

desert for village life. The numerous failed attempts by central governments to settle the Bedouin in many parts of the world are testimony to the Bedouin's deep love for his freedom manifested also in his attachment to beit esh-sha'ar (goat hair tents) dispersed in the open. The fallah on the other hand, found in the mountain areas an environment which provided him with relatively fertile land, water and protected settings, hence a continuous and stable community. For him the mountainous areas were places where he could most trust the environment. The mountain also provided protection from the exactions of the central regime, as opposed to the more exposed coastal villages.

When one looks at figure 1.8 illustrating the location of nomadic encampments and the fallah's villages at the end of the nineteenth century, one notices a well-defined separation between the two. However, it was the fertile area between the two ecological zones, i.e., the area between the mountain foothills and the plains which witnessed many of the encounters between the two groups. This fertile "peripheral" land which acted as a buffer zone created a continuous tension between the two, a tension that could become overtly hostile.

In general, the "peripheral strip" could be described as the area between the mountain foothills and the plains. Most of these areas are located at about 150 meters above sea level. Some of the country's most fertile lands lies in these parts. In them the fallah saw a good potential for an additional resource to improve his livelihood. Unlike the small, rocky and mostly steep parcels he had to cultivate in the mountainous areas, the peripheral strip provided large, flat and fertile land, easy to work. The Bedouin also saw in these peripheral areas when they were cultivated by the fallah, an additional asset, an easy arena for his raids. It was this cultivated lowland in the peripheral areas that Bedouin mostly targeted for their sudden raids (ghazzu).

One has to bear in mind that the main purpose of the ghazzu was to acquire the agricultural crops of the fallah. When attacking, the Bedouin was careful not to shed blood and cause useless blood feuds