironically achieved much of the same goal, by interrogating national subjectivity but taking for granted the territorial dimension of Egyptian nation-statehood.[2] Recent studies have finally begun to chip away at the available Cairo and Alexandria-centered histories of modern Egypt by exploring new geographies, chronologies, and source-materials.[3] But even then, with Egypt's secondary cities or its agricultural interior gaining ground, Ellis again is right in noting that "the country's expansive desert borderlands are still neglected."[4]

"THIS PAPER AIMS NOT TO TRACE NEW BORDERLINES OR SETTLE SOVEREIGNTY CLAIMS..."

The specific borderland this paper explores is the one Rashid Khalidi in his seminal 1980 study called "Egypt's ill-defined Eastern frontier with Syria."[5] That is where, in 1906, a dispute (to be designated alternatively as the ʿAqaba crisis or the Taba incident[6]) between the British, who had been by then occupying Egypt for more than two decades,

and the Ottomans, who were still the nominal sovereigns of Egypt (despite the de facto autonomy that had been granted to Muhammad/Mehmet ʿAli with a firman in 1841 and a long-hidden-away map[7]) broke out. The ways in which such boundary would be called and where exactly it ran mattered and would continue to matter highly. Was it an administrative line or international border?[8]

This paper aims not to trace new borderlines or settle sovereignty claims. Instead, on the basis of Durham University Library archives and others, it takes cues from Will Hanley's plead to study Egyptian history through the lens of nationality and citizenship "as practiced." On the one hand, he writes, the Egyptian state was literally controlled by the British and figuratively controlled by the Ottomans. On the other, the everyday *practice* of nationality and citizenship trouble straightforward narratives and dismantle the validity of Western archetypes for all experiences everywhere.[9] Analogously, in spite of the stark lines appearing on maps, we may think of the border as the product of bargaining on both sides (with the line eventually approved in 1906 not matching any of the proposals yet being much closer to the Egyptian/British position than the Ottoman one[10]) and of accommodating circumstances on the ground. While it is British, Egyptian, and Ottoman officials that are given a voice in these pages, I try to acknowledge and interpret the actions of the people living in border regions. They do not speak but are spoken *about*, which in itself is telling of the workings of the state.

First, this paper suggests that the newly excavated Suez Canal, inaugurated in 1869 after a decade of work, set the course of Sinai's history in previously unacknowledged ways. Secondly, I examine the role of Sinai's Bedouins in shaping a difficult-to-trace Egypian-Ottoman frontier, which bureaucrats in and from Istanbul, London, or Cairo tried, especially in 1906, to manipulate at will. Do people make borders? How does their sheer presence, collaboration, or obstruction affect border-related decisions? What was entailed in the physical creation of such borders and what material effects did this produce? Such questions can potentially tilt the chronology and the focus of the available literature. Almost all previous writers who have dealt with Egypt's north-eastern boundary in Sinai have approached it as the ante-chamber of either British First-World-War diplomacy or Mandate Palestine.[11] Moreover, conventional accounts of the ʿAqaba/Taba affair culminate with the sultan giving in to the British ultimatum in 1906, perhaps because they tend to rely mostly on the published British documents.[12] Yet, disagreements pre-dated that specific crisis and would continuing afterwards.[13] Moreover, the so-called ʿAqaba/Taba affair included the Anglo-Egyptian or the Ottoman bureaucrats dispatched on the spot but involved the Bedouin tribes inhabiting these territories. Previous scholarship theorized that Egypt's Bedouins had been settled by the start of the twentieth century. Increased cultivation and the

growing railway system, the story went, had corraled nomads along the inevitable path that led to sedentarization. Other scholars later qualified such view by showing the limited penetration of the Egyptian state and its coexistence with the 'special social sector' composed of nomadic pastoralists.[14] More recently, for the Syrian interior specifically, Eugene Rogan and Nora Barakat have pushed this interpretation even further by exploring the active involevment of Bedouins (better, Bedouin bureucrats) into the creation of a state on the ground and in everyday life.[15] More needs to be studied when it comes to Sinai and Egypt's southern borders: these remain to be explored in future studies.[16]

Canal Affects

The late-nineteenth-century Sinai appeared as an "arid wilderness" or a "vast waste land" where only a few shrubs and trees grew in the *wadis* (valleys). Seemingly, water from several springs flowed for some distance from the hills and then disappeared in the sand without yielding any considerable benefit[17] (see image 1). Eucalyptus trees and a kind of shrub known as *shagar al yantun*, with leaves resembling those of the olive tree, managed to develop.[18] By this time, the Sinai was said to be drier than before due to the cutting down of timber.[19] Some blamed the Bedouins for turning scrub land into desert by allowing their animals to destroy vegetation.[20]

Image 1: Sinai, Wadi Mukattab. Hisham Khatib Collection, Francis Frith, circa 1857-1860, AD_MC_030_ref28. Source: Akkasah Photography Archive, al Mawrid, NYUAD.

The peninsula was comprised between the cultivated lands of the Egyptian Delta and the hill country of Palestine and was bounded by the Mediterranean Sea in the north, by the Gulf of Suez in the southwest, and by the Gulf of 'Aqaba and the Wadi 'Arabah in the south-east. The land donned different shapes, as it comprised the semi-fertile portions about the southern end of

"...SCHOLARS OF THIS BORDER REGION HAVE NOTED THE CANAL'S POTENTIALLY TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE IN BORDER-MAKING ONLY IN PASSING..."

Palestine, the arid table lands of the Tih, the sandy dunes about the coast of the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, and the mountainous district of the Peninsula of Sinai.[21] The latter could be discerned from the sea a few hours of navigation south of Suez, even though it remained difficult to point out exactly which peak could be regarded as Mount Sinai specifically.[22]

The recently excavated Suez Canal, allowing maritime passage through the isthmus of Suez since the mid-1860s (even though it would be officially inaugurated in 1869), had effects on the Sinai that have so far been understated. First and foremost, by separating the Sinai from Egypt, it came to embody a de facto eastern liquid boundary (see image 2). Interestingly, as early as 1879, Egyptian geographer Amin Fikri wrote that the "natural borders of the land of Egypt" are to the east the *khalīg* (*Gulf* or *Canal*) of Suez and the Red Sea; to the west the Libyan desert; and to the south "the lands of Nubia."[23] Yet scholars of this border region have noted the Canal's potentially transformative role in border-making only in passing.[24] According to a recent intervention, the Canal constituted "a west–east bridge that Egypt has been missing since the dawn of its history."[25] Yet this vision may be mostly informed by a presentist bias. At creation, the Canal functioned as a brand-

new and man-made boundary. Once completed, one could indeed cross the Canal but only with some degree of difficulty and slowdown. Three moveable bridges would be set in place: one north of Suez, the second at Ismailia, and the third at Al Qantara in correspondance with the road to Al ʿArish on the Mediterranean coast.[26] As argued by Valeska Huber, traversing the Canal at Qantara significantly hampered Bedouin mobility and slowed down caravan trajectories.[27]

Moreover, it transformed maritime travel into a quicker and easier option compared to the overland pilgrimage route.[28] Conversely, the fact that steamboats could now ferry passengers such as the pilgrims shuttling between Suez and Jedda, had a reverse impact on land. The five forts that the

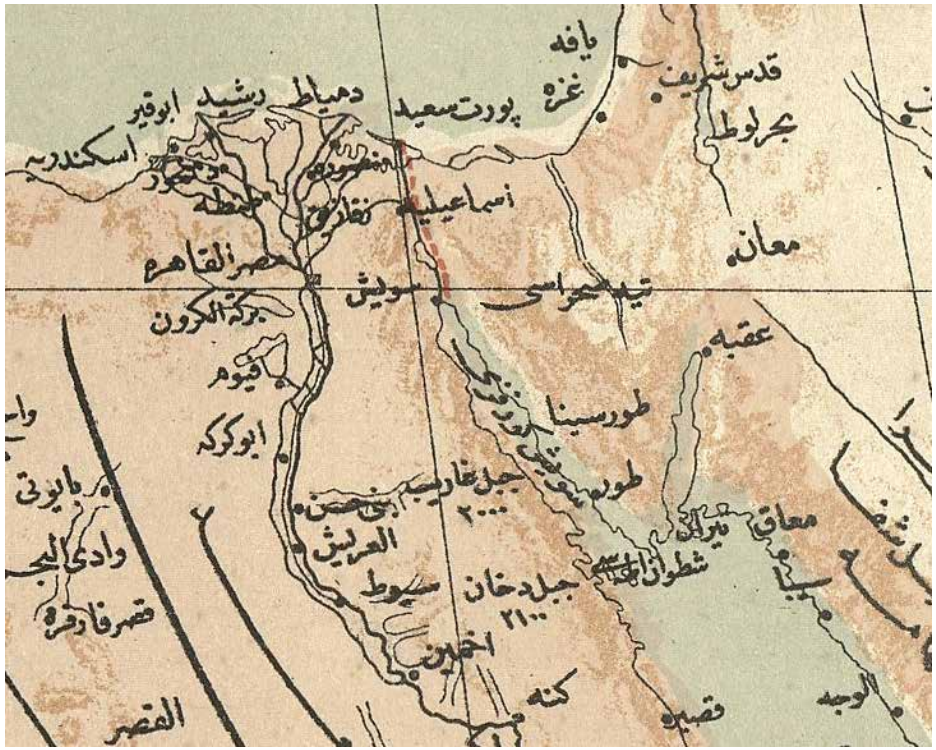

Image 2: Detail from "Miser Iyalati," by Ali Seref Pasa and Hafiz Ali Esref, 1893, Matbaʿa-ı ʿĀmire, Dersaʿadet. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

Egyptian forces used to control (at Nakhl, ʿAqaba, Muweila, Daba and Al Wajh, the last three of which on the Arabian Red Sea coast[29]), once meant to protect the pilgrimage land routes, were now less necessary. The Anglo-Egyptians gradually returned them between 1887 and 1892 to the Ottoman state.[30] The use of roads as well, such as the Darb El Hajj or the "old pilgrims' road" connecting Cairo to Suez and the latter to Nakhl, ʿAqaba, and beyond changed accordingly.[31] These vicissitudes, in turn, had an impact on border-making.

Even though the Suez Canal now drew a north-south line on the previosuly undisturbed surface of the isthmus plain, it remains to be assessed whether its effects could stretch much further away from its eastern banks, where Ottoman-Egyptian and exclusively Ottoman lands could not be told apart clearly. An 1887 description of the Sinai peninsula claimed that three sections could be identified: Egyptian territory east of the Suez Canal; Egyptian territory west of the Suez Canal; and Ottoman (also Turkish) territory. Yet, the same account was helpless when distinguishing the second section from the third one: the Egyptian-Ottoman boundary, it continued, did not "appear to have heen clearly defined by treaty or otherwise." It seemed probable, therefore, that "the boundary inland has never yet been demarked, and this uncertainty may at some future period be a source of difficulty leading to a conflict of jurisdiction."[32]

Lines and Blanks

Early cartographic renditions bear the visible marks of such challenges. Maps of this borderland region have already been juxtaposed and studied in depth.[33] They are numerous and yet still insufficient to map this region well.[34] Here I will populate the misleadingly blank expanses they showcase with people and roads: these were by no means a "no man's land."[35] By 1873, four years after the Suez Canal's inauguration, the newly-founded Port Said had jurisdiction over the northern portion of the waterway, until and comprising Qantara which lay south of Port Said and roughly mid-way through the recently excavated isthmus. Further down, Suez, at the southermost tip of the Canal, extended its jurisdiction way east as far as Al-Wijh (here Widj) on the Arabian shore of the Red Sea.[36] In fact, until 1892, Egypt also controlled the "land o" on the Red Sea coast of Arabia as far as Wadi Hamd (or Hamz) south of Al Wijh: this appeared to be "the southern frontier of Egyptian Midian, and the northern limit of the Ottoman Hejaz."[37]

Along the Mediterranean coast, Egyptian control may have extended further than Al ʿArish and rather up to Rafah, midway between Al ʿArish and Gazza.[38] Al ʿArish figured as an important stepping stone for the caravans of pilgrims and merchants coming from Aleppo, Damascus, Gazza and moving on.[39] Al ʿArish lay in fact along the Damascus-Cairo road passing through the

above-mentioned Qantara.[40] Egyptian sources from 1873 claim it was Al-ʿArish that held jurisdiction over what they call Egypt's "frontier."[41] From his administrative headquarters at al-ʿArish, an Egyptian military and civil governor under Egypt's Ministry of the Interior oversaw "northern Sinai" as a regular administrative sub-district (*Muhāfaza*).[42] According to a contemporary, a *muhāfiz* was assimilable to a "governor of a frontier city."[43] In 1905, northern Sinai was still administered from Al Arish, separately from the rest of the central and southern peninsula.[44]

Here too, the Suez Canal proved momentous: it was after its opening that Al ʿArish also acquired jurisdiction over, in particular, the Bedouin tribes of the Al Sawarka and Al Massaide (who shared their origins with the Lahyawat mentioned below).[45] This region was in fact inhabited, albeit thinly, by nomadic tribes collectively referred to as either Bedouins or Arabs[46] (leaving aside for now the Greek Orthodox monks of the St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai[47]). They were presumed to be all of Arab origin, save the small Gebalia group, "believed to be the descendants of the troops sent by the Emperor Justinian early in the sixth century to defend St. Catherine against the attacks of the indigenous population."[48] Some Bedouins lived sedentarily. What distinguished them from other villagers was not necessarily a nomadic lifestyle but a relative autonomy from Cairo and often their domination over the fellahin. They lived, Timothy Mitchell points out, on the geographical margin, partly within and partly beyond government control.[49]

The Egyptian state conveniently designated Bedouins as "guardians of the frontier" and appointed them to watch over the borders, mountain sides and uninhabited areas.[50] Indeed, as Ellis emphasizes, Bedouins had enjoyed many "special privileges," having become tantamount to guards along the Egyptian frontiers.[51] Such privileges included being "exempt from drawing lots for military service and service work."[52] The pilgrimage road, for example, was divided in different tracts and each fell under a different tribe's responsibility.[53] Prior to the 1870s, Nora Barakat has shown, Ottoman lawmakers had administered the corridor of the pilgrimage route in the Syrian interior closely through a wide network of lasting reliationships with particular Bedouin groups. The Ottoman regime, she adds, "had not attempted to directly govern the landscapes beyond that."[54] Up to the opening of the Suez Canal, then, Egypt's administration of the overland pilgrimage route along the Sinai coast was a convenience to both Cairo and Istanbul.[55]

Moreover, Bedouins played a large part in the earthworks for the embankment of the channel upon the Suez Canal's excavation starting in 1859.[56] In 1869-70, the Towarah tribe inhabiting the Sinai peninsula was "ordered to assist in

guarding the new Suez Canal" but paid for their refusal with the umprisonment of their head Sheikh, Musa Nuseir. That "the Towarah had nothing to do with the country about the Canal, as they lived beyond it" possibly was not regarded as a sufficiently strong claim.[57]

On the whole, the Bedouin tribes who inhabited the deserts of both Sinai and Palestine seem to have been pulled in multiple directions. On the one hand, they may have acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty and recognized they were linked at least nominally to the Ottoman administration. At the same time, as from the beginning of Muhammad/Mehmet ʿAli's rule, the Bedouins of Sinai recognized his authority and were punished whenever they disobeyed him.[58]

A Contested Borderline

The British army, after bombarding Alexandria in July 1882, first landed in Port Said in August that year.[59] The occupation reverberated over both the Suez Canal and the Sinai. The Anglo-Egyptian administration that came to be after 1882 developed a vision for Sinai as a strategic barrier for the defence of the Canal.[60] It came to see an increased need to station troops to protect the waterway as well as to limit smuggling.[61] Egypt's Customs regulation of April 2, 1884, stated that the "custom line being the littoral and the frontiers of the territories of the neighboring states,"[62] but did not clarify where such frontiers exactly lay.

Ottomans, on their part, also strengthened the government's presence and increased troops in Palestine and the Hijāz.[63] As argued by Nora Barakat, Ottoman sovereignty in the Syrian interior, in fact, had become much more fraught after the loss of territory in the Balkans and the British presence in Egypt, which transformed Greater Syria's southern arid regions inhabited by tent dwellers into a contested borderland.[64] Egypt's occupation had altered "the identity, loyalty, and intentions of landowners in the interior, now a contested imperial borderland, a new source of anxiety.[65] Now that the British were in control of Egypt, it was too risky to leave the Egyptian forces protect (or control) the Hajj caravans traveling through Sinai. At stake, Ellis points out, was the very future of Egypt as a simultaenously Ottoman autonomous province and an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.[66] The Ottomans may have thus felt the urge to reinstate Egypt as a regular administrative province (Vilayet) within the Ottoman empire and disconnect the Land of Midian and Sinai from the scope of Egypt's rule.[67] Between 1887 and 1892, as mentioned above, the now Anglo-Egyptian government renounced the forts that the Egyptians had previously run.[68]

In 1892, a blown-out contest for Sinai began unfolding. That is when Khedive Tawfiq died suddenly and his 17-year-old son, ʿAbbas Hilmi II, succeeded to the

khedivate: this was the first time since Britain's occupation that the Ottoman sultan had to issue a firman of investiture.[69] Reportedly, the Ottoman ruler ʿAbdulhamid "saw his opportunity of endevoring to obtain possession of a portion of the Sinai Peninsula" by "drawing a line" from Al Arish to Suez. He had the Firman prepared accordingly.[70] However, Lord Cromer sent a protest to Istanbul vetoing its promulgation and the Ottoman authorities agreeed to leave the Sinai to Egypt. Cromer published a statement interpreting the Grand Vizier's telegram as recognition of a frontier from just east of al-ʿArish to the head of the Gulf of ʿAqaba. The Ottoman authorities remained silent, neither agreeing nor objecting to Cromer's statement.[71] As for Egyptian popular feelings, they seemed to be mostly favoring the Ottoman claim against that of their own government. The British claim of Sinai for Egypt appeared to serve primarily Britain's own interests.[72]

By the turn of the century, the British had thus superimposed an ʿArish-ʿAqaba line over the Ottoman ʿArish-Suez line. The Ottomans, on their part, did not remain idle. In 1898, they seemed to reinforce their forces along the frontier and rumors spread that they even intended to occupy Nakhl. The British in Egypt grew tense.[73] In 1899, the Ottomans founded the town of Beersheba (or Bi'r al-Sabaʿ) in southern Palestine and "commenced operations to strengthen their sovereignty among the Bedouin tribes in the region."[74] In 1900, they established there a new administrative sub-district (Kaza) that took over the task of collecting taxes from local tribes from the Gaza Governorate.[75] That same year, the British in Egypt carried out a survey of the water resources along the Qantara-El Arish axis possibly with military purposes and took steps to develop water resources in the basin of Wadi Al-Arish and elsewhere.[76] Finally, in 1904 the Hjjāz railway stretching from Damascus to Medina reached Maʿan in southern Transjordan, not very far from ʿAqaba.[77] The Ottomans feared that the British may thwart their railway project.[78] The British, for their part, may have fretted about the Suez Canal and what they saw as the foreign power meddling behind the Ottomans, including the pan-Islamic and anti-British movement then agitating in Egypt and elsewhere.[79] They may have also worried that the Ottomans were attempting to create a closed sea out of the gulf of ʿAqaba by distancing Egypt from its western shore.[80] A relatively remote desert location on the Sinai eastern coast had thus become the fulcrum of local, regional, and global concerns.

A Nasty Bother in Sinai

It was not long before what colonial official Lord Edward Cecil described in 1905 as a "nasty bother" developed in Sinai, after the British administration had been "allowed to slack in the previous three or four years."[81] British agent and consul-general Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer (in office 1883–1907),

reported that, early in 1905, the Bedouins of the Peninsula had become "very restless." Several raids took place and, in May, two brothers were murdered. According to Cromer, the restlessness was mostly due to the delay in settling outstanding disputes outstanding disputes between tribes and individuals. The Commandant was able to give judgment but seemed unable to carry out his decisions. Under these circumstances, it was decided to send Mr. Jennings-Bramley.[82] Lord Cecil had asked Wingate to send in specifically Bramley or an "Arab expert" to come and investigate the "matter" in the Sinai.[83] Wilfred Jennings-Bramley had arrived in Egypt in 1891 at twenty years of age and served in the Sudan between 1901 and 1906, where he seemed to have developed an ethnographic interest in the Bedouins.[84] He developed a reputation as an expert of things-Bedouin since he had made an all-round tour in Sinai in 1900 and had formulated recommendations to enforce law and public order that were later put into practice.[85] Cromer certainly trusted him to speak "the Bedouin Arabic thoroughly" and to have "a perfect acquaintance with the Bedouin affairs of the Peninsula." Other British officials who worked closely with him would grow rather sceptical of their colleague, writing that he appeared "to be somewhat hysterical," that his letters were "extremely difficult to make out," and that he was "too excitable" and made "the Turks equally so."[86] However, for now Cromer appointed Bramley Commandant and Inspector and entrusted him "full control over the affairs of the Peninsula" from his headquarters at Nakhl.[87]

Already in late 1905, the Ottoman commandant in ʿAqaba Rushdi Pasha (or Rüştü Sıtkı), expressed worries that the British may try to build a military camp in Taba. "The border to Egypt is unknown here and I have no information about the border," he added.[88] According to historian Amira Sonbol, it was the Ottomans who first occupied Taba on the grounds that "all Sinai was Ottoman territory."[89] On 3 January 1906, Sir Reginald Wingate, then governor-general of the Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian army, sent an order to R. C. R. Owen, director of intelligence, to have the latter's subordinate Jennings-Bramley leave his headquarters at Nakhl, in the heart of Sinai, and proceed to Umm Rashrash (now Eilat) in Naqb al-ʿAqaba to build up a small post for the Egyptian border police.[90] British sources acknowledged that ʿAqaba, at the head of the gulf, now belonged to "Turkish territory" (after being returned in 1892) but stressed that Taba was, on the contrary, "in the Sinai Peninsula, which for several generations has been recognised as being under the administration of Egypt." They also blamed the Ottomans for provoking tension in the Sinai, claiming that "Turkish troops" had occupied Taba and other posts and that their actions were tantamount to an "aggression upon

Egyptian administration" that could not be allowed to continue.[91] Yet, in the later words of no other than Bramley himself, South Sinai has certainly never been owned by Egypt." And, in line with what had occurred already in 1892, Bramley claimed that "Abbas Pacha refused to second Lord Cromer in claiming it as Egyptian because, he said, it had never been given to Egypt" in the first place.[92]

The echo of the tension mounting in early 1906 reverberated loudly in the correspondence between the Egyptian Khedive ʿAbbas Hilmi II and Ahmad Rashid Bey, counsellor of State and representative of the Khedive in Constantinople. On January 16, 1906, Rashid wrote that the Porte was in constant and coded correspondence with the governor of Syria on the subject of Akabé/ʿAqaba where Ramley bey, "an Englishman in the service of the government of your Majesty" led the works.[93] A month later, the so-called "issue of Aqaba" still raised "a lot of concern" in Istanbul.[94] In April 1906, the issue was always on the agenda. According to an "important" despatch received from London by the Ottoman diplomat Musurus Pacha, the council of ministries had gathered and decided to "stand firm and do not abandon anything."[95] A month later, in May 1906, the issue of ʿAqaba was still far from being liquidated. It was Germany that was pushing, according to "what they say," the Sultan to resist.[96] A few days later, on May 8, the issue of the Egyptian border (*frontière*) was taking "a disquieting turn." The Ambassador, it was said, had given an energic note demanding full satisfaction by May 15. In view of a naval demonstration, the British fleet had received order to gather in the Piraeus.[97] The issue of ʿAqaba as well as the delimitation of the Sinai Peninsula was still on the agenda of the Ottoman Council of Ministers. The final agreement with England, Rashid wrote euphemistically to the Khedive, ran counter some difficulties.[98]

The Anglo-Egyptian members of the commission left Cairo in late May 1906 on a mission that was supposed to protract only for three or four weeks.[99] The long-dragged dispute finally yielded a verbosely titled document: the "Agreement signed and exchanged at Rafah on 1 October 1906 between the Commissioners of the Turkish Sultanate and the Egyptian Khedivate concerning the fixing of a Separating Administrative line between the Vilayet of the Hejaz and the governorate of Jerusalem and the Sinai Peninsula."[100] The fact that such boundary would be called a "separating administrative line" is telling of Ottoman anxieties to avoid any impression that, by signing the boundary agreement, they had agreed to the diminution of their sovereignty over Egypt. From the standpoint of Istanbul, now that the British were in charge of the Egyptian government, a boundary treaty would be disastrous, "tantamount to recognizing Egypt as a foreign country."[101] Historians have

insisted that such eastern line rarely served as the border. Even when it was formally sanctioned in October 1906, one of the negotiating parties -the Ottoman one- did not consider it to be definitive.[102] Bernard Lewis underlines how the lands on both sides of such line were Ottoman provinces and all that could exist between them was an administrative bound.[103] Yet, such line ended up functioning, according to others, "as did any other boundary of Egypt."[104] The archive reveals that the British were indeed -in words- urging to have an administrative boundary settled, which they in practice "would of course take care to turn into a real boundary."[105]

Counting (on) the Border People

What had been actually at stake in the 1906 confrontation? Later British documents refer to two triggers: first, the above-mentioned murder of two Bedouins and the determination to bring security to the region; second, the suspicion that the Ottomans were attempting to alter the status quo in the Sinai because of their desire to extend the Hijāz railway from ʿAqaba to Suez.[106] Additionally, the British also feared the meddling of Germany and kept a watchful eye on the citizens of that country who wanted to visit the Sinai under the claim of wanting to hunt ibex and then moving on to Jerusalem.[107] Naʿūm Shuqayr, member of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiating party in 1906, provides two more intriguing angles. Fist, he admits that the long-term goal may have been -once again- to protect the Suez Canal. And further, when describing his appeasing efforts with the Ottoman commandant in ʿAqaba Rushdi Pasha still furious with Bramley, Shuqayr claims having said: "You know that the Bedouins of Sinai and Syria are in the habit of raiding each other. Last year, 1905, chaos spread [...] Whenever a Bedouin committed a crime in Sinai, he fled to Syria or the Hijaz, and there was no deterrent or monitor on the borders [...] all that the Egyptian government wanted now was for the dividing line between Sinai and Syria to be determined so that it could place guards at certain points on the border to prevent Syrian invaders from entering Sinai and Sinai invaders from leaving for Syria."[108] Not only the Bedouins' presumably intrinsic lawlessness came under accusation then, but so did their unhindered mobility as well.

The Sinai population was very sparse. As of 1905, "no regular census" had been made, but it was believed that the Peninsula was home to about 30,000 inhabitants.[109] Some Bedouin tribes, such as the Tarabin and the Lehewat, who straddled the perspective border and complicated its fixing.[110] In spite of the straight ʿArish-ʿAqaba line cherished by the British, the Ottoman Porte still exercised at least "nominal control" over some tribes of Bedouins to the west of this line (in, for instance, Jabal Hilāl), which lent support to the Ottoman claim for the delimitation of the boundary 40 kilometers west of the baseline.[111] The Tarabin of northern Sinai, for example, recognized Ottoman sovereignty.[112]

However, according to British sources, the Teaha mostly leaned on the Anglo-Egyptian side.[113] Loyalty could also shift. Two shaykhs, for example, which had been long supported by annual subventions from the Egyptian Government, decided to switch over to the Ottoman side. While Ottoman sources - Rushdi Pasha in his memoir- claims that they did not do it for greed, the transaction was by the British simply classified as bribery, a view also espoused by a later historian.[114] During the works of the Commission, the Ottomans seemingly demanded that the parties ascertain what the wishes of the local population were regarding the adjustment of the line. While there is evidence that tribesmen accompanied the commission (see image 3), accounts disagree on whose version the Bedouins eventually confirmed.[115]

Image 3: Some of the shaykhs of the Lahyawat and the Teaha and the Tarabin. Standing behind them, some of the members of the Egyptian delegation. Source: Shuqayr Naʿum, Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha (Cairo: Matbaʿat al-Maʿarif*, 1916), 609.*

The British arranged for Bedouins in these regions to be counted barely two months after the agreement on the "administrative line" was finalized. Why exactly did the British want to attain knowledge of the volume and composition of such population? The then inspector of Sinai Jennings-Bramley was at first involved in this task and Wingate expected him to do "exceedingly well." In addition to the "special work" of sheer counting, he was "in a position to collect a large amount of valuable information about manners, customs, and strength of the various tribes of which," Wingate himself admitted, the British were "rather ignorant." Most of the anxiety behind countering such ignorance lay with the need to administer the state's law among Bedouins.[116] And such anxiety was coupled with mistrust. Western travellers and observers abhorred the Bedouins and their apparent uncontrollable way of life.[117] Cromer, in 1905, offered his observations on what he saw as the "very primitive condition of society in the Sinai Peninsula."[118] Previous population counts in Egypt had already taken place, seemingly in

"...WINGATE SIMILARLY FELT THAT DISREGARDING THE PREVIOUS HEAD COUNT AMOUNTED TO A HURRIED DECISION..."

concert with the overall Ottoman effort to enumerate the empire's population.[119] Yet Jennings-Bramley insisted that previously available data on Bedouins be disregarded. Lord Cromer himself thought that Bramley's suggestion to disregard the previous census (1864) of the Bedouins "too radical a measure and not practical politics."[120] Wingate similarly felt that disregarding the previous head count amounted to a hurried decision but he at least opened up the possibility to disregard it at a later time, in case their investigation proved it inevitable.[121] Bramley ended up carrying out such work for the War Office.[122] This was perhaps expedient to the positive outcome of the whole operation. The Bedouins seemed more open towards someone they perceived as not being attached to neither the Ministry of the Interior nor that of Finance, hence to neither surveillance nor taxation. They reportedly regarded Bramley's touring of the provinces, consulting the tribal chiefs, and then doing tasks apparently as menial as typing down his report and sending it in the mail after having corrected its spelling as an affair between them and the War Office only. The shaykhs of the interior in particular did not like to be asked for help.[123] However, conscription, surveillance, and taxation did come into play. First, the British may have ogled the Bedouins as "magnificent soldiers" granted

that the latter plied to "tolerable discipline." The Teyahah, for example, were seen as "a very warlike tribe" as well as -to top it off- "well-disposed towards Franks." They often accompanied tourists "through their country from Nekl to Gazza." How many fighting men on the land comprised between the Suez Canal and Palestine could be available, however, was not immediately clear.[124] Years later, some of the British bureaucracts in Egypt expressed their admiration by referring to Bedouins as "pukkha" or reliable.[125] Second, the British feared that those Bedouins, especially those living "on the Turkish side," coming to Cairo to meet Naʿūm Bey had been actually dispatched "to spy out the land" on behalf of the Ottomans. No "useful purpose" was served "by encouraging these Sinai Sheikhs to come much to Cairo now that we have British officers in Sinai." They were only poised "to learn a great deal."[126] They were supposed not to learn anything but only to be learnt *about*. Third and finally, the Bedouins held on to potentially taxable resources. The Lahyawat, for example, owned most of the many palm trees around ʿAqaba.[127] Some had indeed become fellahin (the reason why Bramley was very anxious to disregard entirely the available data from 1864 in which many fellahin had been included). As the British themselves recognized, these were sedentary people who had been accepted for years already as Bedouins at least in northern Sinai.[128] The Tarabin on the Egyptian side had, for example, almost become fellahin. Those on the "Turkish" side were said to own many horses and camels, grow corn, and be very wealthy. Ottoman troops quartered themselves among them during harvest time for the purpose of collecting taxes, but were frequently driven out and generally kept some of their sheikhs in prison as hostages.[129]

The Bedouins, at least those in northern Sinai, objected to having their census taken. Their shaykh may have been put on alert by the way in which such count was actually carried out, as when an inspector, besides proceeding to the work in ʿArish itself, "gave his moawin orders to appoint six men to go through the *country* and generally make a rough count of the Arabs." The Sheykhs reacted by declaring "pretty straight they won't be counted." British authorities dispatched in the Sinai (i.e. Parker, the successor of Bramley) met with at least five sheikhs to try to come to some arrangement, dampen their suspicions, and guarantee "no intention of taxation or military service." The tribal leaders, however, could not "conceive that Govt. can wish to count them without some such ulterior object in view." They adduced it to the "ignorance of their Arabs" but they themselves may have been "just as much, if not more, opposed to the Census." Overall, as it had become clear, sending people outside of towns to make a count in that way was not only futile but dangerous, especially when Arabs in out-of-the way spots "might go to the length of beating men who turned up to count them."[130]

Eventually, the British authorities in the Sinai still planned to come to some rough count of the Arabs before the end of 1907, "not by actual counting them but by questioning the various sheikhs and checking their statements by the opinions of others." Even if the task had been made difficult by the shaikhs' high guard, it was optimistically postponed.[131] The Director General of the Census actually intervened by requesting an *accurate* census for Tor and Nekhl and sending in forms to be filled. in. He pressed to be given the best possible estimate of all Arabs, including men, women, and children. Naʿūm Bey also contributed his own estimate which he made by interviewing the principal Sheikhs: 12,710 men, to whom a rough estimate of 1 woman and 2 children every man were to be added. "What do you think?" Owen tentatively asked Parker later in January 1907.[132] And yet, the later Governor of Sinai himself (Jarvis, 1922-1936) had to admit, "Everything outside the cultivation of the Nile "was an unknown quantity as far as real survey work was concerned."[133]

What strategies did Bedouins adopt in the face of such unrelenting efforts to collect an only apparently harmless "large amount of valuable information"?[134] First, they petitioned that a *general* and not a *detailed* census be taken "as was done the last time."[135] Second, they tried to set the terms on whom would be appointed to carry out such work. They declared they did not want Bedouin enthusiast Jennings-Bramley out in the provinces (April 1908). When Bramley –offended- threatened resignation, his higher-ups dismissively declared he ought not to consider himself indispensable: by then, he was said to be "a good little chap and smart, but pig-headed." Possibly the Bedouins may have been in the habit of "pull[ing] his leg a bit.[136] Third, when in February 1907 the British authorities in the Sinai (Parker Bey the Governor of Sinai, as in the petition itself) told the "natives of Al Arish" that they wanted to "count the trees" within the year and hinted at future taxes, those who drew at least part of their wherewithal from those trees quickly saw to that. A hundred and three people bypassed the local British authority and petitioned Lord Cromer directly, which bespoke of either their distrust for the former or simply the urgency of the matter at hand. They described themselves as distressed at the news that they would "have to pay taxes on our palm trees, to build dirt pits outside the town and pay for the ghafirs." They continued claiming that they were "very poor" and "not enjoying a citizen's life and always roaming about either in Egypt or Syria in search of food" as the yearly product of El Arish did not satisfy their needs for more than one month. They pleaded the taxes not be collected and that they would be allowed to live same as their forefathers lived before them for centuries.[137]

Finally, the Bedouins manipulated the congealing line on the ground to their advantage, by for example threatening to jump over to the other side. At least two instances of this emerge from the archives. First, those sheykhs of the

Teaha tribe who lived "on the Turkish side of the new boundary (NE of Sinai)" and who had actually paid visit to Naʿūm Bey Shuqayr in Cairo, declared that they would settle in Egypt unless the boundary could be pushed further east.[138] In the opposite direction, some shaykhs warned, if an attempt at counting was made, "their Arabs, in spite of their remonstrances, will up stick and move across the border for good." To such warning, British authorities were unsurprisingly upset and reacted by claiming it was absurd that some tribes would have to abandon property while others would have been dispossessed -in their land and grazing- by the arrival of the newcomers.[139]

Eventually, it seems, the British partially gave in to Ottoman claims by allowing the Bedouins to cross the border for pasture and water as they wished, without interference.[140] "All tribes residing on both sides," wrote Shuqayr, "have the right to benefit from the waters according to their previous customs."[141] As argued by Ellis, if "the Bedouin tribes that lived closer to the Nile Valley were coming under increasing governmental scrutiny, those inhabiting the remote desert regions continued to enjoy considerable autonomy, and they accordingly played their distance to their advantage."[142] Bedouins, in a word, made expert use of the new reality imposed by the nascent border. They were aware of how potentially disruptive their numbers, possessions, and movements could be for those authorities who were trying to get things straight either on census forms or maps.

Conclusion

The Egyptian state encouraged Bedouins to act as frontier guardians. At once, it invited them to leave their nomadic lifestyle behind, stop living in tents, and settle permanently.[143] Such ambivalence may be explained by the fact that, on the one hand, the production of definitive borders delimiting the territorial shape of the nation was not a primary objective of the Egyptian state in the second half of the nineteenth century. As clarified by Ellis, Egyptian geographers and nationalist intellectuals shared a similarly unconcerned attitude to Egypt's territorial delineation, prioritizing instead administrative efficiency and productivity.[144] Even after 1882, historian of British history Robert Fletcher claims, the administration of the desert hinterlands of Egypt remained a low priority.[145] At the same time, however, settlement was to become the hallmark of a national population and the anomalous mobility of Bedouins and foreigners ought to be extinguished.[146] Counting and controlling them was key to tranforming Egypt's population from an agglomeration of disparate groups -Upper Egyptian peasants, Bedouin, Nubians, foreigners- into a "homogeneous mass" whose quantitative and qualitative characteristics could be pinned down.[147] Moreover, scouters of economic resources were inexorably penetrating Sinai, as demonstrated by the Concessions in the Sinai that were being allotted and registered with the Ministry of Finance in 1907.[148]

"...THE STATE-IMPOSED BORDER ENDED UP CHANGING THE WAYS BEDOUINS THEMSELVES DEFINED TERRITORY..."

When it came to carving up territories and spheres of influence on the elusive Anglo-Egyptian-Ottoman frontier, Bedouins could act as potential allies or hindrances. Be that as it may, they needed to be accounted for. That afternoon of October 1st, 1906, when the Anglo-Egyptian and Ottoman parties met in the tent of the Egyptian delegates, they finally "drew the agreed-upon line dotted with black Indian ink on a copy of the border map."[149] However, despite cartographic fictions of clarity, the on-the-ground practice of the border would look different. On the one hand, paradoxically, a border that had been called for because of the excessive mobility of Bedouins could still be freely crossed by them. Access to water, for example, was still dictated by previous customs.[150] At the same time, the state-imposed border ended up changing the ways Bedouins themselves defined territory. A sharply defined border line now competed with previous system of overlapping territories, sheer points, orally-transmitted traditions of naming places and routes, pushing nomadic groups to divide up the desert in similarly sharp lines.[151] For the time being, the inhabitants of Sinai took the opportunities that came their way, tried to steer the boundary line, or threatened to move elsewhere if their requests were not accommodated. This is also part of the history of the making of Egypt, ever much more than a geographic (or ethnic) given.

End notes

1 Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From Its Origins to Ahmad Lutfī Al-Sayyid* (University of California Press, 1972), 123–24. Cited in Matthew H Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018), 194 fn41.

2 Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya*, 9–10.

3 For example, see the work by those contributing to the roundtable convened by Lucia Carminati and Mohamed Gamal-Eldin, "Decentering Egyptian Historiography: Provincializing Geographies, Methodologies, and Sources," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 1 (February 2021): 107–11.

4 Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya*, 10.

5 Rashid Khalidi, *British Policy towards Syria & Palestine, 1906-1914: A Study of the Antecedents of the Hussein-the [Sic] McMahon Correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration*, St. Antony's Middle East Monographs (London: Published for the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford, by Ithaca Press, 1980), 1.

6 Yūnān Labīb Rizq, "Azmat Al-'Aqaba al-ma'rufa bi haditha Taba 1906," *Al Majallah al tarikhiyya al misriyya*, no. 13 (1967): 247.

7 Such map from 1841 showing the eastern Egyptian-Ottoman border was only later published along with the official western border treaty signed on December 6, 1925. Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya*, 3. For a discussion o the 1841 map, see Ahmed Shams, "Sinai's Imaginary Boundary Line in Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 209–18.

8 Moreover, there is a certain loss in translation as different nuances in meaning are conveyed by borderland, border, boundary, frontiérè, hadd and hudūd (with the plural form being most commony found in Arabic), and sınır.

9 Will Hanley, "When Did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans? An Imperial Citizenship Case Study," in *Multilevel Citizenship*, ed. Willem Maas (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

10 Yuval Ben-Bassat and Yossi Ben-Artzi, "The Collision of Empires as Seen from Istanbul: The Border of British-Controlled Egypt and Ottoman Palestine as Reflected in Ottoman Maps," *Journal of Historical Geography* 50 (October 2015): 32, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2015.04.022.

11 Yitzhak Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," *Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 1 (1993): 135. For a recent example of the former, see Robert Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question": Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919-1936, *Oxford Historical Monographs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 85.

12 Ben-Bassat and Ben-Artzi, "The Collision of Empires as Seen from Istanbul," 34.

13 Arthur Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," *Al-Abhath* 33, no. 01 (May 15, 1985): 34.

14 Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 84–85. 101

15 Eugene L Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Nora Elizabeth Barakat, *Bedouin Bureaucrats: Mobility and Property in the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023). On the impact of Eugene Rogan on the field, see Matthew H. Ellis, "Over the Borderline? Rethinking Territoriality at the Margins of Empire and Nation in the Modern Middle East (Part I)," *History Compass* 13 (2015): 418.

16 Carminati and Gamal-Eldin, "Decentering Egyptian Historiography," 110.

17 Charles Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (January 1, 1887): 38; Earl of Cromer, *Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1905* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1906), 13.

18 Shuqayr Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha* (Cairo: Matbaʿat al-Maʿarif, 1916), 77. Durham University Library (DUL), SAD.280/1/91-92, Owen, Intelligence Office, War Office, Cairo, 17 January 1907, to Parker.

19 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 40.

20 Claude Scudamore Jarvis, *Three Deserts* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1937).

21 Charles Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, January 1, 1887, 38. This region lay south of the so-called "Syrian Desert," a vast and arid plain between Sinai, Aleppo, and the head of the Persian Gulf. At the start of the twentieth century it was home to a number of powerful Bedouin groups, the ʿAnaza and the Shammar foremost among them. Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 2.

22 British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, Mss/Eur/C739 John Wilberforce Cassels. Nov. Or Dec. 1879. For an even earlier description, see

Giovanni Martino Arconati Visconti, *Diario di un viaggio in Arabia Petrea, 1865* (Torino: Vincenzo Bona Tipografo di S.M., 1872).

23 Muhammad Amin Fikri, *Jughrafiyat Misr* (Cairo: Matbaʿat Wadi al-Nil, 1879), 1.

24 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 25. Besides Goldschmidt, another exception is James H. Marshall-Cornwall, "An Enigmatic Frontier," *The Geographical Journal* 125, no. 3–4 (1959): 459.

25 Arnon Soffer, "The Impact of the Suez Canal on Egypt's Geography and Economy, 1867-2019 (150 Years since Its Opening)," in *The Suez Canal*, by Carmela Lutmar and Ziv Rubinovitz, Palgrave Studies in Maritime Politics and Security Ser (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2023), 193, https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=7171895.

26 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 20.

27 Valeska Huber, *Channelling Mobilities. Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869-1914* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 153.

28 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 25. See James L. Gelvin and Nile Green, *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

29 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 138. Pilgrims were particulary vulnerable to attacks by Bedouins in the surroundings of ʿAqaba. Denys Pringle, "ʿAqaba Castle in the Ottoman Period, 1517–1917," in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock (British Academy, 2009), 96, https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197264423.003.0005.

30 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 588; Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 138; Ben-Bassat and Ben-Artzi, "The Collision of Empires as Seen from Istanbul," 26. Al Wajh, for example, figures as "returned to Turkey" by Egypt in 1892, Philippe Gélat, *Répertoire général annoté de la législation et de l'administration egyptiennes. Part I*, 1840-1908, vol. 2 (Alexandrie: Impr. J.C. Lagoudakis, 1906), 530.

31 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 77; Frank Henderson Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev: A Document from the Ahaywāt Tribe*, Mediterranean Language and Culture Monograph Series (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1986), 16. For a discussion on how the British relied on pre-existing routes and nodes, see Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 158.

32 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 39.

33 Louis M. Bloomfield, *Egypt, Israel, and the Gulf of Aqaba in International Law* (Toronto: Carswell, 1957); Rizq, "Azmat al-'Aqaba al-ma'rufa bi haditha Taba 1906"; Gideon Biger, "The First Map of Modern Egypt Mohammed Ali's Firman and the Map of 1841," *Middle Eastern Studies* 14, no. 3 (1978): 323–25; Ben-Bassat and Ben-Artzi, "The Collision of Empires as Seen from Istanbul"; Yuval Ben-Bassat and Yossi Ben-Artzi, "Ottoman Maps of the Empire's Arab Provinces, 1850s to the First World War," *Imago Mundi* 70, no. 2 (July 3, 2018): 199–211.

34 Ahmed Shams, "Time for a New Sinai Map?," *Cartographica* 56, no. 3 (September 29, 2021): 208–25.

35 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 138.

36 Egypt. Ministry of the Interior, Statistique de l'Egypte: Année 1873-1290 de l'hegire (Le Caire: Imprimerie française Moures & cie., 1873), 5.

37 Richard Burton, *The Land of Midian (Revisited), vol. 2* (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1879), 219; Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 136, 146 fn 8.

38 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 39; Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 588.

39 Nuran Koltuk, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Mısır, First Edition* (İstanbul: T.C. Basbakanlik Devlet Arsivleri Genel Müdürlügü Osmanli Arsivi Daire Baskanligi, 2012). 2 Rebîülevvel 967 h. = 2 December 1559 m. See also DUL, SAD.280/2/32, Nekhl, Parker, to Owen, 5 February 1907.

40 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 20.

41 Egypt. *Ministry of the Interior, Statistique de l'Egypte*, 5.

42 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 138.

43 Pierre Henri Couvidou, *Étude sur l'Egypte contemporaine* (Cairo: J. Barbier, 1873), 227.

44 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 286–87; Stewart, Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev, 34.

45 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 121–22; Philippe Gélat, *Répertoire général annoté de la législation et de l'administration egyptiennes. Part II, 1905-1910, vol. 5* (Alexandrie: Impr. J.C. Lagoudakis, 1911), 55. Ascertaining group boundaries can be a whmisical endeavor, see Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev*, 2 fn8.

46 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 38.

47 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 138. 24.

48 Earl of Cromer, Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1905, 13.

49 Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2012), 61. Their lands were seldom registered or taxed but they often payed some collective form of tribute.

50 Philippe Gélat, *Répertoire général annoté de la législation et de l'administration egyptiennes. Part I, 1840-1908, vol. 1* (Alexandrie: Impr. J.C. Lagoudakis, 1906), 291. Decree of 12 March 1882.
51 Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya*, 33.
52 Gélat, *Répertoire général annoté de la législation et de l'administration egyptiennes. Part I, 1840-1908, 1906*, 1:291. Decree of 12 March 1882. Fletcher, however, writes that Muhammad ʿAli had mobilized the Bedouin in support of his wars. Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 84–85.
53 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 297–99; Stewart, Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev, 14 fn19, 16.
54 Barakat, *Bedouin Bureaucrats*, 3.
55 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 39. Yet, according to Goldschmit, this alone could not entitle Egypt to rule the whole Sinai Peninsula.
56 Couvidou, *Étude sur l'Egypte contemporaine*, 116.
57 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 42.
58 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 138.
59 Lucia Carminati, *Seeking Bread and Fortune in Port Said, 1859-1906: Labor Mobility and the Making of the Suez Canal* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2023), 136–37, 200.
60 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 598; Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 143.
61 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 25.
62 Gélat, *Répertoire général annoté de la législation et de l'administration egyptiennes. Part I*, 1840-1908, 1906, 2:223, 725–26.
63 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 25. Author writes that this was due to in the wake of westernizing reforms and growing military presence in Palestine and Hejaz.
64 Barakat, *Bedouin Bureaucrats*, 20. The situation started to change in northern and central Trans-Jordan as early as 1867, when efforts came under way to extend direct Ottoman administration to the area (including via military means), Norman N. Lewis, *Nomads and settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980*, Cambridge Middle East Library (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), 125.
65 Barakat, *Bedouin Bureaucrats*, 160–61.
66 Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya*, 167.
67 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 139.
68 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 588.
69 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 25.
70 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 588; Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid* (London: Constable & Company, 1917), 141.
71 Bernard Lewis, "Palestine: On the History and Geography of a Name," *International History Review* 2, no. 1 (1980): 8. Evelyn Baring Cromer, *Modern Egypt, vol. II* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1908), 269.
72 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 26. Goldschmidt writes that it was on the advice of the Ottoman High Commissioner in Cairo that the Sultan tried to advance control over the Sinai. See also Gabriel R. Warburg, "The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 4 (1979): 683; Israel Gershoni, "ʿAbbās Hilmī II," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2007.
73 DUL, SAD, 267/1/273, Cairo, 21 ? 1898, Shakūr to Col. Wingate.
74 Ben-Bassat and Ben-Artzi, "The Collision of Empires as Seen from Istanbul," 28.
75 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 141; Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 609.
76 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 140. Gil-Har writes that at this time it was the Intelligence Department of the Egyptian War Office that was in charge of the administration of Sinai.
77 Jacob M. Landau, *The Hejaz Railway and the Muslim Pilgrimage: A Case of Ottoman Political Propaganda* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1971), 15; Ben-Bassat and Ben-Artzi, "The Collision of Empires as Seen from Istanbul," 28.
78 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 601; Rüştü and Mustafa Öztürk, *Akabe meselesi: Piyade Mirlivâsı Rüştü, Fırat Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi yayınları* (Elazığ: Fırat Üniversitesi, 1998), 12. Rüştü published his account as early as 1910-1911, Warburg, "The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47," 677.
79 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 142.
80 Rizq, "Azmat al-'Aqaba al-ma'rufa bi haditha Taba 1906," 247.
81 DUL, SAD.276/1/6-7, 1 January 1905, Cecil to Sirdar. Cecil was appointed by Sir Reginald Wingate (Kitchener's successor as sirdar and governor-general of the Sudan) as "Sudan agent" in Cairo. There, Lord Cromer made Cecil under-secretary for war and then under-secretary for finance in the Egyptian government. "Cecil, Lord Edward Herbert Gascoyne (1867–1918), Army Officer and Administrator," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed December 16, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32336.
82 Earl of Cromer, Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1905, 15. Also Jennings Bramley, Jennings-Bramley and Jennings-Bramly, Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev*, 34..
83 DUL, SAD.276/1/6-7, 1 January 1905, Cecil to Sirdar.
84 Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 85 fn104.
85 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 140.
86 DUL, SAD.278/2/28-29, 7 February 1906, Owen to Wingate; SAD.278/2/34-36, 11 February 1906, R. Owen to Wingate.

87 Earl of Cromer, Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1905, 15. This view was shared by the Ottoman counterpart, see Rüştü and Öztürk, *Akabe meselesi*, 12. On Bramley's "highly erratic" transcription style" from Arabic, see Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev*, 35.
88 Rüştü and Öztürk, *Akabe meselesi*, 7.
89 ʿAbbās and Amira El Azhary Sonbol, *The last Khedive of Egypt: memoirs of Abbas Hilmi II* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1998), 300 fn1.
90 Warburg, "The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47," 679.
91 House of Commons, 27 March 1906, The Turco-Egyptian Frontier.
92 DUL, SAD.244/1/17, Copy of a letter by W.E. Jennings-Bramley concerning Egyptian demands for the evacuation of British troops from Sinai; 25 April 1947, W.E. Jennings-Bramley to Reginald Wingate. Sonbol, instead, writes that, in 1906, the Khedive supported the British stance while Mustafa Kamel, like other nationalists, supported the Ottoman position, ʿAbbās and Sonbol, *The last Khedive of Egypt*, 16.
93 DUL, HIL/176/24-25, Rashid. Constantinople, 16 January 1906.
94 DUL, HIL/176/77, Rashid, Constantinople, 27 February 1906.
95 DUL, HIL/176/85, Rashid. n. p., 3 April 1906.
96 DUL, HIL/176/100, Rashid, n. p., 1 May 1906.
97 DUL, HIL/176/101, Rashid, 8 May 1906.
98 DUL, HIL/176/141, Rashid, n.d.
99 L'Imparziale, 24 May 1906, "La delimitazione della frontiera turco-egiziana," p. 3.
100 In *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 99, 482-84.
101 Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya,* 167. Ellis points out that what had happened in the former Ottoman-Egyptian provinces of Suakin and Massawa imparted the lesson that the determination of fixed boundaries within the Ottoman domains inevitably led to serious misunderstandings between the "sovereign and vassal state."
102 Goldschmidt, "The 1906 Taba Affair," 23. More on the discussion of the final agreement in Goldschmidt, 36.
103 Lewis, "Palestine," 9.
104 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 143.
105 DUL, SAD.278/2/79, 18 February 1906, Owen to Wingate.
106 Sovereignty of the Sinai Peninsula', the Legal Counsellor of the British Embassy in Cairo, 6 October 1947, FO 371/63080, J.4940. In Warburg, "The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47," 689–90.
107 DUL, SAD.278/2/119, Owen to Wingate, 28 February 1906; SAD.278/2/97, Wingate to Owen, 23 February 1906. On the Britons' seemingly unfounded fears of Germans in the Sinai, see ʿAbbās and Sonbol, *The last Khedive of Egypt*, 231.

108 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 593. He was employed by the Ministry of Defence and a member of the border committee, see 3, 596.
109 Earl of Cromer, *Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1905*, 13.
110 Naʿum, Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha, 609. See also the Ottoman map titled "The Border region between Ottoman Palestine and Egypt in 1906," in Ben-Bassat and Ben-Artzi, "The Collision of Empires as Seen from Istanbul," 31.
111 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 39. Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 143–44.
112 Warburg, "The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47," 681.
113 DUL, SAD.280/3, Owen, 2 January 1907, to General Wingate.
114 Rüştü and Öztürk, *Akabe meselesi*, 13. *Correspondence respecting the Turco-Egyptian Frontier in the Sinai Peninsula, presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His- Majesty*. London, July 1906, 670. Sabrī Ahmad al-ʿ Adl, *Sīnā' fī al-tārīkh al-hadīth, 1869-1917*, Misr al-nahdah (Cairo: Matbaʿat Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah bi-al-Qāhirah, 2010), 146.
115 Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev*, 27; Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 142. Gil-Har writes that they sided with the Ottomans, thus pushing the boundary 40 km to the west of the baseline. Al-Qusseima, Ein Kadesh and Ein Kudirat, in addition to three posts in the environs of Taba, would therefore have figured in Ottoman territory. Shuqayr disagrees, Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 609–10.
116 DUL, SAD.279/6, 136-137, 26 December 1906, Wingate, to Major Herbert, Recruiting, War Office, Cairo.
117 Huber, *Channelling Mobilities*, 146.
118 Earl of Cromer, *Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1905*, 15.
119 Kenneth M. Cuno and Michael J. Reimer, "The Census Registers of Nineteenth-century Egypt: A New Source for Social Historians," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 2 (1997): 197–98.
120 DUL, SAD.279/124, Herbert, 22 December 1906, to Wingate; SAD.279/6, 136-137, 26 December 1906, Wingate, to Major Herbert, Recruiting, War Office, Cairo.
121 DUL, SAD.279/6, 136-137, 26 December 1906, Wingate, to Major Herbert, Recruiting, War Office, Cairo.
122 DUL, SAD.279/6/94, Herbert, 18 December 1906, to Wingate.
123 DUL, SAD.279/6/94, Herbert, 18 December 1906, to Wingate.
124 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 41.

125 DUL, SAD.282/4/71, Herbert, 19 April 1908, to General. Also pucka or pukka and meaning sure, certain, reliable. It originates in the Hindi word pakkā (cooked, ripe, substantial). pukka. Oxford Reference. Retrieved 14 Dec. 2024, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100354138.

126 DUL, SAD.280/3, Owen, 2 January 1907, to General Wingate; SAD.280/1/43-44, 9 January 9 1907, to Owen, Sudan Agent, Cairo.

127 Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev*, 22.

128 DUL, SAD.279/6/92 Herbert, 18 December 1906, to Wingate.

129 Warren, "Notes on Arabia Petræa and the Country Lying between Egypt and Palestine," 40.

130 DUL, SAD.280/1/25-26, El Arish, 7 January 1907, A. C. Parker, to Owen.

131 DUL, SAD.280/1/26, 8 January 1907, A. C. Parker, to Owen.

132 DUL, SAD.280/1/90, Owen, Intelligence Office, War Office, Cairo, 17 January 1907, to Parker.

133 Jarvis, *Three Deserts*, 105–106; see also Gabriel Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 3–16; Re'uven Aharoni, *The Pasha's Bedouin: Tribes and State Relations in Egypt of Mehemet Ali, 1805-1848* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2012), 87–88; Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 84–85.

134 DUL, SAD.279/6, 136-137, 26 December 1906, Wingate, to Major Herbert, Recruiting, War Office, Cairo.

135 DUL, SAD.280/3, Owen, 2 January 1907, to General Wingate.

136 DUL, SAD.282/4/71, Herbert, 19 April 1908, to General Wingate Bramley was soon recalled after the 1906 deal was sealed as a concession to the Ottoman authorities. Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 85. 105 His successor, A. C. Parker, concentrated on quarantine measures and building rest-houses along the declining pilgrimage route.

137 DUL, SAD.280/2/31, Attached to a telegram dated 5 February 1907. Translation of a petition to Lord Cromer. Authors are "inhabitants of Al Arish" but, since they mention roaming, I am assuming that they are Bedouins.

138 DUL, SAD.280/3, Owen, 2 January 1907, to General Wingate.

139 DUL, SAD.280/1/26, El Arish, 7 January 1907, A. C. Parker, to Owen.

140 Gil-Har, "Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai," 144. Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 610.

141 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 613.

142 Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya*, 31–32.

143 Gélat, *Répertoire général annoté de la législation et de l'administration egyptiennes. Part I, 1840-1908*, 1906, 1:291. Superior order of 10 November 1863; Superior order of 29 August 1866; Decree of 12 March 1882.

144 Ellis, *Desert Borderland the Making of Modern Egypt and Libya*, 4.

145 Fletcher, British Imperialism and "the Tribal Question," 84–85.

146 Hanley, "When Did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans? An Imperial Citizenship Case Study," 98.

147 Omnia S. El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory. Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 153.

148 SAD.280/1/93, Owen, Intelligence Office, War Office, Cairo, 17 January 1907, to Parker.

149 Naʿum, *Tarikh Sina al-qadim wa al-hadith wa jughrafiyatuha*, 611.

150 Naʿum, 613.

151 Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev*, 2, 12, 26–27. On local oral knowledge, which Shams terms "geo-heritage," see Ahmed Shams, "Mapping and Mapmaking in the High Mountains of Sinai Peninsula: A Review and the Revival of the 19th Century CE Practices," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 148, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 188–210.