

## Lecture Book on the Sinai Bedouin Tribes

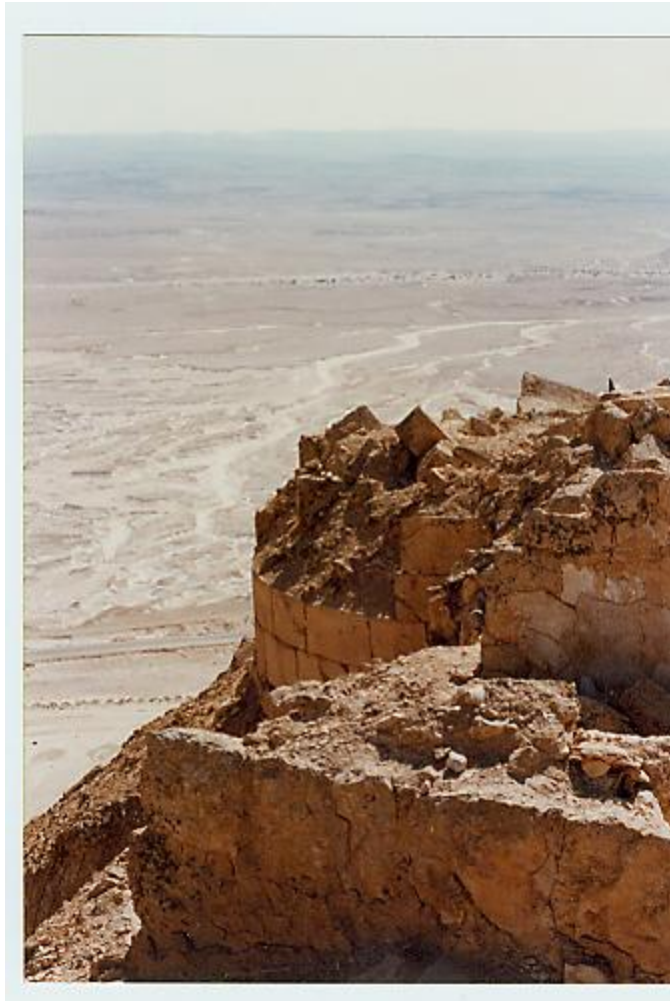
By

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These are a series of lectures used to educate soldiers on the Sinai Bedouin  
combined with material I published on the Sinai in the 1980's.

Additional photos are available upon request.



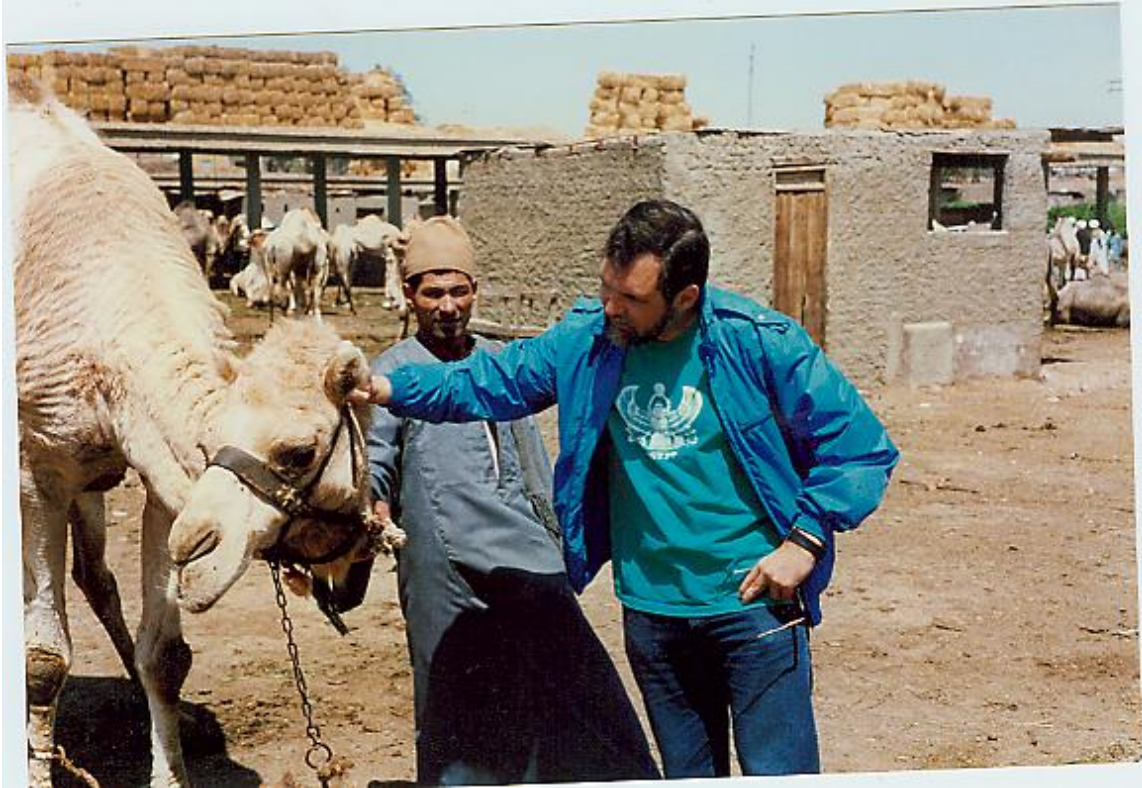
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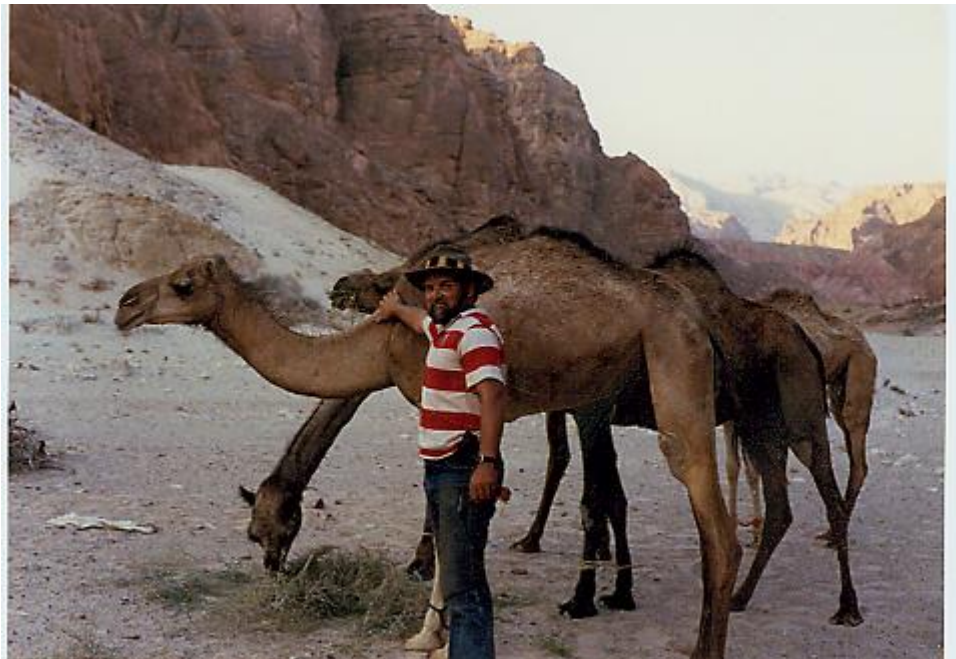
Lady in Center is Daughter of Sheik of Alegat and Friend of Author



Alegat women from 1930's when my father served in the Sinai with British Army



Author at Camel Market on tail between Cairo and Sudan



Author looking after his camels while studying route to Nuweiba



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## Adaptation to the Desert

When I lived in the Sinai, Maidi and Cairo in the 1950's and 80's, I often saw Bedouins walking alone in a vastness of undulating, windswept sand without canteen or any visible shading. It left all of us in awe knowing that the closest point of habitation might be 60 kilometers away! These people seemed superhuman, capable of wandering for days without a drop of water. My father felt the same way while serving with the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army in World War II. I have traveled to Egypt many times in between those two periods when I actually maintained an address, and often since and am in still in awe of my friends. They honored me by making me an honorary member of the Alegat tribe, showing me sources of water and land mines; but I can never be a true Bedouin. They are true princes of the desert.

In 1987 a US soldier died in the Sinai after he left his vehicle broke down. Rumor has it he was overweight and left because he was goaded. Whatever the reason, he died from the effects of the sun. Never leave your vehicle. Always use an advertised route with instructions to search if you don't show up at appointed locations by a certain time. That would not happen to a Bedouin, not because he is superhuman, but because he does not wander aimlessly. <sup>(1)</sup> His travels are scientifically figured out in search of the best grazing and water. Like the Navajo and Pueblo of the American west, with whom I now work, the Bedouin is a tracker beyond par. And he is also a botanist, capable at an early age to know which plants to feed his camels and goats, and which to use for fire wood or food for the family. Education takes many forms. His is an education in the college of nature, and the Bedouin always graduates *suma cum lauda*.

The Sinai is a true desert, but it does have lots of water, if you know where to look. Wells are often within 15 to 20 miles of each other.

The Bedouin represents one of the best adaptations of human life to desert conditions, rivaled in my judgment only by the Apache. Because the Bedouin understands that water is scarce, when on the move he reserves that precious commodity for his camels, goats and sheep. They are his wealth. Instead of drinking water, he uses his animal's nutritious milk for drink and cheese, thus keeping the animals alive to be used for meat, their hair for cloth, etc. And as for using the water belonging to other tribes, there are strict rules. Well water belongs to the Tribe whose dirah the well lies; however, free running water such is at Moses Valley belongs to all. Having said that, only the people of the dirah can use free water for cultivation.<sup>(2)</sup>

The camel also represents an excellent example of the Bedouin's wisdom. The animal is stronger and faster than a horse and it requires a minimum of supervision or subsistence. In addition, a camel can go without water for 25 days in the winter, and for five days in the hottest summer heat. Its dung is used for fuel, much like the Indians and Buffalo hunters of the American west used buffalo chips. Its flesh is sweet and tender, sort of a

cross between beef and lamb. <sup>(3)</sup> Its skin is used for mending and making strong, weather resistant tents. A female camel or Naga gives 2 to 7 liters of milk a day, enough to keep a lot of people in milk. Most meals consist of milk and milk by-products, vegetables and fruit <sup>(4)</sup>. And to conserve resources to the maximum, most Bedouin only eat twice a day. <sup>(5)</sup>

Tea is another good example of desert adaptation. The Bedouin has developed a group of teas used in herbal medicine. I have tasted several while on official patrols and enjoy most. They were served by Egyptian army officers. In that regard, I have been told that some visitors to the Sinai are warned against drinking Bedouin tea. As far as I can discover, there is nothing to fear. The tea "shy" they will serve the westerner is western tea, unless they say otherwise. If they decide to offer herbal tea, they will tell you in advance. There is nothing to fear. Every cup of tea I have ever been served has been tasty and none have produced harmful side effects.

Another example of adaptation to the desert is in the area of hunting. I once explored the Zaraniq region of the northern Sinai and while there interviewed a young Sawarka Bedouin hawk hunter named Elwan. Hawks will bring a bounty of 7 to 8,000 Egyptian pounds, a fortune to a Bedouin, and Elwan uses a very clever homemade trap that does not harm the hawk in any way. He fastens a harness of string to a live pigeon that is tied to a heavy rock with a long string. The pigeon is free to flap its wings and fly. On the Harness are loops of goat gut. When a hawk flies by he will pounce on the pigeon, getting his claws caught in the harness. The loops tighten. He can't get loose and flies to the sky. At the point, Elwan will come out and pull the fellow to the ground. No harm to the Hawk, and even the pigeons are know to survive.

Clothing is yet another sign of Bedouin adaptation. Westerns like to wander under the sun with short sleeve shirts and no hat, perhaps only a cap. The Bedouin realizes these are dangerous habits. The man is clothed in a loose fitting light weight cloth tube called a gallabeah. This covers the legs and arms. Air can move about the body easily and when a man expires, his sweat will stay around him, keeping him cool. I noticed while serving in the Sinai that the UN and MFO soldiers used berets. This is the most dangerous hat one can wear in the desert. It makes no sense at all! The beret is hot and offers no protection from the sun, thus increasing the chances of skin cancer and sunburn. The bedu males wear the agal and kefiyya <sup>(6)</sup>. The Kefiyya is a square section of cotton that lies on the head, protecting the neck and forehead, as well as the nose. by shadowing the face. It also protects the face from the sand and dehydration. The agal is a rope that loops around the Kefiyya. This is also used as a hobble by the Bedouin for camels and horses.

Murray noticed in 1935 that woolen thread was made by using a rough wooden flywheel, and that their woolen carpets were not sold at market, except for those small cottage industries encouraged by the British administration. (E-<sup>7</sup>) Things have changed. The Bedouin frequently make carpets for resale, as well as beadwork. Nuweiba and El Arish are centers for the stuff; but you can buy a lot from Bedouins you meet in villages.

Their diet is made up of unleavened bread, goat's milk and cheese, desert herbs and plants, birds, bird eggs, fish, dates, figs, bean (fouille), citrus fruits, garden vegetables and rarely goat. Meat is only eaten on rare occasion. Fish and bird are eaten when available, shell fish by certain tribes.<sup>(8)</sup> Murray reported in 1935 that Bedouins never eat alone, that their men and women never eat together and are amazed that Europeans do; however, things have changed. I have often seen Bedouins eating by themselves and in mixed company. (E-<sup>(9)</sup>)

Their joys are camel racing, falconry, poetry, music and games. Time is of no importance, and ulcers are nearly unknown.

But adapting to physical surroundings is not all there is to life for the Bedouin. Desert life is changing, especially in the north along the ancient Via Maris, where the Egyptian government has allowed the Bedu to return to the region, after having been evicted after the 1967 war by General Sharon in order to make way for Israeli Kibbutz. TV sets have sprouted up out of grass huts, and tractors and pick up trucks from Japan are replacing donkeys. The Egyptians are making an effort to train the Bedouin in farming and fishing; and many are learning to read and write.<sup>(10)</sup> Every Bedouin male is subject to military service when he reaches the age of 18; and while in the military learns how to read and write. Some have even become fighter pilots for the Egyptian Air Force<sup>(11)</sup> No matter what his occupation, the Bedouin also receives religious instruction and exposure, which is perhaps more important, to modern civilization. Bedouin religion is more instinctual than reflective.

From my observation, for many Bedouin of this peninsula, life has not changed since pre-Islamic times. If I were a purist, I would be tempted to say that they don't want to change. That would be the romantic thing to say. Then we could leave them alone, remnants of a lost civilization, a sort of zoo to the past that tourists of the present can view and photograph and gawk at. In the 1950's Winston Churchill, when speaking of the emerging nations of Africa, said that when changing the lives of primitive people, they must be given something of value in place of their past. For some nomads I am sure, some of those living on the plains and in the poorer areas of the Sinai, the rustic existence is great value. They don't want what we call civilization. After all, what does it offer? They haven't the education to really understand. But there is a change sweeping through the peninsula. I can't say it is always healthy but there is change in the air.

Economics is the moving force. The Israeli occupation seems to have shattered the Bedouin's cultural cocoon, for better or worse is yet to be seen. For some the drive to better their lives has turned them into predators. Children race to a tourist's car, looking for a handout. Women allow their uncovered face to be shot for money, their private homes to be photographed for money. There is even a woman named squeeze titty who I hear will let you squeeze her breasts in return for dog tags. Degrading; but except for craft work many of these people have no other way to make the money needed to raise their standard of living. So they beg.

Where schools exist, Bedouins are deciding on change because education opens eyes to opportunities till then unforeseen. That creates special social problems of course. For example, the Alegat tribe while trying to educate their young men, does not educate their daughters. The obvious reason is that the daughters will want to leave the wadi, will want to stop spending their time tending flock, etc., while the men go out and earn money. But without an education, they are stuck. That keeps the tribe together, at least for this generation.<sup>(12)</sup> Not all tribes take that course of action. The Sawarka, the Aulid-Si'ed, and others educate both their boys and girls.

Which will survive the longest? It is a question every traditional society has had to face. And will they survive as a stronger or weaker society? I think they will make it. There will be social upheaval; but they will make it. I also see a strengthening of the rights of women. It will take a lot of time and will have to surmount the hurdle of traditional beliefs; but it will happen. Some have already made the change. Others will as well. It is called adaptation, and the Bedouin is a master at adaptation.

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK:**

1. Murray reports that Bedouins bake their camel. The women boil the stomach and entrails, without washing. The head was roasted on embers of camel dung, unskinned. For game, they dig a hole lined with stones heat with desert wood. Once the stones are red hot, the wood is removed and the oven is ready. Hare is cut open and cooked with hair on covered with hot stones and dirt. The liver and kidney are eaten raw at time of killing., after adding salt. They also like gazelle, at least they did in 1935. You won't find much gazelle in the Sinai any longer, only Dorcas Gazelle, and damned little of that. (E-<sup>(13)</sup>)
2. Apparently, the Muzeina sometimes fed ham to their camels to improve their eyesight. Still? (<sup>(14)</sup>)
3. Towara are known to eat vultures, ravens, hyenas and leopards, and cats. All Bedouins eat cats, according to Murray. Also locusts and snails during famine. During the famine in 1915 Qatia women boiled camel droppings and extracted the few undigested grains of corn inside. The Tarabin in 1987 were aware of the old traps for cats described by Murray; but indicated they no longer did it(e-<sup>(15)</sup>).
4. In Northern Sinai the Bedouin are known to eat a spiny-tailed lizard named dabb larded with clarified butter, which if properly prepared is supposed to taste like mutton. In 1935 the Awlad Ali hated fish. (<sup>(16)</sup>)
5. Sinai children sleep with their goats and sheep at night. The Ma'aza tie placenta or the severed foreskin to a camel's neck to increase its virility. Only men may milk the goats, except for the Awlad Ali whose women milk. 97-98

6. Cheetah common in Maghara in the 1930's. In the dirah of the Muzeina lived leopards.(E-<sup>(17)</sup>)

7. Haweitat of N. Sinai go after Hyena in its den, tie a rope around the neck, drag him out and slit his throat.<sup>(18)</sup>

8. From my own experience, Bedouins in the Sinai take very care of their camels. I have even seen them kiss them on the nose, though usually after looking to make sure someone else doesn't see. While on an expedition in the Nuweiba mountains in September, 1987, we noticed that each camel received its own camel bag. They also took care of a camel with a lame leg.

### **Footnotes**

1. Hitti and Nutting agree. See: Nutting, pg. 8 Philip Hittie's Book, the Arabs. Also "journey into the Desert" National Geographic World, May 1981.

2. Murray relates an incident in February, 1915 when he rounded up some of the Bedouin of the Ayaida with 3 or 4 troopers of the Bikanir Camel Corps. The bedu had been living off of milk instead of water for three weeks. Murray, pg. 244; Use of water, Use of water: Testimony of Sheiks , pg. 493.

3. I am very found of camel meat.

4. Patai and Schlomo agree. See Patai, pg. 76; but I have also found this depends on the abundance of meats, especially chicken and fish.

5. Nutting, pg. 9

6. White keffiya is called a ghutrainsa

7. Murray 62

8. McDermott, pg. 444; Patai, pg. 76

9. Murray, pg. 85

10. I have been told by numerous Bedouins in the north that their brothers have gone on to college; but these are usually from important families. i.e. Abdel Meguid of Abu Taweila.

11. Interview with Abdel Maguid of Abu Taweila. 5/30/87. His brother is a fighter pilot for the Egyptians.

12. Barakat



13. Murray, pg. 88-89

14. Murray 89

15. Murray, 90, LAmy of the Tarrabin 11/15/87

16. Murray, pg. 92

17. Murray, pg. 119

18. Murray, pg 120

## Besha: Trial by Ordeal

I recently finished two years living in the Sinai peninsula and while there came to know its bedouins as do few other westerners. Anne Edgerley, the daughter of Parker Pasha, told me not long ago that I love the bedouins as much as did her father, British governor of the peninsula in World War One. I suspect that's true. What these people are makes a fascinating story. It lies well beyond the stereotype nomadic life romanticized by Hollywood and depicts a true civilization the bedouins have every reason to be proud of.

Many Bedouin values are very similar to ours; but in this article I want to describe one that mixes a sense of protection of victims that is higher than will seem rather strange at first view, a search for truth that is hot, dramatic and to a westerner's first glance -- barbaric. Your second view will be different. Besha is their concept of justice, a justice tool few westerners have ever seen or heard of. Once while taking some soldiers on a survival training course I ran, a Bedouin tracker near the Cave of the Ghouls in the southeastern mountains near Nuweiba called this procedure **Bedouin Fire**. But first, what is a Sinai Bedouin? After all, to understand the fire, one should first study the fuel.

There are over 35 gabilla (tribes) in the Sinai, depending upon your method of count. Some of my closest friends are Alegat, a curious south western group whose wives wear a hair lock (shibeika) which is intended to resemble a phallus over their forehead, and whose virgins wear their hair in the form of a vagina. The females tend goats in sparse valleys where food is sometimes more often found by shaking the buds off of Acacia tree branches than by grazing. The men labor hard for low salaries in the oil fields on the coast around Abu Rudeis and Abu Zaneima or in nearby (and very well hidden) turquoise mines.



**Abu Zaneima**

Many Bedu also eke out a living as tour guides showing tourists the large number of interesting sights in their range (dirah), including a fabled sand stone Pharonic temple dedicated to turquoise on a high mountain top named Serabit el Khadim at the end of a treacherous trail some call **wild ass pass**. There you will also find a beautiful salt water stream and a tomb where camels were once turned to stones that bled human blood.

Much to the horror of my Egyptian friends in Cairo, I maintained a relationship with a young Alegat woman who refused to allow the traditional veil to hide her beauty. It was really more a close friendship than a romance; but it was also closely regulated by rules that call for death if they are not followed. Only the **taste of the fire** can save violators.

The Alegat and many other southern tribes look like bedouins, at least what Hollywood would have you believe in. But to paraphrase my friend Sheik Barakat, and the tribal elders of the Armilat, the Tarrabin, the Ayyada and any number of other Sinai Bedouin, to be bedu "is to be both part of a tribe and believe in its ethics." It can't be just one or the other. It was from the girl Saadiya that I first heard the ethic of the flame still persisted, the red hot punishment whose embers awaited us if we crossed the line of propriety.

Hollywood would have us believe all bedouins are simple folk who wander in search of grazing, or perhaps race around raiding their neighbors. Northern bedouins in alliance with Napoleon once captured much of the Negev desert in what is now Israel. Legend has it the war may have started over a matter of honor. They also captured a British base in World War One, fought with the British and the Turks, were involved with Lawrence, and carried on in inter-tribal raids up to the 1930's; but now raids are a thing of the past. And while most Bedu wandered in the past; many now live in houses or in very small ranges.

The definition of today's Sinai Bedouin isn't found in camel herding or goats, flowing robes or traditional songs sung around a camp fire. Some bedu have none of that, preferring Toyota pick up trucks, trousers, and battery operated radios and televisions. Once in 1988 in the western Sinai I was on patrol with a peace keeping force and came across a Bedouin run car stuck in the sand. We towed them out, offered to get the car started and gave them water. That's the Bedouin way -- partnership of the desert. But having one or more traits doesn't do it. I was offered honorary membership in a tribe in return for favors and personal relationships I had developed; yet my customs, beliefs and blood are such I clearly am not a Bedouin. Many people descend from bedu, but are not of that proud gathering either, because they have lost the ethics. Some city Arabs fancy many bedu customs such as tasting the flame; but they fail the test too, because like myself, they haven't the blood. For those who do have the blood, the most important ethic is asabiyya, (tribal solidarity). From that comes most other ethics, hospitality, the system of justice, called Orfi law, etc. The link between law and solidarity **is the fire**.

Several years ago, the American public was horrified by a BBC special that graphically showed a Saudi Princess and her boyfriend being slaughtered because of their forbidden love, and then we learned Saudi thieves can lose a hand, a peeping tom his eye. Unlike that image which colored our perception of all Bedouin cultures, Orfi law in the Sinai is non-violent for most crimes. In addition, victims are always taken care of, always. It is a matter of tribal honor.

Of those who watched the BBC special, who can forget the awful swish of the sword before and the thud as it entered the victim's neck on that terrible execution ground? Sinai bedouins don't behead criminals or lop their hands off. Instead, the Sinai criminal pays the victim a fine. Note that I said victim. The fine is not paid to society; but if the criminal can't pay, the tribe pays. The criminal then owes them. Bedouins are not incarcerated. As the Central Security Police in the Sinai will tell you, a people born to the freedom of the sand would go insane in a cell. Instead, the criminal must work off his or

her fine. Failure to repay will mean being ostracized. There are lessons to be learned here, particularly in the treatment of lower level and white collar crimes.

Capital punishment does exist of course, as in most societies. Under the concept of blood vengeance, a murderer is often sought out by the humsa, the victim's first five levels of male cousins, and then executed, usually by gunshot. Otherwise, another male member of the murderer's family must be killed in order to restore balance (asabiyya again). The death penalty is also sometimes used for apostasy, fornication and adultery in certain tribes because these crimes break up families, tribes, and basic religious beliefs -- which is one of the reasons my friend and I had to be careful; but for most other crimes, the punishment is a fine.

Summer nights in the Sinai can be sultry and when holding hands with a beautiful woman as the sun turns the hills into amber, gold and rose, a man gets ideas. Yet had we broken any of a number of rules, either one of us might have been killed. It would have been the BBC special again, except that we have both been shot. I knew that going in; but what would have happened if we had been accused of adultery? How would we prove that we indeed had done nothing wrong? What if there wasn't any hard evidence, a witness, perhaps? What stops the executioner's bullets from blowing you your lover's heart apart? The answer is **besha**, justice in the raw.

When there isn't any witness or conclusive evidence, the accused go to a Mubasha (Judge of the Besha). A British intelligence officer in the 1930's named Murray called him a bogey man. That isn't true; but I can understand how a westerner might think that. You have to be impartial and forget your western values as you watch the accused stick out his or her tongue and slowly lick a red hot piece of metal or stone three times. No tears, no cries as flesh sizzles on the red ashes. In the ancient classical form of trial by ordeal, with the "assistance of Allah", guilt or innocence is determined by the Mubasha as he examines the bright cherry spot surrounded by gray flesh! I have watched it three times.

Research into this subject was difficult. Few books have been written about the Sinai bedouins and only a few even mention besha. The best are out of print and only available in London's fabled second hand district. I must have read all of them, and I have certainly talked to many people who underwent Besha. One of the latter was an eighty year old Sawarka hawk hunter who lived in the Greco-Roman ruin of Ostracine near the Mediterranean sand bar of Zaraniq. He spent almost an hour trying to explain the taste to a couple of us. He licked the spoon eight times, yet his old tongue looked normal. Former British Governor Claude Scudamore Jarvis also saw a man go through the ordeal without permanent damage, which I find incredible. I have seen the flesh seared by red and orange embers and would swear the tongue would evaporate into vapor.

I also interviewed tribal officials, and then finally the Grand Mubasha Gareebie who administers the procedure for nearly everyone in the peninsula, as well as for many in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Sudan. According to the Mubasha, I am one of his first western witnesses, and the first to film it on video tape.

My first trip to actually see the fire began on the Zagazig highway, from whence some say the Biblical exodus started, and proceeded to a point west and south of the French colonial Suez canal port and later British colonial sin city of Ismailliah. Bedouins are rarely specific about directions, and often contradict each other when describing place names. Typically, my informants had not been precise about exactly where to go; but many mentioned the dusty rail head of Abu Suwer on the highway as a source of information. The town sported a Bedouin market as well, always a good place to learn, so I went there. Unfortunately, I was a day early for the market on my first visit, so I tried the local police station. Better luck. They knew exactly where the Mubasha lived and gave me his name and approximate address. This was the first time I had the full name, Ayad Awad Gareeb. Always before it had simply been Gareeb, or "the Mubasha."

The new path was an axle breaking journey south along the verdant fly infested banks of the Ismailliah sweet water canal. I was simply instructed to find a farm on the dirt road in the vicinity of a village named Abu Sultan. Dust covered our car as though heavily laid facial powder. We passed numerous mud houses painted with pictures of people who had gone on the Hajj, farms and a little barber shop where the clippers were run by a thin old man's peddle power. Unlike the Sinai which is mostly sand, mountain and little else, this was a lush land of cattle, camels and many people.

Finally, we discovered a light skinned, gallabeyya garbed peasant who guided me the rest of the way, 18K south of the bridge junction of the main road and the road to Abu Atwa and Faied. I was led across an old concrete bridge just a few yards to the south of an even older iron crossing. The car was surrounded by cattle and geese on this and two subsequent trips. Under the bridge on the first day lay a dead water buffalo covered with flies. The road was also temporarily blocked by a water buffalo and we didn't argue with him; but instead let him pass. All this to find the kiln of Bedouin justice.

From the bridge, I turned north about fifty feet, then took my first left and slid down a muddy trail until I reached a vine covered concrete wall on the north side. This was Mubasha Gareeb's farm. As I closed, the flies grew worse, great fighter wings of persistent creatures that invaded the car in floods whenever the door was opened. Every explorer has complained by Egypt's flies. Like the Pyramids, they remain.

In contrast to his surroundings, the Mubasha was well washed, elegant and gentile. On each of my visits, despite the filth all around us, the bright sun seemed to have washed the man. His gray fellahin style clothes were immaculate and unwrinkled, his fingernails manicured, his style very judicial. He bore a smile any politician would have been proud of. His hair was clean and on one trip when he leaned close to me, I noticed his breath was no worse than any city folk, indeed better than many.

The instrument employed by the Mubasha of Abu Sultan is a **tassa bil besha**, a long handled iron spoon usually reserved for roasting coffee beans, though apparently in 1920, bread with secret inscriptions was also used. During the Israeli occupation, Sinai Bedouin could not always go to Mubasha Gareeb, so according to Israeli officers I talked to and some of the locals and Gareeb, other tools were used by different tribes: swords, knives,

frying pans, branding irons, even stones. In my personal collection is a small frying pan once used for besha. It had supposedly been brought into the Sinai by Maj McDonald about 1845, a mad Scots miner who with his wife tried to make a living mining turquoise. Even a magic egg was once used in the vicinity of St. Catherine's monastery by the Gebeliee, descendants of Rumanian slaves. But Gareeb's **tassa bil besha** is the traditional device for tasting fire. How is it used?

People are never forced to taste the flame. Instead, they volunteer, or are referred by the tribal Muktar (judge) or the local police. On average, Gareeb administers twenty to thirty cases a week, sometimes as many as ten on a Friday. On one of my visits a few months ago, I discovered he had scheduled over ten for the day, including one for people who had to journey over three hundred miles to seek justice!

Usually dressed in their best clothes, both parties to a conflict show up for the ceremony with a kafeel or listener. This worthy is hired by the parties and passes sentence once the Mubasha decides guilt or innocence. These people are seated on palm mats around a hard packed rectangular dirt floor under a bamboo roof facing each other in much the manner guests would be organized in a Bedouin tent. Except for westerners, women of child bearing age can't use the guest portion of a Bedouin tent; however under the roof of justice women are welcome to participate in all activities.

As God's holy intermediary, the Mubasha faces Mecca at one end of the enclosure and when I joined him always placed me and my crew at his right hand. The Kafeel sat behind all of us to the left and a scribe knelt on his knees on a mat between the Mubasha and a fire circle at the center. The side of the rectangle facing the Mubasha (the female room in a Bedouin tent) was left open to Gareeb's farm. Behind, a small box filled with soft sand is provided for prayer. The east wall is made of dried bamboo stalks, while the western wall is the gray painted concrete of the Mubasha's house. It is there that the **tassa bil besha** and the **great book of the Mubasha** are stored when not in use.

Usually, the parties arrive separately and with fan fair. Their faces are nervous; but brave and usually resolute. After shaking their hands, the Mubasha bids them relax over sweet tea with mint leaves until after everyone has arrived and had their fill (there is no limit). Bedouins and peasants sometimes complain when you want to take their picture; but I never had a problem. All the people I examined seemed quite pleased I was interested in what they were doing, though I was forced to take my pictures from a distance and in bad light.

While the ceremony goes on, an aide builds a wood fire in the pit and a representative from each side pays the Mubasha, about £18 per person undergoing the treatment. In the 1930's, the fee was 10 pounds and in the 1920's, five to ten pounds depending on the level of trouble. But, unlike today, that fee went to the kafeel, who passed final sentence and made sure both parties paid any court costs. Most of my interviewees have indicated Mubashas are honest men doing a difficult public service; however, (though not confirmed by hard evidence) I have also heard of under the table pre-payments. Gareeb seemed quite honest; but I was disturbed to see that he took the fee directly.

While the fire begins to come to life, the tassa bil besha is brought out with great ceremony and is stuck ladle end down into the flames, convex side in the ashes. Then, to exclamations from everyone, gasoline is poured causing the flames to shoot right up to the well scorched roof.

The participants then begin to tell their tales, while the scribe takes careful notes. They are frequently interrupted by questions of clarification by the Mubasha who makes sure only evidence directly relevant to the issue is presented, no information about previous crimes -- nothing about a person's character. The later is left to the judgment of the fire. In one ceremony I witnessed, a woman repeatedly interrupted, emotionally trying to accuse the others of past crimes; but she was ruled out of order. Eventually, the Mubasha asked the girl's father to shut her up, when she wouldn't stop. He only wanted to hear about the crime in question.

In addition to obtaining only basic, judicially relevant facts, the Mubasha must determine there are no witnesses and that the crime is truly serious; since Besha is never used for witnessed crimes or misdemeanors, except as a deterrent to future transgressions.

A good example of deterrence happened once when a local peasant went to the Mubasha explaining that a youth who had stolen £E40. The Mubasha didn't want to administer the fire for so small a crime and offered to recompense the victim, himself. However, he changed his mind when informed this was but one of a series of small crimes that the peasant thought would ultimately lead to serious offenses one day and jail. The peasant thought besha might serve as a deterrent.

The intermediary role isn't just a casual sideline. It's central to asabiyya because of the small, close knit nature of tribal society, especially those lining on a marginal basis where minimal crimes can seriously diminish the trust needed to keep the body together. To the Bedouin, anything that diminishes unity or strength ardh must be squashed. From that fear come the laws of sex and hospitality as well as the severity by which the crime of apostasy is treated. From that also comes xenophobia. From this insecurity in the strength of their beliefs, these people are very afraid of new ideas, because of what they will do to traditional, proven values and customs. Thus feelings of ill will and mistrust can't be allowed to fester. If people can't trust each other in times of plenty, they won't when times are hard. And so Besha is really more than a polygraph. It is a mechanism or achieving final reconciliation; and if the Mubasha is in error, that's OK because God willed it. And since God is the true judge, simply acting through the intermediary, the decision can't be appealed. To do so would be to commit an apostasy. "God always has a reason for his actions."

Most people who come for besha know little but legends; so the Mubasha spends part of his time making sure the parties understand that bare flesh will be applied to red hot metal. He offers them a chance to depart; but of course, they won't because were they to leave that would be an admission of guilt.

One legend the Mubasha dispels is that tongues receive no damage. As my friend at Zaraniq proved, the damage might not be permanent; but certainly there is temporary damage. Fifty to sixty years ago an innocent tongue wasn't supposed to show any damage. Murray made the same point; but today, the Mubasha lets the participants know there will be an effect. Truth is discovered by examining the degree of the damage. This builds on the faith of the participants. If you believe in besha and know you are innocent, your tongue will be wetter than if you are a believer and guilty. But there is always damage.

Once the preliminaries are completed, everything is sworn before Allah, the scribe inserts the data into the Great Green Book of the Mubasha, the participants sign or give their thumb print and an oath is taken that the result of the trial will settle the issue -- again this is really more an act of reconciliation than a polygraph, even though people go to prove their innocence. Thus, appeal is impossible.

In the Armilat tribe of NW Sinai and Gaza, accusers sometimes take besha to worry the accused; but the Mubasha said that while this was the original form, the custom is now rare except in those cases where two sides are accusing each other. Then both take the taste. Another change from previous practice is particularly interesting. As recently as the 1920's and 30's, the Mubasha took the first three licks in order to prove the iron was not harmful to the innocent. No longer.

After the affidavit is signed and sworn to, the participants wait for the **tassa bil besha** to heat up to lava color with bits of yellow, orange and red embers falling off. These are scraped away, leaving a smooth red surface to lick. The Mubasha then holds the spoon out to each participant. Three full licks with the full flat of the tongue are required, and if done wrong, must be repeated. I once saw a woman do it five times till she got it right! "The fire will release the spirit of the tongue, and the tongue knows the feelings of the heart". The spoon is then cleansed with water, and then the participants wash their mouths out, spitting into a dirt basin.

After counting worry beads for about ten minutes, the Mubasha will lean over and look at each tongue. The "truth" is declared and then the Kafeel declares judgment.

Ayad Awad Gareeb is internationally famous in the sub-culture of the besha adherents. There are others, some near him, such as a Nubian who mostly looks after his own breed; but Gareeb is the biggest. Both Bedouins and city Arabs go to this man as well as Christians. This means a remarkable change has taken place in the last fifty years. From at least the turn of the century until the end of World War Two, this was strictly a Sinai Bedouin custom. No one did it in mainland Egypt, certainly not city folk. And as for Sinai Bedouins, my specialty, he enumerated cases for nearly all of the 34 major tribes, including the Maa'zeh, who as late as the 1930's were the only Bedouins not practicing Besha.

What about the police, I wondered? Gareeb replied that his procedure was "informal" and that while the police sometimes caused minor hassles (unexplained), more often than not they referred cases. I was shown stamped referral slips from several police



departments, and as I said earlier his address was given to me by the police. One of the most fascinating referrals inscribed in the great book involved a fat man convicted of murder. The fellow asked to be sent to the Mubasha before being sentenced and was granted his request. The Mubasha declared the man innocent. He was released and shortly thereafter the real guilty party was found.

Well, what about the history of the taste? According to Gareeb, the concept was first developed in a forgotten past by a tracker of great powers named Weymer abu Ayad of the Sultani branch of the Ayayideh tribe in Saudi Arabia. The Ayayideh is still the hereditary tribe primarily responsible for Besha. One day someone slipped into Weymer's home and stole something. Weymer knew who the crook was; but how to prove it? There were no witnesses. So he did what the Armilat still sometimes do. Weymer picked up a hot branding iron and said "**I will lick it three times. You will lick it three times. Whoever is guilty will be shown.**" The thief ran away and a legend was born.

The tribe of the Mubasha originally came from Dhahataan in Saudi Arabia, then moved to El Murra and Gebel umm Mukshaab in the Sinai, finally moving to environs of Ismailliah in the 1920's around the time of a major draught in the peninsula, as well as to the Galala mountains to the South in mainland Egypt. I knew that in 1929 a negro immigrant Mubasha from Muweila in Arabia lived in A-Tor. In the same year, a small elderly man named Hamdan was the hereditary bearer of the title of Holder of the Red Hot Spoon and conducted the test for the entire Sinai. Unlike with the current Mubasha, the victim's tongue was checked out after each try; however after the third, the client was immediately allowed to drink water. Hamdan was Mubasha just before Gareeb's grandfather. The current Mubasha followed his father who followed his, so I wondered if this was the rule. It isn't. Though the holder stays in the family, he is chosen by the tribal leaders based on ability. This broke down during the Israeli occupation, according to my sources.

According to the people I interviewed, including an Israeli Colonel, the Israelis repressed Besha, as did the British when they occupied the peninsula. As a consequence, though some members of the Ayedeh family did live in the Sinai and were able to help, the practice devolved into a tribal affair, and differences appeared. For example, the Aulid Sa'id and Gebelieh both used hot stones and the Muzeina used a knife soaked in gasoline. The Tarrabin did no besha at all. But once the occupation was over, things returned to normal. The Mubasha of Abu Sultan now does an overflow business, despite the existence of lesser Mubashas in Cairo, and Sharm el Sheik.

Many have found the procedure revolting and unscientific. Perhaps that is partly true, even though it operates on similar principles as the modern polygraph. The point is of course that the people who use it believe in it and its social role. Right or wrong decisions are at least final ones. Life goes on. Perhaps there is some value in just such a mechanism in a society wherein if grievances were allowed to fester, the strength of the civilization would weaken. If there is one thing that is central to Bedouin culture, it is asabiyya, tribal solidarity, togetherness, all of that. Therefore, for all its faults, in a very real sense, besha

is central to asabiyya, and orfi law and therefore it is one of the keys to what it is to be a Bedouin.

## Bleeding Rocks and Ghouls

Planning your next camping trip? Looking for dramatic scenery, legends, and exotic people? Then come with me on an expedition to the Sinai Peninsula, a land few Americans have ever seen. It is still largely undiscovered, contains a reasonable amount of danger and has sights that will take your breath away, like the coral diving fields, considered by many to be the world's best. There is the El Tih escarpment that cuts the peninsula in two like a massive granite knife and the valley of bleeding rocks where a child turned an army around with faith. A cave in the southern mountains may hold treasure. At that last spot a ghoul once robbed travelers, yet found time to conceive and bear their children!

The Sinai and the Louvre in Paris have something in common. Each would take a lifetime to explore. The Sinai is in fact so rich in historical artifacts, legends and culture that an article can't do justice to all of it; but this expedition should provide a good sampling. It stretches over 150 miles from the battle scarred banks of the Suez Canal to the Gulf of Aquaba. But there is also danger and challenge requiring good maps. My trail maps have never been published before; and you will need them.

Sand dunes cover paths and there is little water. Some areas like the wadis <sup>(1)</sup> between 2908'N-3430'E near Gebel Berga <sup>(2)</sup> and 2901'N-3341'E near the "petrified forest" of Gebel Foqa are frequented by drug smugglers. Some of the prime camping areas are within walking distance of military mines. And there is the possibility of floods. Those are the dangers. Yet, throughout all of this are world class monuments and inscriptions and a people as fascinating and friendly as any you will ever meet.

I prefer to enter the Sinai from the Suez Canal ferry crossing in Kantara (two hours from Cairo). You have not seen chaos until you "become one" with the mob scene of cars and trucks at Kantara crossing, many over laden with camels and luggage. I once saw a Toyota pickup with over thirty mattresses piled high in the air! On top were three crates of chickens scared out of their wits. Often people trying to get on actually block cars getting off! And racing in between the cars are Bedouin boys selling cokes and food. They may try to wipe your windows for a small fee, and kick your car if you don't pay. Treat it as adventure.

Ships will pass at very close range, which is an extraordinary sight, and you may even be allowed to pilot the ferry. I've done the latter twice. Once, the captain twirled his ferry around four times in front of a small war ship! It had nothing to do with politics. The pilot wanted to make an impression on a wedding party. But have no fear. These hardy water folk know their job very well indeed.

During the World Wars Kantara hosted a major British army hospital. Beautiful churches and iron terraces as well as European style streets and cafes graced the city; but now it is a bombed out town with dusty churches, crumbling houses with only a well manicured Commonwealth Cemetery as a reminder of past glory. This is a massive monument to the

cruelty of bombing civilian centers. Visit the British cemetery at the north end of town. It makes a cool lunch break and is good history.

From Kantara, we drive south along the Suez Canal to the town of Sudr which is the last gas stop before the fastness of the southern mountains. Though gas, oil and tires can be purchased at Abu Zenima (the last town on the western leg), supplies are not dependable.

You are now looking for an unmarked white gravel road 242 meters above sea level overlooking the north end of Abu Zenima. Travel about 75 road kilometers south of Sudr air strip to position

297'5" N -- 335'5" E. The route is full of military relics for the war historian and fine beaches are perfect for swimming and a bar-b-que. There is also something for biblical scholars. You will pass Ayn Musa (Moses' Well) where Moses may have taken water the exodus. To the east in Wadi Sudr is a castle built by Saladin high on nearly insurmountable Ras el Gindi in order to protect Egypt from the Crusaders. You can only reach it by goat trail. In between is a lonely unmarked spot where an English spy named Henry Palmer was murdered in 1882 and 3,000 English sovereigns lost. Some think a third of the gold is still buried in the Wadi! And if you like natural steam baths, stop at Hammam Faroun. Water in this nearly invisible seaside cave may have gained steam when a Pharaoh grew angry over the Exodus.

From your position above Abu Zenima face east into the mountains. There you will find a white slash of a trail which after about twenty minutes of rocky ride will quite suddenly open up into the massive Valley of Bleeding Rocks. The valley is rich in color. Yet, beautiful as it is today, it was of far greater glory fifty years ago when there were groves, as yet uncut by pilgrims. There were also herds of ibex, Oryx antelope and leopard.

Ibex have been hunted here since at least 2355 B.C. when Pepi I fought the Heriu-sha "sand people." There were so many in 1931 in fact that the British run Sinai Frontier Administration employed four game wardens! Even famed big game hunter Robert Hayne was attracted to the place in the late 1920s and bagged a leopard while hunting ibex. Cats still are seen along the Israeli border, as well as some Ibex and small pale-fawn large ear fennec fox; but they are very rare. About all you see now with any regularity are lizards, hare, mice (which are often eaten), and birds.

There are many hawks, eagles and falcons; but mostly to the east, especially on the north coast and in the verdant Moses Valley where Moses may have spent forty years as his people slowly moved into Palestine. I have hunted falcons with north coast Bedouins. Like the cats, they are being over hunted however, in this case as live animals for use by the Saudis. But buzzards will be the prominent bird on this leg. Along the mountains on your route are so many buzzards I have found them to be a navigational hazard to helicopters.

The white slash starts the road to the village of Sheik Barakat of the Alegat Bedouin where you will spend the night. But first find the tomb of Sheik Giray. From the entry

way into the white slash, travel east about 22 kilometers. Looking 130 from this new location, you should see Giray's tomb. It is also 97 from the entry point at 295°N, 3320°E. The road is bounded by wells, numerous side paths and plenty of Alegat Bedouin women who should be about drawing water. If you are not sure of your way, the women will show you. You'll be able to tell they are Alegat from their hair. The wives wear theirs tied into a large phallic symbol; while the girls wear theirs parted in the middle.

Much of the route is over rough road or soft sand. The sand can be very treacherous, particularly as you will later discover under the Gebel El Tih escarpment. In addition, the famous inscription laden Wadis Sidre, Maghara and Makkatab where we will visit in two days are full of soft sand. So, make sure your desert tires are in good shape before going any further. Also check your oil and gas. There will be no gas stations for three days.

Giray's tomb is important because of its relationship to this region as a food and water station for travelers between the south and Suez. Typical of Sinai Bedouin Sheik tomb buildings, Giray's resembles a football helmet stuck on a sandy hill. Sift the sand. You will find goat bones. In a ceremony called Zuara, the locals sacrifice young goats, hoping Giray will ask God to solve problems. Legend says you will be cured of your evil spirits by simply praying in the tomb. And yet this is holy ground because of a small boy who worked for Giray, not because of any special deed on the Sheik's part.

At the time of the story's birth, a simple spot of granite lay where the tomb now stands beneath the El Tih escarpment. The escarpment is an overbearing, sometimes frightening slice of granite and sandstone that whips up wind currents which can turn a helicopter ride into a plummeting nightmare. I know. I have flown over the escarpment many times and left my stomach behind as often.

According to legend, a lone boy herdsman was tending his camels ready to sell them to travelers for Sheik Giray. It had been a quiet morning with the only company being the herd. Then from the north advanced camel cavalry from near the petrified forest of Gebel Foqa. There lies an ancient trail which connects the Badara Bedouin of the upper plateau of Gebel Igma to the southern valleys. The herdsman stood upon his rock and gazed at the large advancing dust cloud. Armies never paid for anything, he thought. What was he to do? For an answer, he knelt upon the rock and prayed to Allah as the thunder of hooves began to echo off the cliffs of El Tih.

When he finally looked up, the camels were gone. In their place were white sand stone mounds. Just beyond the mounds was the army, and he could see as the dust settled that their camels were very tired, their mouths white with foam, the riders furious. One rider in particular was especially angry. His camel had no sooner knelt when he jumped off and walked to the shaking herdsman, who had by now fallen to his knees, as the other drew his broad, curved sword.

"Where are the camels" the rider asked.

"There are no camels." replied the boy.

The rider removed his kerchief to reveal scarred and weather beaten face of a warrior -- the sort won by men who wasted no time. "Where are the camels," asked the intruder again, this time bringing his sword under the other's chin.

The boy shook violently. "I prayed to Allah, and he turned them into stone." he said, pointing.

"Blasphemer!" The intruder swung his sword as if to cleave the herdsman in two!

"No! Wait" the boy screamed. "I speak the truth." He pointed to one of the mounds. "There! Strike and see my truth!"

"If you lie," the rider snarled. He turned and with a vicious swipe struck the stone at its peak and blood rushed out. "A miracle!" he cried, and the herdsman was spared.

Despite his heroism, the tomb doesn't go to the herdsman, though there is a stone in one corner commemorating the event. The broad, shiny green cloth hanging from the ceiling is for the Sheik who owned the camels!

From Giray's tomb, let the Bedouins guide you to Sheik Barakat's village. Barakat is chief of the Alegat who live around Serabit el Khadim and Bir Nasb. He is also a genuine "character" who loves to talk about his tribe and its history. There is a well in the center of the grounds, an outdoor latrine and plenty of food; but no gas. The villagers will try to sell you wares, and there are many bargains to be had; but be sure to get an early night. You will need the rest. I like sleeping under the stars; but Barakat also has rooms to let. The floors are beaten dirt but you will at least have shelter from rain and wind.

Barakat's daughter Saadiya will take you by foot the next morning to a Pharonic sandstone temple. She may lead you up the risky wild ass pass used by ancient slaves or the more traditional walk of the inscriptions. What you are about to see is the temple of Hathor, Goddess of Turquoise, on Gebel Serabit el Khadim. This is a monument left alone in its own element. There are no tourist lines or tickets, no films, brochures or special light shows. This is austere reality and you must earn a view by enduring a long upward hike. You will sometimes have to heave yourself over rocks. But, this is worth it.

Built between 1991 BC and 1090 BC between the reigns of Ramses IV and Mnepteh II, this treasure was lost until discovered by Niebuhr in 1761. The steles in the temple and along the main access route will show what ancient Egyptian boats looked like and will describe battles with Sinai nomads in 3100 BC, 2700BC, 2600BC and 1991-1786BC. An anti-Bedouin wall still remains. You will also get a good glimpse of the El Tih escarpment and the region of the Badara. Almost due east is Gebel Foqa. From here you will also see old turquoise mines and sharp chasms. The view is guaranteed to take your breath away.

Once back down the mountain, visit the salt water creek Wadi baba. It should be lunch time, so I recommend a good Bedouin meal of tea, fowl (fava beans) and bread under the

shade of the many palm trees. Dip your feet in the cool water and relax -- the afternoon will be hot.

If you planned your hike well, you will be down by noon and on the road again by two. Now travel from Barakat's Camp along the great "cavern" below the El Tih escarpment until you reach Gebel Foqa, where lies the "petrified forest" I mentioned earlier, actually a forest of mineral deposits. Barakat will be happy to show you the way. This is the only example of such a place in the entire Sinai, so it is a must. Just drive carefully. I have had to pull two cars out of this trail that were stuck right up to their axles in the soft sand.

From Gebel Foqa, drive about 13 kilometers on a 225 angle to a ridge east of Wadi Seih. There you will find the tomb of Sheik Haboose, a stone storehouse and other buildings built by Sheik Mudakhil Sulieman. Sulieman's son Sheik Zeidan Mudakhil led her Majesty's 10th Gurkhas on January, 1915 at Abu Zenima in a successful attack on Bedouin and Turkish forces. As a result of this and an earlier encounter with the British in the 1880s, Mudakhil's is still the dominant line in the tribe.

The complex of buildings includes a Makkad, which is a covered outdoor stone resting place often found near Bedouin Sheik tombs. A Garasha Bedouin Makkad will be seen later in Wadi Sidri. It has only one room and is only meant for males. However, the Alegat Makkad is a two chambered co-ed structure. The western side is for men and the eastern side for women and cooking. Western women are welcome at either end. I recommend the Makkad for the evening stop. The view of El Tih is magnificent and the makkad is excellent shelter.

The next morning travel along Wadi Seih south to Wadi Maghara. At the junction of the two wadis you will find the white tomb of Sheik Sulieman Nafi. Just south of it is a box shaped stone room. This is the only tomb in the Sinai dedicated to a man and his wife. You will also find typical Bedouin graves, football shaped, unmarked mounds surrounded by cactus sprouts.

Follow the trail into Maghara and look to your immediate left about head high and you will find the first of several inscriptions. At the junction under a tree is the Garasha Makkad. Carry on and you will enter a soft sand trail between two rows of unroofed stone houses, folded Bedouin tents and the remains of turquoise mines operated first by the Pharaohs, then a Scot known to some as Mad Major McDonald and later by a man named J Goldins in 1901. Hidden on the sides of the rock cliffs are more inscriptions.

Due to the soft sand and abundance of acacia branches lying on the ground, this is an excellent camp site. If you do stay, seek out the local Garasha, as they use the wadi for religious purposes. You will likely find rings of stone in the sand pointed towards Mecca, which serve as rural Mosques. It is ok to remove one or more stones from a circle for use in fireplaces; however, make sure that the circles retain their shape.

As at Giray's tomb, the sand here is full of broken goat bones and skulls. During the week, women privately bring goats to the tomb and perhaps walk the beasts around three times

for luck. Later on, a husband or father appears and either slits the goat's throat in front of the tomb or in Maghara, where the goat is finally skinned while hanging from one of the acacia, then eaten. Of all of the ceremonies one finds in the Sinai, Zuara is the most common, though its technique will vary from tribe to tribe.

One thing everyone notices right away are the dozens of heavy oil skin tents to be found at any one time hanging from the trees. The practice is common among the tribes of the Tuara Confederation tribes, (Bedouins of the south); but this valley usually has the best collection. You will even find camel saddles from time to time. The Bedouins have been known to sell the tents and saddles; but don't take them without permission.

The valley was once full of inscriptions; however most have now been destroyed. But many world class carvings and writings still exist, each worth careful study. One at the top of a high climb not only offers a wonderful view of the surrounding valleys but also depicts Sekhemkhet of the 3rd Dynasty beating his enemies, perhaps the pre-Islamic Bedouins who used to raid Egyptian mining parties. The present day Garasha of the region are reputed to have descended from those raiders. The inscription is one of Egypt's most famous, so you will be especially lucky as you will see it as the Egyptians did.

The inscriptions are there because like Serabit, this was a major Egyptian turquoise mining operation. The mines are now played out; but exploring them makes for great adventure.

The Maghara visit will take a full half day or more; so you should spend the night. If you do, rise early the next morning, then travel south to Wadi Makkatab where you will find thousands of ancient Aramaic, Greek, Latin and Coptic graffiti statements carved in the stone on both sides of the wadi. I have counted over 3,000. Most have never been catalogued!

The reason for the miles of graffiti is that this was part of a route from Aquaba used by the Romans, Greeks, Nabateans, Crusaders and other invaders; yet these are not the only wadis in the Sinai with inscriptions. The peninsula is riddled with the stuff; but Maghara and Makkatab have the highest concentration and the best quality. One written in 189 AD says "the year the poor were allowed to cut dates." Another says "Be mindful of Chailos, son of Zaidu," while a third says "I Lupus, a soldier, wrote this with my hand."

From here, drive south to a highway, the beginning of the south central portion of the expedition. At the junction is a Garasha Bedouin village. Stop there. The tea and hospitality is excellent. Those with a bent towards anthropology will get to compare the different kinds of Bedouin housing. What you will learn is that contrary to popular belief, not all Bedouins are nomadic.

The Alegat in the Valley of Bleeding Rocks live in tents and cinder block houses. The Garasha in Wadi Seih live only in tents and do migrate; but at the highway junction the Garasha live in shacks of plywood and metal sheeting and almost never move. Along the highway on the way to Abu Zenima you will also have seen the yellow thatch homes of



the Ayaida. Their tribe has a judge who lives in a large cinder block house across the canal and operates the Sinai Bedouin polygraph, a red hot coffee roasting spoon that you must slowly lick three times in order to prove your innocence! I have seen men and women undergo this treatment and according to the judge am the first to have filmed it on videotape.

As you pick up the hardtop and move east, the road passes through Wadi Feiran and Wadi el Sheikh one of the peninsula's greenest sectors, a place full of dates and the solid stone homes of the Gebeliyya Bedouins, descendants of Rumanian and Egyptian slaves brought to the valleys by Emperor Justinian. You are now on the St. Catherine's Highway. Built by the Israelis, it connects the Gulfs of Aquaba and Suez and wanders through the two wadis where it touches St. Catherine's monastery. This leg of your journey is a must for here may be the mountain of the law where Moses was given the Ten Commandments. You can reach the spot after a combination camel ride and hike. Here also lay in the fourth century the Bishopric of Feiran, once one of the most influential religious centers in the world.

In this fastness of granite and sandstone lies the beautiful walled "monastery" of St. Catherine's built in the sixth century by Emperor Justinian as a way to protect the monks of the wadi from the local Bedouins. To help build the enclosure, Justinian brought in the slaves I just mentioned. The treasures of gold and art go beyond the scope of the paper; but you should know that here you can see the "burning bush," and one of the greatest icon and religious manuscript collections in the world!

You will want to stay for a day of rest in one of the Bedouin areas. After seeing the treasures in the morning (including its cellar of skulls) you should take a camel ride up Gebel Katherina where a chapel guards the spot where Moses may have received his tablets! There are at least six other such mountains in the Sinai and one in the Negev; but make the trip anyway. If you are lucky, you may even find snow. I once had a snow fight there.

Once you have finished with religious history continue driving until you reach Wadi Watir in the mountains to the east. We are now in search of ghouls. So far, the trip has been relatively easy. But this will be a truly difficult trek and a taste of what Bedouins go through in droughts. Be especially careful. Military mine fields exist in some of the access passes and are not always well marked, due to floods. Flash floods can be as deadly. Once I drove through Wadi Watir before entering the town of Nuweiba and almost drove off the road. A flood had carved out a twelve foot deep scoop! The day before where once had been an Egyptian police post now lay a smooth patch of fresh sand. They had less than five minutes warning!

As you enter port Nuweiba, you have a choice of several places to stay. I suggest the Turkish fort (which has a water well) or a small hotel called Sally Land 20km north along the coast beach. Sally Land was built by a native of Chicago and an Egyptian with Tarabin Bedouin labor, and offers western style food, hygiene and comfort for about \$20 a night; but I go for the beach. It's free and the hotel will let you use their showers.

If you stay at Sally Land, watch out for the sharks. I have flown over the shore by helicopter and have seen many schools of the beasts in feeding frenzies. I also was foolish enough one summer to climb into a row boat to try shark hunting Bedouin style with a harpoon. I didn't get any sharks; but they almost had me for dinner.

Also watch out for the human sharks at the beach bar in town where Bedouins sporting robes, mustaches and flashing teeth straight out of the movie Lawrence of Arabia will offer to take you anywhere, for a price. They speak several languages and often charge much too much, I think because German tourists are notorious for over paying. Having said that, the guides of Nuweiba are not bad, just mercenary. My favorite guide lives out of town in a thatch hut on the coast. He speaks no English and is totally unsophisticated. Sulieman (often used by Sally Lands) is also excellent.

The Bedouins of Nuweiba often live in cinder block houses with running water. Some have electricity, drive expensive cars and while Sulieman uses an acacia branch to clean his teeth, many of my Nuweiba Bedouin friends use toothbrushes and toothpaste. One guide, who goes by the nick name "Irish", lived in Germany during the Israeli occupation, speaks German, English and Hebrew; but can't write. All of these people know the region, which is the main thing. The difference is really a matter of cost and style. My personal preference is to arrange with Sally Land to pick a selection of guides from which to choose. They have a special relationship with the local Tarrabin tribe, and therefore can probably get you a good deal.

Be sure you are comfortable with the guide, however. This is critical. There is no shame in telling the hotel you are unhappy with their choice. A cheap price is not an advantage if you and the guide don't get along.

After approving your chief guide and the camels, it is common practice to also choose a goat to be sacrificed for luck in traditional Tarrabin style. On my first expedition in the Nuweiba mountains, the guide brought over several beautiful little goats about an hour before sunset. I saw what was coming and pointed to one that didn't look long for the world. The guide wanted to let the thing walk with us through the mountains. We would then eat it mid way in a place called the Painted Canyon. Well, as I explained to the Bedouins, who promptly started laughing uncontrollably, I couldn't eat something I had a relationship with. So without much more delay, the throat was slit and the body grilled over a nearby fire on the beach. The only spice was its own blood!

Sacrificing a goat is a traditional and tasty way to start an expedition; stomach full, you will lay on the sands and watch the ships go by on their way to the terminals at Aquaba and Eilat, the slowing dying fire and the armies of lights in the sky above, which are unhindered by pollution, will occasionally fire a brilliant shooting star in your direction. This is that sort of place. It brings out the poetry.

I remember the first time I led a camel expedition from this spot. We were all anxious to begin the hike. Friends who had never seen a dead animal except at a grocery store had just entered a land where food walked. In a few hours we would go where cars feared to

go, where the dinner's main course might be the unwary tourist. But the surf's pounding of the shore will sooth you into a gentle sleep.

At sunup, a good breakfast can be had of coffee and broiled fresh fish caught during the night from hooks laid before you go to sleep, or perhaps a lobster walked into your trap. There is virtually no pollution to poison the catch. Unless time constraints force you to go on the camel trek, I would take the day off to see the sights and get a good swim or dive to look at the coral. That will give the Bedouin a full day to collect things. Be sure to examine the Turkish fort. Built around 1894, it is the best example of Turkish military architecture in the Sinai. The firing holes are in tact, as are the hills used to drag artillery pieces to the wall tops. You might also go over to the Bedouin village. In fact, if the Bedouin guides didn't go to you, you probably will have to go to the village to make the arrangements. Make them quickly, so that the Bedouins will have plenty of time to assemble their camels and supplies at the staging area on expedition day.

Hollywood portrays negotiations with Bedouins as formal affairs. I went to an Israeli lecture on the subject a few years ago and they insisted that one drink only three cups of coffee at a negotiation. Well, the Sinai Bedouins are not that formal. In one place I made my arrangements in the man's thatch hut on the beach and all the while was surrounded by goats and camels. It really depends on the person with whom you deal. But be sure that everyone understands exactly what is expected and how much will be paid.

On expedition morning, rise with the sun. Then from Sally Land, drive south along the shore to a point just north of Wadi Malha (see expedition map) where you will meet the camels and guides. Even the passenger camels will carry cargo, so be nice to them. There will be much screaming and protesting, which if you have never seen it, is quite a sight. Though a wonderful pack animal, camels never like to work, so they complain. The biggest complainer will be the babies. There is always at least one brought along for training. I remember one three year old naga (female) who only had to carry two small water jugs. To listen to her, you might have thought we were sadists.

You will ride for about twenty minutes into the hinterland until coming to a road break marked on the expedition map as checkpoint A. From here, the expedition goes on foot while the camels proceed up a mountain pass in the direction of Campsite 1. The foot path is too narrow and difficult for the beasts.

This wash is not named on any maps I have found; but is known by the Bedouins as Wadi Ferrier. I named the entire route from the wash until we reach the Painted Canyon at Campsite 1 as Wadi Ferrier, though this actually combines several wadis under one name. I did that because I could find no other name from the Bedouins. It connects up Wadi Watir and the road you used to enter Nuweiba. Please note that according to local Bedouins the junction of the route and Wadi Watir is seeded with military mines as is the main access to the east of that junction.

The rest of the day will be on foot; so carry plenty of water. There are however two cisterns on the way, Moiyet el Wishwashi and Moiyet el Metha, the later, about four and

a half miles from the start of your trip where you can dip your feet, rest and ate dates right off the ground. Watch for gazelle, what the Bedouin call Tatel. These small creatures can be found by watching for tiny footprints in the sand or the unmistakable spoor of small round pellets. The wetness of the pellet will tell you how old the track is.

From there, you proceed to a deep, sandstone canyon of incredible beauty which you should reach about 4pm. This is the entrance to the Painted Canyon and is where you will make your first encampment. I call it the Canyon of Flames.

Except for the first 30 minutes, where the camels broke for high ground, your entire day will have consisted of walking! The trip is only about 7 miles, but will be very tiring, due to the sun, which is a killer; so a hat is a must. My trade mark is a wide brimmed bush hat from South Africa on which one of the Sinai tribes placed a silver pendant. But even a hat won't shield you from the glare that flashes up from the sand to your face. If the guides do their job right, you will be taken from shadow to shadow. This is critical because the hike is tiring, and though you will from time to time ride your camel, you don't want to over tire them. In addition, don't lie on hot rocks. They will suck precious water right out of your body. Lie only in the shade. Maybe one of the two foot long lizards that inhabit the region will stand guard over you while you sleep! Don't worry, they only eat small animals and plants. But if you get hungry, they make an excellent meal.

Dress warmly in the evening. I remember one trip in August when the day was as hot as breakfast's frying pan. We would have slept like babies that night, but a chill wind swept from the gulf through the narrow pass like an Irish banshee until we saw the sun. I was covered in branches and sand the next morning and the nose a goat was trying to lick off was as cold as a popsicle.

What I call the Canyon of Flames is a massive sand stone bowl whose walls rise like orange tongues. Truly magnificent. One of my favorite past times there is to collect canisters of eight different shades of colored sand. A friend of mine once made a beautiful sand painting of a camel much in the manner of the Navaho. This place inspires imagination.

The first thing to do is select a camp site. Carefully examine the sand for water flow. Floods are rare, but deadly. The water flow marks will tell you which areas are most protected. This advice is very important. When it rains, spots like the tight, twisted painted canyon. Also a consideration is the flea population, though the giant fleas usually only inhabit low areas and can be easily seen. Rocks can fall from the heights, as well; so pick a spot that is protected and is not next to rock pits.

Even though you will be tired, explore the Painted Canyon as the sun sets. This is a winding ribbon of colorful cul de sacs and little bird holes, strange granite boulders that pop out of nowhere, and lizards. But the beauty is in the sandstone, great surrealist paintings of red, yellow, blue and orange. Let the Bedouins do the cooking this night. You will be too tired; and this will also be a good opportunity to learn about Bedouin diet.

The Tarrabin eat lean fox meat for sick bones, fetta for food and stomach sickness, perhaps fish or lobster from the gulf.

The Bedouins also like rabbit, which they skin and gut like a goat. Then the meat is cut into small pieces, stuffed back into the skin and tied up. A hole is dug in the sand in which is put burning wood and two stones, one under the meat with the wood and one over the body. The whole thing is then covered with hot coal and sand and left for three to four hours. The meat looks like gold when it comes out.

Unless you are very fit, don't be surprised if every bone in your body is tired the following morning. You will be dehydrated. Stretch, fill your stomach with as much water it will carry and walk over to the painted canyon again to enjoy the effect of the morning sun on the stone.

Don't be surprised if your guides ask to listen to your radio so they can hear the international news. Though "sand people," the Bedouins are often remarkably conversant about current events. A Tarrabin Bedouin I once met in Naqb on the drive down from the Mediterranean coast was so a'current, he knew about the falling prices of the Cairo Aida performances and wondered if I was going!

For breakfast, try Bedouin bread. It is always shared with the entire camp. This builds a bond of hospitality covered by desert law. Rarely is that ever violated. The bread, in addition to tea and tins of fetta cheese, is the staple diet of Bedouins on such trips, that and the fruit found on the road such as the dates at Check point C. The Bedouin will take wheat with live weevils and mix it with water and salt, making a large kneaded dough, which they flatten into a thick pancake. This is then placed on acacia branch ashes. Other hot ashes are then placed over the dough. The mix should be cooked for five minutes on both sides and then removed. The black soot is easily knocked off. Don't be surprised by trip's end to find that it tasted quite good; and that you liked the extra crunch! You will come to greatly respect the guides and their traditional ways.

Camels are as traditional as the food. They will slowly meander in, sometimes lame from the difficult climb, and ask for their bags of corn. While they eat, the bedu will load them up with saddles and gear. Not exactly fair! One can hardly protest with a face full of corn, can one? You may notice they don't drink water. Indeed, they probably won't drink at all on the trip. Camels only need 3 to 4 liters of water per day, which they store in advance. By contrast, you will drink well over five gallons in the first two days, if you are wise, and you will likely still be dehydrated!

We now begin the final leg of the trip in the direction of the Cave of Ghouls. The camels will continue south by themselves. The "camel only" route is marked in green on the expedition map while the routes marked in yellow are strictly for hiking. I did this because while one could have ridden the whole trip, it would not have been as interesting as the hiking trail. The camels can't go through the Painted Canyon, for example, which is your next path. You meet up with the beats at Check point D or (if you like heights)

take an alternative route along the summit of hill top 1009, meeting the camels further along.

From Check point D or the alternative joining up point proceed by camel to Camp 2. This is at the well of Ghouls, also known as Bir Biariyya at position 299°N, 3433°E. At this point, I suggest you ask your guides to tell you a ghouls legend. Here is one.

At the turn of the century there was a great drought and many bedouins went this route, later linking up with Wadi Watir on their way via the Valley of Bleeding Rocks for food rations in Suez. They thus had to pass the Cave of the Ghouls where on a mountain ridge lived a family of ghouls who ate passersby. Well, one night five men camped at the well below. One wandered off and was found by a beautiful lady ghouls who gave him a choice: "have sex or be eaten." As our guide put it, "the man did what a man has to do." A year later the lady saw the man again and informed him he had a daughter, whom he then took into his home.

All was well until years later during another drought when the father passed a desecrated grave. The girl's new husband knew of her history and after being told of the incident, followed his wife one night to a grave where she ate another dead person. He was horrified. What to do? Well, he had recently obtained 500 kilograms of food from the Suez rations, so while she slept on the floor, he tipped the goods over. Her death was billed as an accident.

Before her death, the ghouls and her husband had children and they have had children as well, known today as El Gouwela; but I understand "they are good people and not ghouls any longer." Like many fairy tales, it might be partly true, but the ghouls must have been special indeed to have enticed a man to sex. According to traditional Arabic legend, these creatures are usually hairy and ugly creatures, such as a famous one that lived in a cave in Gebel Raha, a mountain near Saladin's Castle in Wadi Sudr. On the other hand, the luckless man may have found Umm el Gheith, goddess of the Muzeina Tribe who own the coast south of Nuweiba. Umm el Gheith came out during droughts and lured her victims to their fate with song.

Unfortunately, thanks to unusually heavy rains a few years ago, the path to the cave is no longer usable. It can only be entered from above by repelling from a higher cliff. Since I was without ropes on the two trips I made to the cave, I peered in with a strong camera lens from a cliff side ledge that was once part of the original path. There appear to be two entrances to more caves. Legend has it the caves borrow deep into the mountain and inside will be found treasure from the plundered victims of the ghouls. More likely, there will simply be a lot of bones. The victims had little treasure to plunder, only their bodies; but you never know. A few years ago someone found a suit of crusader armor in a cave along the southern coast!. Let me know if you find any treasure.

Now follow the route to the south of hilltop 533 until you reach the final rest stop, Camp 4 on an island of rocks not far from the coast. Essentially, you have made a large U. This is the last night of camping; so I suggest you ask the Bedouin guides to dance by a fire.

The place is perfect for it. The cliffs are so tall and sharp, they block out the night sky. The fire will make giant shadows against the canyon walls! Hopefully the Bedouins brought their own instruments, perhaps a rababa, precursor to the modern violin, or a sumsumiya, a harp remarkably like those found in Pharonic burial sites.

If you rise at sunup in the summer and ride the rest of the way, you should reach the coast by 9am; but not before ascending hilltop 450 after breakfast. Imagine looking down 1200 feet or more to the opening of a wadi that runs miles. On the map, just to the north of hill top 450 is a bend in the trail. Looking south, you will see Wadi Mahla running for a number of miles. It is truly worth it. You then again descend into Wadi Ferrier either at Checkpoint A or to the west if you choose, and return to Nuweiba.

If you receive permission to return to the Valley of Bleeding Rocks via the central plains, you may wish to go by camel, a trip of three to four days. In that case, instead of returning to Nuweiba, you could proceed west from Bir Biariyya and take the alternative route marked on the expedition map and follow the edge of hilltop 623 to Wadi Watir. If you use camels, walk them. If you go by vehicle, be sure you have a high axle! This can be a bone jarring and dangerous trail.

As an alternative, return to Nuweiba, pick up your cars and then drive through Wadi Watir. In either case, join the north central route at hilltop 634. From there, follow the trail marked on the map; but remember that you are in smuggler territory. Some rules of thumb I have learned for dealing with these people are be calm, don't ask what is their bags and don't take any pictures of their faces. They will generally leave you alone, perhaps even try to sell you things; but be very careful. They are often heavily armed.

This alternate route will take you past Ain Umm Ahmed and Bir Naba <sup>(3)</sup> where there is often water. Along the way, ask locals for directions to the tomb of Ali, brother of Abu Talib. His spirit is famous for ringing bells in the night. A good spot to stop is the police station at Gebel Dhalal (sometimes moved to a battered set of buildings at Zulecki) where gas might be found and food and water. This route, especially from Wadi Watir to Debit el Habir is usually ok so long as you travel on the hard surface wadis. Rest stops are noted on the map; but remember that winds will blow sand across the road. In addition, the Bedouins often build water traps that are like large traffic bumps. You will have to go slow the entire way and watch the land in front of you all of the time. In fact, because there are so many sand traps on the entire route, I recommend you take at least two vehicles. That way, one can pull the other out if it gets stuck.

Not only is this a rough terrain demanding close attention to water rationing, proper clothing etc, it is also a place of war. The Sinai has been fought over more times than any other desert. As a consequence, it owns some of the largest mine fields in the world. Explosive charges from two world wars and other conflicts move in often unmarked seas of living sand, ready to kill the unready. I have seen trucks and people destroyed by these things; so study your route in advance before crossing. Do all of that, and you will be backtravel safely at the Valley of Bleeding Rocks.

The great Catholic philosopher Hans Kung once tried to use a book to prove God exists. I have always felt one need only look as far as his nose to know God has to be about; because once you have reached nature in the raw as you will in the Southern Mountains of the Sinai, you have touched the face of creation. My recommendation is visit the Sinai before it becomes "discovered."

### ***Footnotes to Bleeding Rocks***

1. a wadi is a valley or dry river bed
2. A Gebel is a mountain peak, though sometimes an entire range is called a Gebel as well. The classical Arabic word for Mountain is Tur.
3. a bir is a well



## **Sinai Fishing Industry (c) 4/4/1988**

Source: Said Sala Bakhir, age about 25, asst Supervisor, MFO Laundry, North Camp, as well as fishermen from the village of Abu Sakal (fishing village) Father also a fisherman. date 4-4-88

1. Fishing boats 15-18 meters Price LE60-80,000 Prices varies with the engine(s). Motors USA/UK/Sweden.
2. Diesel?
3. Fishermen come from El Arish, Salmana, Birel Abd, ROMAN, Bardwhil and Zaraniq for the most part.
4. An owner of a boat will make about 700 to 1000LE a month.
5. Workers on a boat will make about 35-450LE a month.
6. Fishing only allowed in the sea and bardawhil.
7. Crews are about 3-4 people to a boat.
8. The village of Abu Sara has 55 boats.
9. Boats are manufactured in Abu Saqa by makers from Alexandria, Port Said and other places. Manufacturer takes about one month.
10. Crew 11-14 People.
11. Sea Sailing All day 3pm Leave El Arish return 6am
12. If moon at night, fish in the day. If no moon at night, fish at night.
13. Bardawhil Sailing: opens 15 April Closes 15 December. People usually leave on Saturday and return on Wednesday. Leave at 6am and return 8pm
14. Lots of fish sent to Italians. Also catch Lobster in the sea at night, not in the winter.
15. A tour needs a license from the Army. 5-6 people 200LE all day.
16. Tribes: Swarka: Labidat: Others.
17. No borrowing from the bank. "You must help yourself. No one helps you in Egypt."

## **Maps of mine in the Library of Congress)**

**Lost Inscription Collection:** These are located in the Library of Congress Map Library. See 91-684694 Maps or G8302.S5E63 svar.R6 Vault. 6 maps on ten sheets: ms., col.; 26x49 cm or smaller. Shows trails the author used during expeditions in the Sinai during the late 1980's in the study of Bedouin tribes. Relief of some maps shown by contours, hachures, and spot heights. Each sheet is signed in red ink by author. Consists of 10 extensively annotated base map sheets including one photocopy reproduced from a hand drawn map, four photocopies reproduced from printed maps, and four segments of colored printed maps. Annotations made in pen and ink, colored pencil, and colored felt-tip marker. Some sheets have typewritten notes or legend sheet pasted on. Accompanied by the author's letter to the Library of Congress dated July 17, 1991. 1 sheet; 28 cm.

### **Contents of Lost Inscription Collection:**

- **One:** Chart of Wadi Maghara Complex, showing Wadi Maghara and Wadi Sidri
  - **Two:** Detail on entry way to Wadi Maghara inscription complex.
  - **Three:** The trail to Wadi Maghara and the Valley of Inscriptions
  - **Four:** Wadi Gharandal Complex (Alegat Dirah)
  - **Five:** Road to Wadi Maghara Complex and Wadi Makkatab inscription region
- Six:** Four sheet color(ed) map of Tarrabin and Muzeina Dirahs showing the traditional trail of

## On Bedouins Wars, Honor and Diplomacy:

I was patently amused when I read DIA's unclassified report in 1985 which said that throughout history the Sinai Bedouins have never taken sides in military conflicts and are the most peace-loving people in the Middle East. (E-<sup>(1)</sup>) Equally, I was amused at Robert Stewart's work of 1856 The Tent and the Khan: A Journey to Sinai and Palestine when he said "most of these fellows are the greatest cowards on Earth." (e-<sup>(2)</sup>) These show poor scholarship and bias and are not true. Sinai Bedouins have frequently been used as spies for both sides in any number of conflicts.(E-<sup>(3)</sup>) They have also bravely fought in many wars, to include World War One and the desert war in Arabia and Syria. What I plan to do with this chapter is paint a summary of the total picture of these conflicts, large and small, beginning seven thousand years ago. This subject needs to be understood, badly. You see, while I don't think of the Bedouins as dangerous to westerners. They are quite the opposite; they could be deadly if handled wrong.

In ancient times the Bedouins used to raid the Pharonic mining caravans in the Sinai so successfully that the most powerful nation then on Earth paid them tribute. The first known battle with the Sinai nomads happened in 3100BC. Another was recorded in 2600BC and another between 1991 and 1786BC, all recorded victories by the Pharoos. If they felt it important enough to record victories, there must have been defeats prior to the victories. If it was important enough to build a major permanent force and a wall around Serabit el Khadim in the western Sinai near present day Abu Zaneima, the risk of attack must have been constant. (E-<sup>(4)</sup>) But the battles of course have not always been against external enemies. Often, the Bedouins fought themselves.

In 1673AD, the Ababada fought the Beni Wasi. (E-<sup>(5)</sup>) and in 1750 a caravan of 20,000 camels was plundered on the Pilgrim's route. In 1784 a caravan of coffee was robbed, so large that the price of coffee in Palestine dropped 50%. (E-<sup>(6)</sup>) And then there were the turbulent times of the 18th and 19th centuries when Bedouins bands fought each other for control over land and grazing area both in the Negev and the Sinai. The most famous of these struggles took place during the Napoleonic campaign of 1799 when a Bedouin army from the Tuara and Tieya nations of the Sinai invaded and conquered portions of the Negev! This led to a series of internecine conflicts which lasted nearly a century.

### ***The Invasion of Palestine 1799***

As Clinton Bailey noted in his work The Negev in the Nineteen Century, the causes of Bedouin wars can only be discussed by examining legends; and since these legends are only now beginning to be systematically written down, their veracity is suspect.(F<sup>(7)</sup>) However, as Winifred Blackman discovered with Upper Egypt Fellahin during the last century, even in fables lie truths -- truths about the motivations of a people if not specific events. Certainly Sinai-Negev war fables tell us something about what make Sinai Bedouins angry, and that has to be valuable not only for prospective tourists who might read this book, but also for peace keeping forces. The invasion of Palestine in 1799 and its descendant wars are good examples of this point. Each was fought over points of honor, the 1799 war over a stolen goat!

Like the Genesis stories, the legends regarding the start of the war vary. Nevertheless, they are consistent in that they describe a conflict begun over a point of honor. To me, the most interesting legend began with a band of women of the Palestinian Bedouin tribe of Ramadin just north of Beersheba who took their flock to market in Ramla, about twenty kilometers south of Jaffa, adjacent to present day Tel Aviv. They had to pass through the dirah of the Wuhaydat, then the primary tribe in the Negev. Unfortunately, for the women, the Chief of the host tribe, one Al-Wuhaydi, took an animal (probably a goat) in order to feed his guests. This sort of Adaya (aggression) is legal under Orfi law so long as the thief repays the herdsman within local time guidelines. By contrast, demanding immediate payment is considered an insult to the thief, who after all is merely trying to

abide by the laws of hospitality with regard to hosting guests. The problem was that the women did demand immediate payment. In anger, Al-Wuhaydi had his "slave deal roughly with them" but Unfortunately for him some of his guests were Ramadan who then felt compelled to leave their host's tent. In fact, they were so angry legend has it they or others of their tribe escalated matters later by killing Al-Wuhaydi!

Not to be outdone, rather than seek mediation, the Wuhaydat set off to kill a few Ramadan. The whole thing might have ended there with a decisive Wuhaydat victory except for two factors: the establishment of an alliance with the Sinai Bedouins and the presence of Napoleon in Egypt. The first step was the alliance. Abu Shar'ra of the Rasmadin was related by marriage to a noble of a minor tribe of the Sinai Tiyah, one Salim ibn Atiyya. Not only did Atiyya take the bait; but he managed to convince all of the Tiyah and Tarrabin confederations to invade the Dirah of the Wuhaydat in return for the promise of land, a traditional reason for war by any man's measure.

Up to this point the dirahs of the Tiyah and Tarrabin were only in Egypt and the Wuhaydat was a powerful tribe. Perhaps more than seeking revenge for the disgrace of the women, my suspicion is that these folks were willing to fight because (a) the Negev has more water and crop land than the Sinai; and (b) they thought they could win, always a point uppermost in any Bedouin mind. The reason was simple. Napoleon was racing across the Sinai to Capture Palestine as part of a plan to make his way to India. He did that by defeating the ancient enemy of the Tarrabin, the Egyptians. (F-<sup>(8)</sup>) The Turks were folding. A vacuum was opening for someone willing to take the opportunity. Time for an alliance.

I don't know of course if all these thoughts were running through Atiyya's mind; however, they surely must have. The war was risky, the allies poor when compared to the Wuhaydat. Certainly Atiyya was aware of the advantages of a western alliance; and just as clearly was the knowledge that neither the Turks nor the Egyptians had any love for Sinai Arabs. Indeed, the Mamelukes tried to exterminate mainland Tarrabin during Ali Bey's reign (1750-1779). One hundred years later as I prowled the wadis and mountain of the Tarrabin, I could still feel the hate. Well, the plan worked. The allied army welcomed with open arms to the point that Napoleon said the Tarrabin are "well-disposed and can be trusted."(E-<sup>(9)</sup>) And even after Napoleon's forces were defeated the Turks could not expel the new Bedouins, their invasion being so complete.

### ***The War of Abu Sirhan 1807(?) 1813-1816***

What do Bedouin clans do after they capture lands? In the 1799 case, they fought each other in order to better their political position. Again, we are faced with oral traditions that flow down from the descendants of each side, plus the accounts of passing travelers. This is a summary of the first internecine conflict to arise out of the invasion.

First, the lay of the land. The hapless Wuhaydat have not only been defeated, they have been expelled and their former subject tribes the Bani Ugbah, Zullam, Galazin and Billi are now subjects of the victorious Attiya who has taken for his Atawnah section of the Tiyah the best of the best, land east of Gaza. The Allamet, Igal, umri, Shallaliyyin and Badinat sections spread from the new Atawnah dirah south with the former Wuhaydat tribes interspersed along the way. The confederation's southern flank however was enemy territory, dirahs of the Jubarat and the Suwarka. These folks had been defeated allies of the Wuhaydat; however, in 1801 with resurgent Turkish assistance gained their dirah back at the expense of the Tarrabin and the Hukuk and Gudayrat branches of the Tiyah. Also, in 1801, the Tarrabin occupied the Armilat dirah near Khan Yunis, pushing many of that tribe into present day Rafah, Sheik Zuweid in Sinai.(F-<sup>(10)</sup>)

We are not sure when; however, probably between 1807 and 1813 the hukuk and Gudayrat of the Tiyah and some Tarrabin decided to fight their own war by attacking the Sawarka, Jubarat and "those sections of the Tiyah led by Salim al-Atawna." According to one legend, they succeeded at a pivotal battle led by the Huzayl (a section of the Hukuk) at Gawz al-Izz, "the Hillock of Glory" near Khan Yunis. The victorious army then crossed the Wadi Sharia and crushed the Allamat Tiyah. And following on their footsteps were the Sinai Azazma who successfully warred on yet another tribe, the Zullam. The Armilat dirah was then occupied by the Huzayl and that of the Suwarka and Jubarat by the Gudayrat. the Azazma took the Dirah formerly occupied by the Gudayrat.(F-<sup>(11)</sup>) The Tarrabin also made territorial gains.

### ***The Expulsion of the Beni Attiya -- Circa 1830***

Reading the legends of the Bedouin wars is a little like reading the exploits of Imperial Rome; but in a microcosm. Family against family constantly moving for better position. Typical of this was the conflict which erupted around 1830 between the Huzayl section of the Hukuk Tiyah and Salim ibn Atiyya's Atawna. The central issue revolved around pride to certain extent. Before 1799 the Huzayl had been the principal section of the Tiyah. But they lost out that year when the Atawna not only brought Iyal Umri, Badinat, Allamat and Shallaliyyin under their war bonnet; but then much more importantly won the war. Adding insult to injury, the Atawna were newcomers to the Tiyah. Once again, honor requires that blood be spilled. The War of Abu Sultan should then be seen not simply as a means to gain new ground; but also as a political maneuver in a game of chess designed to place the Huzayl at the head of the Tiyah.

The second step in reestablishing prestige took place at Al-Madhbaha, place of the Slaughter, where according to a guide working for E.H. Palmer 800 men and 150 horses

died! The incident was caused when the Beni-Attiyah from Ababa (F-<sup>(12)</sup>) crossed into the Negev for water. Salman al Huzayl, then Sheik of the Huzayl demanded tribute on behalf of the Negev tribes. This was refused and the intruders began cultivating the Beersheba plain. Salman then formed an army of Tiyaha, Tarabin, Hanajra and villagers in a rare alliance with the Hadawi(F-<sup>(13)</sup>); but before attacking, he sent a poem to the Beni Attiya inviting them in rather diplomatic terms to fill their water bags and leave lest there be war. The Beni Attiya ignored the "diplomatic note" and so war broke out. Four main battles were fought, the last being at Madhbaha when the invaders finally gave up their claim and agreed to a treaty establishing their Dirah's boundary. In addition, though they were allowed to come into the Negev, it would only be for the purpose of buying grain for which they would pay tribute to the Huzayl.

### ***Opposition to the Egyptians! 1834: The Rebellion Against Ibrihim Pasha***

Ironically, the fall of the Atawna came not directly from the Huzayl, but rather from the west, an invasion of Palestine by Ibrihim Pasha of Egypt in 1831 with the aid of Egyptian Bedouins, the Hinadi. But it was of course also due to the Huzayl. The Atawna had come to terms with the Turks, who basically left them and their allies alone. On the other hand, the Huzayl and their growing alliance of tribes, especially the Tarrabin, were in conflict with the Turks. Therefore, when Ibrihim Pasha invaded, he faced a divided enemy.

According to an ancestor of Salim ibn Salim al-Atawna, the Bedouins initially wanted to fight Ibrihim when he moved in. That was logical. After all, the Egyptians were traditional enemies. But Sheik Salim was also afraid of the Egyptian guns and so made an initial try at traditional diplomacy. He offered gifts in return for peace. Unfortunately, an old man at the council meeting which decided the matter challenged Salim saying "by God! one thousand smokers of the long, stone pipe are enough to beat Ibrihim Pasha."(E-<sup>(14)</sup>) So as not to appear a coward, caution was thrown to the wind and war declared.

The decisive battle took place in Wadi Ghazza when a tight formation of cavalry attacked the Pasha's forces. Unfortunately, the first shot hit Sheik Salem; but he continued to fight bravely until a second bullet killed him. With that, the Bedouins broke off the engagement and the Atawna fled east of Beersheba.

How the Atawna were defeated is actually in question. Egyptian and Austrian sources indicate that the defeat may have come about more as a result of a series of conflicts resulting from a country-wide rebellion in 1834. In any event, regardless of how it happened, the Atawna were crushed, as were the Jubarat whose lands were given to Hinadi Bedouin mercenaries from Egypt. There would be little further violence until about 1840 when the Egyptians left Palestine.

### ***The War of Awda and Amir: 1842-1853 1855-1864***

Like the other "wars," this also had its origins in honor. Awda, second son of Salem ibn Attiya, became paramount chief of the Atawna led Tiyaha when his elder brother was

killed. His younger brother was Amir. The trouble started supposedly when Amir's wife insulted one of Shaykh Awda friends, one Musa Abu Salam abu Shunnar of the Allamat Tiyah. The lady was assaulted for this indiscretion of a daughter of Shunnar. Amir demanded vengeance but Sheikh Awda refused. That's when the intrigue started. Out of spite, Amir joined our old friend Salman Ali Azzam al-Huzayl!

The air in the Negev was full of tension then. the Huzayl still wanted to run the Tiyah but Awda was not prepared to give anything up. Indeed, Awda had an imperial attitude towards his "subjects." He was arrogant and he demanded tribute from the peasants and merchants of the Northern Sinai. Adding to all of that, the two rivals had just concluded an uneasy agreement to avoid war and a blood feud as a result of Salman Huzayl wounding Yunis, son of Awda. So the brotherly split could not come at a better time. It split the Atawna; and thanks to Awda's general arrogance also split the Tiyah, placing the Huzayl, Gudayrat, Tarrabin, Azazma and southern Hebron villagers to the side of Amir. Adwa was left with few allies.

For eleven years the war of the brothers raged on with battles at Um Dabkal, Barshayn, Jusayr, Zayta, always with the Amir alliance winning. But then fleeing the tyranny of the Egyptians, the Hinadi Bedouins of Egypt fled to the Negev and joined Awda. This ended the first stage of the war because after Amir killed a Hinadi, he was also struck down by the victim's brother, Karim al-Tihawiyya. Rather than continue the war, Amir's son Sulayman arbitrated a reconciliation. The date is assumed to be about 1853

But the intrigue continued, peace notwithstanding and within a year war returned, initiated in part by the Atawna having arranged for Salman al Huzayl to be arrested by the Tarrabin on a variety of rape and extortion charges, crimes for which he was eventually hung in Sidon. The following year war broke out again. After all, the Huzayl didn't go to war over Amir's honor. They fought to destroy the Atawna and after Salman's death had even more reason to do so. With that in mind, they pressed on with the Hanajra, Azazma and Heiwat. This second phase began about 1855 would continue until about 1864 with the Tarrabin-Huzayl forces continuing a slow, but steady and victorious advance. Nothing seemed to work for the Atawna who then tried an alliance with the Sinai Suwarka on the pretext that their common enemy would be the Tarrabin. But before the Suwarka and the Sinai Armilat (Rumaylat) could assist, they were cut off by the Tarrabin decisively at a battle called al-Maksar (the breaking place). The Tarrabin then added another and final feather to their war bonnet by killing Sulayman Amir al Atawna, putting an end to the war. But the big shock then comes!

The Tarrabin had saved the day by cutting off the Suwarka and Armilat, and they had also killed the enemy chieftain. As a consequence, they asked Salman's successor Sheikh Fuhayd al Huzayl to divide up the conquered lands north of Wadi Sharia, including the Atawna lands east of Gaza originally conquered by Salim ibn Atiyya in 1799. Fuhayd refused. He had fought for glory and honor, not land and besides, his enemy had been of the Tiyah confederation of tribes -- his own in other words. The Tarrabin are of the Tuara confederation, so he told his former friends to depart to Wadi Shallala and won. That decision redressed the political balance and put the Huzayl back on top.

But there would be one more stage to the war. In January, 1855 the Tiyah and Tarrabin would fight each other near Bethlehem while assisting various peasants and Bedouin in a conflict that would last until about 1864 when, as recorded by Austrian Archduke Ludwig Salvator, the Al-Arish Suwarka fought the Gaza Tarrabin. We don't know who won.

There were other conflicts as well, which I plan to discuss.

The most famous of the major conflicts was the War of 1813-1816, known as the War of Abu Sirhan and the Wars of the Zari fought between 1875-1879 and 1882-1887. Also, in the 1860's the Tiyaha Bedouins used to go on military ventures at least once a year using an army of at least a thousand men. They also campaigned against the Eneizeh who lived about twenty days away. (E-<sup>(15)</sup>)

As a diplomat, one of the interesting things I discovered about the Bedouins of this period was that they understood the use of the diplomatic note. At one point, a tribe was about to be attacked by another. In order to prevent the attack, they sent a poem to the invading tribe, trying to persuade them from the attack.

### **The Diplomatic Note**

O Rider on a mount, pure for untold generations,  
Brownish white as bred by the Shararat Dab'in  
Tighten the girth on his wide body, ready provisions  
And let him fly as if he'd stepped on hot embers  
Ridden by a lad used to mirage-strewn spaces;  
`Arar, if directed, will complete every mission.  
Spur him on toward Hammad, whom we highly commend,  
Whom you'll find sitting taut as a long-winged hawk  
In a long tent with spacious sections  
By coffee-pots glistening from the fire's hot glow  
To Abu Muhammad, the foe of yellow fanged fighters  
extend my greetings, panther and do not delay.  
Say: Nassar Abu Uwayh is a pouncing eagle



Fearing only that in meeting places they say he failed  
And the sons of Abu Sittah fight like the Zaghabah  
Men of valor whenever cavalries clash.  
And four sons of Abu Mughaysib fight like wolves  
Dashing toward the clash like young camels.  
And Humud al Wuhaydi, chief of red clad Bedouins  
On horseback, like a suckling she camel in search of grass.  
And we Tiyaha, ever like a sword gripped at the hilt  
Provide profit to the camel-merchant although we are few.  
Our lands are lands of plenty whose harvests we glean  
And those sent forth to scout them out are quickly met  
With lads firing weapons unrestrained  
Forming ranks around Khuwaylfah two thousand strong.  
By the life of he who created rain in the clouds  
We'll not concede our land while we sit squarely on a mount. (E-<sup>(16)</sup>)

The invaders were not impressed. But before they attacked, they sent the following response.

### **The Response**

O'Rider upon a scrawny mount with neck drooping  
And belly flesh twisted from so many trips  
Convey my regards to Id and Awdah  
And these words to the people whom we call Gaysiyah:  
Water your herds in Wadi Hasi and pasture them in the Hebron hills  
But at Wadi Shariah you have nothing to find !

We Tarabin are like a ring in the nose of a rutting camel:

Famous among the bedouins as the Zaghahah

Ask the daughters of Burayr what happened at the threshing floor

when you fled on horseback all the way to Masmiyah

And surely you couldn't forget the Hanajrah

Their lance-blades as if dipped in viper's poison

We will grant you no peace, no peace will you see

Until the wolf recites rhymes at our night-time dances

Or an ostrich bitch suckles a jackal (E-<sup>(17)</sup>)

At the beginning of the 18th century the Towara and MAaaza of Egypt fought each other in attacks of guerrilla war. The Tiyaha used to cross the canal as well and steal camels from the Ababda. (E-<sup>(18)</sup>)

The Terrabin fought a war under Sheikh Abu Jahama by raiding Egypt and plundering the pilgrim caravans on the Qift-Quseir road. The Ma'aza resented this, captured the Terrabin Sheik and turned him over to the Turkish Pasha who imprisoned for a year until he delivered up part of the booty. (E-<sup>(19)</sup>)

The Tarrabin were luckier forty-one years later when in 1856 they fought the battle of El-Maksar with the Sawarka, driving their enemy into the fort of El-Arish. (E-<sup>(20)</sup>)

In 1875 a British survey party under Lt. Conder was attacked near Gaza by twenty Tiyaha cavalry "all well mounted and armed with swords, guns, and pistols, and with great lances of cane with long iron heads and tufts of ostrich feathers." The British were left alone when they found no Tarabin, with whom the Tiyaha were at war. The tribe has also been described as Azzazma, sometimes thought of as a division of the Tarrabin. (E-<sup>(21)</sup>)

Another typical feud took place in 1905-1906. The Heiwat was at war with the Maaza, Sidin and Hajala bedu from the Turkish Negev. The struggle began in January, 1905 when for reasons unknown to me five members of the Saidin, Maaza and other tribes from the Turkish side killed a Heiwat noble in Wadi Ghabia, and wounded others. In true blood vengeance fashion (see chapter on law) the noble's brother and cousin then proceeded into Saidin territory and killed one of that tribe's men. The head Sheik of the Saidin then declared war on the Heiwat.

In order to settle things diplomatically, the head of the Heiwat, rather than immediately proceeding into a war instead attempted arbitration through the Tarrabin; however, the

Saidin didn't agree. About this time the British were brought into the picture after the incident was reported to them by the Heiwat Sheik. The brother who sought revenge was arrested. At the same time he wrote to Arab leaders as well, seeking Arab arbitration. That attempt failed as well and the war continued into the period of the boundary commission. AS a result of this and the fact that the Heiwat agreed not to take action, on advise of the British, London was advised to maintain camel police posts at Ma Yein and Kuntilla. As of 1988, there is still a police force at each of those posts, now of course Egyptian. (E-<sup>(22)</sup>)

After the abortive Turkish attack at the Suez Canal in 1916 in world War One the Turks created a Bedouin irregular force in the Sinai to raid the Canal and capture the Sinai port of Tor, Quarantine Station of Egypt. Bedouin forces supported by Turkish troops did manage to damage the Mining machinery and plant at **Abu Zeneima** and make an abortive attack on Tor; however, the port was defended by the famous **Ghurkas**. The Arabs lost with heavy casualties. Except to act as spies for both sides, the Sinai Bedouin took no further part in the War. Some Bedouins also fought with the British.

In 1915 the first people in the Sinai to join with Turkey were Bedouin policemen from A Tor of the Tiyaha tribe. On January 1, right after pay day, they severed the telegraph to Suez City. This was followed by a conference of war at Wadi Feiran. Attending was a Turkish Officer, Shiekh Nassir of the Garasha, Sheikh Khidr of Muzeina, Sheikh Suleiman Ghoneim of Awarma, Hajj Hamden Abu Zeit, Judge of the Garasha.

The Turks told the Bedouins they must join them in the war against the British or the Turks would war against the bedu. The bedu said they would think about it. Khidr returned to Tor and linked up with Egyptian forces. Nasr stayed with the Turks. Ghoneim a driller from the oil fields called Gondos burned and looted Abu Zaneima.

At the end of January, 1915 30 Turks and 100 Bedouins attacked the outskirts of Tor. Right after the Turkish advance on the Suez Canal was repelled on 2 February Colonel Parker in HMS Minerva landed north of Gebel Hamman Saida Musa with 500 of the 10th Gurkas. Zeidan (Mudakhil's eldest son) led them to attack the Turkish Camp to the North while Egyptians attacked from the south. The Turks were taken by surprise at dawn. 80 were killed, 80 taken prisoner. The Bedu retreated, some with Ghoneim to Abu Zaneima. Husein of Awarma died, and others as well.

A Sawarka survived by covering himself with entrails of a slain brother. Hajj Hamden of the Garasha remained loyal to the Turks for some time. Since NAsir did nothing, Hamden became Sheik of the tribe. Was still sheik in '35. Murray 144-146.

Today, every Bedouin male is subject to Egyptian military service once he reaches the age of 18. Bedouins are found in every branch of the Egyptian army. I even know of a Bedouin fighter pilot. (E-<sup>(23)</sup>) Thus, even today, they are learning the science of war, all the more important for visitors to the peninsula. And one should never assume the Bedouin are unarmed. They are masters at hiding weapons and frequently have hidden

stores of military weapons and mines found in the desert during the various Arab-Israeli Wars. Thus, they not only have the training, but the means to fight.

In 1921 the Hiweat attacked the Hawaeitat from Transjordan. (E-<sup>(24)</sup>)

June 1933, rebel elements of the Haweiat and the Billi went to Arabia and fought Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. (E-<sup>(25)</sup>)

An incident in El Arish is a good example of what can happen if the power of the Bedouin is ignored. El Arish, though the biggest town in the Sinai, is essentially run by a Mafia of Seven families. One day in 1987 one of the families decided to take some beach front property from a local Bedouin tribe. As I understand it the Bedouins didn't hold recognized title to the land, but had been living on it for generations. When they refused to give up, the townsfolk arrived in the night to steal it with small arms and rifles. The Bedouins responded with AK-47 fire and hand grenades! (E-<sup>(26)</sup>) What does this teach us about our treatment of Bedouins? If angered enough, they not only could attack any target in the Sinai; but they also have the will to do it.

In WWI most Bedouin males wore weapons, rifles, swords, etc. Considered very deadly and vicious. NZ troops were sometimes killed by them, and this was avenged. (E-<sup>(27)</sup>)

### ***Footnotes to War Chapter***

1. McGowan, pg. 16
2. The Tent and the Khan, pg. 8.
3. The New Zealanders noted for example their Bedouins could be used by themselves and were also used by the Turks. Mounted Riflemen
4. **Sinai Journeys**, pg 223.
5. Murray, 140
6. **The Sinai Journey's**, pg. 120
7. The best scholarship in this area has always been Occupation based: Description de 'Egypte: Etat Moderne in the French period, Flinders-Petrie, Murray, Lawrence, Jarvis, Parker, Palmer and Kennett during the British period and Bailey and Har-El during the Israeli period.
8. See Chapter on Tarrabin History
9. Yesterday and Today, pg. 131; Negev in the 19th Century, pg. 45.

10. The Armilat still speak of this push by the Tarrabin, whom they hate. I have also detected a great deal of animosity in Moses Valley on the part of the Gudayrat towards the Suawarka..

11. Today the Azzazma face a greater deal of discrimination because of their willingness to serve in Israel's security forces.

12. Section of the Syro-African rift separating Negev from the Transjordan.

13. City folk

14. Negev in the 19th Century, pg. 59

15. **Sinai Journeys**, pg. 120

16. Clinton Bailey,

17. Clinton Bailey (for a book which contains good work by Bailey on Bedouin poetry, see <http://pages.prodigy.com/SALUQI/saluqi.htm>)

18. Murray 138

19. Sons of Ishmael, pg. 254

20. Sons of Ishmael, pg. 254

21. Sons of Ishmael. pg. 255-256, Tent in Palestine, ii, London 1879, pg. 171; Negev in the Nineteenth Century: Reconstructing History from Bedouin Oral Traditions, pg. 35.

22. Owen to Cromer, June 14, 1906, pg. 335; Patrols by author in the dirah 1986-1988.

23. Interview with Abdel Meguid Ibrahim 5/25/87

24. Murray 135

25. Murray 133

26. Interview with Mike Ryan, force Area Specialist for the MFO, April, 1987.

27. Mounted Riflemen, pg. 64

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## Important Social Customs

### ***Generosity***

As one might expect in a harsh environment, generosity is part of the way of life, and is dictated by Islamic law.

The Zakat is an annual distribution of 2 1/2 % of one's wealth to the poor. It is one of the five basic tenets of Islam. Ramadan is a time of fasting, intended to bring one closer to the poor, who are forced by poverty to fast all year. In fact, during Ramadan, people are expected to give extra to the poor. The whole concept of giving to the poor in fact predates Islam. <sup>(1)</sup> It was an ancient Bedouin custom long before Mohammed came on the scene; but because Zakat was an administrative measure imposed on the Bedouin, they resisted it, even while taking care of their poor.

In the Koran (16:71), it is written "Allah hath favored some of you above others in provision." Unequal distribution is a manifestation of God's will; however, this is also interpreted as meaning the rich must help the poor. Miserliness is decried.

### ***Hospitality***

Even if a legitimate victim of blood revenge, a host is obligated to provide the best available food and bed to people (even strangers) asking for a place to stay. Called the Salt Bond, Tradition holds that this provision lasts until the third morning, when the guest is supposed to tell the host what his plans are, and where he is from (from what well he drinks). Until then, the guest is not obligated to say anything about his problems and background. An old Arab couplet. 'O guest of ours, though you have come, though you have visited us and have honored our dwelling, we verily are the real guests and you are the lord of the house. A variation of this rule, a food covenant, says that an individual is safe so long as the food in his stomach is the same as in the stomach of his host.

### ***Coffee/Tea Ceremonies:***

Only on two instances have I ever been offered coffee in the Sinai. Always tea. I was told this was because coffee is for the house, tea for the desert. (E-<sup>(3)</sup>) Having said that, you should be aware that coffee sharing has developed as a ceremony for sharing news, or receiving guests, especially guests needing help. <sup>(4)</sup> When a fellow with news arrives, coffee beans are fried dry in a small pan and then ground in a mortar. the sound of the pestle in the mortar is distinctive and is a signal to everyone within hearing range that news is about to be shared. <sup>(5)</sup> Once ready, the ground beans are poured into a coffee pot already having ground cardiman in it. Then boiling hot water is poured over the beans

and allowed to boil to a foam several times before serving. The cups are always served from the right side of the host.

The male's only version is only one form of coffee/tea. I have been served by men and women and eaten with both. For example, a different version of tea offering took place during May, 1987. Sayidda, a teenage Adegat tribeswoman led a team of mine and I up Serabit el Khadim. Afterwards, we went to her home and she made tea for us. The wife of the house boiled the water, but Sayidda put ground tea leaves into the water and actually made the tea, which was quite excellent, mint spiced and very sweet. The tea was served to me first on a steel tray in glasses by placing the tray in front of me. I then passed glasses to the rest, drinking last. She then engaged us in conversation while showing us things she wished to sell. After the conversation, we dickered on the price.

The host should not receive news alone, hence the pestle noise custom. News needs to be shared. Even an enemy can respond to the call without fear of harm.

Individually representing (question, fun and sword) three porcelain cups of coffee are served to each guest, all bitter and without sugar, to represent the harshness of the desert. Don't throw the dregs into the fire. The Bedouin believe demons will be released. You can however, swallow the dregs. They make an excellent, gentle laxative. Coffee is supposed to served in porcelain; but sometimes the Sawarka tribe near El Arish serves it in glass. Others do as well<sup>(6)</sup> According to the Bedouin museum in Beersheba, Coffee is never served in a glass. To request such is an insult; <sup>(7)</sup> but I think the truth is really that sometimes the Bedouin just doesn't have porcelain. Avi Navon the Director is talking in classical form.

- Coffee sharing is a time for singing, as well as story telling. The Bedouin love to tell legends.
- Once the coffee is finished, tea with sugar will be served in glasses. The tea represents hope for the future.
- Unless an emergency, help should not be requested until after the third cup of coffee.
- Coffee sharing is a male activity; however, barren women, or women past the age when they can give birth, are invited and often make the coffee. In fact, old women, no longer considered sex objects, are venerated. They may talk to any man they choose, even strangers. They are often fortune tellers, healers and advisers.

### ***Background Data***

**The Law of Dakhila:** This is the law of supplication. If you are being pursued for an offense, you can rush into a tent or home and beg Dakhila. The owner of the tent is then bound to grant sanctuary to you, feed you and cloth you and then see you safely to a place where you will feel safe.

The Wajh Concept: This is the concept of traveling under the protection of another.

Protection of an Enemy who seeks protection If one surrenders in battle, he is entitled to good treatment; however, don't ask for quarter when captured. It may or not be granted.

Even in extreme form, poverty does not excuse a man from three day hospitality rules. He is judged largely on how he treats his guests. As a consequence, refusal to accept hospitality is considered an insult.

### **See Coffee/Tea Traditions**

Fellow travelers refuqa are supposed to look after one another. Murray relates a famous incident in Alegat history regarding this concept. There is a spot on the Suez-Tor road called Mahatt el-Mezraq or the **javelin-cast**. At one time four people were traveling together, an old man and a girl under escort of two others. The escorts decided to rob their guests; but were killed by the old man.

These laws of protection are real. People can expect a large measure of hospitality from the Bedouin; however, they have also been used as measures of extortion. The brotherhood of food was offered to Christians in Tor at one point for example if they paid for it. Ships traveling to the Hejaza avoided piracy by paying protection money and having a member of the brotherhood tribe on board with them. <sup>(8)</sup>

A further example shows how non-homogeneous the tribes of the Sinai really are. In theory, each tribe descends from a common ancestor; but the reality is rather different. There is a great deal of intermarriage between friendly tribes, for example. I have seen this in several instances; but the men usually say they descend from their father's ancestor, unless the women comes from a more powerful tribe. For example, I know a direct descendant of Sheik Zuweid. The link is maternal through tribal intermarriage. My friend says he comes from Zuweid, rather than his tribe.

People who are thrown out of their tribe for various crimes, or are fleeing from some sort of persecution, often go to other tribes and beg the Sheik for protection as a refugee or **tanib**, a refugee who can gotten hold of the tent peg. The new Sheik then works out an arrangement with the other tribe and the refugees become tenants who eventually are absorbed into the tribe, their children claiming the ancestor of the new tribe, not the old tribe, though they may have no blood link. <sup>(9)</sup>

A typical home is divided up into two rooms, a family room and a male room. When a guest stays over, he is expected to stay in the male room with the host and his wives.

- When entering a home, come in from the male side, not the family side. Never approach from the rear. Tents are organized North to south, with the opening to the east. Seeing the sunrise brings good luck.
- Winter tents are made of black, oily wool, which compresses with moisture. Summer tents are of burlap. By the way, I have discovered that while the family



area is heated, the guest area may not be. I caught a cold the other day because of that. Dress warmly. You can always peel clothes off. Winter tents are left hanging from trees in the summer.<sup>(10)</sup>

- Do not approach with a donkey. Legend has it God created the Donkey out of earth, so Donkeys are a lower form of life. Following from this, since Donkey's defecate on the soil, farmers are also considered to be a lower form of life, though all Bedouins do engage in some light agriculture.
- A person should not impose himself on others unless he truly needs help
- When served, the guest will receive the best food, which is passed to him before it goes to members of the family.
- Women are usually relegated to labor involving the earth, my understanding being that they are considered to be a lower form of life than the male; rather than laziness on the part of the males. The wives and daughters do sewing, grinding of grain, farming and shepherding, haul wood and water from wells, make carpets, butter and cheese.

With regard to the cheese, It has a lot of salt in it and no water. Will keep for six years in the desert. When you want to eat it, smash and add water.

### **Footnotes on Customs**

*1. Because of the harshness of the desert and its unbeatable character, the Bedouin has adapted an attitude of passive resistance in life; but he will always resist outside authority. Perhaps this is why though the bedouin takes care of their poor, they resisted Zakat. It was imposed from outside authority.*

*2. Confirmed by Meguid 6/8/87*

*3. Freij of the Tarrabin 9/12/87*

*4. Confirmed by interview with Abdel Megeid Ibrahim, 5/25/87 of Abu Taweila. In addition, he noted that often the men in the tribe gather three times a day for coffee, breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

*A different version of tea offering took place during May, 1987. Sayidda, a teenage Alegat tribeswoman led a team of mine and I up Serabit el Khadim in May, 1987. Afterwards, we went to a home (perhaps her own -- this is not clear), and she made tea for us. The wife of the house boiled the water, but Sayidda put ground tea leaves into the ater and actually made the tea, which was excellent, very sweet tea. The tea was served to me first on a steel tray in glasses by placing the tray in front of me. I then passed glasses to the rest, drinking last. She then engaged us in conversation while showing us things she wished to sell. After the conversation we dickered on the price.*

*5. Confirmed by interview with Abdel Megeid Ibrahim, 5/25/87. In addition, he noted that often the men in the tribe gather three times a day for coffee, breakfast, lunch and dinner*

*6. Interview with Dutch Doctor, May, 1987 who was served coffee in glass.*

*7. Interview with Avi Navon, Director of the Bedouin Museum, January, 1987.*

*8. Murray, 38-39*

*9. Murray 41*

*10. I saw this in Magara when I examined the tents of the Garasha tribe. 5/31/87.  
Concept was confirmed by interview with Rabeeh of the Garasha tribe same day.*

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## Tribe Chapter: The Alegat

### *The Alegat*



Author with Son of Sheik Barakat. The son is now the Sheik

Position yourself on a gravel mining road cut through solid white stone. The trail is rough enough that even your seat belts don't stop you from bouncing into the car ceiling. You have just left the pristine azure coast of the Gulf of Suez with its majestic cliffs and beautiful beaches, which is the entry way into the tribal lands of the Alegat. For the last ten minutes you have driven through a cloud of white dust in a narrow canyon. The dust covers your car like talcum powder, forcing you to use your wipers. Then, like the suddenness which comes with walking out of a dark cave, spread in front of you is a vast valley, bright enough to hurt the eyes. This is the central core of the Alegat dirah (territory) as well as the valley of bleeding rocks where once a brave young camel herder stood his ground before an angry army and won.

I remember my first visit to the valley. We stepped out of our car at the opening and marveled at the view below while we drank water. We had come from El Arish on the NE corner of the Sinai, exploring various archeological sites along the Via Maris, the ancient invasion route that stretches from Palestine to Kantara. The evening before a storm had battled the north coast of the Akharsa Bedouin range at the site of an Egyptian seaport from antiquity called Pelusium. Our tires and fenders were still caked from mud we had picked up on the salt encrusted beach where we had met some of the tribe in search of old coins and glass. (See chapter on Akharsa) The cliff dust settled on the cars at the entrance making them look like snow mobiles.

We walked away from the cars and gazed closely at the valley before us. The sky that day was naval blue with large, thick white clouds, a truly unusual commodity. Normally, the sky was dry cobalt and the only clouds we usually saw were in our dreams; but the coast storm had worked its way down through the mountains, missed the cut and left a blessing in the valley. The peaks north of Suez dripped fog like heavy, gray icing, especially at the famous invasion pass of Mitla. But the primal colored cliffs of the valley of the Alegat looked scrubbed, like a girl on her first date.

After drinking, we cleaned the dust off of our windows and then quickly jumped back into our car and drove on. We had arrived. Depending on how you count them, there are

now about 34 major tribes in the Sinai and numerous sub-tribes. This is the core of land of the Alegat, one of the major tribes I would come to concentrate on over the coming couple of years as I wandered the desert in search of what the Sinai Bedouin are all about.

The Alegat is an especially good tribe with which to begin the discussions of tribes, especially because of their role in the history of the Peninsula since the spread of Islam. But, they are also interesting because of the dramatic land they chose to live in, a place once full of game and still full of legends. In Arabic the range in which a Bedouin wanders is called a **dirah**, sometimes Ba'dai though that word connotes desert and many Bedouins don't wander or even live in a true desert.

Like the Tarrabin of the Palestine border and other large tribes, the Alegat have several dirah. Many explorers have tried to define these ranges over the years; but as we shall see it is a very difficult task, subject to much interpretation. This is especially true since a border connotes limit and Bedouins don't believe in limits. As a consequence, none are well defined and most overlap others at some point. As for the Sinai Alegat bands, the geographer **Har-El of Tel Aviv University** described this **dirah** as being in the vicinity of Wadi Nasb near the inscription rich temple of Serabit el Khadim, Abu-Zaneima<sup>(1)</sup>, (a famous sea port where uranium was recently discovered), and Wadi Ramla which is one of the places the Saint Nebi Salah is supposed to be buried.(F-<sup>(2)</sup>) An unclassified DIA report from the early 1980's somewhat imprecisely said their dirah was from Ramla to Wadi Gharandal (F-<sup>(3)</sup>)(to the north of Abu Zaneima) as well as in Egypt and Sudan.(E-<sup>(4)</sup>) While relating a blood vengeance incident around 1913 involving the Garasha, Aleqat, Muzeina and Faranja, the great explorer Murray (who inspired this book) indicated that the Naqb Pass (now a road to Israel) was then on the border between the Aleqat and Muzeina (E-<sup>(5)</sup>) He also felt many lived in A-Tor and at Hammam Faroun. (E-<sup>(6)</sup>)

During my explorations, I found many Alegat as far west as the town of Zagazig in Egypt, traditional site of the start of the exodus. The tribal members I know best say the primary Dirah of the tribe is from Ras Sidri at the port of Abu Rudeis (on the border of the Garasha) (F-<sup>(7)</sup>) to Sharm el Sheik on the Gulf of Suez where today live the Muzeina. However, I have also seen an urbanized branch in Suez City at the source of the Gulf, tented gatherings in Wadi Gharandal (fabled Elim?) which is north of both Abu Rudeis and Abu Zaneima, and connected with the murder in 1882 of Professor Palmer, an English spy. Many live in Wadi Ramleh where a hundred years ago wandered wolves and herds of Gazelle. (E-<sup>(8)</sup>) I have also found them as far east of Gebel Foqa, a "petrified forest" under the El Tih Escarpment. This mass of strange black crystalline structures resembling inverted stalactites (except they are in the open) is a staging area for those whose primary homes are nearer to the coast. From there and the slopes to the south where lies the tomb of Sheik Haboose the Bedouins make camel forays across the dirah of the Badara and Tiyah on the forbidding Gebel Igma highlands where they then go north to the ocean or the border. I have also met Alegat near Nebi Salah's tomb near St. Catherine's' monastery; however, those were primarily either transient or tenders of Date Groves (E-<sup>(9)</sup>). But this rich land of primal colors and ancient temples is not where they started, only where they have ended up. How then did the Alegat arrive?

**Har-El** said the Alegat are a weak tribe of meager size that originated in Nubia. I know of little evidence to support that assertion. Certainly, all the Alegat I met strongly disputed the Israeli assertion. I think the error is one of misinterpretation. The Alegat more properly should be considered part of the Rab'ia, medieval invaders of Nubia, known as 'Arab el-Must'aqiba. They are strong, good looking individuals of almond complexion. The women have large, beautiful eyes, and use kohl like their cousins in Arabia, western makeup if they can get it. Except for the principal son of the Sheik of Serabit, the men are slight of figure, almost Kuwaiti in appearance. No one looks very Nubian; and for good reason. They are not.

In June, 1987 the Paramount Sheik and elders of those Alegat living in Serabit el Khadim (The Heights of the Servant) and Wadi Nasb (The Valley of the Sacrificial Stone) gathered with me around a large red and green carpet the Sheik's wife had just made and discussed their history. (I still have the carpet)(E-<sup>(10)</sup>) Their oral tradition as it existed in 1987 and has been confirmed since has them beginning in Arabia with a lost name. (F-<sup>(11)</sup>) They also said they were descendants of the Imam Ali. However, unlike many of Ali's descendants, these didn't turn to Shia Islam like the people in Iran; but instead are Sunni; of the Maliki school. Their view was that because of tribal warfare in the Arabian peninsula "two hundred years ago" like the Hashemite who now rule Jordan, the Alegat's ancestors moved from the Hejaz region of Arabia to present day Jordan, then crossed the Sinai to Upper Egypt and finally returned to Sinai in search of land. Others became peasants in Nubia, losing touch with the rest of the tribe. I think these are the Alegat fellahin between Sebu'a and Korosko. (E-<sup>(12)</sup>)

As the oral tradition goes, those that remained as Bedouins moved on to the Suez City area at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez, where many now live and prosper, then to Serabit el Khadim, Wadi Nasb, Wadi Ramla and the points between "because the land was free". It was in the Sinai that they took their present name, at least according to tradition.

Bedouin histories are difficult creatures to get to know, largely because they are based on oral tradition of uncertain quality. According to Murray, the Alegat originally came from Syria and shortly after the Islamic conquest (which was principally along the forts of the Via Maris such as Pelusium) settled in the eastern Delta of Egypt where they grazed their camels and made a living raiding the date growers for their harvest. However, leaving some of their people behind in Sharqiya province, the Alegat and Sawalha tribes (F-<sup>(13)</sup>) decided at some point to move in force back to the Sinai and conquered the Beni Suleiman and other tribes, exterminating some, absorbing others in a wave of warfare. (F-<sup>(14)</sup>)

This second invasion may have begun in 1302 when the Sawalha and Alegat, along with other Bedouins in Upper Egypt, rebelled against the rule of Sultan Nasir and began to tax the peasants.

Avoiding taxes is probably the second oldest sin. Egyptian fellahin for example, if Klunzinger is to be believed, went to extremes in the 1800's to avoid such a calamity. "The fellah... will rather be beaten till the blood flows than voluntarily pay the detested taxes to

the government ... after getting all of the flesh of his body made tender by repeated scourging, he slowly drops the money demanded him out of his mouth, where he has concealed it." (E-<sup>(15)</sup>)

But if the fellah were as difficult in the 1300's for the government to tax as they were in the 1800's, they could not have been as tough a customer as Sultan Nasir. This was not a man to challenge. He had a reputation for jumping off of his throne and beating dignitaries till they bled. Take one occasion when he sent one of his favorites to prison to starve. On the eighth day the man was given three covered dishes. Naturally the man thought mercy was about to be offered. Imagine his horror when he discovered the plates were filled not with food but gold, silver and precious stones! He was found dead four days later. The wretch had gnawed his palms off and one finger was still in his mouth. Other cruelties of the time were nailing people to their saddles, or perhaps wrapping a rich man's hands in oil and cloth and turning them into torches. His solution for the Bedouins? Exterminate the men and carry off the women as slaves. As Lawrence would later find on his journey to Damascus, the Bedouins have never enjoyed inflicting such cruelty.

For their troubles, Sultan Nasir "slew mercilessly every Bedouin in the land and carried off their women captive." They were nearly all slaughtered. Nasir's final solution caused the Bedouins to flee to the western desert, south and to the Sinai in search of freedom from oppression.(E-<sup>(16)</sup>) Having conquered portions of the Sinai, in true Bedouin style they decided to fight each other, to divide the spoils I suppose. For example, Murray recorded one incident when 250 Sawalha attacked and destroyed a 100 strong party of Alegat at A-Tor on the southern coast of the Gulf of Suez.

Apparently at roughly the same time as the attack on the Alegat, seven Muzeina from the Gulf of Aquaba, (one of whom was a slave), and their families appeared at Sharm el Sheik fleeing from unknown enemies, and asked permission of the victorious Sawalha to share pasture. This sort of practice is not uncommon and is one of the ways some tribes grow. A smaller tribe is allowed to live in another's dirah for a while, and then later is considered to have joined the more powerful. We shall see more of that later when I discuss the divisions of present-day Alegat.

The Sawalha then said ok to the refugee Muzeina; but they had a price for their protection. The Muzeina must pay tribute, which they refused to do, because that would have made them Heitem or outcasts. Instead, these Muzeina entered into an alliance with the Alegat.

Then the Alegat with their new friends and some Nafa'i horsemen from Cairo attacked the Sawalha, finally defeating them at El-Watia near St. Catherine's. From this battle was supposed to come a compromise for sharing power. The Sawalha and Alegat divided the fertile valleys with the Muzeina receiving one third of their share from the Alegat. By 1935 the eastern half of the Peninsula and the territory south to Wadi Mi'r belonged to the Muzeina. The land between Wadi Sidri and Ayun Musa, (Moses Wells) near Suez belonged to the Alegat, (E-<sup>(17)</sup>), except for areas belonging to small tribes.

We may be able to date the great compromise. Out of it, the Sawalah sold half of the peninsula's camels to the outside world, the Alegat and Muzeina a quarter each. Supply of camels to the Monastery was different. Sawalha took one half the share. The Jebeliya a quarter, the Alegat a fifth, and the Muzeina a twentieth. (E-<sup>(18)</sup>)(F-<sup>(19)</sup>) Na'um Shugayr wrote that the battle took place during "the time of Antush" but didn't provide a date. Fortunately, Clinton Bailey during the occupation found a reference to Antush in St. Catherine's Monastery records. the man was Governor of the Port of A-Tor around 1600. Bailey also notes that the Muzeina who assisted the Alegat did not appear in Monastery documents until 1600. (E-<sup>(20)</sup>)

My sources in the tribes thought this was an accurate description of their past, though in fact, no one person really had much of a clear notion. Each had to discuss with others, making one wonder what the truth really was. In any event, all of that would lead one to believe that the principal invasion of the Alegat was this second thrust. In fact, the Alegat appear to have invaded the peninsula from both sides, though the principal invasion as far I can tell actually came from not the Gulf of Suez; but the opposite Sinai coast, the Gulf of Aquaba I suspect in the 1400s at the port of Nuweiba. Here our legends somewhat overlap.

According to the English explorer Richard Pococke the tribe planted the palm trees in Nuweiba, currently a very pleasant little town on the Gulf of Aquaba that currently acts as a border between the Muzeina and Tarrabin.(F-<sup>(21)</sup>) But then it was simply Alegat. The Danish explorer Neibuhr said the Alegat continued to hold the land until at least 1792. This was confirmed by the English explorer Burkhardt who found the tribe at this location as late as 1816. Their dirah at that time may have stretched as far north as Taba on the Palestine border. Heiwat oral tradition has it they were given use of the palms in Wadi Taba, what they were allowed to own. Clearly, by 1816 these folks had been on the East Coast for over one hundred years. Bailey figures they probably were there 300 years prior to Burkhardt, which would place them in the 1400s, about a hundred years after they may have begun to take the west coast.

Thanks to Neibuhr and Pococke, we now also know that the Alegat were at Nuweiba before both the Tarrabin and Muzeina. And thanks to Wellsted, we know about when they left. Even the Tarrabin's oral tradition indicates they obtained their palm trees from the Alegat. But the Alegat were not the first. They conquered the land from the Hamada who took it from the Sawalha who took it from the Bani Wasil.

Our history goes even further back. In 1565 a Hanbali religious figure named 'Abd al-Qadir ibn Muhammed ibn Ibrihim al-Ansari al-Jaziri wrote a paper covering the years 1515-1565. It dealt with which tribes lived along the Hajj route between Cairo and Mecca. The Alegat were not mentioned there; however by 1820, the Alegat and Sawalha were sharing raiding rights between Cairo and Suez on the darb el Hajj.

In 1605, records were made at St. Catherine's monastery that does record the Alegat's presence around the monastery, somewhat south of the traditional Darb el Hajj that runs through Mitla, Nekhl and Naqb Pass. According to those records (still in the Monastery

library) the tribe did not come from the Gulf of Suez; but rather from the Gulf of Aquaba where they captured the land of the Nufay'at along with their ally the Sawalha. The Nufay'at is now a section of the Alegat known now as the Suwada. (F-<sup>(22)</sup>) As I mentioned earlier, this was one of the most significant events in Sinai history because as a result the boundaries of the southern Sinai Bedouins was established. It also determined the proportion of services provided to the monastery by each tribe.

By cross referencing the legends and records of the other tribes, it would appear that the Alegat, in addition to arriving from the mainland of Egypt in a post-Islamic surge may have also arrived in the Sinai shortly after the turn of the 15th century from the coast of the Gulf of Aquaba. But clearly, they were also in Egypt.

To combat the raiders, the merchants allied themselves with the Maa'za and Howeitat tribes of the Tiyah Confederation (which is a loose alignment of tribes to the North of the El Tih). The Towara confederation to the south didn't take too kindly to this interference in trade, so the Alegat and Sawalha increased their raiding. In retaliation, Pasha Muhammad Ali dispatched two to three thousand troops to put down the Bedouin who had by then fortified Wadi Barq with a breastwork. Unfortunately for the Bedouin, they were outflanked, defeated and routed, but with little bloodshed. The troops followed them until they reached St. Catherine's Monastery where the Bedouins surrendered and agreed to peace. (E-<sup>(23)</sup>)

Before visiting any Dirah, I tried to come prepared with the known history, even photographs of famous individuals of the last century, when I had them. This practice proved useful when checking on the accuracy of oral traditions and written histories. Sources were flattered that the American with "funny hat" knew so much about their tribe, and would compete to be part of the information exchange. That of course forced a lot of cross examinations and cross checking with known history, in order to get the story right -- as some people have a tendency to simply tell you what you want to hear. The process also proved useful in determining what an average Bedouin known of peninsular history in general. Take for an example of the later, the Wars of the Zari and Abu sultan begun in 1799 starting with the invasion of Palestine by Napoleon and ending nearly a century later.

In alignment with the French and in their own right for years after, some of the tribes along the northern border with Palestine invaded and conquered portions of what is now Israel. It was one of the most colorful portions of Sinai history and is developed further in the Chapter on War. Surprisingly to me, none of my sources in the Alegat were aware of the events. Nor did anyone have much recollection of their tribe's history during the Turkish occupation, though many were aware of the Bedouin conference that split the Sinai between the Tuara and Tiyaha confederation, even if none knew when it happened. Generally, tribal elders would simply tell me over the years that they did not know when the conference took place, only that it happened and that it involved "all of the gabilla in the Sinai." Too bad. The conference (which may have been several meetings, instead of simply one major event) defined each Gabilla's dirah, each of which was a combination of rain and dry season land. The Tiyaha confederation was supposed to be North of Ras

Sidre and the Tuara Confederation from Abu Zaneima south. (E-<sup>(24)</sup>) Even more significant, none of the Alegat I met were aware of the murder of Professor Palmer or the impact that event had on their tribe's structure and political makeup.

## **POPULATION**

If you want to travel with Bedouins, especially as I do, often alone or in small parties, you have to develop trust and rules of behavior sometimes not defined in Bedouin law. One of those has to do with population figures. Wherever I have traveled in the Middle East or Africa, I have found that natives don't want their population figures known. In addition to seeing it as an almost military secret, they are worried that the information could be used to develop taxes. For that reason, I steered away from the subject for the most part, only occasionally taking down numbers, some of which are repeated here when I was told the locals would not mind. The rest are private. These are estimates, as are those of earlier explorers I have cited.

1905 2,000 (Alegat and Hamedah)(E-<sup>(25)</sup>)

1935 269 Tents (E-<sup>(26)</sup>)

1985 2,500 (E-<sup>(27)</sup>)

1987 About 2,000 (E-<sup>(28)</sup>)

1987 In Serabit area 1,000

1987 In Egypt as a whole, 5,000. (E-<sup>(29)</sup>)

## **DIVISIONS OF THE TRIBE**

(F-<sup>(30)</sup>)

Studying the divisions of the Alegat teaches us an important lesson, which is that tribes don't always descend from a common source, even though their ethic says so. The pre-Islamic Bedouins whom the Alegat and others conquered didn't just vanish from the face of the earth. Some were absorbed by the invaders. Western invaders have had their way with Bedouins as well, especially in the north where European stock is obvious when one finds blue eyed Bedouins, red hair, etc. I have met several Bedouin men married to western women; though I must confess their children are rarely left in the desert today.

The divisions as they currently stand are also testament to the way a tribe grows.

Awlad Salma (**Wilad Selmi**) (E-<sup>(31)</sup>)

Aqlamat (E-<sup>(32)</sup>)



Faranja (former member of the Muzeina tribe, now Alegat.)

### ***History of the Faranja***

Oral tradition has it this was a lawless section of the Abu Sabha section of the Muzeina (Gulf of Aquaba tribe) who broke away from their mother tribe around the turn of the century and moved to Wadi Sidri and Wadi Feiran. Both of these wadis are now in Garasha territory, though palm trees are often owned by Alegat.

The newcomers were regarded as squatters by the Alegat; but are now an accepted part of the tribe, having proved their loyalty. The term here is Qusara. Some of the tribe worked in the turquoise mines then being exploited and sold their gems at Ayun Musa or Cairo. While some turquoise is still taken out of the mines, now they primarily make a living working in the oil wells of Abu Rudeis and Abu Zaneima.(E-<sup>(33)</sup>)

### **Al Hamayidah (Hamaida or Hamada) descendants of original pre-Islamic Bedouins.**

#### ***History of Hamada***

No one actually knows when these people joined the Alegat; but it was probably shortly after the capture of Nuweiba. We do know that from then until the 1880's this was a sub-tribe (or section) of the Alegat. Then in 1880 internal politics forced a split when the Hamada requested permission to live under the protection of the Muzeina. By 1935, they had become integrated enough in Muzeina affairs to be considered an integral part of that tribe.

This split happened because of a blood vengeance relationship between Sheik Mudakil Suleiman, later paramount Sheik of the Alegat and one 'Aid, Sheik of the Hamada. In their youth, each had killed the other's father. The reasons are clear; however, even though they settled their differences later on according to Bedouin custom, when Mudakhil became paramount Sheik, 'Aid decided he couldn't live under his former enemy and then split off. (E-<sup>(34)</sup>)

Jarajira (reported in 1935 by Murray) (E-<sup>(35)</sup>)

Kureisat (or Zumeiliyin) (E-<sup>(36)</sup>)

Now in Zagazig in Egypt, where they have been at least since 1935 when their paramount sheik took up residence in that town. During World War One, this clan sided with Turkey against the British, thus trying to settle an old score against Sheik Mudakhil Sulieman who was put in charge of the Alegat by the British. Mudakhil had supplied evidence to the British in 1882 in trials that implicated the Sheik of the Zumeiliyin by inference. The British then deposed this Sheik and put Mudakhil in charge of the entire tribe.

Suwada (remnant of the Nafei'at) (E-<sup>(37)</sup>) (Now live in Zagazig. In 1935 their Sheik lived there.)

Tleilat (E-<sup>(38)</sup>) (may now be in Zagazig. In 1935 their Sheik lived there)

### **BRANDS (Wasm)**

Most tribes have traditionally used a brand or Wasm to identify property; though the practice is dying out in the north. In 1935 the Alegat they used a reverse C. (<sup>(39)</sup>); however that has changed. Now they use an 11 with a line underneath, as opposed to the Tarrabin who use a sunset supported by a three dots in a reverse triangle. The triangle is a standard Sinai good luck charm. (E-<sup>(40)</sup>)

### **Ghouls and Spirits**

The Sinai is a Peninsula of Legends, frequently involving GHOULS AND SPIRITS; however, except for the Tarrabin, most Bedouins I have met don't believe in specific ghouls or ghosts today. Having said that, many do believe in them in a general way. For example Sheik Barakat of the Alegat while confirming there were no ghouls in his dirah said that Spirits did exist in the night, sometimes calling people's names, sometimes putting stones in the way. But they are not seen. This concept is believed by many.

Barakat and his tribe also agreed with many in the Tarrabin of the Gulf of Suez and the Ahharsa and Alegat of the Mediterranean that the ocean had spirits; but felt only God knew how many. They did not believe trees have no spirits, or animals; however.(E-<sup>(41)</sup>)

### **TURQUOISE**

The principal dirah of the Alegat used to be one of Egypt's major mining area, which is one of the reason for the fortified temple on top of Serabit el Khadim (see article on Serabit el Khadim); however, the mines have been emptied of most of their wealth. Having said that, there is enough left for subsistence mining. The Bedouin of the Alegat get theirs mostly from Gebel ada Daya two hours drive from Serabit(E-<sup>(42)</sup>) and then sell it to tourists for what they can. (photos) however individuals often have secret holes in one hill or another.

### **Laws**

[See Chapter on Bedouin Law](#)

### **Alegat INCOME**

The ones I concentrated on lived in the Sinai, though I had some acquaintance with those outside as. The ones in the vicinity of Serabit el Khadim mostly lived as guides to travelers, or as farmers or workers in the oil fiends. Some owned trees in Wadi Feiran. I have met others in Abu Rudeis as well who were integrated in the life of the city.(E-<sup>(43)</sup>)

Contrary to what Har-el reported, they were heavily engaged in farming in Suez, and goat and camel herding in the Serabit region. The tourist industry around Serabit el Khadim has had a major impact on them. Once in 1988 they even catered a visit by the United States Ambassador. However, they did better during the occupation. They sell fine beadwork and carpets (see chapter on art) and are quite generous about inviting tourists into their homes for dinner. These were very nice, generous people, the women extremely intelligent and strong.

I do foresee trouble for the Alegat. Though only subsistence level farming exists in the Serabit Area, even a couple of modern farms, it has become increasingly difficult over the last 15 years because of a steady decline in the water supply. That has reduced the camel herds as well as the plant life used for feeding goats. There is some water in the Serabit area, so people in the surrounding areas have begun a slow concentration in Sheik Barakat's section of the Dirah; but one wonders how long it will last.(E-<sup>(44)</sup>) Because farming is nearly impossible in the mountains, other than at a subsistence level, the Egyptian government sends rations from the United States every three months in the form of cracked wheat, cooking oil and white flour. (E-<sup>(45)</sup>) Cairo has also begun to establish water stations in areas where they would like the Bedouin to assemble. That does work at least a little. For example, I once saw three hundred Masaid camels in the Mitla Pass on their way to Egypt. At the time they were at a water station built for the Bedouins. That is an enormous herd. Thinking of that, I have to wonder if water might not become the final humbler that forces Bedouins to move to the city.

Most researchers have described the Bedouins as seeing physical labor as a dishonor. Certainly, being a camel driver is a higher order of life than a sheep herder, which is higher than a farmer, which is higher than smith. The Salubba of Arabia are thought ill of, since they breed asses. Those were the ethics of only fifty years ago in the Sinai too; but they are concepts that are changing as these people come increasingly closer to the west and western desires. Certainly, unlike the experiences of other explorers, I have found the Sinai Bedouins quite willing to engage in physical labor. I have seen them painting buildings, gardening in the city, farming, etc; and I have never heard of anyone who felt people who engaged in such activity were less than those who refused to. Quite the opposite. Bedouins of the 1980's realize that if they wish to better their lives, physical labor may be needed, and so they look for it, be it in the mines of Abu Zaneima, the oil fields of Abu Rudeis, the quarries near Nuweiba, or simply working as janitors, gardeners and cooks. I have even met many Tarrabin camel guides who complain that the Egyptians will not hire them to work in the restaurants of Nuweiba, even though some Bedouins speak more languages than the waiters from Cairo!

### ***Alegat RELIGION***

Sunni, of the Maliki school.(E-<sup>(46)</sup>)

### ***SHEIKS***

A partial list of Sheiks and families . Dates are not exact.(E-<sup>(47)</sup>)

Abu Ghaneym Sheik of Wadi Maghareh and Serabit el Khadim, 1905 (then aged 50)(E-[48](#))

Giray (unknown)

Haboose (unknown)

Suleiman

Sheik Hajj 'Awda ez-Zumeili (Sheik prior to Mudakhil Sulieman) This man was deposed by Colonel Warren, British Army after the Arabi rebellion for allowing the murder of Professor Palmer to take place, though it is not clear he had anything to do with the event. The evidence used to depose him was provided by Mudakhil Sulieman, father to Zeidan who became sheik upon the removal of Awda ez-Zumeila. Mudakhil returned the favor during World War One by siding with England against the Turks. The Zumeiliyin on the other hand sided with Turkey and were amongst those who captured the port of A-Tor in 1915 where they were later defeated by British forces guided by Mudakhil.

His creation as Sheik caused the separation of the Hamada from the Muzeina

Zeidan Mudakhil In the 1930's he resided in Abu Zaneima, a camel driver for Palmer.

Mudakhil Suleiman (turn of the century according to Murray. Barakat said he lived in the 1920's) Three sons of this man are still alive at Camel Rock and one lives in Abu Zaneima.

Sabah (son of Mudakar)

Barakat Since 1974

### ***Clothing and the Alegat***

I was struck by the cheery image in Murray's book of an Alegat girl. The Alegat still speak of Murray sometimes, the older ones that is; and I can see why. He had the touch. Well, as you can see by comparing his picture with one of mine taken in late 1987, the girls haven't changed. The hair style is the same, in this case depicting a virgin. As shown in the introductory chapter, the married women still wear the goosa. Once all women wore it; but not any more..

Married and single women both wear loud blouses. The girls often wear dresses of the same material. I'll not soon forget the screams of glee when I gave one about five bolts of cloth from Port Said. Three weeks later when I returned she was in a beautiful dress of iridescent green made of one of the bolts. The dresses look like rude cuts from the 50's, very loose fitting. They wear sandals, usually Japanese plastic.

One thing that distinguishes a woman of the South (especially the Alegat) from a woman of the North Sinai west of Bir el Abd is her cloak. The northern folk wear a distinctive black cloak with a single red plaid strip down the middle. You can't miss it. The women of the south wear a patterned of sparkles on their back. (see chapter on art for pictures of the two styles).

As for the men, most wear traditional Bedouin garb; but I have also seen western sports jackets, especially amongst the Descendants of Mudakhil Sulieman in Abu Zaneima. They too wear sandals, sometimes trousers; but mostly an abba or gallebeyya. Like the sheiks of the 30's the Sheiks of the 80' also generally have a black or deep blue cloak to wear for formal occasion; though unlike the 30's, I have only seen swords and guns in the north, except for smugglers.

### **ALEGAT WIVES and Women in the Alegat**

Four wives are allowed at any one time, as in Islam; but I have met few Sinai men with enough money or inclination for more than one. Sheik Barakat has two, both young, one pregnant in the spring of 1988. (E-<sup>(49)</sup>) Unlike the Shia, the Alegat (indeed no-one in the Sinai so far as I know) do not practice temporary marriage **mut'a**. This contrasts for example with the Sheiks of Iraq who have been known to have as many as 25 wives at one time. As with all Bedouins I have met in Israel and the Western Desert, the male does have the right of divorce, though he loses the dowry unless the woman is at fault.

As is the case with other Bedouin tribes, the women have little authority and no right to own anything other than what they bring into a marriage. Having said that, as with most Bedouins, in their own special way, the males honor the women above all else. A tribe's honor resides in its women's' honor, just as it did for the knights of medieval Europe. It is through the women, after all that the blood line is continued. If family and Asabiyya is the anchor that holds the Bedouin together in his loneliness in the desert, then women are the steel.

I might add that women are often the hardest workers. Guiding is hard work; especially when it means climbing mountains; but try bending over all day picking up branches for fire, then separating the thorns! A woman works from the moment she wakes. She washes the clothes, cleans house, makes the food, gathers the wood and bears the children. And unlike the men who can sometimes get away with illicit sex, women must appear chaste, else they will be killed in most tribes, certainly in the Alegat. But she is also held with honor. For example, if she welcomes a stranger in her home, she is not accused of illicit sex.

This is very different from women of the pre-Islamic era, called jahiliya or uncivilized period. In those days women were free to choose their mates or dismiss them, and men had to court a woman to win her. Now, thanks to a couple of thousand years of Islamic based relations, Bedouin men, indeed Arab men in general, usually don't know how to deal with women having their own mind. And there are plenty of them, though I only met

a couple in the Alegat. But they have little chance of asserting themselves. If they did, they would leave, and as I pointed out, the tribe couldn't have that.

Alegat women wear hair braided into a forehead horn called a goosaa when they are married and along the forehead coming to a flat peak called a gibla when they are single, though some married women do that as well. Fifty years ago perhaps all of the Sinai married women wore their hair this way. Today, only the Alegat do it irrespective of age. Some Muzeina and Gebeliya wear the goosaa as well; but generally only the elderly.

Wearing the veil out of sight of the husband seems to be optional to some women, though they also say that it is in bad taste to be bare faced. As I have found with the Bedouins of the Negev, Alegat are willing to breast feed in front of a western man. A young girl from the tribe (daughter of Sheik Barakat) was the most self-possessed Bedouin girl I have met. She wore no veil, used nail polish, eye shadow (antimony) and smoked like a chimney. She also wanted an education and life in a city, walked proudly and had a grip like a vice.(E-<sup>(50)</sup>)

### **MARRIAGE and SEX in the Alegat**

On the operational level, sex and marriages are handled differently throughout the tribe, though the theory is the same. For example, according to the leaders of the Alegat, marriages are always arranged by the father, with love playing no part. According to the Sheik of the Serabit Alegat in October, 1987, there is no dating before marriage. If so, "both the woman and man are killed". But I was also told by the elders from various sections of the tribe earlier in the same year and later that dating can take place and that the proper punishment is to beat both the woman and man, which of course is closer to the Koranic system.(E-<sup>(51)</sup>)

As I found out one day when I tried to hug a woman to whom I had become close, women are not hugged in public, unlike the Muzeina, who do sometimes allow it. However, it is ok to hold hands or engage in mughazala (love talk), and the lady and I did a lot of that. But whatever is done must be done in public. I remember for example one cold winter night when I had a slight fever. My friend took me by the hand and pulled me into a small one room structure at the edge of the Barakat encampment, whereupon she began to make a fire in typical fashion in the center of the room, allowing the smoke to escape through a small hole in the ceiling. She then heated up a large tin can full of water and herbs.

We laid back for a while and drank the tea as I began to get warm again and listened to American music coming from a radio in my camp a few yards from the house. I was just beginning to totally relax under the spell of the tea and my friend when suddenly, her mother roared into the room and began to lay around me various carpets and necklaces while she yammered at my friend about her father. A few moments later the Sheik arrived with a smile and an air of conspiracy and sat down to share in the tea, remarking that he was surprised my friend made it as he didn't think she was much of a cook. I was reminded of my college days in rural Missouri when my girl friend's father would catch

us on the porch in the early autumn and make much the same sort of comment about that girl's tea.

Girls are usually married at 18 in this tribe.(E-(52)) Some elders I have met have suggested Alegat girls may marry a non-Bedouin but only if he has joined a *gebeelah*. Others have contested that, saying Bedouin women may only marry Bedouins; however men may marry non-Bedouins. In any event, though the father does have the final word, a woman's elder brother can take precedence if the father allows.

Though my relationship with a certain Bedouin girl never really justified this comment, the girls' mother and some elders suggested that if I wanted to marry her I could if I became an Alegat, though I might first have to marry her elder sister first. I was in fact later offered honorary membership; however, could not accept as that would have divided my loyalties. A Bedouin must owe his entire allegiance to his tribe, *Asabiyya* again. I wasn't prepared to do that. (E-(53))

According to Murray in the 1930's the Alegat (unlike the Sawalha), did not remarry the wives they divorced. (E-(54)) Now they do it. In fact, I met such a couple. However, the man and woman must first go to a Sheik of the tribe and make sure the original problems were resolved so that there will not be another divorce.(E-(55))

### **School and the Alegat**

The traditional schooling of boys and girls follows the model of most Bedouin societies. The early stages are in the hands of the mother, though the father does take a hand. The boys stay under their mother's tutelage until they are about 7, while the girls remain under her care until they marry. The boys (who by the way remain considered as such until they are circumcised) must learn their heritage, so that they will know how they stack up against other member of the tribe. They are also taught a certain amount of tribal history; however, very little from what I could discern. In the Alegat tribe, a girl's education is limited to the kitchen and sex for the most part, as well as how to sew and weave. She must also know how to draw water, and how to care for goats. As for the boys, emphasis is placed by the father on honor and on how to survive in the desert. A boy must learn all about camels, how to ride and load them, and of course how to steer them through the desert at night by using the stars and memory of landmarks. He will learn that a certain dropping means a specific breed of animal was at a spot. The level of moistness can also be interpreted. Plants are learned, mountain passes, etc.

From my experience, Bedouins love to teach as well. The women have shown me how to cook their way and how to make wool thread. AS for the men I'll never forget the several trips when some guide tried to show me how to track droppings or interpret the meaning of a circling bird.

Now, most tribes also benefit from "modern" education as well. The Alegat has a school run by the Egyptian Government in the Serabit area, but at the request of the tribe unlike the Muzeina, Tarrabin, Akharsa, Alegat and others, the school does not service women.

Sheik Barakat understands the basic inequity of this system and regrets it, particularly since he has an especially intelligent daughter who yearns to learn; however, as is the case with most hunter gather tribal leaders he is "a slave to the rules of the tribe".(F-<sup>(56)</sup>)

I was once shown a primary school report card for the son of the Sheik Barakat and told by the tribal elders that the entire tribe was proud of the boy because he would be one of the successful ones, one of the future male breadwinners who would bring money into the tribe. Knowing I was writing a book on the Bedouins, for history's sake and because I intend to follow this young man's progress, the elders asked me to reproduce the results of the card.

Rabia Barakat received a 83/100 in Arabic, 86/100 in Math, 45/50 in Social Sciences, 46/50 in Health Sciences.(E-<sup>(57)</sup>)

When it comes to education and employment the people are caught in a catch-22 situation not dissimilar to that felt by the most rural tribes throughout the peninsula. The older men have no formal education or military service record and thus no hope of a real job and salary -- not at least one commanding a salary an Egyptian would consider reasonable. Therefore, the tribe tries to educate the young men so they can find jobs in the Sinai (not Egypt) and bring cash back to the tribe. But custom acts against teaching the women. This is not however as others has thought because of conservative Islamic beliefs that to educate women is against the Sharia. The reason is rather more simple. If they received an education, they might leave the dirah and go else where, perhaps out of the Sinai and away from the tribe. Asabiyya would be weakened. Consequently, while the boys go to school, the women don't. They are illiterate.<sup>(58)</sup> This is a common problem with Bedouins in the more isolated areas, though some do educate their women, notably the Muzeina.(E-<sup>(59)</sup>)

### ***Medicine and the Alegat***

The Alegat, indeed all of the southern Bedouin have a heavy reliance on herbal medicine. For example while in the Serabit area in November, 1987 my "girl friend" treated me for dhareaha with lemon and tea made of herbs gathered by her father. It worked extremely well. I never had the time to study this practice as well as I wanted to; however, I have drunk many herbal teas for upset stomachs (usually rosemary), headaches and other ailments. They all seem to work. They even have herbs for high blood pressure. My recommendation is that a professional herbalist should travel through the peninsula and study this issue closely before the practice dies out.

Some Ethiopian mountain folk I met while I lived in Eritrea were afraid of western medicine, preferring traditional methods of curing; however, by contrast the Alegat and the rest of the Bedouins of the Sinai peninsula in the 1980's are not afraid. On almost all of my expeditions I brought a medic who invariably was asked by tribal elders and plain folk on the road had to treat minor abrasions, fungal infections, a great many eye infections, and other injuries. Some have even been sent to hospitals for especially serious ailments, not something I recommend in the Sinai. I remember once walking into



the operating room of a hospital in the Tarrabin Bedouin region near the Giddi Pass. The floor was filthy. There were dirty bandages everywhere, opened medicine bottles, roaches and rat leavings in one corner -- a rust set of scapulas in another.

### **ZUARA and the *alegat***

Most Bedouins gather in time of trouble or when they need divine guidance and pray to a saint or holy sheik at his tomb. This is called Zuara. When coupled with celebrating the birthday of the Sheik or Saint it is called Mulid and is generally a tribal event with lamb being sacrificed and much dancing. The Alegat are no exception. Their annual Mulid is celebrated at the tomb of Sheik Giray near Wadi Ramle about two months after Id El Adha; or at the Tomb of Sheik Haboose in Wadi Sieh (also known as the Haboose Area or on some Maps as Sheik Hatrid) in August. Zuara is practiced whenever needed by an individual, on any day at Giray's tomb. However, Zuaras at the tomb of Sheik Haboose are only held on Mondays and Fridays. (F-<sup>(60)</sup>)

Because the tribe is extremely poor, a collection **zakat** is not made for the poor, something other tribes do try to do. However, no one leaves without plenty of food and water, the water having been provided by Egyptian Army trucks.

(See Introduction to Adventure for Story about the Bleeding Rocks at Giray' Tomb)

### ***Footnotes on Alegat***

1. Test

2. Nebi Salah's tomb area provides a good example of why it is so often hard to date tombs. If you were to visit the area today you would find an additional tomb and a Makkad used by the followers of Nebi Salah. I asked the local Garasha village to whom the second tomb was dedicated. They didn't know, saying it belonged to a lost tribe who lived there "hundreds of years before." We know the oral tradition can't be true. A picture taken by G.W. Murray at the turn of the century shows only one tomb, that of Nebi Salah, and no Makkad!

3. Robert Walker Stewart noticed a Bedouin graveyard on the north slope of Wadi Gharandal in January, 1854. I discovered the same graveyard, just to the west of a major dam constructed on the one of the tributaries in 1987. The local tribesmen identified the graveyard as Alegat. See The Tent and the Khan, pg 72.

4. The Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula, pg 10.

5. 2. Visits I made during the summer of 1987, The Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula, pg 10, Sons of Ishmael, pp 207-208.

6. I discussed this with Mohammed, a well known 60 year old guide at Hammam Faroun on 11/1/87. He agreed completely.

7. Just south of the UN outpost and oil company air field look for a short road bounded at its entrance by burnt out oil tanks. At that spot you will find the western most outpost of the Garasha, a poor gathering of huts and ill clad people eking out an existence doing whatever menial labor is available in the nearby mines and oil fields, or perhaps simply going to the ration office.

8. The Tent and the Khan, pg 166.

9. Sheik Barakat, 10/31/87.

10. Sinai by Col. Sir Charles W. Wilson, pg 32-33

11. Sheik Mudakhil Sulieman of the Alegat told Murray at the turn of the century that the lost name was Beni Ugba, an old Arabian tribe.

12. Murray, pg 33

13. The Sawalha are reported to have gotten their name from their home town before the invasion in a village called Salihyah in the eastern fringe of the delta. This name was given to a confederation of tribes at that location then known as the Mahasnah and sections of the Awarma who provided leaders for the village.

14. The Beni Suliemen no longer exist in the Sinai; however, according to Richard Pocoke who explored the area in the 18th century, they then lay between the Ayayda and the Alegat. Evidence since indicates they disappeared by at least 1915. Today the Tarrabin and Haweitat occupy that territory.

15. Upper Egypt by C.B. Klunzinger, pg 68

16. Emil Ludwig, pg 512 The Nile, Viking Press 1937; Murray, pg 29

17. Murray, 258-259

18. Murray, pg 258

19. At the time I was in the midst of most of my research, the price had fallen drastically due to drought in Ethiopia and Sudan. Once they sold for around LE 800. In June, 1987 they were selling for as little as LE 180, less than ninety dollars, the female a bit more.

20. Arrival of Bedouin Tribes, pp 32-33

21. G.W. Murray was able to place this dirah between Nuweiba and Ain hadera, an area Murray thought was given up to the Muzeina, not the Tarrabin. However, I suspect they left by 1833. At that time the English Sea Captain J.R. Wellsted sailed past the town and was told by the locals that the palms belonged to the Tarrabin. See J.R. Wellsted **Travels in Arabia**, London, 1838, Vol 2, pg 151; Bailey **Dating the Arrival of the**

**Bedouin Tribes in Sinai and the Negev**, pg 46 Journal of Economic and social History of the Orient, Vol XXVII

22. Clinton bailey's analysis of records at St. Catherine's Monastery in the 1970's indicates that the westward invasion by the Alegat which forced a war with the Sawalhah may have taken place in 1595AD.

23. Murray 258

24. Barakat 10/30/87.

25. Researches in Sinai, pg 268.

26. Murray, pg 263

27. DIA Report, pg 10

28. Sheik Barakat, 6/26-28/87.

29. Barakat 11/1/87

30. Technically, these are clans, such as exist in Scotland and in their terminology they are families; but the popular way to describe them as tribes, or sections of tribes.

31. DIA, pg 10, Murray 264

32. DIA, pg 10

33. Murray, pg 207, pg 40

34. DIA, pg 10, Murray 264, 40, 207-209.

35. Murray 264

36. Murray 264

37. Murray 264

38. Murray, pg 264

39. Murray 45

40. Barakat's wife 10/31/87, Selim Barakat (Barakat's elder son volunteered that as long as he has been alive they have never used the reverse c.

41. Barakat 10/31/87

42. Barakat 10/30/87

43. Nomachi agrees. See pg 119

44. Barakat

45. Sheik Barakat, March, 1988

46. Barakat 10/31/87

47. Murray 208-209, Barakat agreed 10/31/87, though he changed Murray's spelling of Mudakhil to Mudakar.

48. Researches in Sinai, pg 7

49. Barakat 11/1/87

50. Visit with Aleqat tribe 5/87. Discussions with Saleema and Saadiya, the first married, the second single.

51. Alegat Tribal Elders: Discussions, Serabit el Khadim, 6/26-28/87.

52. Barakat 10/30/87

53. Barakat 11/1/87; At the time I was a Civilian Observer with the Multinational Forces and Observers.

54. Murray, Sons of Ismael, pg 226,

55. Barakat 10/31/87

56. Sheik Barakat specifically told me on several occasion that he was sorry girls could not receive an education; but felt his hands were tied by custom, that he would lose his position as Sheik if he challenged the rule.

57. Discussions with Sheik Barakat and elders of the Alegat tribe, Serabit el Khadim, 6/26-28/87.

58. I tried to bring one girl to America for an education in the late 1980's; but with little success. The rationale given me was that if she gained an education, she would not return.

59. Discussions with Sheik Barakat and elders of the Alegat tribe, Serabit el Khadim, 6/26-28/87.

60. 180 degrees south of the tomb off of Wadi Seih is Wadi Kerak. The Alegat told Robert Stewart in February 1854, that a battle took place in the Wadi in 1839 when South

Confederation Bedouins (Tuara) robbed a coffee caravan of "100 camel loads" on the way to Cairo. According to the legend, the caravan was guarded by Ibrihim Pasha. The Pasha led his men into the wadi to a barricade set up by the bedouins who proceeded to shoot down at the troops from the heights. Ibrihim Pasha won his battle but only after losing 100 men. This legend is a famous exploit which did have an impact on the cost of coffee, according to British government documents in the Public Records Office in London. Karnak is however only one place where the attack was supposed to have taken place.

The explorers Wilson and Palmer also saw this spot; but made no mention of the Tomb of Haboose; so I suspect it had not yet been built.

## **Tribe Chapter: El-Armilat:**

### ***Dirah***

**Their biggest collection is in Rafah where they may be the biggest grouping. I have also seen many in Sheik Zuweid, between Sheik Zuweid and Rafah, as well as in Abu Taweiya, where lies a large concentration. Many live between the village of El Gorah near the north camp of the Multinational Forces and Observers, and Sheik Zuweid, as well as a large group, perhaps the largest in Gaza. 2,000 are also reported to reside in Jordan, as well as a small group in Cairo (E-<sup>(1)</sup>)**

### **DIVISIONS of the Tribe**

E-<sup>(2)</sup>).

**Abu Jarat**

**Abu Shera (extremely small)**

**Ajalin**

**Awabda (Sheik in 1987 Azarh Diban)**

**Abu Darwesh**

**Abu Katefane (katefene) (in 1987 their Sheik was Salme)**

**(F-<sup>(3)</sup>) Dirak of Karafeen: Live between Sheik Zuweid and Rafah**

**Abu Atrabi or el Dribi**

**El Athrihi or el Drihi**

**El Athribi or el Thribi**

**El Hamamda**

**El Sanana (Sheik in 1987 Masabab Raba)**

**Dirah of Sanana Live between Sheik Zuweid and Rafah**

**Ajaleen**

**Eayed**

**Abu Mleh**

**Abu Fria**

**El Mahadi (where most of my information came from)**

**El Shreteen (Sheik in 1987 was Awda El Gazali)**

**Abu Heloo**

**El Rgeba**

**El Atarr**

**El Mwasi**

**El Awitha**

**El Buaran (Sheik in 1987 was Abu Mhisen)**

**El Khrafeen**

**Abu El Toom**

**Nawafla**

**Asebat**

**Hosenat**

## ***INCOME***

**Some work as cooks and cleaning personnel for the Multinational Forces and Observers near El Gorah. Others are involved as artisans in Rafah; however, most work in agriculture and chicken farming.**

**Principal produce: Peach trees, Cucumber, pears, green pepper, apples, watermelon, tomatoes.**

The chicken farms are in buildings run by Upper Egyptians. Sudanese are also used for labor. I visited many farms in September, 1987 and the spring of 1988 where I saw this, including a yellow onion farm run by Said Abu Gazala, a Palestinian Armilat. What surprised me was that very few fished, despite close proximity to the ocean.(E-<sup>(4)</sup>)

## **EDUCATION**

About 1985, the Egyptian government built several schools in the dirah servicing both boys and girls who start at six and then can go to college. (E-<sup>(5)</sup>). The teachers are both men and women but do not come from the tribes, instead from the mainland; however, I understand there is pressure to bring in their own.

I have been greatly impressed by the educational level of many of the Armilat. Most seem literate to at least a modest degree and many have gone to college, even to Cairo universities during the occupation. At least one is an air force jet fighter pilot.

My close friend Ferress has a degree in art from a college in Cairo, read Newsweek in English and could intelligently discuss Middle East politics with ease. In addition, he had a good command of world geography, as well as a surprisingly good command of American geography. Like many Armilat and other Sinai Bedouin, he took advantage of the Occupation to see all of Israel, the occupied territories and Jerusalem. He has also traveled widely in Jordan. From what I can see, he is not an exception.

## **Sheik**

The Egyptian government has set up a system whereby all of the bedouins in the Northern Sinai (from Sudr el Heitan to the Mediterranean) can vote for a single representative to the Parliament. Both men and women can vote and do in the Armilat; however, only men are elected. In 1987-88 the Sheik of the Armilat was the member of Parliament; however, his term is only for 4 years; so it might be Sawarka the next time, or any other tribe. In 1987-88 the Sheik was Esa Awda Salim of the Karafeen section of the Armilat. (E-<sup>(6)</sup>)

Hamula and Gabeela Sheiks are not elected by the tribal elders, but by the entire tribal population whenever someone can garner enough votes to interest the group in question in having an election! The process begins at the family level. An individual wanting to elect himself or someone else starts with his immediate family, then moves up through his hamula and friends outside his immediate family until he thinks he has enough votes to justify an



election, only about 75. Then he goes to the Egyptian authorities in Rafah, who make the final decision to set up the election. (E-<sup>(7)</sup>)

### ***What is a Bedouin***

This is one of the common questions I asked. One answer I received from the Armilat was that "All Bedouin come from outside of Egypt. The Armilat come from Saudi, some from Jordan and especially the north of Jordan, other from Upper Egypt. Also, there were bedouins in the Sinai from before who were Christians, perhaps all Bedouin in the Sinai were Christian. Together, with the Muslim Bedouin, these became the Bedouin of the Sinai." This was the story told my friend Ferress by his grandfather during a dinner I attended one very cold November night in 1987 while eating a traditional meal in a har. What struck me about it was that it concentrated entirely on blood and geography. Most of the other bedouins I have spoken to, especially in the south preferred a definition that mixed blood, geography and a belief in specific ethics. (E-<sup>(8)</sup>)

### ***Housing***

They have now almost ceased to be nomadic, living in a mix of steel homes built during the days of the Israeli occupation, traditional hars that they call (Arisha) or cinderblock houses.

### ***HISTORY***

Their history would ordinarily might lead one to think of them as being aggressive,(E-<sup>(9)</sup>);however, the people picture themselves as pacifists, famous for resolving conflicts, not starting fights, unlike the Tarrabin and Sawarka whom they term warlike. Even the Tarrabin and Sawarka share that opinion.

DIA reported they are related to the Sawarka (E-<sup>(10)</sup>) though not a part of the tribe now. This would appear to be correct. The Sawarka is a parent to the Armilat, so far as I can determine; however, according to local legend "about 75 years ago" the Armilat, then a hamula of the Sawarka, were being attacked in Rafah and Gaza, a land they had captured during "in the distant past," actually the Napoleonic wars. They asked for help from the Sawarka; but none came. After defeating their enemies, they broke from the Sawarka and became their own Gabilla. When I was told their story, I asked my sources if they had ever heard of the wars of the Zari, Abu Sultan or the wars of the French from the 1799 period; but they had not.

**DIA also makes the point that the Armilat originally came from Khan Yunis in Palestine, with whom the Sinai group maintains strong ties; however, according to many sources within the tribe, very few now live in Khan Yunis. They say that their roots are primarily in Saudi Arabia and Upper Egypt. I passed through Khan Yunis once on the way to Tel Aviv; but couldn't stay long because of MFO regulations prohibiting visits to people in the Gaza Strip.**

**During the Israeli occupation, the Israelis moved the Armilat out of the area later taken up by Yamit Kibbutz. In fact, a cordon line was drawn around the kibbutz and Arabs could only cross with special passes. After the occupation and the decision of the towns folk to destroy their town rather than give it to the bedouins, Armilat moved back into the area. The area of Yamit is still mostly a pile of rubble, except for the old Synagogue; however over the next few years the Egyptian government hopes to built a modern town for the local bedouins.**

**Erroneous reports in the fall of 1986 by Tarrabin I knew just to the south of El Gorah that farm the area around the sewage reservoir led me to believe that many of the people in the Canada Palestine refugee Camp in Rafah might be Armilat; but on an inspection through most of the day of 9/26/87 and on various other casual trips, I discovered this was not so -- at least all whom I spoke to said they were Palestinians -- no Armilat lived there. All were very friendly and seemed not the least concerned that I was an American asking a lot of questions. However, the one fact that does seem to be true is that there is prostitution in the camps and that some of the local Armilat males avail themselves of the young Palestinian girls. Indeed, I was taken to several of these girls one afternoon, beautiful, well fed full figured teens with large dark eyebrows and very clean faces. They were most embarrassed, for fear I would tell their parents.**

## ***ISLAM***

**Shafi school of Islam. Their principal Mosque was built two years before the end of the occupation. (E-<sup>(11)</sup>)**

## ***ZUARA AND MULID***

**At the tomb of Sheik Zuweid, and at Zuara village between Abu Taweila and Sheik Zuweid. (E-<sup>(12)</sup>)**

## ***POPULATION***

**Populations statistics is one of those strategic issues that neither the bedouins or the Egyptians liked to talk about. I am not sure I trust this figure, but I was told 25,000 for the entire gabillya in 1987, Khan Yunis included. An**

Egyptian Army Census conducted in 1967 indicated that the Armilat has a population of 24,000 at that time.

(E-<sup>(13)</sup>)

## ***Tatoos***

As with many women in the Sinai, many Armilat wear tattoos. This comes from a tribal identification system which has lost its meaning. Now it serves only as decoration, and is rarely used by young women. (E-<sup>(14)</sup>)

## ***Clothing of the Armilat Women***

The women wear traditional garb. It was explained to me that the reason for black is identification. It is easy to see a women against the sand and the system goes back thousands of years, evolving from when women wore only black to the current mixture of colors with the black. This was the most specific reference to this definition I could find in any tribe; though when asked why women wear black, many other bedouins who were willing to speculate did suggest identification as a reason.

Men often wear giffiya and agals; but usually wear pants.

The women of the Armilat and the Sawarka wear black skirts; but will wear any color of blouse, black scarves if of marriageable age, yet not wed. They might wear a white scarf after marriage, not before. Married women pluck their eyebrows; not unmarried women; however, this is changing.

## ***Marriage and Divorce***

Some girls are married off at 13 and 14; however, most do not marry until they are 17-20.

Dating happens throughout the Sinai; but usually it is quite a secret thing, even forbidden as with the Alegat and Muzeina -- so I was always interested in answers to this question. I was told by several young men who often date that dating is only allowed in public. Also, a man may not take his "lovely" away from her town. For the first several dates, she wears a veil; but after about five dates she takes it off, the man having learned "of her mind. Now he may gaze upon her face."

Sex education is generally passed on by peers. Condoms are used in many tribes, including the Armilat; though I never heard of a girl using anything to prevent a pregnancy. On the other hand adultery and fornication is punished by death for the man and possible death for the woman.

**Marriages are arranged by the father. The prospective groom sends his parents to the parents of the bride and they talk. If the bride's parents are satisfied, the groom visits the family after a few days and brings gifts. Usually he will pay for everything associated with the marriage including the bed, gold, dishes, and clothing. But sometimes the Father will be proud and not take money. Then he is given a token.**

**Some reports indicated that man could not remarry a women they had divorced; but discussions with locals indicated the contrary. No special ceremony is required, only the procedure for first marriage.**

**Traditional teaching indicates a man may not sell the property his wife brings into the family -- else face a possible divorce on ground; however, this isn't the case in the Armilat. A man can sell his wife's property without permission of the wife.**

### ***Property Ownership***

**Land is owned by bedouins in this tribe, not just the tribe. Following Islamic practice, the land owned by an individual eventually becomes quite small, really too small to keep a family in any reasonable income. In order to take care of that problem, the profits of large pieces of land are collected together and then disbursed throughout the family.**

**A woman does not inherit property. If a man dies, his wife can live in his house until she dies, and her father in law will then pick up the tab for all of her needs; however, should she decide to marry again, she must leave and not see her sons again. The sons do not inherit either, unless the father of the dead man says so. He decides on the split of property. Again, daughters and widows do not inherit land.(E-<sup>(15)</sup>) So, once again, though the Armilat are liberal in important ways, they also have broken away from some Islamic traditions. Islam gives women certain specified rights, namely to inherit and own property, to divorce under certain circumstances. From what my sources tell me, the tribe has separated itself from those traditions.**

### ***Cairns***

**The Armilat used to use cairns for whitening faces in much the manner described by Murray in his classic work Sons of Ishmael; but no longer.(E-<sup>(16)</sup>)**

### ***Ghouls and Spirits***

**My sources had no stories about Ghouls, though they could understand the basis for the Tarrabin Ghouls story. At the time of the story they indicated there was no food in the Sinai. "People in the desert just have flour. No meat**

or fruit, only pita. Maybe tomatoes, garlic onion, hot green peppers. If he had this fifty years ago, he was a wealthy man." (E-<sup>(17)</sup>)

### ***Photographs***

The women do not like having their photograph taken.

### ***Hospitality***

All seem very hospitable. For example on 9/26/87 several helped me out of the sand when my pickup truck was stuck in the Yamit area. Later when I had tea in one women's house, I was invited back for more. Great people.

### ***BESHA***

In 1987, the tribe conducted Beshah for major personal and intertribal affairs under the direction of Grand Mubasha Gareebe. (E-<sup>(18)</sup>)

### ***Conflict resolution in the Armilat***

This is done at five levels:

**1st. Kafeel** If two people are having a problem involving honor, the two might each choose a powerful person in the tribe, or someone physically bigger than they are as a champion and intermediary. Then, the hurt party would personally approach the other's Kafeel, asking for resolution. The Kafeel is paid for his work. They are not hereditary.

**2nd. Kabir** Personal Problems and problems between people within one hamula.

**3rd Adraybee** Problems not resolved by Kabir are appealed to the Adraybee, as well as problems between Hamula.

**4th Manshaad** Handles problems not resolved by the Kabir.

The second through fourth are hereditary, each Hamula having holders of each title.

**5th Jrabee:** Problems not resolved at the first three levels can be resolved by a Mubasha, or as the Armilat call it, a Jrabee, master of the Beshah; but only

if there is a question of truth. As with most other tribes, this is done near Ismailliah.

Before a problem goes to the Jrabiee, each side is expected to fill out a report on the problem in writing, setting out their side of the dispute. This is done at the house of the Manshaad. Then, Besha. For the Armilat, a coffee frying spoon is heated for two hours until it turns from red to blue, then the accused is expected to lick the spoon three times in quick succession. If the accuser wants to worry the accused, he can lick the spoon first. The Jrabiee then makes a determination based on the degree of swelling on the tongue.

Besha is not prescribed in the Koran; being a traditional Bedouin system of justice predating Islam. Almost every tribe in the Sinai uses it; but an interesting thing here, my source indicates that Jrabiee are notorious for being susceptible to bribery. After all, their only fee is 5 to 10 LE! Some people may give up to 100 LE.

Another interesting I noticed is that the bedouins of this tribe consider conflict to be almost a sickness and describe the actions of their judges as opening a conflict the way a doctor would open a boil.

## ***Symbols***

I have not seen this anywhere else in the Sinai; but these folks have personal symbols that are often painted on buildings. They come in three classes (a) Key (b) Knife and (c) circles with arrows showing a clockwise direction. The symbols do not indicate a family, rather an individual person. (E-<sup>(19)</sup>)

## ***Footnotes to Armilat***

1. Selan Rabeela Ektefan 8/27/87, Feress of the Armilat on numerous occasions, Tribal Elders on 9/26/87 and 11/8/87 and on many other occasion, Personal inspection trips 1986-1988, the last in March, 1988.
2. Saber El-Geborg of Rafah 5-25-1987. Tribe is also mentioned in Journey's, pg 119 (Spelled El-Ramilat). Gamile, 6/8/87., Murray, pg 253, Selan Rabeela Ektefaeen 8/27/87, Feress of the Armilat 9/26/87 and on many other occasions, Feress of the Armilat 11/7/87, numerous visits to the dirah.
3. Some reportedly have important positions in the national government, though I've never had the time to fully investigate this.
4. Survey of dirah on September, 1987, March, April, 1988. Feress of the Armilat 9/26/87 and 10/11/87..
5. Inspection of Dirah 9/26/87, Feress of the Armilat 11/7/87..

- 6. Ferres of the Armilat 10/11/87, 11/7/87.**
- 7. Ferress of the Armilat and tribal elders 10/11/87**
- 8. Feress of the Armilat 11/7/87.**
- 9. DIA report, for example.**
- 10. DIA, pg 12**
- 11. Sheik Shadda of the Armilat, "sheik of the Mosque" He called the people to prayers every day. 9/26/87.**
- 12. Selan Rabeea Ektefan 8/27/87, Feress of the Armilat 11/7/87.**
- 13. Ferris of the Armilat. 9/26/87, Sinai, Moon Land**
- 14. Ferres of the Armilat 9/26/87, Various women in the dirah on 11/8/87.**
- 15. Tribal elders of the Armilat 11/7/87.**
- 16. Tribal elders of the Armilat 11/8/87.**
- 17. Feress of the Armilat 11/7/87.**
- 18. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87; Ferres of the Armilat, 10/11/87; Selan Rabeea Ektefan 8/27/87 (didn't know name of village)**
- 19. Inspection of 9/26/87**

## Tribe Chapter: [El-Ayayideh](#): (Ayayda)

### **DIRAH**

[E-<sup>\(1\)</sup>](#),

Live in NW Sinai near Suez Canal. In 1935 the tribe and lived in a range due east of Ismaillia. Apparently, a larger portion lived west of Suez Canal in Sharqiya. Locals informed me that the bulk of the tribe lives in 1987 in Balusa, Bir el Abd, Nagila and Raba on the Via Maris. In the 1930's during the rainy season, they were found in the Galala mountains but at other times on the low ground north of the Cairo-Suez road.(E-<sup>(1)</sup>)

### **POPULATION**

In the 1700's they managed a horse cavalry of 600; but between 1816 when Burckhardt saw them and Murray in 1935 they had been reduced to 100 tents somewhat allied to the Hawatat. (E-<sup>(2)</sup>)

1935 300 people and a 100 tents (E<sup>(3)</sup>)

### **BESHA**

In the 1930's this was the tribe that performed Besha for most of the Sinai. At that time the fee for Besha was 10 pounds, sterling. In the 1920's the fee varied from 5 pounds to ten pounds depending on the level of trouble. That went to a neutral third party who assured fair play. The Sheik was paid five pounds by the losing party. Conducted in the home of the Besha Sheik or at another predetermined spot, in the 1920's (and I think up until the Israeli occupation) this was used for murder, theft or any serious charge; however, local Akharsa Bedouin inform me that for this tribe and their own only the elderly now engage in Besha for personal matters, instead reserving this for inter-tribal fights. (E-<sup>(4)</sup>)

In 1929 a small elderly man named Hamdan was the hereditary holder of the post of Holder of the Red Hot Spoon. He conducted the test for the entire Sinai. For his instrument, he used the ladle for roasting coffee beans. The victim's tongue was checked out after each try; however, after the third, he was allowed to drink water. Other such judges at the time were the Sheik of the Amran tribe east of Akaba and another in Medina. (E-<sup>(5)</sup>)

See article on Besha: In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(6)</sup>)



## ***Sub-Divisions***

(E-<sup>(7)</sup>)

Ayaida and Saltna: Under Sheik Musallam ibn Saba

Fawai'da Shaikh Selim Abu Fuda

Jerab'a Shaikh Aid Abu Rish

Qawa'ila Sheikh 'Aweimer ibn 'Ayad

## ***Chief Wells***

(E-<sup>(8)</sup>)

Abul 'Oruq, Maqeibra, Murray once owned gardens in Wadi Feiran and Wadi Solaf

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## **Tribe Chapter: The - Azazma:**

### ***DIRAH***

The tribe lived in the SE corner of the triangle in 1931. (E-<sup>(9)</sup>) I am still reviewing the borders of their dirah, but for the present I am only aware that they live near St. Catherine's just north of the Dahab/Ras Nasrani Ras Nasrani-Sharm el Sheikh Roads.

### ***HISTORY***

It was Jarvis's opinion they were similar to the **Amalikites** defeated by the Hebrews in Exodus, chapter xvii, verses 8-16. Murray thought they might have sprung from **Sinqir**, a frankish castaway and thus the ruling family of the Sinagri, western Bedouins descendant of Ali el-Abyad (the white), eldest son of Ali bin Aqar bin Dib.(E-<sup>(10)</sup>)

Within the Sinai, they are desperately poor people living in traditional dual sectioned tents, though badly tattered. Frequently the tents have small semi circle corrals built in front of the entrance. They raise sheep, goats and camels. In Israel, they often find work as anti-smuggling troops for the Israelis.(E-<sup>(11)</sup>)

Fought wars with the Tarabin at one point in history and have maintained a dislike for them. (E-<sup>(12)</sup>)

## **Sheik**

In 1986 the Sheik was Sheik Khalil Abu Rabaya, but in 1987 this changed to his son.(E-<sup>(13)</sup>)

**Tribe Chapter:** [Azzaza:](#)

## **DIRAH**

Moses Valley (E-<sup>(14)</sup>)

## **INCOME**

Same as Gudeirat (E-<sup>(15)</sup>)

## **ZUARA/MULID**

This is conducted at the tomb of Sheikh Suweilam who died "long ago." (E-<sup>(16)</sup>) The tomb is located on the south side of the road in Moses Valley between the road and the tell. There is no dome over the tomb, which is very unusual. Site is also supposed to be the location of where Miriam, sister of Moses, is buried. (E-<sup>(17)</sup>) From personal observation, I believe that the Zuara are held every week on either Thursday or Friday. My trips tend to be on Saturdays. Each time I have found evidence of sacrificial goats, and there is always blood at the hanging tree, a tree closer to the tell in a grove. (E-<sup>(18)</sup>)

## **Besha**

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(19)</sup>)

**Tribe Chapter:** [El-Badara:](#)

## **DIRAH**

Murray recorded this tribe in 1935; but I have not seen evidence of them in my survey. In 1935 they consisted of 20 tents in the Gebel Igma area, named after them because the bedu were 'Ajam, non-Arab.(E-<sup>(20)</sup>)

## **BACKGROUND**

Considered by some to be non-Arab. **WHY?** (E-<sup>(21)</sup>)

## ***SHEIK***

Early part of the century: Salam Hamdan Abu Arbid (E-27)

## ***Besha***

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(22)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: [El-Bali \(billi\)](#)**

## ***Dirah***

Encamp around Tel-Abd as far as Kantara, as well as west of the Canal: Economic and administrative center is Kantara See also Qatawiya. (E-<sup>(23)</sup>)

## ***Besha***

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(24)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: [El-Bayadin, \(Bayadieen\)](#)**

## ***DIRAH***

In 1925 this tribe lives in Qatia; however now reportedly encamp around Tel-Abd as far as Kantara, as well as west of the Canal: Economic and administrative center is Kantara. See also Qatawiya. According to Akharsa bedu in Balusa, some of these folks also live in that fabled town. Locals in El Arish have identified members of the tribe in El Arish and Sheik Zuweid. (E-<sup>(25)</sup>)

## ***BACKGROUND***

In the 1930's the **Bayadin** Bedouins were recorded to be six foot tall or more, with huge beards. Jarvis speculated they may have been descendant from a roman colonial legion stranded in the Sinai after the Islamic invasion. Jarvis had a lot of thoughts on this. He also speculated that the fishermen on the north coast might have been descendant of Romans and others. Unfortunately, he had no proof. I haven't found any either. (E-<sup>(26)</sup>)

In 1925 they had a paramount Sheik. (E-<sup>(27)</sup>)

## ***JUSTICE***

(see article on justice)

## ***INCOME***

In the 1930's these folks were known to be smugglers.

## ***POPULATION***

1926-1936 400 at most. (E-<sup>(28)</sup>)

## ***BACKGROUND***

In the thirties bullied others, according to Jarvis.

## ***Besha***

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(29)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: [El-Dawajara](#) (Dawaghra)**

## ***DIRAH***

They encamp around Bir el-Abd as far as Kantara, as well as west of the Canal: Economic and administrative center is Kantara See also Qatawiya (E-<sup>(30)</sup>)

## ***BACKGROUND***

Supposed to be an offshoot of the Hitteim, an outcast tribe. According to legend, the Hitteim was a wealthy tribe in the early days of Islam; but brought a curse upon their head when though they offered to help pay for the building of the **Kaaba** at Mecca, they refused to **dirty their hands**. Their money was refused. For years, they became as the untouchables in India. No self respecting Arab would have anything to do with them. So strong is the hatred of the tribe that they are supposed to have a distinct evil smelling odor about them.(E-<sup>(31)</sup>)

## ***Besha***

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(32)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: [El-Geborg](#): (Dabour)**

## ***Dirah***

Family in Rafah (E-<sup>(33)</sup>)

## **Besha**

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(34)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: El-Heiwat (Lehewat)**

### **Population**

1967 7,000 (E-<sup>(35)</sup>)

1985 4,500 (E-<sup>(36)</sup>)

## **Besha**

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(37)</sup>)(E-<sup>(38)</sup>)

## **Dirah**

In 1935 lived between NW of Aquaba and Kuntilla and El-Thamed. 1985 DIA report has their range as E and W section of Al Tih, Gebel Magarah, Gifgafa, Sir Al Haqib, Sudr, Gebel Nafi'a and Bir al Thamed. In September, 1987, I interviewed a group of pretty rough types at Bir Betal, south of Kuntilla, whom I strongly suspect were smugglers.

(F-<sup>(39)</sup>)(E-<sup>(40)</sup>)

## **Sections of Tribe**

(E-<sup>(41)</sup>)

Hamdat

Hanatilah

Karafimah

Kasasibah

Kalayafah.

Khawatarah

Mastur

Najmat: History of Najmat: Apparently, the Maaza have an obligation to this sub-tribe of the Heiwat dating back to 1820. Members of the tribe murdered one Suleiman ibn Eliwiya and then hid in the tent of a fellow Heiwat tribesman claiming tent protection from Eid ibn Husein who managed to arrange for the murderers to escape.(E-<sup>(42)</sup>)

Qarafatin

Safayihat

Salamiyan

## **HISTORY**

Famous for being robbers, Jarvis' **Lehewat** tribe. He was of the opinion that they descend from the Midianites of biblical fame. However, according to Murray derives from the Arabian Arab confederation of Rabi'a. Most ancient known ancestor was Sa'ad Sadiq el Wa'd.(E-<sup>(43)</sup>)

Broke away from the Masa'id division of Beni Atiya. Infamous for ferocity, according to Murray. In 1856 assisted the Terabin in their war with the Sawarka when later was defeated and chased into El Arish.(E-<sup>(44)</sup>)

In 1923 relations with Tiyaha were apparently good enough that a woman of the Heiwat was married to a Tiyaha.(E-<sup>(45)</sup>)

## **ART**

In the Museum of Bedouin Culture near Kibbutz Lahav, Israel is an unusual exhibition of stone statues by two Bedouins, one an Israeli named Hasan el Esad of the Lagiya (F-<sup>(46)</sup>) and the other Salem Chmed Odeh of Heiwat. Odeh is supposed to be a member of the Karadmeh clan (Karafimah) and a millstone maker for Sinai Bedouin. According to the museum, his tribe lives west of Eilat.

During the Israeli Occupation (or perhaps before--- this is not clear) Salem took up sculpting, mostly animals. Perhaps to escape his tribe from whom he was ostracized, during the occupation he took up residence in Wadi Sidra; but later built a stone house not far from the Eilat-Sharm highway. Photos of his work are enclosed. I intend to purchase copies. (E-<sup>(47)</sup>)

## **Cultural Awareness**

Just south of Naqb and about three kilometers to the west of shacks that looks very Muzeina is a road leading to Nuweiba. There is a rest stop on either side of the road well known for their hospitality. This is also a good place to catch a ride. I had coffee at the eastern one in June, 1987 and in September drank coke with an expedition I was leading on the way south to Wadi Malha. On both occasion, I met mell to do Heiwat. One on the

September visit, I two such people, one about 35 in a white gefiyya with smooth ceremonial, gray flannel jacket, white abba and an expensive watch on his left hand. He was also very clean. The other was 29 with an off white galibeyya with a collar. Both men wore plastic sandals.

The men we talked to confirmed what I had been told in June, that only Heiwat lived; but they also put the lie to the theory that Bedouins never know anything about the world. After we talked to them, they asked a member of my party if she was going to see Aida in Cairo, noting that the ticket prices had recently come down. They also asked questions about the negotiations on Taba, saying the disputed land belong to Egypt. They also wanted to know what we thought of the Iran-Iraq war.

## ***Besha***

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismailia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(48)</sup>)

## ***Footnotes***

1. Makmoud of Balusa, 8/2/87
2. Journey's, pg. 119, Murray 244
3. Murray 244
4. Jarvis, pg. 44-45, Local visits in August, 1987, Kennett, pg. 109
5. Kennett, pg. 109
6. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87
7. Murray, pg. 244
8. Murray, pg. 244
9. Murray, 164
10. Murray, pg. 40
11. Jarvis, pg. 164, Ferris of the Armilat 10/11/87
12. Randolph, 130
13. Ferris of the Armilat
14. Suweilam of the Gudeirat, Aug 28, 1987

15. Suweilam of the Gudeirat Aug 28, 1987

16. Suweilam of the Gudeirat Aug 28, 1987

17. Traditional beliefs. No archeological evidence, though biblical history does support theory.

18. Visits in 1986-1987.

19. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

20. Murray 245

21. Murray, pg. 245

22. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

23. Sinai Journey's

24. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

25. Yesterday. pg. 17, Sherif of El Arish 10/8/87

26. Desert and Delta, pp. 139-43. Photos of Bayadin opposite page 193.

27. Kennett, pg. 59

28. Desert and Delta, pg. 139-43

29. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

30. Sinai Journeys, Murray 252

31. Kennett, pg. 25

32. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

33. Interview of Saber el-Geborg of Rafah, 5/25/87

34. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

35. Sinai, moon Land

36. DIA, pg. 11

37. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87



38. Locals at Naqb September 12, 1987

39. All wore coats, except for one who seemed to be dull witted. HE wore a kefiyya. All wore home made daggers; but the dull witted one wouldn't let us photograph his. The folks were watering their camels. Instinct tells me that they were smugglers by the look and conversation we had; but I don't have any proof of that. Interview of 9/12/87

40. DIA, pg 11

41. DIA, pg. 11

42. Murray, pg. 212

43. Murray 250

44. Journey's, pg. 119, Jarvis, pg. 165, Murray, pg. 25,33,251, DIA, pg. 11

45. Kennett, pp. 136-138

46. ESAD lives near Lahav and works as a caretaker at a primary school in Lagiva. Herbal medicine expert.

47. Visit to Museum in July, 1987.

48. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

## Tribe Chapter: El Muzeina

*Note looking for a spot. Thamed water is great. (E-<sup>(1)</sup>)*

### - Population

Population: 1985 4,200 (E-<sup>(2)</sup>) The women at Bir Ashar indicated that they had a population of about 350; however, we did not see enough houses to support that contention. At Urwasad we were told that while many families have eight people and that it is safe to use a formula of four to a tent or house.

Question: What is the village's perception of their tribe's population? What about the village's population? (F-<sup>(3)</sup>)

### **Tribal Divisions**

**Alawinah (or Alwana) (from Ali, son of Alwan) (E-<sup>(4)</sup>),**

**Faranja (former member of the Muzeina tribe, now Aleigat.)**

#### History of the Faranja

**A lawless section of the Muzeina who broke away from tribe around 1935 lived in the area of wadi Sidri and Wadi Feiran. Regarded as squatters in Alegat territory. Some of the tribe worked in the turquoise mines then being exploited and sold their gems at Ayun Musa or Cairo. (E-<sup>(5)</sup>)**

**Shararawinah (E-<sup>(6)</sup>)**

**Al Hamayidah (Hamaida or Hamada) descendants of original inhabitants of region.** In the 1880's this sub-tribe became a tenant of the Muzeina and by 1935 was considered to be part of that tribe, rather than Alegat. (E-<sup>(7)</sup>)

#### History of Hamada

In the 1880's this sub-tribe became a tenant of the Muzeina and by 1935 was considered to be part of that tribe, rather than Alegat. This happened because of a blood vengeance relationship between Sheikh Mudakhil Suleiman and one 'Aid of the Hamada. In their youth, each had killed the other's father; so though they settled their differences later on,

when Mudakhil became Sheik of the Aleqat, the Hamada left the tribe and later joined the Muzeina.(E-<sup>(8)</sup>)

### **Hawayittah (E-<sup>(9)</sup>)**

Also known as Heiwat, this group lives on the South Side of Nuweiba in Wadi Nuweiba.(E-<sup>(10)</sup>)

### **Awlad Ali or Wilad Ali, from Ghanim, son of Alwan (E-<sup>(11)</sup>)(F-<sup>(12)</sup>)**

### **Ghawarma, from Ghanim, son of Alwan (E-<sup>(13)</sup>)**

### **Meseid (E-<sup>(14)</sup>)**

### **Subahat (E-<sup>(15)</sup>)**

### **Tarabish (E-<sup>(16)</sup>)**

The question of sections or sub clans elicited different answers everywhere I went. DIA lists Alawinah, Shararawinah, Awlad Ali and Hawayittah as the divisions. Murray listed only three Alawinah, Ghawarma and Wilad Ali. Members of the tribe at Merna (in the Sharm region) indicated Meseid, Subahat and Tarabish. The women of Bir Ashare (in the Nuweiba region) could not list their divisions; however, were firm that Alawinah, Awlad Ali and Hawayittah were not Muzeina, rather tribes to the north. At Urwasad (in the Sharm area) we were told the groups tended to mix it up in different villages. For example, in Urwasad there were members of the Alawinah (**sons of Ali**) and Ghwarma, though Ghwarma mostly lived in Wadi Sal, the area where their paternal ancestor is buried. (see Zuara), and Ein Hudra. As for Wilad Ali, they indicated this is a sub-tribe of the Alawinah. They were not familiar with the Shararawinah or Hawayittah, though they thought they might exist as small gatherings. (<sup>(17)</sup>)

The men of Urwasad indicated that the tribal sub-divisions were Alewat Harb, Geraba, Awewat Jindi, Derama and Awewat Sumahad.

## **WOMEN**

In the 1930's in the Northern Sinai hair was arranged in plaits; however the women of the Tuara wore theirs over a leather piece in the form of a horn over the forehead. Usually a bead was found on the horn. Palmer recorded red beads, Na'um in 1916 blue and Murray in 1935 often white. All were there to ward off the evil eye. Every female had a horn. So far as I can determine, the only tribe in the Sinai now using the horn is the Garasha, Alegat, some older women in the Gebeliah and perhaps a very few older women in the Tarabin. The Muzeina no longer do it. Additionally, virgins wore a Seibeika, which was ripped off on the wedding night to be replaced by a ring through the nose. This was true of the Sawalha and the Alegat; however, not the Muzeina. (E-<sup>(18)</sup>)

## **DIRAH**

Often felt to be the newest of the southerners, I believe their Dirah, or range of operations to have been around the coast of the Gulf of Aquaba for about 400 years; but the borders have undergone various changes. DIA has their range as south of A-Tor to Ras Muhammed and then north to Al Tarbia and Al Ramlah. Other sources differ. Murray, relating a blood vengeance incident around 1913, involving the Garasha, Aleqat, Muzeina and Faranja, indicated that the Naqb Budra Pass was then on the border between the Aleqat and Muzeina (E-<sup>(19)</sup>)

Reportedly a noble tribe from the Hejaz, during the six day war they sold arms and contraband to the Egyptians, gaining the rest of their money from gardening and farming coconut trees. In 1935 the eastern half of the Peninsula and the territory south to Wadi Mi'r belonged to the Muzeina. The land between Wadi Sidri and Ayun Musa, near Suez belonged to the Alegat. (E-<sup>(20)</sup>)

People at Urwasad told me that their tribe lies primarily in El Arish, Dahab, Nuweiba, Sharm el Sheik, St. Catherine's, Wadi Feiran, Wadi El Sheikh and A-Tor.(E-<sup>(21)</sup>)

MFO personnel tell me that the tribe in the Merna area has been in the region since at least 1983. The interviewees did not say how long they had been on site, only that they are mobile and move with the circumstances, as do the people of Urwasad. They said they were of the Meseid branch tribe and that there are at least two other branches: Subahat and Tarabish. Members of the other two sub-groups work at South Camp; but not the Meseid. The Merna is their principal area; however, branches are to be found through out the Sinai.

Question for this section: What is this village's perception of the tribal dirah?

## **Besha**

This is done at Ismailliah by a special judge called a Mu Basha, or in Cairo. Unlike with some other ceremonies, they use a long knife heated with gasoline. As with all Besha ceremonies, witnesses are present to ensure that the metal is hot enough. In addition, we were informed that an individual may only request Besha if no witnesses were present to the crime.(E-<sup>(22)</sup>)

## **HONESTY**

Murray found these people to be quite honest and cited two excellent examples. Well within the Muzeina territory was a hut abandoned in 1893 by German Naturalist Kaiser which remained un plundered as late as 1921. Also, there were the buildings abandoned in 1904 at Samra mine, left alone as late as 1929, all this despite the great scarcity of fuel in the winter. (E-<sup>(23)</sup>)

## **BLOOD VENGEANCE**

Some tribes demand the death penalty for murder, this orchestrated under the rules of Blood vengeance. But that wasn't so with the Muzeina. We were informed that it serves no purpose to set up a system of revenge by killing people; so if a man is found of murder or manslaughter, he must pay a fine. I suspect there are exceptions to this rule; but it was a refreshing statement. (E-<sup>(24)</sup>)

## **ISLAM**

Of the Maliki school, according to local sources; however, Murray recorded in the 30' that these folks also worshipped a rain goddess named **Umm el Gheith**. (<sup>(25)</sup>)

## **ZUARA (Zora)**

Once a year the ceremony of Zuara (E-<sup>(26)</sup>) (also known as sheik Day or Mulid (the name for the annual ceremony) (E-<sup>(27)</sup>) is performed by most Sinai tribes at the tombs of Sheiks, or in nearby shelters called mak'ad when a Bedouin or group of Bedouin wish to ask the Sheikh to intervene with Allah on their behalf. Zuara is the generic name for any activity of this sort. In addition to the Mulid, the bedouins often practice Zuara on a weekly basis. The sick Bedouins or their relatives, pregnant mothers looking for healthy children, or people looking for a good crop, go to a tomb.

My Merna interviewees indicated this tribe does not practice a Mulid; instead stating that individuals go into the mountains for Zuara as they like and pray at one of several unspecified tombs. However, the folks at Urwasad disputed the Merna account. According to them, the Muzeina not only do a Mulid but are required to do it. In addition, wives are brought along as a must. The spot is the tomb of Sheik Feraja, in a southerly finger of Wadi Sal. I have seen it by helicopter; but haven't landed on the spot. However, it looked like a regular tomb, a white dome with a crescent on top. They also confirmed that Dahiyya is performed at the Zuara, as well as many other dances. As for the regular Zuara, this is done on Fridays; but only as needed. (<sup>(28)</sup>)

In June, 1929 a Zuara was held at Nebi Salah's tomb at which time a camel was slaughtered. Apparently, they also slaughtered at Nebi Harun. (E-<sup>(29)</sup>)

## **SCHOOLING (Muzeina)**

Both boys and girls at Merna go to school in Sharm, as do the boys and girls at Urwasad, (F-<sup>(30)</sup>) where they learn the basics of reading and writing, arithmetic and Islam. Other villages between Nuweiba and South Camp had access to local schools with the same curriculum. In the case of Bir Ashare (little well) the children attend a school in buildings which at first I thought was Israeli built; but actually seem to have been built by the Israelis. Many of the children we saw spoke a few words of English, especially Bedu 3, whom I suspect knew more than he was letting on. Mother was called Mama by Zieda. (E-<sup>(31)</sup>)

While at Bir Ashare, I met a tall, young, shy, unveiled girl of about 8 named Jameela who read my name tag. It is in English and Arabic. Thinking on that, I came upon an idea to save the U.S. Army a few problems at the sling load site. The children who assemble at the site and their mothers often come too close to the helicopters during the sling load operation. To prevent an accident, an army linguist came by one day and told the people not to go past a certain nearby rock until they were signaled that the sling load operation was over. Then they could sell their wares.

The agreement is ephemeral, something needing reinforcement once in awhile; but it is not always possible to provide Arabic linguists on the site. I suggested they provide a card in simple Arabic with straightforward instructions covered in plastic? (E-<sup>(32)</sup>)

The children were on summer holiday between the two principal Islamic festivals the Id Al Fitr and the Id Al Adha, Kurban Bairam (the big feast) which lasts for four days.

Question: Do both boys and girls go to school in your village? What do they study? Islam, for example?

## ***HISTORICAL BACKGROUND***

On the fifth of July, 1987 and for two succeeding days I visited seven Muzeina villages in the interior north of Sharm el Sheikh and along the Aquaba beach between the Ras Nasrani Airport and Dahab. The gebilla has not fared well, and is easily the poorest of the tribes I have visited. I gather from reports by Murray in 1935 that they were poor even then. According to him, they had a contempt for the accumulation of worldly possessions. Their villages still have that appearance. To their credit, Murray found in them chivalry; but unfortunately also a love of litigation. (E-<sup>(33)</sup>)

Derive from a female descendant, not a male.(E-<sup>(34)</sup>)

On the morning of the fifth I spent the morning with members of the Muzeina at Merna, the Bedouin term for the wash leading into Ras Nasrani airport. This is a shanty town of 16 plywood and cardboard single room shacks, plus a partially built sun baked brick hut. The construction seemed to be made of refuse from MFO's South Camp and the construction camps on the Ras Nasrani beach. The Egyptians were building hotels; but I don't think they used the refuse simply because construction was going on. Almost without exception, whether far inland or on the coast, or near the resorts of Ras Nasrani, Muzeina camps were dirt poor and their buildings identical. Even their bedding was different from the rest of the Sinai, bright pads laid on boxes, instead of the ground.

Our principal interviewees at the Merna camp were Aziza, a Howeitat wife of one of the local Muzeina, and a man of about forty who would not give his name. The group was the most reticent of any tribe I have interviewed. Not so reticent were the women of Bir Ashare near Nuweiba, though they knew little about their tribe's history. Better were the men of Urwasad, a village to the west of Merna. They not only knew a great deal about

their tribe; but because one of their men had married a North Carolinian, were willing to tell all.

The village of Bir Ashare is quite unlike any other I have seen in the tribe. The houses lie in rows and are built of brick and cinder block. Wells are present and gardens surrounded by stone. They have a school made up of four white structures topped with red roofs.

Bir Ashare lies to the west of an MFO sling load site under SCC-6; but most of our discussions took place took place at the sling load site. Though the Bedouin probably use this place regularly for caring of sheep. There were no men present, only old and young women and boys and girls. (E-<sup>(35)</sup>) The women had things to sell. An ephemeral agreement has been set up whereby the bedu stay away from the soldiers while they load the helicopters. The idea is that they should stay behind a rock until the loading operation is complete. At that time they may come forward and eat and trade their wares. They will not eat pork products.

The men of Urwasad told us an interesting fable about the creation of the Sinai tribes. According to them seven brother and their wives came to the Peninsula and from them sprang the tribes Muzeina, Aulid Said, Garasha, Tarabin, Haweitat, Tiyaha, Alegat and Sawalha. (E-<sup>(36)</sup>)

## **THE SHEIK**

According to the folks at Merna, unlike the Alegat, the Muzeina has a paramount Sheik. His name is Muhanna and he lives in Wadi Kid. The people at Urwasad disputed this, saying that Muhanna was only the Sheik for Nuweiba, and shepherder. I thought this was fascinating. Merna and Urwasad are only a few miles apart! (E-<sup>(37)</sup>).

## **HYGIENE**

While there was trash about in Merna and some other villages, the people were not filthy. Obviously they could not wash, as there was little water and not much effort was made to rid themselves of flies; however I saw few signs of disease, though some malnutrition. At Merna The children's teeth were in excellent shape, though the adult males had terrible, rotting teeth. A beautiful little girl named Zieda had well spaced, brilliantly white teeth. From what I could see, in the Merna village and others, the adult women had most of their teeth as well. Also typical of Sinai Bedouin sanitation, chickens and goats wandered in and out of houses. When we were served tea, it was on a pair of blankets spiced by dung pellets; however, the bedu took their sandals off when sitting on the blankets, and served their tea in brilliantly clean French shot glasses. Bedu three tasted the tea first to see if it was ok before serving with the right hand. All primary actions were done with the right hand.

Dung pellets powdered the soil of the camps, which the bedu did not seem to mind. I have noticed a real inattention in the Sinai to the filth associated with dried dung. For a people who understand that dung is dirty (hence the use of the right, not the left hand),

they show a remarkable flexibility when the stuff dries, even using cracked dung pellets for pieces on board games. Since many children play in the dirt, I wonder how much of a worm problem they suffer. At least they do not fool around with human dung. Defecation is done away from the camp, though often in broad daylight in front of people, even though at a distance.

The clothes at Urwasad were in better condition than at the other villages. At all of the villages, though some children had remarkably clean, white teeth, most were heavily marked with tarter, and the adult teeth were marked with nicotine stains. Many were chipped, and there was evidence of bad separation. I saw no fungus at Bir Ashare though soldiers tell me they have. Most seemed rather clean. One girl had a terrible case of warts on her left hand.

As is normal in the Sinai, all of the women at Bir Ashare smoke. An interesting story here. When we offered to light the cigarette of the principal woman we were told that a man must light his cigarette first, then the woman lights her own.

## ***INCOME***

I gather the villages make some of their money from drug smuggling, certainly the middleman sale of hash. We had only been in Merna for a few minutes when we were asked by an old lady if we wanted to buy hash; but only after that cute little girl with the white teeth checked us out by asking in English if we were police. They can't be making too much money this way however. Though a 12v TV and antennae, two Toyota pickups and a leather bound radio were evident at Merna and more of the same in the other camps, there were no other signs of wealth, only abject penury.

Despite earlier reports, none of the branches do major farming any longer. This is because of a lack of water. Drinking water is piped in from A-Tor to the Merna region for example and is very scarce. Food is equally scarce. However, even at Bir Ashare, where water is plentiful to supply the needs of the village and the Tarrabin in Nuweiba, farming is not extensive. According to the senior male present (labeled as Bedouin 3 in the bibliography) the Egyptians used to provide rations for the tribe; however, have not done so for 15 months. The fellow complained a great deal about the weather as well, which he found intolerable in the summer. Despite past loyalties, they do not like the Egyptians.

The men at Merna and Urwasad made money in auto repair and construction; however in July there was apparently little work, though some in other branches of the tribe still work at South Camp.

Many Bedouin I have met have not been out of the Sinai; however, Bedu 3 and his son Zeid have been in Cairo. "Not far in a car."

Question: How do they make their money? How about from handicrafts?



## **EATING HABITS**

Since most of the villages are either on the coast or near it, I wondered about their eating habits. Many Muslims will not eat shell fish. No such inhibitions for the Muzeina. They love conch and lobster, and other forms of shell fish. I was offered a live lobster at Nebd on the coast which I would have purchased straight away if it were not for the fact that I had several hours of interviews in front of me, and no way to keep the beast alive. Fishing is done with nets, not hooks.(E-<sup>(38)</sup>) I also had occasion to view some of the nets, and they are made of commercial material of good construction. Oddly, the Muzeina at Urwasad said they hated the ocean. No explanation.

Question: Confirm

When I visited the old Israeli resort town of Nebd in July, 1987 on the Gulf of Aquaba coast I found it had no school for its children. The houses formed a meandering line along the beach and were made of plywood and cardboard, wire mesh and fencing. Very poor, though there were a few Toyotas and TV antennas. Still evident was an Israeli snack bar and an Israeli ammo box stuffed full of salt on the west side of the road that ran through the center of the town. Most of the huts were on the east, or coast side. There was also an Israeli bus sign to Elat and Jerusalem. This drew a lot of laughs. One is always finding old Israeli signs in the Sinai, some only slightly altered to look as though they were created by the Egyptians. At Checkpoint Oscar, I even found an Israeli land mine sign inside an Egyptian tank battalion compound. It was right next to a lecture on ground.

## **LARGE CATS AND DOGS**

There were persistent reports of large cats in the southern mountains in 1987. Fifty years ago there were lots of leopards in the Sinai, now considered to be extinct.

(E-<sup>(39)</sup>) However, another Observer reportedly saw paw prints once in a cave, so I asked the Merna people if they had ever seen such cats. They had heard the rumors as well, but hadn't seen any. But they had seen something I had not heard about, large wild dogs called Dubba that ate donkeys and even humans! Something to think about when camping in the SE mountains.

QUESTION: I would like to know about the dubba, blood dogs. Are they really wolves?

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

As some women do in the Sinai, the women of Merna refused without permission from the males and the primary male (Bedu 3) refused altogether. No explanation. We experienced no such trouble in any other Muzeina village; however, at Urwasad we were not permitted to film the children, which was a real reality. Also during our meeting there, no women were present, though tea was brought by little girls, as in the usual custom.

We wondered at Ursawad why some people believe that photographing them steals their spirit. Our interviewees said this is no longer the problem. Refusal to photograph is due more to an ignorance as to why westerners want photographs. Not knowing why, they say no. Given Bedu animist tendencies, I suspect it is a combination of both. (E-<sup>(40)</sup>)

## **CLOTHING**

Very raggedly, except for unnamed son of Bedu 3. This boy (Bedu 4) was in clean shorts, sandals and pull over shirt. Hair and skin seemed clean. Bedu 3 was in gray peasant galibiya with red and white checkered gifiyya. He also wore sandals. Women were all in black and mostly veiled. Blouses were very loud. Lots of moth holes. Women wore cheap bracelets on right arms only so far as I could see and were mostly young. This was mostly true at each camp. Every camp had an old woman; but most of the women were teenagers or in their twenties.

Several women (also in the Azama tribe) wore four point blue crosses on their foreheads. When asked about it, they said only that it was custom. Both married and eligible women wore hair crossed at forehead; but not in a peak like the Garasha. At one village I saw a woman with a cross surrounded by a halo or blue lines on top. The same at Bir Ashare.

## **BRANDS**

The women of Bir Ashare confirmed that the tattoos are for decoration only, nothing else. They are created by piercing the skin with a needle until blood comes out and then covering the wound with coal for three days. (<sup>(41)</sup>)

## **MARRIAGE**

In the 1930's the brides were in the habit of escaping the birza, **bride tent** into the mountains. The groom then has to search for her without any help from the tribe. If she liked the groom, she would allow herself to be captured. But she might remain away for a year. When the groom made the capture, consummation of the marriage took place on the spot in the open air. The Ma'aza across the canal had the same habit. (E-<sup>(42)</sup>)

## **Other QUESTIONS FOR THE MUZEINA**

1. There are reports from the 1930's that these bedouins when they bake their camel boil the stomach and entrails, without washing, the head roasted on embers of camel dung, unskinned. For game, they dig a hole lined with stones heat with desert wood. Once the stones are red hot, the wood is removed and the oven is ready. Hare is cut open and cooked with hair on covered with hot stones and dirt. The liver and kidney are eaten raw at time of killing. (E-<sup>(43)</sup>)

2. The Muzeina have also been known to feed ham to their camels to improve their eyesight. Still? (<sup>(44)</sup>)

## **Poetry**

The people at Urwasad indicated that while they loved poetry, it was dying out. In the past fifty or more people would sit around a fire at night and recite poems to each other; but now people listen to the radio. I agreed and told them I wanted to record some of the poems before they were forgotten. We were able to receive the following.

## **Other Thoughts**

1. The people at Urwasad hate the ocean, though they wouldn't say why. Kids read to adults but some adults read.
2. Discipline. Firm, with the threat of physical violence; but none were hurt. Urwasad.

## **Cairns**

The system of using cairns in the Sinai is dying out. You will see them as boundary markers; but not too often in the manner described by Murray. I have for example never seen a cairn of the sort described below (photo from Murray pg 198) Interviewees at Ursawa indicated that they do make cairns from time to time but not often and usually only as boundary markers.

## **Brands**

On the way into the Bir Ashare in July, 1987 we came across a man on a camel. The camel had a tattoo on his neck in the form of an Arabic numeral. Apparently this is used to identify the camel's owner; but not the tribe.

## **For History Section**

In 1915 Jebely 'aid married into the Terabin and was made Mamur by the Turks for the area between Nuweiba and Aquaba (E-<sup>(45)</sup>)

## **Footnotes**

*1. Garden, pg 2*

*2. DIA, pg 10*

*3. Answers to this question are usually unreliable; but they sometimes do offer an idea of a village's perception of self.*

*4. DIA, pg 10, Murray 265*

*5. Murray, pg 207, 40*

6. *DIA, pg 10)*

7. *DIA missed this point, pg 10, Murray 264; , Murray 40*

8. *DIA, pg 10, Murray 264, 40, 207-209.*

9. *DIA, pg 10*

10. *Ferrajj of the Heiwat Hamula of the Muzeina, 11/10/87.*

11. *DIA, pg 10, Murray 265*

12. *Jarvis was the opinion that the Aulid Ali of the Western Desert, while possessing a vague Hejaz claim, descend from Libya where they lived prior to the Islamic conquest. Jarvis, 17. (See also El Qatawiya)*

13. *Murray, pg 265*

14. *Visit to Merna region, July 1987*

15. *Visit to Merna region, July 1987*

16. *Visit to Merna region*

17. *Moses and other Muzeina at Urwasad, 7/25/87, Women at Bir Ashar, 7/24/87.*

18. *Murray 49-51*

19. *17.DIA, pg 10, Murray 207-208*

20. *Nomachi, pg 120, Murray 243, 258-259*

21. *Moses, 7/25/87*

22. *Moses, 7-25-87*

23. *Murray pg 240241*

24. *22.Moses, 7/25/87*

25. *23.Moses, 7/25/87, Murray, 156*

26. *Shi'a Muslims rank Zuara to certain shrines with the Hajj. pg 663 Ziyara in Comparative Religion.*

27. *25. Alegat Tribal Leaders 6//24-26/87*

*28. Moses, 7/25/87*

*29. Murray 153*

*30. Some indicated the children also went to Wadi Gharasa forty kilometers away for schooling; but this was hotly debated. However, all agreed that while little girls went to primary school, girls over 15 did not go. Instead, they were married off.*

*31. Various visits in July, 1987*

*32. Visit to the sling load site on 7/24/87.*

*33. Murray, pg 243*

*34. Murray 53*

*35. Population at gathering: 14 children (4 boys);5 women (old)*

*36. Moses, 7/25/87,*

*37. Moses, 7-25-1987*

*38. Murray also noted the fishing, pg 62*

*39. Jarvis, pg 311*

*40. Moses, 7/25/87*

*41. Fatma of the Muzeina, 7/24*

*42. Murray, pp 181-182.*

*43. Murray, pg 88-89*

*44. Murray 89*

*45. Murray, 146*

## El Tertra, El Tiyaha Associated clans, -El-Wazadina:

### - El Tertra:

Live in north beach north of El Gorah. (E-<sup>(1)</sup>)

### - El Tiyaha:

Tiyaha Population

1911 according to Parker 900 men (E-<sup>(2)</sup>)

1985 4,500 (E-<sup>(3)</sup>)

### ***Dirah and History of Formation***

Like the Tarabin are considered an offshoot of the Beni Atiya; but the Tiyaha claim **Suleiman el-Anud of the Beni Hilal** as their ancestor. Together with the Tarabin, they were driven out of the Hijaz by the Maaza. They then fought the Tarabin to decide who would control central Sinai, finally deciding peace at a conference at Nakhl, traditional capital of the Peninsula.(F-<sup>(4)</sup>) The Tiyaha received the **land of the Jalad** and the Terabin the **land of the ed-Damath**.

Their dirah runs from Gebel Hilal to the North to Naqb er-Rakna in the South and from Nakhl in the east to Gebel Hasan in the west. (E-<sup>(5)</sup>) Though some live in tents and hars; not all are still nomadic. Some cultivate Wadi Muweilih, Sabha, Quseima, Seram and especially Wadi el Arish. (E-<sup>(6)</sup>) DIA identifies the dirah as Nakhl, Gebel Halal, Moses Valley, Ain Al Waylaj. I have seen no Tiyaha in Moses Valley; however, I have seen them between Sheik Zuweid and El Arish, by Gebel Hallel, and know that they go as far as Nakhl and Qesima. (E-<sup>(7)</sup>)

The ones I spoke with in 1987 primarily live in Wadi Hadira, a interrupted dome on the southern slope of Gebel Hellal. (E-<sup>(8)</sup>) Wadi Hadira is also the site of a single Turkish Army barrack from WWI and a deep cistern or perhaps older vintage.(E-<sup>(9)</sup>) See my article on following the Turkish War Road.

### ***Sections of the Tiyaha***

*Awarma (E-<sup>(10)</sup>)(F-<sup>(11)</sup>), Banei'at or Binyat(E-<sup>(12)</sup>),  
Bareikat (F<sup>(13)</sup>)(E<sup>(14)</sup>)*

*El-Imur (E-<sup>(15)</sup>), Jaqirat (E-<sup>(16)</sup>), Naghamsha (E-<sup>(17)</sup>),  
Qedeirat or Gudeirat or Qanayrat*

*Shatiyat or SZhabibat (E-<sup>(18)</sup>), Sibabha (E-<sup>(19)</sup>)*

## **Besha**

In 1987, the tribe conducted Besha for major personal and intertribal affairs near Ismaillia under the direction of the Mubasha of the Sinai. (E-<sup>(20)</sup>)

## **Dirah of the Qedeirat**

The primary location is Moses Valley (Ein Qudeirat); however in an interview of members of the tribe in October, 1987, I discovered that some of them also live as far north as El Arish. (E-<sup>(21)</sup>)

## **history of Qedeirat**

A Palestine section from Tel esh-Shari). Their clothes bear this out. Like most Palestinian bedu, and in particular the Armilat of Gaza and the Sinai, the married women often wear long white shawls. Sinai bedu rarely do, except perhaps for short white shawls.(E-<sup>(22)</sup>)

## **income of Qedeirat**

Farmers and herders of camels, goats and donkeys. They share the Moses Valley with the Azzaza and **El-Ariawshat**. They farm olives, maize, Sorghum, Bananas, Eucalyptus trees, tomatoes, green peppers, castor beans, melon and vetch like fodder crops in organized plots.

## **camels**

Our primary interviewee owned a five year old camel and informed us that male five year old camels in good condition fetch about 2,000LE currently in the Sinai. market. Such camels tend to live about 25-30 years.

Cut camel hair once a year with scissors for clothing and tenting.(E-<sup>(23)</sup>)(E-<sup>(24)</sup>)

## **other**

On each of the seven visits I made between the Summer of 1986 and October, 1987, I saw a lot of blue jeans. Also, the use of bikes and **boom boxes** wrapped in needlepoint bags.

## **cleaning**

On my visits in July and August, 1987 I saw women cleaning clothes in the springs with soap. I also saw men cleaning with soap in waterfalls created from pumps.

## **Zuara/Mulid**

See citation on Azzaza.

## **Women and Men**

The friendliness of women varies from very friendly to not at all; however, of all the tribes in the valley, they tend to be the most friendly. The best example of this happened on 10/13/87 when I took US Ambassador Eleanor Constable on a tour of the valley and other valleys in the "C" sector of the Sinai. The women not only were quite friendly; but also were quite willing to have their photographs taken, even without asking a male. In one case, a woman climbed a tree and repeatedly posed for us. The men were also quite friendly. (E-<sup>(25)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: El-Wazadina:**

### Dirah

Mostly live in Jordan and to the south of the Malalha

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## **Footnotes**

1. Abdel Megeid Ibrahim of Abu Taweila and Sheik Zuweid, 6/8/87.

2. Murray

3. DIA, pg 11

4. When was this?

5. Murray, pg 255, DIA, pg 114.

6. Murray, pg 254-255

7. Examination of Dirah 10/10/87 and on numerous trips along the Via Maris in 1986 and 1987.

8. Interview of Hamdan the Masai'd and Egyptian Border Guard troops one kilometer south of Wadi Hadira 10/10/87.

9. Yesterday 296

10 Murray, pg 256



11 The Awarma used a cross, called a spindle in 1935 as a brand. See Murray 44 I have listed Awarma as a tribe under the Tuara.

12. Murray, pg 256, DIA pg 11

13. Not true Tiyaha. Their ancestor Breik is buried at Mayein. The tribe is divided into two; a northern division under Sheik Salem el-Awamri; and a southern under the former Sheik Hamd Muslih. "An Evil Race! I, Lupus, a soldier wrote this with my hand." Greek inscription in Wadi Mukkatab.

14. 78. Murray, pg 256

15. Murray, pg 256

16. DIA, pg 11

17. Murray, pg 256

18. Murray, pg 256, DIA, pg 11;

19. Murray, pg 256

20. Interview with Mubasha Ayad Awad Gareeb, 10/18/87

21. Visit to Moses Valley 10/13/87

22. Murray, pg 256, DIA, pg 11, Visit to Moses Valley August 28, 1987.

23. Visual sightings taken on visit to Moses Valley August 28, 1987. Interview with Suweilam of the Gudeirat Aug 28, 1987.

24. Suweilam of the Gudeirat Aug 28, 1987

25. Expedition to Moses Valley, Dakliah Pass and El Queseimah 10/13/87

## **Tribe Chapter: Tuara (also known as Towara):**

(F-<sup>(1)</sup>)

Because of the severe climatic conditions of the south, the Tuara are the poorest of the Sinai Bedouin, originally mostly from the Hejaz, dwelling for the most part near water sources and oasis. Murray says that in 1935 the confederation consisted of about 750 tents united not by blood but by common interest. (E-<sup>(2)</sup>) He doesn't say it exactly, but the interest is survival. He saw them as a great people debased by the Monastery of St. Catherine's, kept as beggars by Monks who gave them food on a daily basis, and living on what they could get by begging from the tourists. Some of that is certainly quite true. The people of the south always seem more ready to beg and take than in the north, with the exception of the Akharsa bedouins around Balusa who prey off of tourists going to Pelusium, sometimes even to the point of breaking into their vehicles.(F-<sup>(3)</sup>)

But I would add that there is also an effort to improve their standard of living by other means besides living off of tourists. It will be a long time however before they completely change. The economics of the Sinai are against it.

Their tradition is that the former inhabitants of the Sinai were the Beni Suleiman, the Hamada, the Beni Wasil (an offshoot of the Beni Ugba) since incorporated into the Tuara. As best I can discover, they are divided as follows:

### ***Divisions***

**Alegat**, (also Aleigat) (E-<sup>(4)</sup>)

**Aulad Sa'id**. (also called Wilad Sa'id) (E-<sup>(5)</sup>)

**Awarma** (E-<sup>(6)</sup>)

**Garasha**, (also called Qararsha) (E-<sup>(7)</sup>)

**Gebelieh**, (also Jebeliya) (E-<sup>(8)</sup>)

**Hiteim** (E-<sup>(9)</sup>)

**Ma'aza** (E-<sup>(10)</sup>)

**Muzeiana**, (E-<sup>(11)</sup>)

**Sawalha**, (E-<sup>(12)</sup>)

## **COFFIN Heads**

Apparently in the south in the early part of this century were to be found coffin shaped heads. Murray speculated that they, along with some of the Qatia were descendants of pre-Islamic Arabs.(E-<sup>(13)</sup>)

## **Population**

Palmer cited the population for the entire Sinai as 4,000(E-<sup>(14)</sup>)

In 1967, according to Egyptian army sources, there were only 4,000 Tuara, a figure I dispute, given current population figures.(E-<sup>(15)</sup>)

## TOWARA WIDE CUSTOMS

### **CHILDBIRTH:**

In the 1930's it was reported that when a child was expected, the Towara burned a fire outside the mother's tent for three days and nights. When born, the child was buried in a hole, except for the Maaza who placed the child in a sieve, and later washed with salt water and sheep's urine, and bandaged from the knees to the loins with cloth. According to Palmer the baby was then placed into a bag, its eyes and eyebrows ornamented with kohl. The head was pressed into shape and bandaged up, perfumed gum placed in the hand and bracelets called nuss placed on its arms and legs. The mother stays in the tent seven days after childbirth, except for the Muzeina where the women stays for forty days.

The Maaza sieve was placed in leather cradle after the first 40 days called a mazfar hung from tent pole. The placenta is then tied to a camel. In ancient Egypt the placenta was considered the double of the child.(E-<sup>(16)</sup>)

The father can't see his child during the above period. Jennings Bramly saw mother's sometimes introduce their babies to milk by first causing them to swallow a finely chopped feather of owl mixed in milk for luck. Ashes of burnt scorpion were also placed in the milk to make the child scorpion proof. Some placed hornet ashes in the milk as well.

## **Footnotes**

***1. Sinai Journeys, pp 116-119, Nomachi, pg 119 Tuara is the largest tribe., Sinai and the Red Sea, (unnumbered), According to Murray, most of the Sinai Bedouin derive from the Arabian Arab confederation of Rabi'a, from whom sprang conquerors of***

*Nubia, the famous Beni Atiya and the Sinai tribes of Tiyaha, Terabin, Laheiwat and Maa'za.*

2. *Murray, pg 256*

3. *Two British Embassy cars were broken into in 1987. I have heard of numerous other similar accounts.*

4. *Sinai Journeys, Murray 263*

5. *Sinai Journeys, Murray pg 262*

6. *Murray, 259*

7. *Sinai Journeys, Murray, pg 260*

8. *Sinai Journeys, Murray 263*

9. *Murray 268*

10. *Murray, 266*

11. *Sinai Journeys*

12. *Journey's, pg 116, H.S. Palmer, The Desert of the Exodus cited in Journey's., Nomachi, pg 119*

13. *Murray 243*

14. *Palmer, The Bedawin and their Traditions: pg 55*

15. *Sinai Moon Land*

16. *Murray 172*

## Tribe Chapter: Tuara Chapter Two

Aulad Sa'id , AWARMA, - Emzeineh:, - El-Garasha, - El-Gebeliya (or *Jebelillah* or *Jabaliyah*):

### Tribe Chapter: Aulad Sa'id (Awlad Sa'id)

#### **Population**

1985 1,000 (E-<sup>(1)</sup>)

1987 Bedouins rarely give accurate figures on their population. Here is a good example: "As the grains of the sand." (E-<sup>(2)</sup>)

#### **Dirah**

Live around A-Tor and at El-Qa'ah. Also own numerous Wadis to SE of the Gulf of Suez. (E-<sup>(3)</sup>)

#### **Sections of Tribe**

Awlad Sa'id (E-<sup>(4)</sup>)

Al Zuhayrat (E-<sup>(5)</sup>)

Al 'Awarimah (E-<sup>(6)</sup>)

Awlad Muslim (E-<sup>(7)</sup>)

Awlad Sayf (E-<sup>(8)</sup>)

#### **Women**

Arad reports that the men of this tribe take the concept of the chastity of their women very seriously.(E-<sup>(9)</sup>)

#### **Zuara**

Until the 1956 war in the Sinai, the Gebeliya and the Auled-Said shared a common Mulid (the annual Zuara) at the tomb of Nebi-Saleh; however the war forced them to conduct the ceremonies at separate locations; but the tribes are still apparently close. Now the Gebeliya go to Aaron's tomb down the road, and the Auled-Said go to Nebi Salah's tomb. Both go in the 8th month. The Garasha and Sawalha also go to Nebi-Salah's tomb for their Mulid but in the 7th Month. (E-<sup>(10)</sup>)

Our interviewee did not know when the regular form of Zuara was performed, only where. <sup>(11)</sup>

### ***Aulid Sa'id Besha***

During the Israeli occupation, bedouins had a hard time crossing the canal, so Besha was handled within the tribal villages by a special judge. The tool used was a hot frying pan and unlike with other tribes, the people asking for Besha were not given any water to drink before hand. However, since the occupation, the tribe take their Besha cases to a special holy judge in El Arish or Ismailliah. Apparently there is a small village half way between Ismailliah and Port Suez called **Abu Abulswer**. An interesting thing here. The judge holds a hot rock in his hand which the defendant must lick, as opposed to a hot branding iron, which most tribes use.

In addition to the trial by ordeal, the Awlad Sa'id have a less dangerous polygraph, which Reyede saw during the days of the occupation. Many of the bedouins believe their Muktars have magical powers. Once during the occupation, a Bedouin stole \$100 from some tourists. Instead of using the Besha, the Judge said he had a magical egg that would roll in the direction of the guilty party. Out of sight of the others, he nicked a hole in the egg, drained the yoke out, and then inserted an insect that immediately began walking around the inside of the eggshell. When the ten Bedouin who had been rounded up saw the egg moving, the guilty one jumped up from his seat and ran off.<sup>(12)</sup>

### ***INCOME***

Assist the monks of St. Catherine's. (E-<sup>(13)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: AWARMA**

### ***BACKGROUND***

Legend has it they were the Sawalha of the Islamic conquest. They are listed as a separate tribe by DIA with subsections, this is sometimes separately listed as a sub-section of the **Sawalah**. I agree with DIA's assessment. It should now may also be classed as a separate tribe because of its growth, as with the Garasha. The members of the tribe has said the same thing to me.

Some of these people under Suleiman Ghoneim, Sheik of the Awarma attacked and burned the British Outpost of Abu Zaneima in the first World War, along with Austrian and Turkish troops. He died in Palestine later on in the war.

### ***POPULATION***

Population in 1935: 59 Tents (E-<sup>(14)</sup>)

Population in 1985: 1,500 (E-<sup>(15)</sup>)

### ***SUB-SECTIONS OF AWARMA***

Awarimah (E-<sup>(16)</sup>), Fawanisah (E-<sup>(17)</sup>), Radisahan (E-<sup>(18)</sup>), Awlad Jahis (E-<sup>(19)</sup>), Nawasarah (E-<sup>(20)</sup>), Muhassanah (E-<sup>(21)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: Emzeineh:**

### ***Dirah***

Live in SE on coast of Gulf of Aquaba. Center is Nuweiba. Also live around Sharm el Sheikh. Own the palm-grove at Dahab. Control area near Sharm el Sheik and own the palm grove at Dahab (E-<sup>(22)</sup>)

### ***Background***

Originate from Hejaz. Regarded as aliens by rest of **Tuara**, though they do intermarry. (E-<sup>(23)</sup>)

### ***Income***

Fisherman, for the most part. (E-<sup>(24)</sup>)

### ***Diet***

Eat mostly raw dried fish, milk and butter only occasionally. (E-<sup>(25)</sup>)

### ***Clothes***

Dress in rags (E-<sup>(26)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: El-Garasha:**

(also known as Krasha and Qararsha See Sawalha citation)

### ***Tribal Divisions***

Al Nasirat (F-<sup>(27)</sup>)(<sup>(28)</sup>), Awlad Tihl (E-<sup>(29)</sup>)

### ***Population:***

1985: 1,500 (<sup>(30)</sup>)

## **DIRAH**

Nomachi describes their dirah as being in the vicinity of St. Catherine's in Wadi Seih. <sup>(31)</sup> According to **Har-el**, these people live in Wadi Ferian and own Negro slaves who work as camel herdsman and in other hard work. (E-<sup>(32)</sup>) During my visit to Wadi Maghara, Wadi Makattab and Wadi Feiran in May, 1987, I saw no evidence of slaves, though I did meet a Bedouin male (non-negro) who was involved in both goat and camel herding. I also discovered that in addition to Wadi Feiran, they live in Wadi Magarah and profit from the tourist trade in that region as well as in the valley of inscriptions. One of the local senior tribesmen explained that the dirah spread from Serabit to Wadi Feiran, where they own Palm trees. That last point is well taken. In 1935 Murray made the same observation, but he went a little further. The tribe apparently at that point owned the best palm trees in the wadi; however in 1927 suffered disastrous losses, due to a fire.

## **GARASHA ZUARA**

Zuara is practiced in the tenth month of the Islamic year in Wadi Sidri and Wadi Maghara at the intersection of the two wadis.

## **SHEIK'S tomb**

The principal Sheik Tomb is in Wadi Sidri across from Wadi Maghara at the junction of Wadi Sidri, Wadi Maghara. Next to it is another Sheik tomb that of Sheik Suleiman Nafai <sup>(33)</sup>; but unlike the first which is of the traditional shape, the second is square with a flat top and contains two bodies. The second is a brown stone structure with an open door and windows. The traditional one has a blue door with a latch and the bier is covered with green cloth, on top of which are two Korans. To the rear is a traditional corner for candles. The Makkad faces Wadi Sidri from the entrance of Wadi Maghara on a low hill surrounded by acacia trees. Like all structures in this area (save the tomb) it is made of stone. A new building is being added in Wadi Maghara made of cinder block. (E-<sup>(34)</sup>)

## **Winter Tents**

The tribe hangs their winter tents from trees in Wadi Maghara. (E-<sup>(35)</sup>)

## **Tribe Chapter: El-Gebeliya (or Jebelillah or Jabaliyah):**

### **POPULATION**

1929 420 (F-<sup>(36)</sup>) (E-<sup>(37)</sup>)

1935 400 (F-<sup>(38)</sup>)

1985 500 (DIA Report) (E-<sup>(39)</sup>)



1987 About 2,000. (E-<sup>(40)</sup>)

## **TRIBAL DIVISIONS**

Hamayidah (E-<sup>(41)</sup>), Salayimah (E-<sup>(42)</sup>), Wahibat (E-<sup>(43)</sup>)

In 1935 Murray was able to identify 6 sub-divisions: Wilad Masa'ud, Wilad Musa'ad, Wiheibat, Wilad Salim, Heimat and Wilad Gindi. He also noted that the Taban in Feiran, Beziya at Tor and Sattila are offshoots of the Gebilliya, as are the Mu'atira at Tor. (E-<sup>(44)</sup>)

## **ZUARA**

Until the 1956 war in the Sinai, the Gebeliya and the Alegat-Said shared a common Mulid (the annual Zuara) at the tomb of Nebi-Saleh; however, something in the war forced them to conduct the ceremonies at separate locations. But the tribes are still apparently close. Now the Gebeliya go to **Aaron's** tomb down the road, and the Alegat-Said go to Nebi Salah's tomb. Both go in the 8th month. The Garasha and Sawalha also go to Nebi-Salah's tomb for their Mulid but in the 7th Month. (<sup>(45)</sup>)

The regular Zuara is conducted on Fridays and Mondays at Nebi Saleh's tomb. People come the day before and stay through the day after.

## **GEBILLIYA DIRAH**

DIA has them living at TUR mountain; but a more accurate description I think would be From Tor to the region near the monastery and in the Wadi-e-Sheikh.

## **Besha**

The tribe take their Besha cases to a special holy judge in El Arish or Ismailliah. Apparently there is a small village half way between Ismailliah and Port Suez called **Abu Abulswer**. An interesting thing here. The judge holds a hot rock in his hand which the defendant must lick, as opposed to a hot branding iron, as I have normally told about. (E-<sup>(46)</sup>)

## **History and Tribal Interaction**

The word means mountaineers. They are descendants of Bosnian and Wallachian serfs, and perhaps other Eastern European Christian slaves and serfs brought by Justinian to build and service St. Catherine's monastery. One theory is that they came from a combination of 100 Rumanian slaves and 100 Egyptian slaves. (E-<sup>(47)</sup>) I doubt we will ever know the exact truth. Fields is of the opinion that at least some are of pure Balkan stock with little intermarriage. (E-<sup>(48)</sup>) They converted to Islam, along with the rest of the Sinai during the Islamic conquest. Some experts say that because they are not pure Arabs, the Gebeliya are considered inferior to the rest of the Bedouins of the south and do not

intermarry with the rest of the **Tuara**. I have yet to discover any evidence of intermarriage; but I have discovered that they at least have friends with members of other tribes. Very closely attached to their land, living in mud huts, as well as stone structures built by the Israelis during the occupation, rather than grass huts or tents.

On July 4th, 1987 while visiting the tomb of Nebi Salah I found a member of the Alegat-Said working closely with a member of the Gebeliya in order to white wash the tomb. We were later met by a Bedouin who identified himself as being with the Marafat tribe from El Arish on a visit with friends in the Gebeliya. We also discovered that the two tribes are very close, once even sharing their Zuara.(E-<sup>(49)</sup>)

## **RELIGION**

Though the Gebeliah came to Sinai as Christians, most quickly converted to Islam during the second Arabian surge through the Middle East, the Islamic surge; but reportedly there are still some Christians. (E-<sup>(50)</sup>) Nomachi reports that in conversations he had with the people of this tribe, they considered themselves to be the only true Bedouin, which may account for some of the animosity felt towards them.(E-<sup>(51)</sup>) Perhaps as a throwback to their Christian days and even older superstitions from Eastern Europe, some still believe that the Monks control that most precious of commodities in the Sinai, rain water. They think the Monks have a book written by Moses that has magical powers.(E-<sup>(52)</sup>)

## **Footnotes:**

1. DIA, pg 10
2. Sobhe, 4 July 87
3. Journey's, pg 117, Nomachi, pg 119, DIA, pg 10
4. DIA, pg 10
5. DIA, pg 10
6. DIA, pg 10
7. DIA, pg 10
8. DIA, pg 10
9. Arad, pg 45
10. Alegat Tribal Leaders 6//24-26/87, Visit to Nebi Salah's Tomb, July 4, 1987, Sobhe, 4 July 87.
11. Sobhe, 4 July 87

12. Alegat Tribal Leaders 6//24-26/87, Visit to Nebi Salah's Tomb, July 4, 1987, Sobhe, 4 July 87, Reyede, July 17, 1987..

13. Journey's, pg 117, Nomachi, pg 119, DIA, pg 10

14. Murray, pg 259

15. DIA, pg 10

16. DIA, pg 10

17. DIA, pg 10

18. DIA, pg 10

19. DIA, pg 10

20. DIA, pg 10

21. DIA, pg 10

22. Journey's, pg 117,118

23. Journey's, pg 117,118

24. Journey's, pg 117,118

25. 24.26. Journey's, pg 117,118

27. On July 14, 1987 while patrolling the El Hirba area on the Via Maris I came across several palm frond huts, or Har occupied by, if they are to be believed, people of the **Nasirat** sub-tribe, which would mean that the Dirah spreads as far as the Mediterranean coast. The Garasha to the south by the way live in tents, not the har of the north. Those whom we met were poor, but clean and lived by selling fish to passersby which they kept in water barrels.

28. DIA, pg 10

29. DIA, pg 10

30. DIA, pg 10

31. I visited these people May 1987. Interview with Rabeeah, a Bedouin male of about thirty five years of age. The local guide. 5/30/87., Nomachi, pg 119. I had a disagreement on this in July, 1987. Freidj of the Gebeliyya said they have their Zuara in the 7th Month at Nebi Salah (7/4/87).

32. Journey's, pg 117

33. Wadis of Maghara.

34. Visit to the region by 5/29-31/87.

35. Visit to the region by 5/29-31/87.

36. This figure represents severe reduction caused by influenza epidemic.

37. 32.Murray, pg 266

38. Jarvis, pg 229

39. DIA, pg 10

40. Freidj, 7/4/87.

41. 36. DIA, pg 10

42. DIA, pg 10

43. DIA, pg 10

44. Murray, pg 233

45. Alegat Tribal Leaders 6//24-26/87, Visit to Nebi Salah's Tomb, July 4, 1987.

46. Visit to Nebi Salah's tomb, July 4, 1987.

47. Morton, pp 345-346

48. Fields

49. Visit to Nebi Salah's Tomb, July 4, 1987.

50. Nomachi,pg 119

51. Nomachi, pg 117.

52. Morton, pg 345-346