

Theeb (2014) summary and review



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- Brandon Sanders

Theeb is a drama thriller film directed by Jordanian film director, Naji Abu Nowar. The film is about a young Bedouin boy named Theeb, played by Jacir Eid, who must adventure across the large desert of Wadi Rum. It takes place in the middle east surrounding World War I and is set during a period known as the Arab Revolt. This was a time when Arab nationalists sought to fight for independence from the Ottoman Empire. They saw an opportunity to be able to free Arab lands from the control of Turkish oppression, but could only accomplish this with the help of British officials. Which is why Edward, played by English actor Jack Fox, accompanies the boy in the journey of a lifetime (Stephen 2015: 1).

Additionally, much of Theeb was filmed in Wadi Rum, located in southern Jordan. Although, it was split up into three locations; the first event, Theeb's tribal encampment, was shot in Wadi Araba. The second event, the pilgrim's trail, was shot in wadi rum. Finally, the third event, the ottoman fortress, was shot near Amman. This is one of the things that attracted me to the film because of how accurate and true to nature the locations were. It wasn't like they were filming in America trying to portray what happened, instead they chose Wadi Rum which has deep roots in Bedouin history and culture.

Another aspect of the film that attracted me was how recent it had been released. It's hard to find foreign films that are contemporary and true to culture. What I mean by true to the culture is they don't use directors or actors from outside the culture because in most cases it could lead to inaccuracy or manipulation of the film, and all the actors were recruited from the Bedouin tribe. Except for Jack fox of course, who played the British

soldier. Which is why Theeb was a perfect choice to help describe Bedouin cultural context and meaning.

For this reason, it is important to be able to understand Bedouin culture to fully appreciate the film. The Bedouin, a nomadic Arabic-speaking culture from the Middle East, are animal herders of the desert. Meaning they earn their living “ primarily from animal husbandry by natural graze and browse of sheep, goats, and camels (Chatty 2009: 1).” Traditionally speaking, the Bedouin seasonally migrate over the Middle East and North Africa depending on pasture and water because they need animals for survival. This largely plays into the subsistence of the culture, whereas the core of Bedouin subsistence is pastoral nomadism. Another important aspect of the culture that one should note before watching the film is Bedouin history and cultural relations. For the most part, “ Bedouin societies are always linked to other non-pastoral societies by economic, social, and political relations.” Meaning that they are considered specialist in livestock breeding in terms of local context. This is important when understanding the role of Bedouin societies for aspects concerning cultural relations. In addition to this, Bedouin history is largely important. In regards to the film, the most important information to note is the Arab Revolt. The Arab Revolt started in 1916 with the goal of gaining independence from the Ottoman Turks, with the hopes of being able to unite a single Arab state. This largely was due to the appeal of Arab nationalism, and is sometimes referred to as the “ Arab Awakening (Jones 2013: 399-401).” In the film, you see this portrayed in the actors as they fight their way across the desert accompanied by British soldier.

In addition to this, there is much cultural meaning with the work. It exemplifies the culture by showing history in an accurate setting and using actors from a Bedouin tribe to help illustrate Bedouin culture. It portrays to the audience the lifestyle of Bedouin culture by showing accurate representations of camps and implementing core values. Values such as the importance of hospitality within Bedouin culture. Hospitality is greatly ritualized and taught within the teachings of the Quran. And, for the most part, Bedouin are considered Sunni Muslims and follow the teaching of the Quran. In fact, hospitality is so important that “ guests must be protected as if they were family members (Chatty 2009: 7).” The film portrays this accurately with the acceptance of the British soldier, Edward. The film also shows the roles of men, where traditional Bedouin- Arab families are dominated by males. Also, shown in the film, men are the primary outfitters of war and political issues.

Furthermore, this film helps to signify or convey traditional values and history of Bedouin culture by accurately following cultural context and history within the film. Such as Men having dominant roles within the film and showing cultural context such as religious practices of hospitality. It shows the importance and struggle of Bedouin history, and makes known the traditional aspects within the culture. Traditional aspects such as subsistence, identification and location, history and cultural relations, and religious beliefs and practices.

All in all, Theeb is an excellent feature film from Bedouin culture and accurately highlights and shows key aspects of the culture. Furthermore, the film represents a universal message that translates to all cultures. Inspiring

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perseverance through trials and tribulations and encouraging traditional cultural practices inspiring nationalism. It is a contemporary example that even today films can be made that exemplify culture.

Citations

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