**Prince Amir Nuri al Sha’lan & the Rwala Bedouin tribe**

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**\*The Rwala Bedouin**

Since the 16th century, the Rwala (arab: **الرولة** ) are one of the great warrior tribes of the Dhana Maslam branch of the 'Anaze tribal confederation (Fed'ãn, Sba'a, 'Amarãt, flsene, Wild 'Ali, Rwala), , as characterized by Alois Musil in 1908-09: "*recognized by all their neighbors as the only true Bedouin tribe of northern Arabia*". Its tribal area lies in the Syrian Desen, between the river Euphrate and the settled regions of Syria and Jordan. In the eighteenth century the tribal area (dira) of the Rwala comprised the region of Wãdi Sirhãn southeast of the Jordanian border and the southern part of the Syrian Desert. During the war against the Wahhabites they were compelled to move farther northward. About 1800, the tribe, as well as all the tribes of the 'Anaze confederation (southern and northern branch), was converted to the Wahhabi doctrine. The Rwala Bedouin are nomadic pastoralists who move throughout southeastern Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia to sustain herds through the varying seasons. The pilgrim road from Basra to Medina crosses their territory. Traditionally, the Bedouin grazing territory extended north towards Damascus (as far as Homs), west bounded by Wādi Sirhān (an arid 200 mile-long depression along the border of Saudi Arabai and Jordan), east towards the Iraqi border (as far as Karbalā), and south towards Sakāka (bounded by the Nafūd desert). Grants of land were for the benefit of a shaikh and his immediate family, but also widely distributed. Sha’alan say that although the Emir had large amounts of land registered in his sole name in Syria, the income went to the wider family and for general hospitality and generosity throughout the tribe and beyond.

The Rwala Bedouin are Sunni Muslims, for which religion is bound up with all aspects of life. The leadership of the tribe is with the house of Sha'lan (or the Al Sha'lan), who in recent past have close ties with the Lebanese Government and the Saudi Royal family. The Rwallah tribe consists of five major branches: Al-kwakbah; Al-doughman; Al-murre 'eth; Al-frrejah; Al-ga' 'a' 'Gaah and Al- Alrhmoun. Today, Citizenship rather than membership of a tribe, is the entry to means of livelihood. The badia,(villagecitizenship) is a thin veneer of Bedouin identity. Hospitality and courage continue to be practiced as fundamental to the Bedouin ethic. Disputes continue to be settled using local law, but it is now the state who agrees on settlements and collects compensation.

The meaning of ‘Bedouin’ itself has shifted. For the orientalists, it implied free tribal groups living in the desert from camel-herding, and therefore outside state governments. Now nation-states have incorporated deserts in their boundaries, and extended their administrations over desert areas. ‘Being Bedouin’ is redefined as “*living by our own efforts, we defend our interests, we are generous to those in need, we protect the weak, we try to be a good family*”.

Today, tribal identity provides individual access to a social infrastructure, which it generates by its continuation, expected to be in the tradition of its Bedouin narratives and poems, using metonymy and metaphor as literary devices. Metaphor gives a symbolic heightening to the historic events, signifying parallels between transcendent values and acts of bravery and generosity. the Shararat refer to Rwala as eagles, as an acknowledgement of their position as protectors of the Shararat. The latter see themselves as ravens; being better survivors. These tribal histories are a-chronic, concerned with the re-creation of a world founded on moral values. the tribal structure leads automatically to a hierarchy, authority and power, symbolized by the Shaikh.

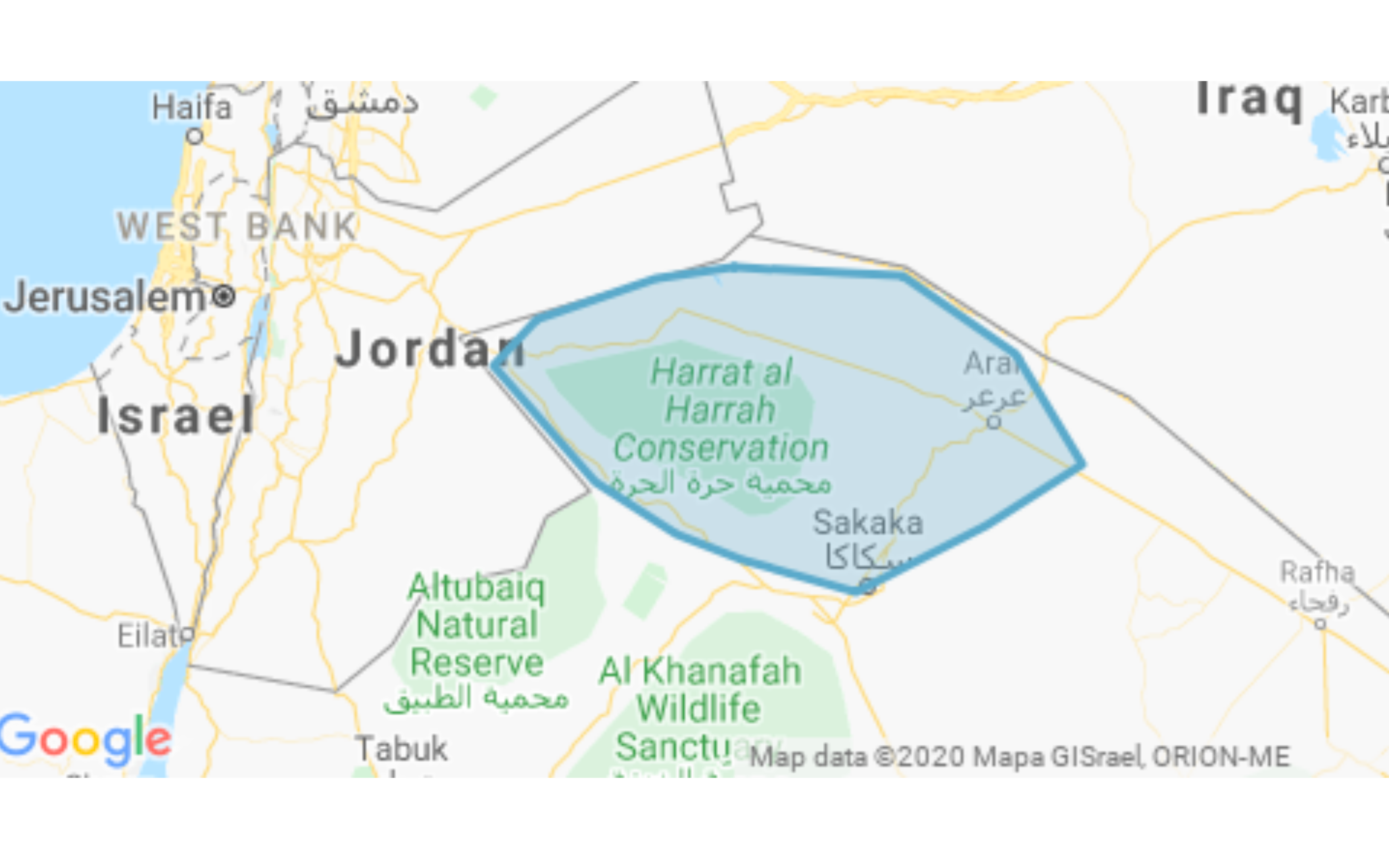
***Prince Amir Nuri al Shalaan 1927 Carl Raswan with prince Amir Nuri and Rwala chiefs 1930***

***Wearing his Legion d’honneur***

Some contemporary writings describe the Rwala bedouin life. ‘*For the Rwala, all men are seen equi-distant from Allah and therefore jurally equal in His eye. The Creator and Judge of all*.’ (Lancaster, 1981: 73). In the winter of 1909, Alois Musil gained the trust and friendship of the Rwala prince and chief Amir Nuri ibn Harza ibn Sha’lan, who bestowed him the title ‘Shaikh Musa al Ruwayli. He dined in the prince’s tent on hare, coursed by a Saluki and taken by the prince’s falcon. He visited regularly there until 1917, when the collapse of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires was imminent.

In 1926, the German author Carl Raswan made a trip to the Rwala to meet, after an absence of 14 years, his blood brother Prince Fuaz. The prince's grandfather, prince Amir Nuri ibn Harza ibn Sha’lan Raswan, was very affectionate at that occasion. Raswan described his experience in his book ‘*Black Tents of Arabia’*. In his opinion: "*The First World War destroyed greatly the Romantic ideals of the Bedouin life and chivalric virtues and laws (e.g. the blood-revenge)*’. On April 15, 1929, Carl Raswan was formally accepted as a member of the Rwala and as a member the family of Nuri as-Sha’lan. This was a great honor for a European and a Christian.

In the same year, Raswan brokered a peace agreement between 21 leaders of rival Bedouin tribes, which gave him an excellent reputation. He described this experience ‘*The Arab and his horse’.* Arrived there, Raswan,was informed that Nawaf, Fuaz’s father, had been killed and that prince Amir Nuri as-Sha’lan, Fuaz’s old grandfather, had lived now in Damascus. He observed how Fuaz himself had won fame as a true *amir el-barra* (a prince of the desert). Though Fuaz would have many faults in the eyes of our western civilization, these are not considered as such in Arab eyes. He might kill hundreds of enemies, marry four hundred times, it would not create a problem if only he notifies his enemies and the parents of his brides beforehand. His grandfather prince Amir Nuri, has been married forty-six times. He was in 1927 still alive and went on marrying in spite of his seventy-six years and his one hundred and twenty children. A Bedouin prince is often supposed to marry for political reasons and not out of love (as in most of the royal families in Europe since centuries). He is expected to court the daughters of the desert as well as to be successful on ‘ghrazzu (raiding party)’. Raswan observed that Bedouins pointed to Fuaz with pride and say, "*he paid us the blood price for the killing of our brother or cousin*. *He is our uncle, our brother-in-law.* *He took our brother's daughter as his handmaiden. He married our only daughter*."

Arab mentality differs from the Western. Montgomery Watt points out (1973: 315):*’Arab thought is descriptive (*bi-l-wasf*), not determinative; and the use of terms changes with the context*. *The meaning of ‘ownership’ focuses on production, animals, wells, tools, seeds and trees. All parameters of life, agricultural production and breeding come from Allah, not from the efforts of man: and therefore cannot be owned. This is use. Owning comes from developing a resource beyond its natural capacities, such as cisterns, wells, gardens, domestic animals’*. In Bedouin society, ‘*the concept of jurally responsibility is based on the idea that law is personal rather than territorial, and derived from membership of a religious community rather than from a territorially based state*’ (Goitein, 1967: 66)**.**

Jaussen writes about grazing,: ‘*Il y a une quarantaine d’années seulement, la plupart de ces terres étaient reconnues se trouver sur le territoire d’une tribu, et appartenir par conséquent à cette tribu, mais au même titre que tel pâturage. Les troupeaux du clan venaient y paître en liberté; ceux des étrangers y cherchaient aussi leur nourriture; en somme, la délimitation était assez vague, semblable à la démarcation de la steppe à l’heure présente. Ces champs, sur le territoire de la tribu, n’appartenant à personne, étaient appelés’*ard shamsiyeh’(terre ensoleillée sans autre propriétaire que la tribu) *…Chaque année le cheikh, aidé du conseil des anciens, partage le terrain en trois parties égales.. car personne ne peut accaparer le terrain, mais chacun peut vivre, s’il travaille’* (1948, 238).

Doughty (1936, I, 396) and Musil (1928, 47, 49-50) mention ‘beni‘‘amma’and ‘khuwa’ as conventions which allow the grazing in allies’ or protectors’ pastures. Musil (1928: 533) uses the term ‘dira’ to indicate a territory, seen as a property to be defended (1928: 505). But, dira is one of the terms determined by the context in which it’s used. Rwala use dira in a variety of ways; as an administrative centre, a market, the place of residence. Rwala say: ‘*my*dira*moves with me*’.

Jaussen comments on seasonal grazing and access to markets, a vital aspect of Bedouin life: ‘*le va-et-vient des nomades est commandé par les nécessités de l’existence et les conditions climatiques…. c’est ce qui explique… la bonne entente relative qui leur permet de vivre côte-à-côte’* (1948: 118)… *C’est la loi du sang qui arrête bien souvent les coups mortels, et maintient une certaine sécurité chez les nomades*” (1948: 211). Since the sixteenth century, Bedouin tribes also got income from the provision of safe passage to merchants, while trading in their territory and travelers on the Pilgrimage to the Holy Places; and for ensuring water and provision supply (Jaussen,1948, 139)

Burckhardt writes: ‘*The political institutions of the Bedouins, the nature of the offices of their shaikhs and elders, the well adapted rules which they observe in war and in negotiating peace – rules founded on the very spirit and wandering life – might probably be traced to such an origin*… *The general law by which the right of blood-revenge is determined to rest within the ‘*khomseh’*, and which limits hospitality towards a fugitive to three and one third of a day; the rules of ‘*dakheil’*, of the ‘*rabiet’*, of several of the laws relating to divorce; the precise distinctions made between wounds and insults; to which may be added the nature of the*agayd’s*office’* (1831, I, 378-9). *Their saying: ‘*El-Beduw ma yetaboun’*, (toil not) refers to their relation with enemies and to the constant threat of hunger and disease. The necessitous lives of the Arab make that they are constrained to be robbers”* (1936, I, 285-6).

**\*The Family relations**

The family acts as a civil association for the benefit of all.Jaussen (1948: 11-12) describes the Bedouin family: ‘Ahel*designates ‘la famille’, non point considérée dans toute son extension, comprenant toute la parenté, mais restreinte à la descendance directe. Le père est naturellement le chef et le principe de cette*ahel*, qui tire surtout son importance du nombre et de la capacité des enfants mâles’* The sons are acting as representatives of their father. By maintaining a common household, they make their individual property available to the common good of the household but maintain rights over its disposal. Jaussen writes :*’celui qui n’obéit pas à son père, on ne sait ni d’où il est, ni qui il est*.’ Musil reports that ‘*In the opinion of the Bedouins the son who disobeys is guilty, for which the proper punishment is the sabre*” (1928: 256). Burckhardt and Musil both recount events where parents have total power over members of the family in questions of honor. Musil (1928: 52-54) tells the story: ‘When the ash-Shreifi of the Kwatzbe were fighting ash-Sha’lan of the Rwala: ‘*The seven sons of ash-Shreifi led a raid of Kwatzbe, Shammar and Dhafir against the Rwala. A Rwala herdsman in ash-Shreifi’s tent warned the Rwala who set an ambush for the raiders. As they approached, the wind carried the scent of the herb in which armour was hidden towards them. A Shammari smelt it, and warned the seven sons of ash-Shreifi to flee with him, but only the youngest, Mashlan, did so. All the other raiders fell into the ambush, , including the six sons of ash-Shreifi. Mashlan, with the Shammari, came back to his father’s tent. The father asked the Shammari what had happened. The latter explained it, adding: ‘Oh ash-Shreifi, do you not see the darling of your eye?’ Ash-Shreifi was silent. At last he asked his wife, the mother of all the sons: ‘Mistress of my tent, where is Mashlan, your youngest son? She replied: ‘I did not carry, I did not bear and I did not give birth to a son named ‘Mashlan’. Mashlan got up, left the tent, and was never seen again. His mother died from grief shortly afterwards*’.

**\*Capture of Damascus 1 October 1918**

The northern part of Najd and the Hejaz is now Saudi Arabia.

Burckhardt (1831, II): ‘*The aims of Wahhabi government paralleled those of the Ottomans in many* *respects; strict Islamic law replaced customary law (136), raiding was expected to cease by the practice of making the Arabs “responsible for every robbery committed within their territory, should the robber be unknown. Those who were sufficiently strong to resist a hostile invasion, and lacked the courage to do so, were punished by a fine equivalent to the amount of cattle or property taken by the robbers” (136-7). The acceptance of compensation instead of taking blood vengeance was heavily encouraged but not imposed. Confiscations and fines were the usual punishments for infringements on peace and other transgressions. Reconciliations were insisted upon. Trading with countries outside the Wahhabi realm was initially forbidden but “as the inhabitants of Nejat had the habit of visiting Medina, Damascus, Baghdad, and the adjacent countries, the rule was not strongly implemented. ibn Saud even tacitly accepted at the end of the Syrian hadj, that his Arabs transported provisions for the caravans. He took himself one dollar for every camel; but he never allowed his Arabs to trade with Syria or Baghdad until after 1810, when the Egyptian expedition began”.* Thezeka (*tax) was part of the Wahhabi state’s income under Sa’ud’s authority. As they were formerly free from taxes manny tribes frequently revolted against them’* (153-4). Some Aneze tribes successfully resisted the paying of zeka (168) because of their explicit acceptance of the political authority of ibn Sa’ud. The Rwala stated that “*our holy war is to protect our tents and herds*” (Musil, 1927: 443); they saw ‘zeka’as an infringement of that autonomy.

The first Wahhabi state incorporated and marginalized the Bedouin, but negotiation was possible in three arenas. According to Burckhardt: ‘ *One was with the Wahhabi state because it was founded upon the system of a Bedouin commonwealth. He was the Shaikh of tribes whose respective politics he directed, while all the Arabs remained within their tribes completely independent and at liberty, except that they were now obliged to observe the strict sense of the law, and liable to punishment if they infringed it*’ (1831: ii, 118-9). If a tribesman objected, he could leave and live outside, but no longer be under ibn Sa’ud’s protection. The second route to negotiation was to serve ibn Sa’ud and obtaining exemption from the obligation of political submission, as the Rwala did (Burckhardt, 1831, I, 7). The third way was to resist with talent and bravery. Ibn Rashid usurped the power formerly delegated to him by ibn Sa’ud, as his agent. He brought finally a number of Arabian tribes to obedience and soon. The Rwala alone opposed him. He organized a raid, looting the camp of the Ghshum kin. But, Hazza’ ibn Sha’alan, the chief of the Rwala went in pursuit of ibn Rashid’s raiders. Allah gave him victory, all the animals taken from the Ga’adza’a clan were recovered, besides which they captured many horses and riding camels and won fame by liberating their own she-camels and defeating the enemy. Then Muhammad ibn Rashid sent friends to ibn Sha’lan (...). Therefore, ibn Rashid and his tribes became the friends of the Rwala, just as if they were related by blood. The ibn Sha’alan kept for all the booty (...), because the ibn Sha’lan were independent” (1928: 578-9).

At the end of the XIXth century, the British expansion in Egypt and the Gulf, obliged the Ottomans to extend direct rule into the Bilâd ash-Shâm south of Damascus. The newly installed Ottoman administration in Moab exercised justice, propagated the practice of Islam and collected taxes. The installation of the telegraph and the Hijaz railway were important tools to extend control over the desert, but they undercut the economic independence of the tribes. The central Ottoman government ruled over markets and the desert, (Jaussen, 1948: 121-3; Musil, 1928: 58; 1927: 430-1). Confiscations of property, especially animals, fines, and imprisonment were common. The expansion of the Ottomans into the Bilâd ash-Shâm and their demand for grain changed the access to grazing land for the Bedouins. In the 1850s to the 1880s, rising prices for cereals and the expansion of grain cultivation restricted the amounts of land available for grazing herds. Bedouin leaders felt they needed to acquire more efficient weapons. Politically, while the support of Rwala and other tribes became important to ibn Sa’ud, the tribal power had become less important to the Turks. New modern inventions allowed them to control the area: the Hijaz Railway now carried the pilgrims, traders, and the Turkish officials and military personnel; the telegraph allowed rapid communication. The extended direct rule of the reformed Ottoman state introduced centralized taxation, administrative and legal structures, modem technology. It saw itself as threatened by Russia, by the rise of nationalism in Europe, by the British in Egypt, the Gulf and the Red Sea, and by Arab polities in the peninsula. Bedouin saw the Ottoman system as based on absolute power, without guaranties for personal security and property. Burckhardt writes: ‘*The real government of the Bedouins may be said to consist in the separate strength of their different families, who constitute so many armed bodies, ever ready to punish or retaliate aggression’* (183, I, 116). Doughty (1936: i, 113, 132) refers to the Bedouin commenting on the corruption and tyranny of the Ottoman government. Musil reports that tribal shaikhs ‘..*saw the Turkish government merely as a bureaucracy of tormentors who were of no benefit to the Arabs in general or the Bedouins in particular but, on the contrary, injured their interests whenever possible*’ (1927: 399). The Government saw Bedouin and peasants as subjects of a state, and whose leaders could be manipulated by bribes, imprisonment and threats of death ( Musil, 1927, 327, 389, 429, 430-1, 435-8/ and Jaussen, 1920, 9).

Prince Amir Nuri as-Sha’lan greatest claim to fame is his role in uniting part of the Arab tribes and his loyalty to the later king Faisal bin Hussein. At the end of the First World War in the Middle East, the troops of the Ottoman General Mustafa Kemal and the German general Liman von Sanders (Fourth- stationed at Deraa, Seventh-under Mustafa Kemal Pasha, and Eight Army & the Asia Corps) opposed the advance of the British and Australian troops under General Edmund Allenby and Lieutenant General Harry Chauvel (XXI Corps, Desert Mounted Corps) who had taken Haifa, Tiberias and Beisan. The Battle of Samakh opened the way to Damascus and to the Pilgrims Road from Ziza to Deraa. Under the extensive allied aerial bombing attacks, the German-Ottoman troops were forced to disengage from Amman and to retreat east of the Jordan river to avoid outflanking. Chauvel’s Desert Mounted Corpse pursued the remnants of the Ottoman armies and moved to the Damascus area. Prince Faisal’s Sherifial Army cut the Hejaz railway with the help of prince Amir Nuri as-Shalaan and later captured Deraa on 27th September 1918. The Asia Corps under Colonel von Oppen fled from Deraa towards Rayak by train, but the prince Amir Nuri, Faisal’s- and Rwala troops broke up the line over 500 yards, so that the military German train was delayed by 9 hours, making it impossible for von Oppen to strengthen the defensive line in the north (FALLS Cyrille, *Military Operations: Egypt & Palestine from June 1917 to the End of the War*, Volume II, Part 2,). On September 21, Lieutenant Colonel Alan Dawney, liaison officer between British and Arab troops, invited prince Faisal to close the sole Ottoman escape route: the Yarmuk Valley; to cut them off while they retreated north from Ma’an, Amman and Es Salt; and then to move to Damascus with the British troops. Three quarters of prince Faisal’s troops (4.000, including Nuri as-Sha’lan camel forces) were irregulars. A total of 2.000 prisoners were captured in Deraa by the Anazeh tribal confederation. Prince Nuri as-Sha’lan met there Lieutenant Colonel T. E. Lawrence and Major General Barrow, agreeing to cover the 4th Cavalry Division’s right flank during their pursuit of the Ottomans north to Damascus (FALLS, Vol II, pp 582-83). After the fall of Damascus on October 1th, The independence of Syria was proclaimed. The Hejaz flag was raised over the Governor’s palace and Prince Faisal’s force was allowed into the city ‘first’. T. E. Lawrence drove into the city center with Amir Nuri as-Sha’lan, Emir of he Rwala, Sherif Nasir and Auda. They met at the Town hall and declared loyalty to king Hussein, Prince Faisal’s father. In fourteen days, the allied and the Hejaz forces destroyed the Turkish and German forces, which had resisted during four years. 75.000 prisoners were taken. The French and British Governments agreed to:*’recognize the belligerent status of Arab forces in Palestine and Syria, as allies against the common enemy*’ (Allenby report to the War Office 6 October 1918, in Matthew HUGHES, *Allenby in Palestine: The Middle East Correspondence of Field Marshal Viscount Allenby June 1917-October 2019*, 2004 Sutton Publishing p 202). Prince Faisal claimed that Colonel T. E. Lawrence had assured him that Arabs would administer the whole of Syria, including the Lebanese coastal areas. But, France claimed Lebanon as a separate mandate. On 25 October, Prince Faisal’s Sherifian army captured Aleppo with the help of the armored cars and the 15th Cavalry Brigade and the Australian Mounted Division.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the establishment of the French and British mandated territories and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, shaikhs were either incorporated into centralized administrations or side-lined. The British administration saw shaikhs as exercising undue power, and were keen to break it. With the establishment of the nation-states of Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the position of tribal shaikhs became ambiguous: formally, as heads of tribes, they have no power and no influence; informally, as representatives of their citizens, some obtained considerable influence at high levels.

**\* ‘*Saif tayel’*-the drawn sword-, dignity and honor of the Shaikh**

A ‘saif’ is a broad-bladed Arab sword or sabre with a particular shaped hooked pommel and straight quillons[[1]](#footnote-1). Carried in front slung, it is fastened from two rings on the metal band of the scabbard. Each Arab region has its variety. Sabres of high value belong to clan chiefs and princes. They are often assembled from older high-quality-steel blades, often of western origin. The hilt and leather covered scabbard are covered with silver and gilded silver ornaments, finally engraved. Some scabbards have silver plates and gold inlay. Elaborately decorated sabres of high value were presentation pieces, traditionally given as diplomatic gifts to high ranking personalities such as the one given to Tsar Nicholas II, by the Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II (nr 539)[[2]](#footnote-2). Others were given as a mark of high esteem and friendship. A good example of such an ornate high quality sabre, datable c. 1880, made from an European blade (c. 1700) is in a Danish collection[[3]](#footnote-3) .

Islamic swords had initially straight blades. As such, they persist today in Oman, Yemen and Sudan.

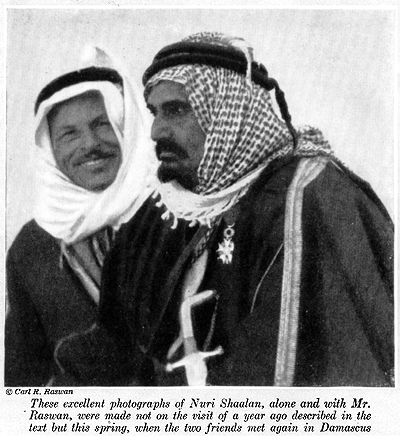
Later in the late XVIIIth century, the curved blade sabre was developed as a more effective cutting weapon for mounted warriors. The best steel (*wootz*) blades were from Damascus. Other were made from pattern-welded steel. European blades of high quality were extremely precious as base for a saif.

Ambiguities between power, strength, compassion and generosity exist, in a society where reputation for honorable behavior is the driving force. Honorable behavior by being a good person depends on responsibility and accountability and moral parameters within an individual’s power. Providing defense and restitution for those unable to enforce it themselves is the duty of the shaikh. Having ‘urd’ (honor) is a part of the definition of being Bedouin. It enables a man to partake in economic, political and social life. Jaussen quotes a Bedouin proverb: ‘*Mieux vaut accuser des pertes de biens que dans la famille ; dans la famille que dans l’honneur; dans l’honneur que dans la religion (*diin’*)*. He continues: “*…les deux qualités les plus estimées dans le désert sont: la bravoure à la guerre et la générosité envers les hôtes et les faibles*” (1948: 204-5). Local poems express this quality, such as ‘sahab al-marjala’, much appreciated among the Rwala. A Shaikh has to be brave and knowing how to confront the greatest danger. He reflects on the future and never acts hastily.

But while all may have honour (as a good man), not all have a reputation as Bedouin. The Hutaim tribes, owned no dira(tribal territory) of their own and must pay khuwa for the use of other’s’. This meant they had no reputation (Musil, 1928: 136). All Bedouin tribes practice ‘*khuwa’(brother)*, (Jaussen,1948, 162) (Musil,1928, 59-60). Musil writes: “*The basis of khuwa is quwa* (force). *Those who are strong compel the numerous settlements to raise khuwa for them. Those who have no akh* (brother)*must rely only on the’ seif tayel’* (drawn sword) *. Those who receive the khuwa must protect those who give it to them, or, as the Rwala say: ‘He who eats a young goat must protect its mother, alli yakul al-jidi yahma ummoh’”.*

*Khuwa* was given as goods, agricultural products, tenth cloth in return for protection (Musil,1908, 67, 69, 88, 117/ and Jaussen, 1948, 163). To pay for protection was a choice, made for economic and/or political reasons. An example: The Shwayain the Bilâd ash-Shâm were sheep herders in Qalamoun. They paid the Rwala for use of pasture and protection.

But the ‘sahab al-mruwwa’ is equally important: a chief has to be kind, truthful and disregarding trifles. A proverb says: ‘*A wolf does not suffer hunger with him, neither do his sheep perish*’. Also ‘Ash-shima’is one of the most prominent qualities: he who has ash-shima not always insists on his rights, being generous to one weaker than himself. The Rwala know the proverb: ‘Ar-rajul ya’ref metabbeh’ (a true man knows how to behave) (1928: 471 ff.). Jaussen writes: ‘*Tous les soirs, la tente doit être ouverte aux voyageurs et aux hôtes: c’est la tradition du désert. L’hospitalité est sacrée’* (1920: 42).



Arms, and above all the ‘saif’ were important in combat and raids, and even as diplomatic gifts, a symbol of power, respect and dignity. Successful raiding was the testing ground for bravery, smartness and enrichment- and the opportunity for the raided to defend their property (Jaussen, 1948, 165). Burckhardt noted that: ‘*Most families of the Anezes are unable to pay the annual expenses from the profits on their cattle, and they would not sell a camel for it: they know, from experience, that to continue to long in peace, diminishes the wealth of an individual. War and plunder therefore become necessary*’ (1831: 71-2). Musil describes some of the protections against raiding (1928: 47, 49-50, 438, 447-51) for the Rwala and other tribes: ‘*It are formalized relations of protection between tribes, such as*beni ‘amma*or*sohba*treaties; or between individuals, as guest, neighbour, traveller, guarantor, or*khuwa*; or the use of demands for protection, by entering a tent.* Jaussen writes : *“le fait seul de n’avoir aucune relation d’amitié avec un clan éloigné ou avec des fellahs inoffensifs autorise la razzia pour le bédouin pillard... Les Haweitat vont razzier les Arabes des bords de l’Euphrate; les Sakhour attaquent les habitants de la plaine de Hismeh… Chaque année, des maraudeurs, Hagaia ou Rashaideh, dépouillent les voyageurs dans le Ghor. Tous ces gens font la razzia à leur manière et maintiennent au pays un vrai caractère de pays de brigands. Mais la grande razzia est organisée d’une façon savante, sous la conduite du ‘*aqid’ (1948: 166).

The raid is an expression of political power while getting booty and fame, undertaken as a sporting contest following certain rules, breaking them causes the loss of honor. Nobody wants to be deprived of his*,*majrud an-neqa’ (good name). A Rwala proverbe says: ‘*Celui qui ne mange pas le bien des autres, ne termine jamais les affaires des hommes*’ (Jaussen,1948,136). Raids are also undertaken to avenge assumed slurs on honor. Musil writes (1928: 504): ‘*The Rwala are ever at war with one tribe or another. Without war a Rweili could not live. War gives him an opportunity of displaying his cunning, endurance, and courage. He neither loves the shedding of blood, nor craves booty, but is allured by danger and delights of the predatory art. The booty itself he will give away without thinking much about it -even to the wife of the very man he has just robbed. Some tribes, not always entire strangers, hate each other cordially. Between them peace is never of long duration. Despite the greatest efforts of the chiefs to prevent war, their people continue to attack and destroy one another”.*

Intelligence, horsemanship, bravery, intelligence, caution and wealth, but also inherited nobility, determine the acquisition of power. Musil discusses (1928: 51) such intelligence as seen in the transfer of the head chiefdom of the Rwala from the Ga’ga’a to the Sha’lan:’ *The re-establishment of peace between the tribe and settlers by Sha’lan’s successful mediation brought him to power.* Burckhardt puts it: *‘When a Shaikh dies, he is succeeded in his dignity by one of his sons, or his brothers, or some other relation distinguished for valor and generosity: but this is not a general rule. If some other Arab of the tribe should possess those qualities in a more eminent degree, he may be chosen. The tribe is often divided; one party adhering to the family of the last shaikh, the other choosing a new one. A living Shaikh is sometimes deposed and a more generous man elected in his place* (1831, I, 118).

Musil listed the qualities of a chief, and wealth is not among them. He enumerated the yearly expenses incurred by Nuri ash-Sha’lan (1928: 59), the upkeep of horses tents, food and clothing for the family and guests, together with the payment of taxes to the Ottoman government (1927: 4301). His income came from tax collection (1928: 59; 1927: 326), from merchants (270, 280) and khuwa(1927: 353). Nuri was not extremely wealthy. Burckhardt writes: ‘*The Shaikh does not derive any yearly income from his tribe; on the contrary, he is obliged to support his title by considerable expenses, and to extend his influence by great liberality. He should treat strangers better than any other person of the tribe; he should help the poor, and divide among his friends whatever presents he may receive. His means of paying these expenses are the tribute which he exacts from the Syrian villages, and his emoluments from the Mecca caravans*. *The Bedouin says, that he acknowledges no master but the Lord of the Universe. The most powerful Aneze chief dares not inflict a trifling punishment on the poorest man of the tribe, without incurring the risk of mortal vengeance from the individual and his relations. His orders are not often obeyed, but his example is generally followed*’. (1831, I, 118). Not every tribe received income from the Haj; the Rwala did not. The power of the Ottoman government meant that the Shaikh had to collect taxes from the tribe for the government, and refusal to pay taxes was punished (1928: 59). Non-compliance was punished by military expeditions, confiscations, imprisonment and/or death. In Saudi Arabia, zekatax was due to ibn Sa'ud.

Musil comments actions of chiefs in protecting the oppressed, their generosity to the poor (453) and protecting the weak (465). He says: “*if the guest has only one host, who is not very powerful, whilst his violator is a member of a powerful kin, the host with all his kin will conduct the guest to a prominent chief, put himself under his protection, and in this manner fulfil his obligation. No chief would think of refusing to protect a victim, since it is the duty of the strong to protect the weak, or, as it is said in the desert: ‘the big horses protect the small ones*’. Chiefs also help to settle vengeance disputes.

Burckhardt writes: ‘*It is a custom among Bedouins, when a party of them, with their Shaikh, visit any neighboring town, to express great deference towards him, representing themselves as being completely under his control. This they do, that the governor of the town with whom they have to treat may be inspired with a high opinion of the Shaikh’s great power and authority; this often results in more favorable terms granted by the governor . As soon as the party returns to the desert the mask is thrown off, and the Shaikh mixes again normally with his people* (183, I, 285-7).

Nawwaf ibn Nuri Sha’lan , as head of the ibn Sha’alan, a shaikhly family, not as the chief of the tribe, founded ‘The Sha’lan kingdom of Northern Arabia’ taking al-Jauf as a base (Musil 1928, 162). *Nawwaf had the support of ibn Sa’ud, himself fighting ibn Rashid (168). This alliance was favored by most Rwala (280). Nuri himself was initially hesitating (174-5, 207), but came to support Nawwaf (287) because he did not wish to split the tribe. He backed ibn Sa’ud against ibn Rashid, “whose abuses they [Rwala] had endured so often”.*

After the death of Nawwaf ibn Nuri, Amir Nuri as-Sha’lan gave al-Jauf to ibn Sa'ud and based himself in Syria*,* as related by Raswan (see above). He offered al-Jauf to ibn Sa'ud and retired in Syria where he and his tribesmen had assets. Other Rwala had assets in northern Saudi Arabia and were based there. Amir Nuri as-Sha’lan choose to live under the French Mandate as they administered the badiaregions under a system of indirect government, which he thought enabled the Bedouin to live more as their identity required. In Jordan the Rwala had also some assets. Amir Nuri as-Sha’lan became befriended with the viscount Robert de Caix de Saint-Aymour, when the latter was in charge of the French mandate.

The highly symbolic gift of the prince’s ‘saif’ at the end of his career in Lebanon and Syria was a token of the prince’s appreciation for the honor and the dignity of the viscount, as engraved on the silver plate on the scabbard of the sable. The ‘saif ‘is a major historical document for the Middle East and the witness of the friendship between a great Arab Bedouin prince and viscount Robert de Caix de Saint-Aymour, one of the architects of the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon.

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