

# After the Commons: Legacies of Land Privatization and Communal Norms under Colonial Rule

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## Abstract

How does land privatization affect communitarian behavior? European colonial administrations often implemented land settlement programs that privileged the allocation of private property rights to the detriment of indigenous communal tenure systems. I examine how colonial land reforms affected post-colonial patterns of collective action in the long-run in the case of Jordan, a British colony from 1921 to 1946. I leverage variation in the pre-reform proportion of communal tenure to test the effect of land privatization on village-level outcomes in economic development and communal petitioning in the wake of the colonial reform. I find that after colonial privatization, majority-communal villages retained corporate village norms as evidenced by an increased likelihood for the village to submit petitions via elected officials and collective citizen groups. Importantly, however, the survival of communitarian norms may have been reinforced by the negative externalities of land privatization; the shift from communal to private tenure drove smallholders in communal villages into greater poverty and reliance on state welfare programs than those in areas where private tenure predominated prior to the reforms. This article contributes to our understanding of how colonial legacies may perpetuate inequalities in post-colonial autocracies, and challenges the characterization of private property rights as a prerequisite for development and democratization.

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[W]hile agricultural societies all over the world do share certain universal features, like the peasant household at the core of society, it should not be assumed that all agricultural societies necessarily follow the same pattern of development as the European ones. (Schaebler 2000, 241)

## 1 Introduction

Social scientists tend to consider private property rights to be superior to communal regimes. But while the development of property rights in Europe culminated in a system based on a relation between an individual and the capital they possess, property rights in the rest of the world were not rooted in the same liberal ideology. Or, as Elinor Ostrom would argue, “diverse production and allocation functions” will lead to a variety of property relations (2003, 239).

European norms about private property came into direct conflict with communal property regimes during the age of European imperial expansion. Rather than following a natural evolution toward private property, colonialism accelerated the turn toward land privatization through targeted programs known as land settlement. Land settlement, or the survey and registration of titled property, was a common policy across the British and French colonial empires in the 19th and 20th centuries. After conducting cadastral and fiscal surveys, European land settlement officers, with the occasional assistance of local staff and judges, would consult extant property records, interview landholders, and register individual titles to land which had previously been held in common. Despite the prevalence of these programs, their study has been mainly limited to a few select cases (e.g. India) and with little understanding of their effect on local communities.

In this paper, I use detailed data from the land settlement program in the British colony of Transjordan (now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) to shed light on how communal land relations might condition local collective action event after the

material source of corporate identity - shared agricultural land - has been parcelled out to individuals. I argue that the social relations that previously governed land access - interdependence, communal decision making, and acting for the collective good - are norms do not fade immediately after settlement. Preliminary analysis of the relationship between communal land tenure and petitioning suggests that in villages where communal tenure predominated, citizens and elected officials are more likely to petition the state for communal benefits. The long-term economic effects of privatization present-day Jordan, however, have also meant that the fragmentation of landholding and high cost of agricultural inputs have made citizens in former communal villages more vulnerable to poverty.

## **2 Property Rights and Political Order under Colonial Rule**

The relationship between property rights and political order is particularly contentious in colonized countries. As Boone (2014) and Mamdani (2001) argue, access to land has shaped arenas of political competition in sub-Saharan Africa, and without exception, those land policies have roots in colonial administrations. After piloting the practice of land settlement in India and Ireland, British administrators pursued a variety of land settlement procedures throughout the empire's African and Asian territories (Home 2006). In countries under direct rule, the expansion of settler colonialism led to multi-tiered systems of land tenure. Settlers usually received private titles to land, while the indigenous systems were re-engineered to ensure preferential European access to land, the pacification of local elites, or both.

The question of what to do with land in indirectly ruled colonies was caught between two imperatives: a modernizing world view and fiscal exigencies (Scott

1998). Colonial administrations came up against fiscal obstacles; as large overseas empires began to unravel after World War II, competing martial and budgetary commitments in the metropole reduced the ability of colonial governments to pursue their policy goals (Lawrence 2013).<sup>1</sup>

Variation in land settlement makes clear that the colonial state is much more constrained than the historical legacies literature assumes. Like any autocratic system, colonial administrators depended on their alliances with elites to govern. Colonial re-engineering of land tenure and property rights systems transformed rural economies with potentially long lasting effects. Lee (2018) finds that in India, for example, localities dominated by powerful landlords enfranchised by the British-designed Zamindari system mitigated against the spread of the colonial bureaucracy. Lee argues that this lower state capacity depressed downstream economic activity for decades after independence.

Land settlement under direct rule in certain cases, like India, has been relatively well-studied. Yet, land settlement programs became a more central feature under late colonialism and indirect rule. A comparison of land settlement programs in Transjordan, Sudan, and Syria shows that these programs varied in their targeting and completeness. While the British land settlement program in Trans-Jordan was completed soon after the end of the Mandate, a similar program in Sudan only titled an estimated one percent of the land; the land that was registered became elite property. Allan (2017) shows that British administrators in Sudan used land settlement to build alliances with local elites. Land settlement practices under French indirect rule also favored the titling of private property, with the stated intention of instituting medium and small agricultural holdings. 'Abdullah Hanna describes the

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<sup>1</sup>This is consistent with Lee's (2017) argument that precolonial elites in regions annexed during war are systematically less wealthy than those annexed during peacetime, a difference he attributes to the colonizer's strategic attempts to forestall revolt.

French Mandate in Syria as a time when the large landowning class “stabilized” and the commodification of land occurred at the expense of the peasantry (Hanna 2004). The French conducted a cadastral survey to promote smallholder property rights, reduce the Ottoman-era practice of landed elite tax farming, and to establish a more equitable tax system (Khoury 1989, 214). The French began land survey operations in 1923, but the cadastre was only 45 percent complete in 1955, nine years after independence (Provence 2005). Laws passed in 1925 and 1926 formalized French attempts at rural reform like dismantling collective (*musha*’) tenure, but without a complete survey and sufficient funding, the plans were discarded after re-titling only 50,000 acres (Warriner 1948).

Table 1 summarizes colonial cases in the Middle East and North Africa region, listing the colonial power, its descriptive type, settler presence, whether a land settlement program took place, and its completion status. It is clear that in settler colonial cases, land settlement instituted pluralistic systems (listed as multiple in the table); this meant that settlers had one set of laws while indigenous has another. Under indirect rule without settlers, land settlement focused instead on reforming land laws to reflect a uniform system in a given territory. It is under these circumstances that we might expect private and communal tenures to come in most direct conflict. Ultimately, while land settlement was a diverse phenomenon that varied globally, the case of Transjordan can help us to better understand the effects of colonial-led land privatization on rural communities.

### 3 Property Rights and Colonialism in the Levant

Jordan is located in the Levant. Like its neighbors, Jordan had been under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Property rights in the Ottoman Levant fell under

**Table 1** – Summary of Colonial Land Settlement Activity in Colonized MENA

Case	Colonizer	Type	European Settlers	Land Titling Program	Completion
Egypt	British	Protectorate	No	Yes (1897-1920s)	Uniform (Full)
Sudan	British	Condominium	No	Yes (1899-1924)	Uniform (Minimal) (<1%)
Iraq	British	Mandate	No	Yes (1932 - 1950s)	Uniform (Partial)
Kuwait	British	Protectorate	No	No	
Palestine	British	Mandate	Yes	Yes (1920-1948)	Multiple (Full)
Transjordan	British	Mandate	No	Yes (1933-1950s)	Uniform (Full)
Aden (Yemen)	British	Settlement, Protectorate, Crown Colony	Yes	Yes (Aden Only, from 1880s)	Multiple (Partial)
Trucial States	British	Protectorate	No	No	
Bahrain	British	Protectorate	No	Yes	Unknown
Algeria	French	Colony, Department (1830-1962)	Yes	Yes (1840s-1890s)	Multiple (Partial)
Morocco	French	Protectorate (1912-1956)	Yes	Yes (1919-1956)	Multiple (Partial)
Tunisia	French	Protectorate (1881-1956)	Yes	Yes (1892-1956)	Multiple (Partial)
Syria	French	Mandate (1923-1946)	No	Yes (1926-1943)	Uniform (Minimal)
Lebanon	French	Mandate (1923-1946)	No	Yes (1926-1943)	Uniform (Minimal)

four broad categories that governed access, use and ownership of land according to Islamic, Ottoman and customary precepts: private (*mulk*), communal, state (*miri*), and Islamic religious endowment (*waqf*). These categories in order on the spectrum from private to communal are:

1. *mulk* an exclusive form of private tenure where the owner enjoys the right of full ownership and usufruct of the land. Inheritance follows Islamic law where heirs are eligible to receive a fraction of the the owner's property. *Mulk* registered under individual title is classified as *mafruz*.
2. *miri* land is owned by the state and usufruct is typically granted to individuals for agricultural use. The Ottoman Empire hedged against large landlord power and tribal domination by granting *miri* land to small cultivators, thereby projecting state power into the countryside. Occupation and usufruct rights were inheritable. A degree of uncertainty remained as rights could be withdrawn

by the state at any time.

3. *waqf*<sup>2</sup> land remains outside the land market and is earmarked for religious or charitable purposes. It is not eligible for resale and is usually leased to tenants while remaining under the original owner's title in perpetuity.
4. *musha'a* land organized land ownership jointly among all farmers in a given village. Usufruct rights were occasionally redistributed according to changes in population.
5. *mawat*, or "dead", land held under communal property regimes for pastoral agriculture by local tribal groups. This land is usually located in arid steppe or desert areas, making them "dead" or difficult to cultivate. Individual usufruct is common, but disposable individual ownership is rare. Pastoral land is sparsely populated, but often characterized as a highly political space viewed as threatening to state control.

Communal tenure on arable land, known as *musha'*, had been a long-standing feature of agrarian life in the region. *Musha'*, refers to a system of land access (not ownership) where parcels of cultivated land are periodically re-partitioned by village leadership to members of the community (Nadan 2020, Schaebler 2000). Land would be divided into sections to ensure equal distribution of soil type, terrain, distance to the village (Schaebler 2000, 246). Villagers with shares in the land would then receive parcels in each section (Antoun 1972, 21-22). The village, therefore, was the "owner" of the land, and land could only be distributed within villager clans and families (Antoun 1972, 22).

The late nineteenth century was a watershed moment for agrarian relations across the Ottoman Empire; at this time, communal tenure began to come into increasing

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<sup>2</sup>Also called *habbous* land in North Africa.

conflict with a modernizing state agenda. Lawmakers passed the Land Code of 1858 as part of the multi-pronged modernization reforms known as the *Tanzimat*. By that time, the Ottoman empire had fallen into heavy debt to European countries who had financed expensive modernization projects through loans. Struggling to keep up with industrializing nations, the Ottoman government turned to tax to generate much needed revenue. The primary objective of the Land Code was to establish title and tax every piece of productive land in the Empire. Focusing on the rural tax base made economic sense. By 1900, the empire was still primarily agrarian, and four-fifths of Ottoman subjects made their living from agriculture (Quataert 1994, 843). Well into the nineteenth century, Ottoman land ownership was governed locally rather than by Istanbul (Gerber 1987). Despite an articulated desire to title communal land, the Empire only managed to register shares in communal land in ledgers (*deftar*).

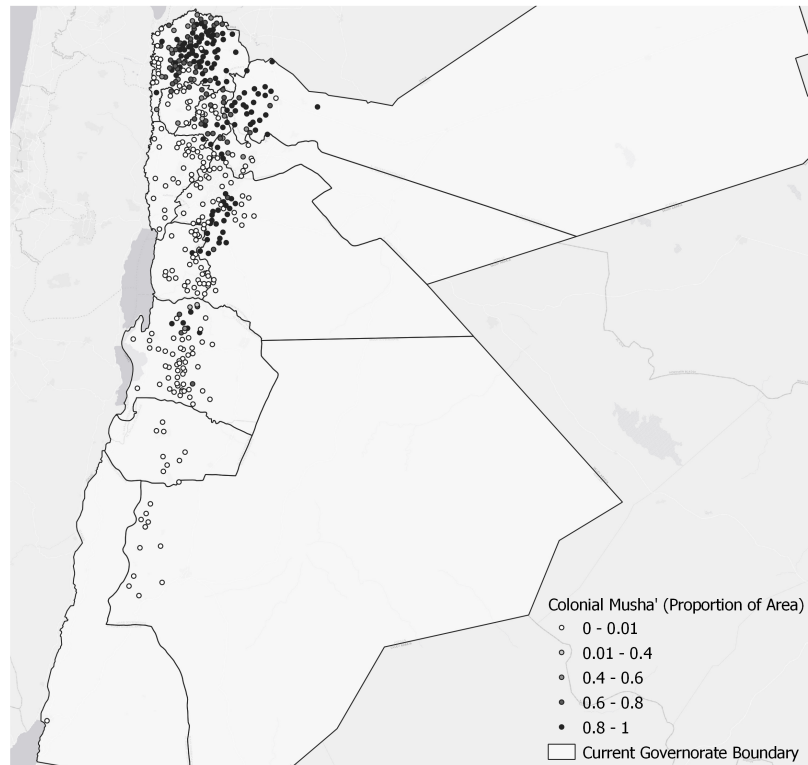
### 3.1 Land Settlement in Colonial Transjordan

The Ottoman Land Code reached Transjordan in the late 19th century, but did little to disrupt *musha'* tenure. Figure 1 shows all villages in Transjordan and its proportion of *musha'* land. Although *musha'* villages - those where the majority of land is classified as communal - are densely concentrated in the northern region of Ajlun, these can be found as far south as the region of Karak, over 185 kilometers away. South of Karak, all settled land was either private (*mafruz*) or state domain.

Figure 2 illustrates the progress of the land settlement program from its beginning in 1933 to 1970. Based on the data in the villages register and in the annual reports from the Department of Land and Survey, early settlement operations focused on *musha'* tenure, while *mafruz* lands - which comprised the majority of settled land - only began in earnest in the 1940s. This mirrors the colonial administration's



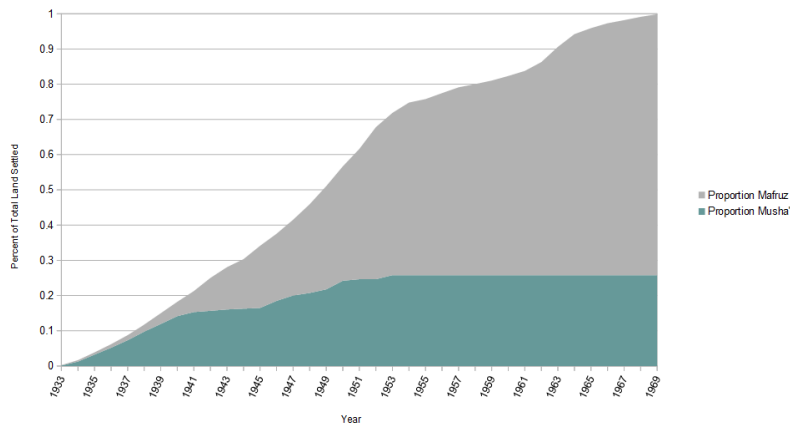
**Figure 1** – Musha’ as a proportion of village area in Transjordan



focus on privatizing communal land tenure. Consequently, all village settlement of musha’ land in the now-independent Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was complete by 1947. After that date, the only musha’ left to settle was located in the West Bank, which had been annexed by Jordan after the creation of the state of Israel. Jordanian mafruz lands were mostly settled by the mid-1950s.

When British embarked on land tenure reforms in Transjordan, they relied on Ottoman title deeds (tapu) to determine land rights. Ottoman land titles had only registered usufruct rights, while the British re-interpreted tapu titles as a record of private property rights. In Transjordan, the colonial land program began with a British cadastral survey conducted in the late 1920s. Using this survey to assess land values, private property rights were then allocated using Ottoman tapu records

**Figure 2** – Land Settlement by Tenure Type



to identify individual owners.<sup>3</sup> Progress was not always fast<sup>4</sup> (the program lasted from 1933 through to the 1950s, post-independence), but actors across classes - peasants, shaykhs, and merchants - felt that the land program served their basic interests (Alon 2007; Fischbach 2000). Historian Michael Fischbach’s meticulous study of British land settlement in Transjordan summarizes the overall impact of the program as fundamentally shaping the relationship between the Hashemite state and Jordanian society:

Thousands of people had seen this very visible manifestation of the regime’s existence with their own eyes. Thousands had seen the mounted police officer coming to collect the annual land taxes. In truth, government employees involved with land and land taxation offered the most visible expression of the state’s existence, a state that had only existed (and then under British tutelage) since 1921. (Fischbach 2000, 147)

John Glubb, commander of the Arab Legion (the Transjordanian army) and arguably the most enduring and influential colonial officer, described the musha’ as a system that “is a relic of join ownership of land.” Glubb’s view represents the

<sup>3</sup>Kew National Archives files CO 831/19/3, CO 831/33/5, CO 831/54/7

<sup>4</sup>See *Village Settlement Register*, Jordan Department of Lands and Survey, 1952.

dominant Ottoman and colonial discourse around communal tenure as outmoded and antithetical to agricultural development. Recent work by Nadan (2013) has done much to refute this view, arguing that the social relations embedded within the musha' system provided security against an arid and variable climate, frequent raids by nomadic tribes, and served to reinforce communal supports. One could not work the land alone, and needed to collaborate with the rest of the cultivators in the village to appropriately time planting and harvests as a matter of survival (Antoun 1970). Antoun (1970) studied the former musha' village of Kufr el-Ma in northern Jordan, and observed that even though the land settlement program had partitioned musha' lands in 1939, that the corporate nature of the village remained intact and that villagers continued to collaborate closely to ensure village welfare.

Negative economic consequences of rapid privatization became quickly apparent. Drought drove down yields, which meant farmers could not pay their taxes. Agricultural lending from the central government's new Agricultural Bank sky-rocketed. Small-holders who were now responsible for the development of their own lands were often forced into bankruptcy, stressing the rural labor market. Another legacy of privatizing musha' parcels was the fragmentation of holdings, both spatially and among owners. Because plots had been owned in shares, it was rare for small-holders to have enough land to efficiently produce for market.

In sum, the privatization of the musha' system had a profound material impact on Jordanian villagers. On the basis of this historical overview, I advance the following hypotheses:

1. Social: In villages where communal tenure predominated, post-settlement petitions will be more likely to reflect corporate interests of the village over class or individual interests.
2. Material: In villages with higher historical proportions of musha' will be more

likely to experience indebtedness.

## 4 Data and Analysis

The data in this paper are drawn from two years of archival research in the Jordanian state archives housed in the National Library in Amman. This version of the paper focuses on the Mandate-era administrative district of Ajlun (including the subdistricts of Irbid, Ajlun, and Jerash) due to the high concentration of communal tenure in this region. Future drafts may expand to cover the entirety of Transjordan. Summary statistics for all variables are presented in Table 4 in the appendix.

### 4.1 Social Dependent Variable: Village Petitions

I measure villages' communitarian behavior by analyzing petitions from the Jordanian national archive. Petitions are categorized by the receiving government body (local or national). Readers can view the content of the petition and the source, be it an individual, the people of a village, elected local officials, or a tribe. I collected 338 petitions for the Ajlun district that date from 1930 (three years before the beginning of the land settlement program) through the 1990s and coded the petitions according to their village, sender, and recipient. Only sixteen petitions were submitted prior to land settlement in those villages. About half of the villages in the sample did not submit petitions.

Although I do not analyze the content of the petitions in this draft, the petitions follow thematic trends by sender. Individual petitions frequently cite damaged property, requests for compensation, conflict resolution over property, requests for employment, or other material issues. Petitions to the state from an elected official or officials are typically sent on behalf of the village community, although not always

with input from residents. These petitions focus on the question of whether or not to become a municipality<sup>5</sup>, requests for agricultural loans, rural development projects, school building, or mosque repair. Sometimes these collective requests were made by tribes within a village. Requests might be sent to local branches of government, like a sub-district or district governor, to the central government. More often than not, petitions to the central government were sent directly to the prime minister.

## 4.2 Material Dependent Variable: Economic Prosperity in the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey

I combine the village data on land settlement with the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS) 2016 to test the effect of privatization on individual economic outcomes over the long duree. This nationally representative survey reports on the economic well-being of Jordanian residents and households. The survey provides information on each respondent’s locality of birth, which I then match to my village land settlement data. I am therefore able to test the effect of the proportion of land privatization of one’s birth locality (village) as well as their birth year. I restrict the sample to include only Jordanian citizens<sup>6</sup> who were born in rural localities in the historical district of Ajlun. I interact the proportion of musha’ (*settlement*) with a dummy variable (*post*) to indicate individuals in the “treated” cohort - those who were born after land settlement began in the nearest locality.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Incorporating as a municipality meant additional taxes were levied to pay for municipal services. One series of petitions from the village of al-Husn showed how elected officials and elites submitted a petition without villagers’ consent, leading to a collective petition by villagers to the central government to reverse the decision.

<sup>6</sup>The survey does not enumerate whether or not someone is Palestinian.

<sup>7</sup>I use individual-level weights as indicated by Assaad and Krafft (2018).

### 4.3 Independent Variable: Land Tenure and the British Settlement Program

The Department of Land and Survey (DLS) maintains archival records on the land settlement process that are currently closed to foreign researchers. Historian Michael Fischbach shared his handwritten transcription of the village registry of land tenure and settlement dates from his fieldwork in the 1990s. These registers include the village's name, the start and end dates of the land settlement process, and the area of musha', mafruz, and total land in dunums<sup>8</sup>. In this paper, I focus on the region of Ajlun. Under the mandate, British authorities divided Ajlun in the districts of Ajlun, Irbid, and Jerash. Although communal tenure was more highly concentrated in this region than in any other part of Transjordan, it also varied. Some villages had no musha' land at all, where in others musha' comprised the majority of land area.<sup>9</sup>

Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 map villages by these characteristics. Villages with missing data are symbolized with a cross. Amman, the new capital under the British mandate, is shown for reference. Figure 3 shows the proportion of each village classified as musha'. Darker shading indicates a higher proportion of musha'. Figure 4 maps the beginning of land settlement in each village by year. Darker shading indicates a later start year. For many villages, the start year was not recorded and therefore labeled as missing. The earliest settlement operations covered a wide swath of territory, and nearest neighbors do not necessarily share a start year. According to Michael Fischbach, some settlement processes were highly contested; settlement

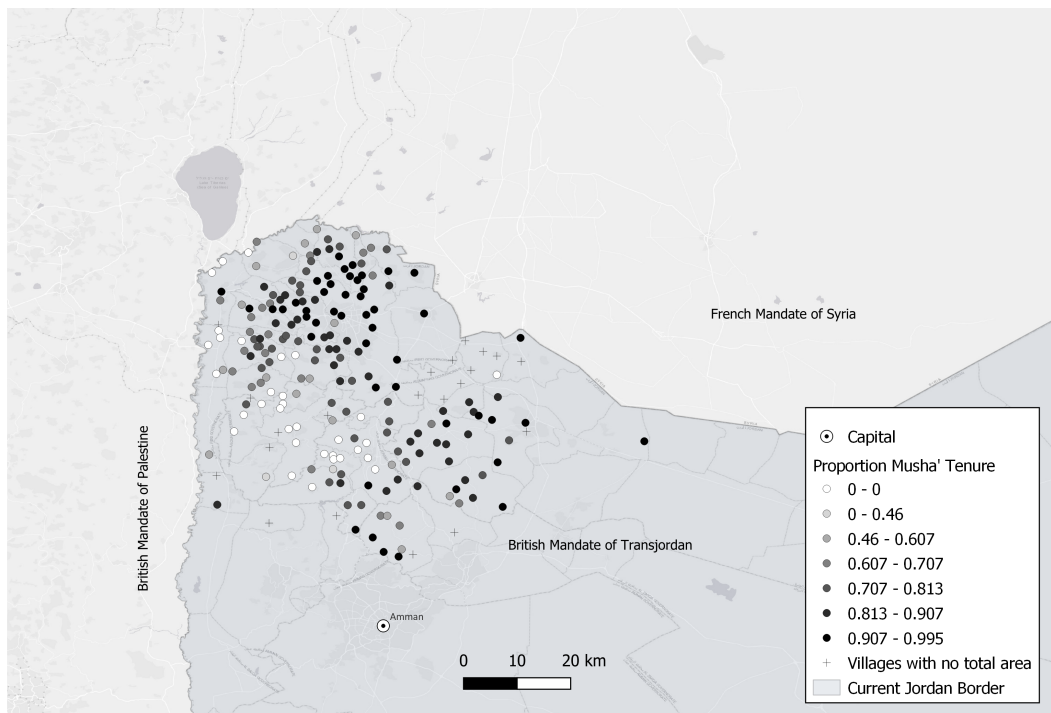
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<sup>8</sup>A dunum is an Ottoman unit of measure that often varied locally in terms of its definition. The standard metric conversion is one dunum to one thousand square meters.

<sup>9</sup>I have the data for all of Transjordan, and so am open to expanding the scope of this paper to cover the whole country. One unique advantage of focusing on Ajlun is that I have precolonial land tenure, census, and taxation data for this region. It is not yet Incorporated, but would welcome feedback on the scope of the analysis (i.e., precolonial factors might more comfortably fit in another paper altogether).

courts would hear claims from those claiming land rights and adjudicate the settlement process. In other places, such as in the Bani Hassan territory of Jerash, tribal leadership resisted land settlement proceedings and as a result they were among the last villages to complete settlement in the region and had some of the longest settlement processes (denoted by the dark shading in Figures 5 and 6).

**Figure 3** – Musha’ as a proportion of village area in Ajlun Sanjak

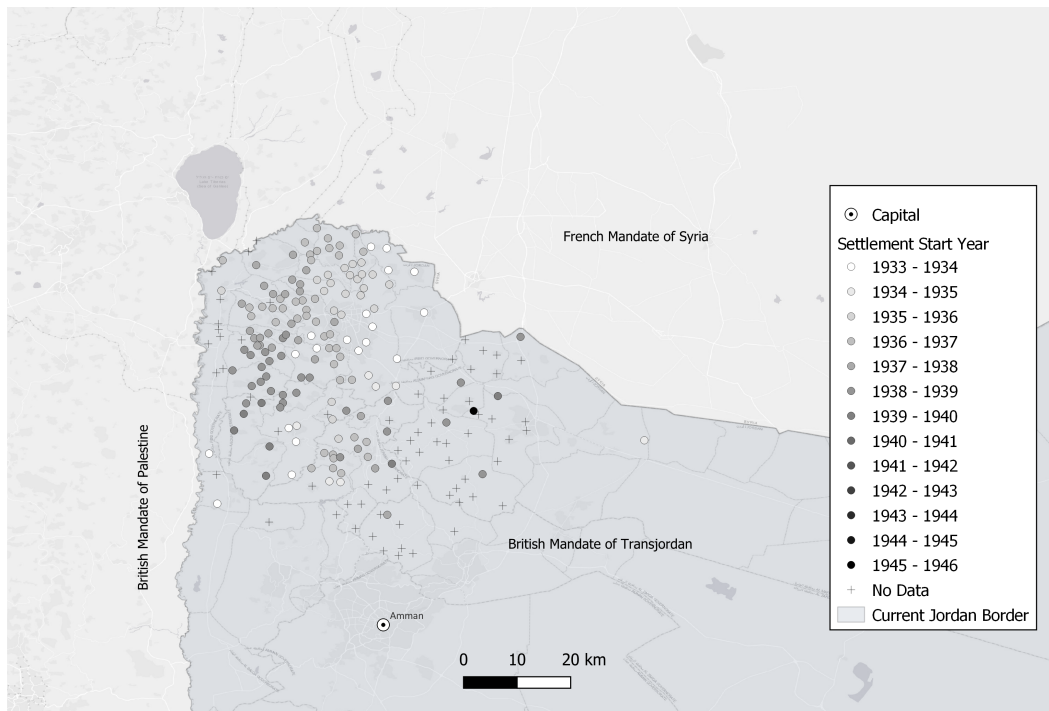


## 4.4 Other Covariates

Village population figures come from a variety of sources. Population figures from the Faisali<sup>10</sup> census of 1916 is incomplete but provides some insight into population

<sup>10</sup>Prior to the establishment of British mandate control in Transjordan, the Arab Kingdom of Syria under the Hashemite Emir Faisal ruled from Damascus.

**Figure 4** – Beginning of Land Settlement by Village



in the years immediately preceding colonial occupation.<sup>11</sup> An American embassy communique from 1949 captures population dynamics soon after independence in 1946.<sup>12</sup> Finally, I digitized locality-level data from the 1960s population census district reports.

I mapped all villages from a 1930 British military survey that pre-dated the beginning of the land settlement program by three years. The contemporary maps eliminated the possibility that villages may have changed name or boundaries that would complicate their mapping.<sup>13</sup>

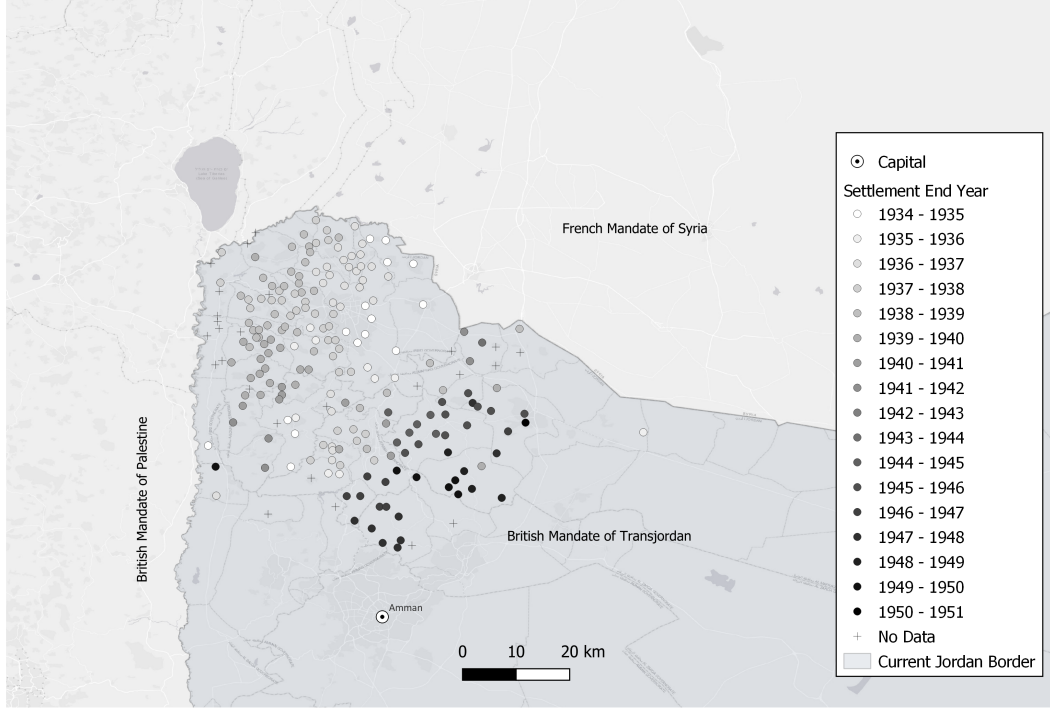
<sup>11</sup>The most comprehensive pre-settlement local population data comes from late 19th century Ottoman censuses that are too far removed from the period to be helpful.

<sup>12</sup>I thank Michael Fischbach for making this document available.

<sup>13</sup>In the next draft, I will include other salient geographic features like roads, railways, and police posts that might have affected state officials' access to the villages. I also have maps from subsequent surveys in both the Mandate and national periods. Could these be potentially useful to track changes over time?

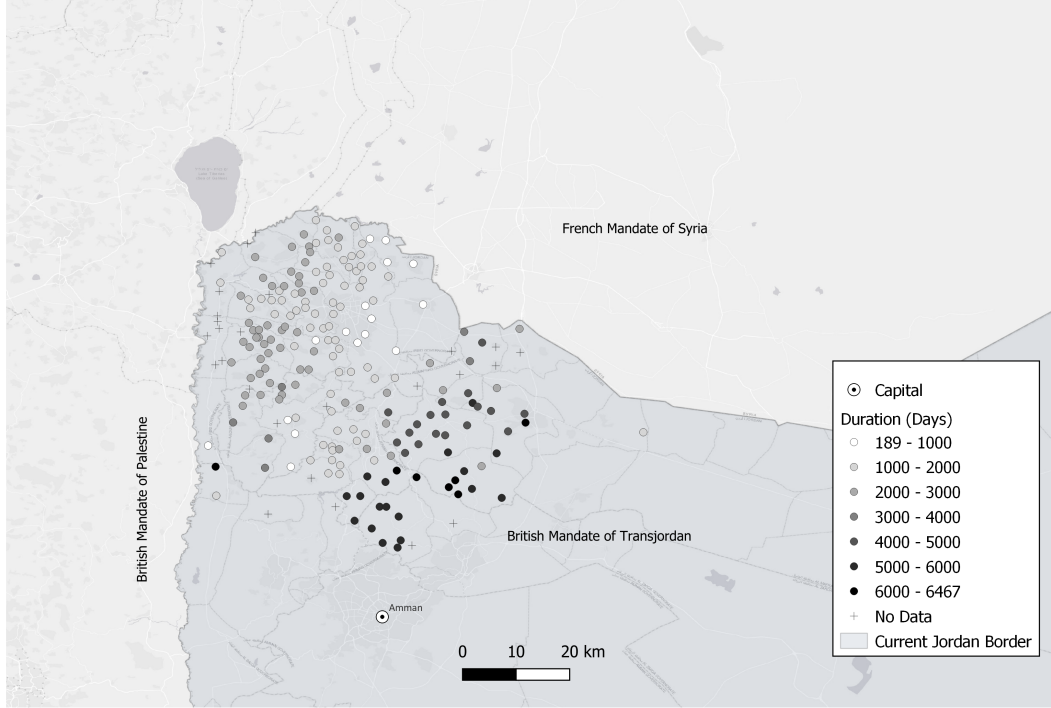


**Figure 5** – Conclusion of Land Settlement by Village



I use the HYDE 3.0 database to account for agricultural conditions. This source tracks global historical changes in land use by decade. The measures for 1930s cropland and rain-fed agriculture are highly correlated in Transjordan, and I present the results using the rainfed measure due to the predominance of non-irrigated agriculture in this region. I also control for the relative ease of access to administrative centers by including measures of the linear distance to the capital of Transjordan (Amman) and to the Ottoman provincial capital of Damascus in the French Mandate of Syria. Variation in ruggedness and altitude is extreme. Some villages are located in the Ghor (Jordan Valley) at the lowest altitude on earth, over 400 meters below sea level. In stark contrast, the majority of villages are located the highlands of Ajlun or on the Hawran steppe. Each environment presents unique challenges to cultivation, habitation, and administrative control. I capture this variation using

**Figure 6** – Duration of Land Settlement Implementation by Village



the SRTM database to measure the altitude at each village's geographic centroid.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4.5 Preliminary Results: Effect of Land Settlement on Communal Social Norms

A cross-sectional analysis reveals interesting correlations between pre-settlement levels of communal land tenure and village petitioning. This results are presented in Table 2. In columns 1 – 3, the outcome is the number of petitions submitted per village by village citizens (column 1), by the mayor and/or village council members (column 2), or by the landed class (or farmers, column 3). Higher levels of historical communal tenure have a significant and positive association with petitions by citi-

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<sup>14</sup>This measure is omitted in the current preliminary analyses because there is a singularity when I run the regression. When I checked it is highly correlated to the land use measures.

zens and by elected officials. Prior communal tenure is negatively associated with petitions from the landed class within conventional levels of statistical significance. At the same time, larger populations appear more likely to have citizen and elected official petitioning, while whether or not a village belongs to the Bani Hassan tribe makes such petitions less likely.

**Table 2** – Cross-sectional Analysis of Village Petitions by Musha' Proportion

	<i>Dependent variable: Petitions</i>				
	By Citizens (1)	By Mayor (2)	By Farmer (3)	Local Gov. (4)	Central Gov. (5)
Perc. Musha'	0.161** (0.063)	0.236** (0.104)	−0.088*** (0.033)	−0.064 (0.117)	0.117 (0.087)
Log(Pop1949)	0.056** (0.027)	0.116*** (0.044)	0.019 (0.014)	−0.023 (0.054)	0.059 (0.037)
Dist to. Amman (KM)	−0.002 (0.002)	−0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)	−0.015*** (0.003)	0.006*** (0.002)
Rainfed (1930)	0.003 (0.005)	0.004 (0.009)	−0.0004 (0.003)	0.050*** (0.011)	−0.015** (0.007)
Bani Hassan	−0.161** (0.081)	−0.349*** (0.134)	−0.011 (0.043)	0.412*** (0.158)	−0.208* (0.112)
Area (KM)	−12.560 (26.771)	−18.488 (44.152)	11.787 (14.187)	1.368 (49.915)	48.641 (36.868)
Constant	−0.152 (0.231)	−0.349 (0.381)	−0.201 (0.122)	0.921** (0.442)	−0.823** (0.318)
Observations	215	215	215	215	215
R <sup>2</sup>	0.052	0.071	0.045	0.169	0.088
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.032	0.052	0.025	0.145	0.069

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

I also analyze the relationship between prior communal tenure and the intended

recipient of village petitions: the local (column 4) or central (column 5) government. Here, there is no statistically significant relationship between a village's prior communal tenure and the targeting village petitions. Rather, Bani Hassan villages were more likely than the rest of Ajluni villages to petition the local government, and less likely to petition high-ranking central government officials like the prime minister. The results for all outcomes are similar in magnitude and significance using either distance to Amman or Damascus, as well as cropland versus rainfed agriculture. These results lend some tentative support for the social hypothesis advanced earlier; the social relations inherent in *musha'* tenure did not seem to be completely erased by land privatization.

Going forward, I plan to conduct more sophisticated analyses to test the robustness of these correlations. The current cross-sectional structure neglects the element of time. One limitation on implementing causal identification strategies in the current data is the small number of pre-settlement petitions by villages. I will be looking through more archival records to determine whether there earlier petitions that can be incorporated into the analysis or if I can use an alternative measure to capture pre-trends in communitarian behavior.<sup>15</sup> Another concern is the over-representation of the Kura sub-district in the archive. The sub-district's archive was incorporated into the national archive and might be skewing the results because we lack the same richness from other sub-districts.

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<sup>15</sup>It is possible I might have to abandon the concept of communitarian behavior altogether. It might be easier to make a more directly economic argument to show how the privatization of communal land contributed to long-run poverty.

## 4.6 Preliminary Results: Effect of Land Settlement on Long-Run Economic Outcomes

The OLS regression models test the effect of communal land privatization on long term material outcomes for individuals in the former district of Ajlun. The models include locality and birth year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the locality level. Each model also controls for two pre-treatment variables: the respondent's gender and their father's level of education. I also control for respondents pre-treatment class status using their father's total years of schooling. Given that men have historically been the primary breadwinners and the importance of education for achieving high-status jobs, this measure provides a reasonable proxy for class status. The results are robust to using the father's occupation as an alternative measures of class status.

I consider several economic outcomes to assess the effect of land settlement on rural Jordanians: 1) wealth, 2) years of schooling completed, 3) whether or not a person works in the public sector, 4) if they have relocated from their birth locality, and 5) land ownership. Results are presented in Table 3.

I find that being an individual born in a village with a historically high proportion of communal land *after* settlement results in lower wealth (column 1), less migration (column 4), and less land ownership (column 5). There is no effect on schooling (column 2). One reason these material deficits could be the high debt burden of smallholders after privatization. Drought and policies that provided more support for capital-intensive agriculture induced peasants to take loans to finance their now-privately owned farms in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. These had a potentially deleterious effect on any benefit that came from private title, limiting rural Jordanian's ability to accumulate wealth. We also see that there is a positive, significant coefficient on the public employment variable (column 3). Another consequence

**Table 3** – Musha’ Privatization and Individual Outcomes

	(1) wealth	(2) yrschl	(3) public	(4) move	(5) ownland
<i>SettlementXPost</i>	-0.926*** (-5.12)	0.613 (0.99)	0.0951* (2.37)	-0.0681* (-2.28)	-0.339*** (-3.60)
Female	-0.0459** (-2.98)	-0.299* (-2.19)	-0.266*** (-14.37)	0.0524*** (6.21)	0.0109 (0.67)
Father Education Level	0.157*** (13.13)	1.037*** (21.22)	0.00430 (0.87)	0.00288 (0.80)	0.0295** (2.65)
Constant	0.330*** (5.98)	7.590*** (21.84)	0.261*** (9.97)	0.145*** (8.21)	0.910*** (25.29)
<i>N</i>	6736	6748	6064	6743	507

*t* statistics in parentheses. Robust standard errors clustered by locality of birth.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

of the decline of farming is the increased dependence of rural Jordanians on public sector employment.

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper, I presented preliminary evidence of the importance of taking a critical approach to the privatization of communal land under colonial rule. While Transjordan is only one case, the study of land settlement in this context is instructive for other cases of indirect rule and late colonized states - particularly in the British empire. I have shown that despite the survival of some communitarian norms - as seen in petitioning by rural Jordanians in Ajlun - land settlement can also have negative material consequences long after independence. This study also helps address some open questions among scholars of Jordan, particularly surrounding poverty pockets in the Ajlun district. Why is the the most fertile area of the country, and the one with the longest history of bureaucratic state capacity, the poorest region in modern

Jordan? By highlighting the material drawbacks to communal land privatization, we might be one step closer to understanding contemporary patterns of poverty in Jordan.

## 6 Appendix

**Table 4** – Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Petition By Residents (Group)	432	0.120	0.326	0	1
Petition By Village Mayor(s)	432	0.331	0.471	0	1
Petition By Landowners	432	0.023	0.151	0	1
Petition To Central Gov	432	0.199	0.400	0	1
Petition To Local Gov	432	0.655	0.476	0	1
Cropland (1930)	218	15.088	5.277	0.791	27.427
Rainfed (1930)	218	15.088	5.277	0.791	27.427
Pop1949	218	922.594	610.903	59	3,352
Bani Hassan	218	0.130	0.337	0	1
mushaa_p	218	0.612	0.330	0.000	0.995
mafruz_p	218	0.155	0.304	0.000	0.981
Distance to Damascus (KM)	218	128.256	13.668	96.270	161.135
Distance to Amman (KM)	218	57.187	15.231	16.168	87.612
Area (KM)	425	0.009	0.001	0.007	0.011