THE WAHHABI TRIBE:
AN ANALYSIS OF AUTHORITY IN THE UNIFICATION OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, 1902-1932

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ABSTRACT

The declaration of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 marked the end of a thirty-year process to unify the peninsula. Under the authority of Ibn Saud, the conquest movement which began in 1902 came to control most of current Saudi Arabia by 1932. Throughout this period, Ibn Saud used the legitimacy he gained from the historical association of his family with the Wahhabi movement to help solidify his political authority. However, in order to properly understand how this occurred, Ibn Saud's conquest movement and the effects of the Wahhabi ideology more generally need to be contextualized in terms of tribal political norms and practices. Thus, rather than providing a historical narrative for the period under review, the focus here will be on the construction of Ibn Saud's political authority, using two conceptual tools. First, what role was played by his leadership over, and embodiment of, the Wahhabi movement in the creation of his political authority, and second, how did the tribal political context facilitate such a process.

RESUME

La déclaration du royaume de l'Arabie Saoudite en 1932 marque la fin d'un processus de trente ans pour unifier la péninsule. Sous l'autorité d'Ibn Saud, le mouvement de conquête qui commença en 1902 est venu contrôler la majeure partie de l'Arabie Saoudite actuelle des 1932. Tout au long de cette période, Ibn Saud emploie la légitimité qu'il avait gagnée de l'association historique de sa famille avec le mouvement de Wahhabi pour solidifier son autorité politique. Cependant, afin de correctement comprendre la manière que ceci s'est produit, le mouvement de conquête d'Ibn Saud et les effets de l'idéologie de Wahhabisme doivent être compris en termes des pratiques et normes politiques tribales. Ainsi, plutôt que de fournir un récit historique pour l'ensemble de la période, l'emphase portera ici sur la construction d'autorité politique d'Ibn Saud, a l'aide de deux outils conceptuels. D'abord quel fut le rôle joue par son leadership du mouvement Wahhabi dans la création de son autorité politique, et en second lieu, comment le contexte politique tribale a facilité un tel processus.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Between 1902 and 1932 Ibn Sa'ud led a conquest movement which came to dominate the Arabian Peninsula. The al-Sa'ud had a long history of political authority in the peninsula dating back to the eighteenth century, having united it twice previously. Both of these earlier incarnations, as well as the one initiated by Ibn Sa'ud, owed much of their success to the association of the al-Sa'ud with the thought of Muhamad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, an eighteenth century theologian whose ideas were responsible for the Wahhabi movement more broadly. By January 1932, when Ibn Sa'ud was declared King of Sa'udi Arabia, this represented the culmination of a thirty-year process whereby he had become the sovereign ruler over most of the Arabian Peninsula, in a relatively short period of time. The question, therefore, arises how had this process come about, and perhaps more importantly how did Ibn Sa'ud construct and maintain the necessary political authority to bring about this transformation. Put simply, how did the son of an exiled tribal *shaykh*, who literally had been physically removed from the peninsula, create the necessary authority to become the sovereign ruler of the peninsula in the span of thirty years, and to what extent, and in what ways, did his leadership over and embodiment of, the Wahhabi movement play a role?

From a methodological and historical perspective there are three requirements which must be met in order to answer this question. First, the political context in which the Wahhabi movement operated needs to be identified and analyzed. That is to say the dominant mode of political authority which characterized the Arabian Peninsula prior to the Wahhabi movement must be established in order to determine what role it may have played in facilitating the unification effort under Ibn Sa'ud. Second, Wahhabism itself

needs to be examined to determine what role it played as the ideology of the socio-political movement which conquered the peninsula. It is important to understand from an ideological or discursive perspective the content of Wahhabi beliefs, in particular with respect to concepts of political authority, in order to ascertain its impact on Ibn Sa'ud's authority during this period. Likewise, the actual manifestations of the Wahhabi movement need to be examined in order to determine what role it played in helping to establish and sustain Ibn Sa'ud's authority. Third, the history of the period should be reviewed. However, rather than being viewed as a comprehensive historical description establishing the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's authority, this portion is better understood as an analytical reading of specific events in the unification effort which are representative of larger processes outlined in Part I. More interpretative than historical, the analysis in this section will be based on the conceptual parameters outlined below.

In terms of organization, the thesis will be divided into two parts. Part I can be considered, broadly, the conceptual and theoretical section, while Part II will be historical-analytical. Part I will consist of two chapters. The first chapter will outline a theoretical understanding of the political context which existed preceding and during Ibn Sa'ud's unification of the peninsula. The focus will be on establishing the nature of tribal society through an analysis of its principal social, economic and political characteristics. Throughout this analysis particular attention will be devoted to establishing the basis of political authority, emphasizing in particular the social and cultural aspects therein. That is, to show what a crucial role was played by cultural notions of leadership in establishing political authority.

Two theorists in particular will be relied on in this section, Ibn Khaldun and Antonio Gramsci. Khaldun, whose contributions towards our theoretical understanding of tribal society are considered seminal, will be used in three ways. First, the importance he attaches to the concept of *asabiyya*, or 'group-feeling,' in building authority in tribal society, will be shown. Second, the problems inherent in establishing authority in tribal society will be reviewed. Third, his understanding of how religion could be used to supplement political authority in tribal society will be examined. His theories will be supplemented by more current theorists, such as Eickelman, Piscatori and Gellner, in order to highlight the significance of social or cultural authority to political authority in the tribal context more broadly.

The use of Antonio Gramsci's thought, in particular his concept of hegemony, to help understand the growth of Ibn Sa'ud's authority during the unification of the Arabian Peninsula, may require an explanation. The question can be rightly asked, how can a Marxist theoretician who was primarily concerned with examining political authority in bourgeois-capitalist societies shed light on Ibn Sa'ud's growing authority in the Arabian Peninsula. Part of this objection can be answered by examining what Gramsci himself had to say about the "ability of an intellectual enterprise which was capable of transcending its social precipitants." He stated that,

> The question arises whether a theoretical 'truth' discovered in
> correspondence with a specific practice can be generalized and
> deemed universal. . . . The proof of its universality consists
> precisely in that which it can become: (1) a stimulus to know
> better the concrete reality of situation different from the one in
> which it was discovered (and this is the prime measure of its
> fecundity); (2) when it has stimulated and helped this better
> understanding of concrete reality, it incorporates itself into

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this reality as if were originally an expression of it. [1]

Thus, in terms of objections about the applicability of social-political theories from one era on to one quite distinct from it, Gramsci seems to suggest that at the bare minimum there is no harm in trying. Even if the attempt is misguided or fails to convince, it will at least shed light on the actual merit of the theory itself.

In order to succeed in the project outlined by Gramsci it is, therefore, crucially important to be very specific about what is meant by the concept of hegemony. For the purposes of the analysis which follows hegemony will be understood in its simplest form as cultural, moral and ideological authority and leadership. The significance of this contribution lies in its recognition of the role of norms and beliefs in engendering and re-enforcing a ruling elites' authority. And while this may seem unfaithful to Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony insofar as it ignores the role of class and class structures in the operation of hegemony, it is nonetheless a fair representation of his thoughts on the construction of a hegemonic order, which he describes as, "order in which a common social-moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant, informing with its spirit all modes of thought and behavior."[2] Therefore, when referring to Ibn Sa'ud's hegemonic authority, or his construction thereof, it is this process that is being referred to.

Antonio Gramsci's thought overlaps and adds to Ibn Khaldun's theories in a number of interesting ways, none more so than in the relationship between *asabiyya* and hegemony, as defined above. If Khaldun's theory that *asabiyya* is the cardinal element in the establishment of political authority in tribal society is accepted (and many current

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[1] Quoted in Joseph Femia, Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 17.

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theorists do accept it, if in a less deterministic, slightly modified, form), Antonio

Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be used to explain how *asabiyya* is engendered and

maintained. Hegemony, as understood by Gramsci, is equated with moral, cultural or

ideological leadership, portrayed as a general conception of life for the masses and as a

scholastic program advanced by a sector of intellectuals.[3] Put briefly, in this

understanding of tribal society, Ibn Sa'ud's Wahhabism can be equated with Khaldun's

asabiyya which can be spread through Gramsci's hegemony. Having established

salience of cultural norms and practices to tribal authority, in Chapter 2 the focus will

turn to an examination of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought, as this would form an important

aspect of Ibn Sa'ud's *asabiyya*.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought will not be examined from a theological

perspective. Rather, it will be viewed as the ideology of a socio-political movement. In

Gramsci terms, Wahhabi beliefs and norms formed the ideology (or *asabiyya* in

Khaldunian terms) which was advanced through Ibn Sa'ud's conquest movement to

produce hegemony. Focusing in particular on those aspects of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's

ideology which relate to political authority, three principal themes which emerge from his

thought will be discussed. First, the expansive elements of Wahhabi thought will be

identified in order to show how, as an ideology, Wahhabism engendered and perpetuated

a conception of political authority that was intimately linked with continued expansion in

the quest to eliminate infidels. Second, the normative elements of Wahhabi thought will

be examined. That is, those aspects of Wahhabi beliefs which regulated public behavior

and demanded outward conformity, will be analyzed in order to show how control over

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[2] Ibid, p. 24.

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the social sphere contributed to political authority more broadly. Disciplining social space is an important aspect of power, one which is often overlooked, and yet in the case of Wahhabism it formed an integral aspect of its growing authority and the emergence and maintenance of Ibn Sa'ud's hegemony. Third and finally, the ways in which Wahhabism made leadership over the movement and the areas it conquered essentially the exclusive purview of the al-Sa'ud family will be established. The Wahhabi conceptualization of the legitimacy of political authority was inextricably bound with the implementation of the Wahhabi ideology. The resultant situation was one in which leadership over the Wahhabi movement and the conquest movement it inspired belonged exclusively to the al-Sa'ud.

Having determined from a theoretical or conceptual perspective the respective conceptualizations of political authority by both the tribal political context and Wahhabism, and having established potential ways of understanding how these two elements interacted, the last step which needs to be taken in order to determine the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's authority during the unification of the Arabian Peninsula is to examine the historical record of the period. Part II of the thesis will provide this. Divided into three chapters for purposes of clarity, this section of the thesis will be historical only insofar as it deals with a period of time which has past. That is to say this section will not provide a comprehensive history of the period between 1902 and 1932. Rather this portion of the thesis is better viewed as being an analytically informed interpretation of the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's authority during the conquest movement, based on the concepts and processes outlined in Part I. Therefore, this section will analyze the major campaigns of the

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[3] Nazih Ayubi, Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995), p. 84.

conquest movement in order to ascertain how Ibn Sa'ud was able to construct his political authority in a political context determined by tribal norms and practices with an ideology of Wahhabi beliefs; in short, how he constructed his hegemony by focusing on those events and processes which were axiomatic of the larger picture. Chapter 3 (the first chapter of Part II) will examine the first phase of Ibn Sa'ud's unification effort between 1902 and 1912. Chapter 4 will be concerned with the period between 1912 and 1925, and Chapter 5 will examine the final phase of the unification effort between 1925 and 1932. Much like all historical endeavors, the choice of dates and the subdivisions therein is relatively arbitrary. However, when taken as a whole, the period between 1902 and 1932 does represent an identifiable historical episode. The subdivisions of the period into distinct chapters correspond to specific shifts and events with respect to the construction of authority in the peninsula and, therefore, seem justified.

It should be noted that this analysis will be principally concerned with domestic or internal aspects of authority. The role of international actors will, therefore, feature only insofar as they impacted upon aspects of authority within the peninsula. Thus, for example, while scant attention will be devoted to why the British increased their involvement in the affairs of the peninsula throughout the period under review, considerable time will be given to examining the impact of this effort on domestic configurations of authority. Indeed the historical period under review and the basis for political authority therein could not be understood without recourse to the role of international actors. However, much as this section as a whole, does not pretend to be a comprehensive history of the period under review, neither does it claim to be a complete analysis of international involvement in the Arabian Peninsula between 1902 and 1932,

and is, therefore, confined to examining the domestic implications of international involvement, which it might be noted were significant.

In order to appreciate the argument being made, it is important to locate this analysis within the broader context of other literature on the Arabian Peninsula. Sa'udi Arabia has been subjected to extensive commentary in the scholarly literature. In terms of the secondary literature, much of it is concerned with the era after the discovery of oil and, therefore, does not focus extensively on the period of unification. Authors such as Fred Halliday, in <u>Arabia Without Sultans</u>, looks at the impact of oil revenues on political instability in the Arabian Peninsula. Likewise, Helen Lackner, in <u>A House Built on Sand</u>, focuses on the period after the discovery of oil in her analysis of the political economy of Sa'udi Arabia. If the first two authors are examples of economic approaches to Sa'udi society J. Holden and R. Johns, in <u>The House of Sa'ud</u> and Muhammad Almana, in <u>Arabia Unified: A Portrait of Ibn Sa'ud</u>, are representative of a second trend in analyzing Sa'udi Arabia. That is they focus on the rise of the al-Sa'ud family. However, much like the authors cited above, their focus, particularly Holden and Johns, is principally on the post-oil discovery era and the ways in which oil revenue was able to solidify the al-Sa'ud's authority.

There are three principal trends in the literature dealing exclusively with the unification of Sa'udi Arabia. The first is represented by scholars like Joseph Kostiner and emphasizes the tribal aspects of Ibn Sa'ud's unification project and attempts to downplay the Wahhabi component. The second trend can be seen in John S. Habib's book, <u>Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam</u>, which elevates the role of the *Ikhwan*, and of Wahhabism more generally, in the unification of the Arabian Peninsula. The third way

this period is dealt with is by highlighting the role of the British in the creation of Sa'udi Arabia; this perspective is reflected in John C. Wilkinson's, <u>Arabia's Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert</u>. While examining this period from differing perspectives these three approaches are similar insofar as they generally lack a theoretical or analytical component justifying their respective positions. That is to say, they fail to identify from a theoretical position how Ibn Sa'ud built and maintained his authority with respect to all three of the factors outlined above. Thus, for example, Kostiner gives an incredibly in-depth analysis of the role of various tribes in the unification of Sa'udi Arabia but fails to adequately ascertain how Wahhabi beliefs, norms and the movement they engendered, impacted upon and interacted with the tribal norms.

These three perspectives are reconciled, to a certain extent, in two secondary sources which are remarkably thorough in the historical narratives they present. Alexei Vassilliev gives an almost textbook like treatment to the history of Sa'udi Arabia in <u>The History of Sa'udi Arabia</u>, which covers the period from the rise of the first Sa'udi state up to the present period. What this book lacks in theoretical perspective it makes up for in comprehensiveness. A very rich source of primary materials and quotes, Vassilliev offers a historical assessment of Sa'udi Arabia which takes into account all three perspectives outlined above in his treatment of the unification period. What Vassilliev accomplished for the entire history of Sa'udi Arabia, Lawrence Goldrup achieved for the period between 1902 and 1932. Like Vassilliev, Goldrup provides an in-depth historical narrative of the unification which attempts to reconcile the role of tribal politics, of Wahhabism, and of the British. Again, like Vassilliev, there is not much of a theoretical or analytical bent to Goldrup's work. Their accomplishment lies in providing a clear and

concise description of the events which took place during the period under review more than it does in explaining or analyzing how these three factors combined to create and sustain Ibn Sa'ud's authority. In short, Ibn Sa'ud's authority is taken for granted in both of these works (as well as in those other sources mentioned above) and then traced, along with contemporary events, to produce their historical narratives.

This study, therefore, represents something of an original contribution to the literature on the unification of Sa'udi Arabia. Rather than taking Ibn Sa'ud's authority for granted and then providing a historical narrative displaying the growth of his authority, this study seeks to understand how he built and maintained his authority according to the norms and principles of both the tribal political context and Wahhabism. Moreover, instead of attempting to provide a comprehensive historical portrait, a task successfully accomplished by others, this study analyzes the historical portrait already provided, according to the broader processes outlined in Part I. This thesis is, therefore, an original contribution to the study of the unification of the Arabian Peninsula insofar as it attempts to explain and analyze the growth and maintenance of Ibn Sa'ud's authority according to the theoretical and conceptual understanding of tribal society and political authority and the Wahhabi movement and its understanding of political authority outlined in Part I.

As a means of concluding this introduction it is worth mentioning briefly the role of primary sources in this thesis. Briefly, for two reasons. First, because there are not a lot of primary materials available and second because those that are available seem to have been almost universally interpreted in the same way. Thus, there is very little disagreement about what can be gleamed from the primary material which makes its

incorporation into this study much easier. The primary literature can be sub-divided into two categories, European travelers and statesmen, and indigenous chroniclers and historians. Although language restrictions have made it impossible to consult the original indigenous chroniclers, their findings have been presented and quoted extensively and relatively uniformly, in particular by Goldrup and Vassilliev.

The most important European contributor for the period under review is the famous Arabist, occasional British official and Ibn Sa'ud supporter, H. St. John Philby. Having compiled a massive amount of writing on Sa'udi Arabia during this period, Philby provides important details with respect to the specific events and campaigns which took place. Therefore, much like Vassilliev and Goldrup, Philby's import lies in the main in providing details about the historical record of the conquest movement rather than a theoretical understanding of the processes at work. The same can be said for Colonel Dickson who provides import details for the period up to the 1920s.

A final note on primary sources relates to those European travelers whose writings preceded the conquest movement of Ibn Sa'ud, principally Burckhardt and Zwener. Their cataloguing of the various tribes and their norms and practices provides important insight into, and examples of, the theoretical and conceptual analysis of the tribal political context more generally.

This thesis, therefore, builds upon and supplements the primary and secondary literature dealing with the unification of Sa'udi Arabia under Ibn Sa'ud. It is built upon the latter insofar as it based upon their historical descriptions and it encompasses all three of the main perspectives subscribed to with regard to the role of the tribal political context, Wahhabism and the British. It supplements the latter to the extent that rather

than taking Ibn Sa'ud's authority for granted, this thesis seeks to deconstruct his authority

in order to determine the respective roles of tribal political behavior and Wahhabism

therein.

Part I

Chapter I: Tribal Politics

The conquest and unification of the Arabian Peninsula entailed, among other things, the construction and growth of Ibn Sa'ud's authority from a position of weakness to a position of unrivaled supremacy. In order to understand how Ibn Sa'ud created and maintained the necessary authority during the unification of the Arabian Peninsula, which began with the re-conquest of Riyadh in 1902 and was completed with the formal declaration of the Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia in 1932, there are two conceptual elements which need to be examined. In Chapter I, a comprehensive analysis of tribalism and its social and political implications needs to be undertaken as this was the political context in which Ibn Sa'ud sought to reunify the peninsula. In particular the nature of political authority in a tribal political context needs to be examined and analyzed in order to determine how it was created, maintained and legitimized. Second, attention must be given to the Wahhabi movement. This will be taken up in the second chapter when examining in detail the social and political implications of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought, so as to be able to ascertain its impact on the construction of authority for the period under review. Thus, the intent here is to present the ideological underpinnings of the Wahhabi movement in order to establish, from a conceptual or theoretical perspective, the ways in which Wahhabism as the declared ideology of a socio-political movement impacted upon Ibn Sa'ud's authority during the unification of the peninsula. However, prior to examining his thought, there are a number of contextual and methodological pre-requisites which must be addressed in order to justify and substantiate this focus.

Contextually, the social, economic and political landscape upon which Ibn Sa'ud arrived in 1902 was defined, above all other considerations, by tribal structures and norms. In order to properly understand the impact of the Wahhabi movement on Ibn Sa'ud's authority, it is, therefore, important to begin with an analysis of tribal society, focusing in particular on the social norms and economic structures encapsulated therein before concluding with an examination of the political ramifications of such a society for the Arabian Peninsula. It is only through such contextualization that a proper conceptualization of Wahhabism as a socio-political movement can be achieved. This is particularly important because discursively, ideologies cannot be understood in isolation. That is to say that the production of authoritative discourse is dependent upon "the appropriate production of other representations/discourses; the two are intrinsically and not just temporally connected."[1] In particular, it is fundamentally important to understand the nature of authority in the tribal society that Wahhabism sought to alter and build upon, in order to properly understand Wahhabism as a socio-political movement. Thus, the purpose here is to establish the nature of tribal society as well as the ideology of Wahhabism, as these will form the interpretative vantage point through which the historical period under review will be analyzed.

This analysis of tribal society will proceed along two lines. Beginning with an examination of the basis of social solidarity within tribal society, as well as the economic ties which bound groups together and concluding with an analysis of the political implications of such a society, the first line of argumentation will highlight the inherent difficulties in creating stable political structures in the Arabian Peninsula at the

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[1] Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 31-32.

beginning of the twentieth century. Emphasis throughout this analysis will be placed on the transitory nature of political authority. Within this context particular attention will be paid to divisions between tribal groups and the differing priorities of nomadic communities and sedentary towns and villages, with specific attention being focused on their distinctive priorities with regard to notions of territoriality and warfare.

The second aspect of this analysis will focus on the extent to which these difficulties were overcome in the creation of tribal-confederacies or chieftaincies, focusing in particular on the nature and sources of political authority therein. It is within this realm that the methodological emphasis on cultural norms and beliefs, as the basis for political power, will be substantiated. It is only once the contextual and methodological parameters have been firmly established that the attention will shift, in the following chapter, to an examination of the thought of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and its social and political implications for the Arabian Peninsula. However, prior to proceding, it is important to clarify the term 'tribe' as it has been used (and misused) in a variety of contexts.[2]

Society was defined, above all other considerations, by kinship relations which at its maximum level took the form of the tribe.[3] Loyalty, therefore, was to kin above all other considerations. This applied to the nomadic communities and the sedentary population, although certain variations between the two existed. Beginning with the

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[2] Richard Tapper, "Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East," in Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East eds. Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (London: I. B Tauris, 1990), pp 48 – 51.
[3] Joseph Kostiner, "Transforming Dualities: Tribe and State Formation in Sa'udi Arabia," in Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East eds. Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 227; Alexei Vassiliev, The History of Sa'udi Arabia (London: Saqi Books, 1998), p. 40; Christine Moss-Helms, Cohesion of Sa'udi Arabia (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 52; Richard Nolte, "From Nomad Society to New Nation," in Expectant Peoples: Nationalism and Development ed.

nomadic communities, at the smallest level were kinship groups of several nuclear

families, referred to as clans. Above them were larger kinship groups who were related

by remote ancestral links. Encompassing both of the latter was the tribe[4], a kinship group

which was tied by imaginary or perceived genealogical ties.[5] At the level of tribe, the

group resembles a political organization more than it does a kinship group, and is often

referred to as a chieftaincy.[6] Ernest Gellner clarifies some of the ambiguity surrounding

the various levels of tribal organization with the concept of nesting, which according to

him implies that, "groups contain subgroups, which in turn contain other subgroups,

whose relationship to one another is once again similar. There is no preeminent or

crucial level of social organization."[7]

The salience of tribal identity, as a basis for social action, tended to decrease as

the genealogies expanded.[8] Thus, at the level of chieftaincy, tribal identities based on

real or perceived lineages are far less significant in determining social behaviour than

they are at the clan level. As Dale Eickelman argues,

> Lines of political cleavage follow no pre-ordained pattern but depend
> upon complex factors of residence, kinship, herding, and land
> arrangements, among other considerations. Those interests that are

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Kim Silvert (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 79; George Rentz, "Wahhabism in Sa'udi Arabia," in
The Arabian Peninsula, ed. Derek Hopwood (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 55.

[4] It should be noted that according to traditional Arabian understanding there were nine levels of recognized
kinship ties. However for our purposes, only the broad outlines need to be ascertained. For a more
complete discussion see Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 53.

[5] Vassiliev, History p. 40.

[6] Philip Khoury and Joseph, Kostiner, "Introduction: The Complexities of State Formation in the Middle
East," in Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East eds. Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (London:
I.B. Tauris, 1991), pp. 8-11; See also Thomas J Barfield, "Tribe and State Relations: The Inner Asian
Perspective," in Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East eds. Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner
(London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 156.

[7] Ernest Gellner, "Tribalism and the State in the Middle East," in Tribes and State Formantion in the
Middle East eds. Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 109. See also John
Middleton and David Tait, "Introduction," in Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary
Systems eds. John Middleton and David Tait (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 7-8.

[8] Dale Eickelman, The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach (New Jersey: Pentice Hall Inc, 1981),
p. 97; Barfield, "Tribe and State," p. 163.

most significant often are legitimized by concepts of patrilineal descent. "Tribal-man," at least in the context just considered, does not respond in a semi-automatic way to the affairs of the various social collectivities to which he belongs.[9]

The decreased salience of tribal identity as the scale and scope of the tribe grow can be directly linked to the importance of immediate kinship relations for survival in an ecologically severe climate. Thus, for example, in her discussion of camel raiding amongst the bedouins of Northern Arabia, Louise Sweet argues that it is at the level of the clan that groups "camp and nomadize together" and moreover that it is this level of social organization which is predominantly concerned with "mutual help and defense of the camel herds."[10] Attachment to the wider group is limited, according to her analysis, because it is only during the summer months, when access to water and pastures are at their lowest that tribes congregate on a scale larger than that of the clan.[11] Sweet goes on to state that,

> Each bedouin tribal chiefdom comprises a group of patrilineally related, corporate segments or clan sections which cohere only on rare occasions in communal movement at the maximum tribal chiefdom level and which can fission down the subunits of the lineages to the level of the family unit according to the conditions of life in the desert.[12]

Thus, while there is an attachment to the larger tribal organization, the smaller clan based group takes precedence in terms of social solidarities.

A further limiting factor in terms of social identification with the larger nomadic tribe revolves around the issue of leadership. Leadership within the tribe, and within each segment of the tribe, was granted to the *shaykh* or *amir*. His position was not

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[9] Eickelman, The Middle East p. 97.
[10] Louise Sweet, "Camel Raiding of the North Arabian Bedouin: A Mechanism of Ecological Adaptation," in American Anthropologist vol. 67 (1965), p. 1135.
[11] Ibid.

sacrosanct and was dependent upon the successful fulfillment of the expectations of the tribe.[13] Although nominally chosen because of his possession of traditional qualities such as courage, generosity and knowledge, more often than not the leadership over the tribe became hereditary within a particular family.[14] To a very real extent, leadership over the tribe and the authority embedded therein came to be identified with specific people and lineages. There was, therefore, a particularly personalized aspect to the building and maintenance of authority, insofar as the leader came to be seen as the embodiment of the tribe.[15]

The *shaykh's* duties and responsibilities included guiding the tribes' migration, acting as judge for internal disputes and as a liaison with external groups, declaring war and concluding peace.[16] Major decisions concerning the welfare of the tribe were, however, taken in consultation with other respected members of the tribe, thereby imparting a certain democratic character to the tribe[17] and were made according to the precepts of traditional tribal law (*urf*). Such localization of leadership within each level of the tribe made it difficult to organize or sustain authority beyond the immediate kinship level. The attachment to immediate kinship relations at the expense of wider tribal or chieftain relations created a situation which Thomas Barfield characterized thus:

> The virtue of small, tightly defined tribes lay in their *asabiyya*, or group solidarity, yet this very strength made it difficult to organize groups of tribes where group feeling was absent and where leaders refused to subordinate themselves to someone else's command. . . . The strength of tribal *asabiyya* fell off rapidly as it grew beyond the local lineage. Leaders could only become powerful players by

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 57.

[14] Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 57; Vassiliev, History p. 52.

[15] Al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite Polity," in Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States ed. Ian Richard Netton (London Croom Helm, 1986), p. 78.

[16] Vasiliev, History p. 50; Moss-Helms, Cohesion pp. 57-58.

[17] Vassiliev, History p. 51; Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 57.

overcoming these inherent divisions.[18]

This is a problem that will be returned to when discussing the political implications of the social and economic characteristics of the chieftaincy system which predominated in the Arabian Peninsula during this time. However, prior to examining these implications, it is important to examine the economic basis for nomadic tribal organization.

The economic basis of the nomadic groups revolved, in the main, around pastoralism. Camel, sheep or goat breeding represented the most common forms of economic activity.[19] Camels were particularly invaluable to the nomadic communities as they could not only cover vast tracts of land without requiring a lot of water, but also provided the basis for some of the food, shelter and clothes which were necessary for survival in the desert.[20] Furthermore, they represented an important tradable commodity. Those who bred goats or sheep had slightly less mobility because they needed to remain in areas where abundant pasture lands could be found. Quite often, those involved in sheep and goat breeding would settle for the summer and farm close to their pastures.[21] However, as an economic activity nomadic pastoralism is not "a productive system that can alone supply the necessary resources for the survival of those who practice it" and therefore those engaged in pastoralism integrated "their pastoral activities . . . with other types of activities,"[22] in particular trade and raiding.

In order to survive, the nomadic population had to trade with the settled population. As Alexei Vassiliev notes,

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[18] Barfield, "Tribe and State," 163.
[19] Vassiliev, History p. 33.
[20] Abdul-Aziz Fakhro, A Study of the Political Role of Shaykh Muhammad B. Abd al-Wahhab in the Establishment of the Wahhabi State, 1744 – 1792 (Master's Thesis, McGill University, 1983), p. 26.
[21] Vassiliev, History p. 32.

> In summer, the bedouin gathered in the large oases and trading
> centers, bringing livestock, wool, butter and cheese to exchange for
> dates, grain, cloth and items of clothing, mats, horseshoes, arms,
> gunpowder, bullets, medicines coffee and tobacco. . . . The nomads'
> summer migration to the trading centers were considered the
> 'greatest event of the year' both by them and by the settled people.
> The greatest volume of exchanges of products occurred at the summer
> fairs.[23]

Thus, unable to procure all the necessities of life from the desert, exchanging their

livestock and the products derived therefrom with the settled communities, was necessary

to ensure the survival of the tribe.

Raiding other groups, whether nomadic or sedentary, represented another

important aspect of nomadic tribal economic activity. Because nomadic

conceptualizations of their traditional territories (*dira*) were based mainly on natural

geographic features, such as the existence of wells, pasture lands or mountains, and as

such were not clearly demarcated, tribes felt free to roam and raid the *dira* of other tribes,

thereby providing an important economic supplement to their existence.[24] It is within the

context of immediate kinship fidelity and the economic necessity of raiding in order to

ensure the physical survival of the tribe that John S. Habib's description of nomadic

warfare takes on added salience. He states that,

> The bedouin belonged only to themselves; the entire desert was
> their home. They used politically ambitious sheiks just as the latter
> used them: for convenience and for material gain. The bedouin were
> mercenairies in a sense, available to the highest bidder. Sanctions
> could not be placed against them: they owned no land, no homes and

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[22] Ugo Fabietti, "Sedentarization as a Means of Detribilization: Some Policies of the Sa'udi Arabian Government Towards the Nomads," in State, Society, Economy in Sa'udi Arabia ed. Tim Niblock (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 187.

[23] Vassiliev, History p. 34.

[24] Vassiliev, History p. 38; Sayyid Ahsan, Life and Thoughts of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1988), p. 48; Hafiz Wahba, "Wahhabism in Arabia: Past and Present," Journal of the Central Asian Society, vol. 16 (1929): p. 461; Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 55.

only very little material wealth.[25]

Militarily this meant that the nomads were characterized as being fickle allies who would abandon the fighting once they had gained some booty or it appeared that the fighting was going against them. Moreover, they preferred short raids over long drawn out battles.[26] Such preferences in war served both economic and social functions. War and raids were seen as "sport"[27], and preformed an important economic function insofar as it allowed for the acquisition and re-distribution of wealth.[28] By focusing on small-scale raids and abandoning battles which were going against them, the cost in human lives was kept to a minimum, a crucial consideration for the survival of the tribe.

The sedentary population was also defined to a very real extent by genealogical affiliations.[29] It should also be remembered that, with the exception of Mecca, towns "in the sense where the greater part of the population of subsisted on means other than agriculture"[30] did not exist. Rather, it was the combination of several agricultural villages, which would take the form of large oases, which came to be the principal manifestation of sedentary living. Land was owned primarily on a small-scale basis, quite often communally by a family. There were no large-scale tracts of irrigated land. Towns were situated either near a source of water or in close proximity to trading routes as both were crucial to their existence.[31]

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[25] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam: The *Ikhwan* of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of Sa'udi Arabia (The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1978), p. 14.

[26] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam pp. 15-16; Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia: The Development of a Wahhabi Society (PhD Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1971), pp. 181-182.

[27] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 182.

[28] For an in-depth analysis of raiding as means of resource redistribution see Sweet, "Camel Raiding."

[29] Vassiliev, History p. 36.

[30] Ibid, p. 34.

[31] Fakhro, Political Role p. 25

The priorities of townsmen, in contrast to those of the nomadic tribes, were for

stability and security. Located mainly on the central trading routes, the settled

populations sought strong central leadership in order to safeguard the free passage of the

goods upon which they depended for their survival. Moreover, concepts of territoriality

became much more firmly entrenched as the inhabitants were no longer mobile. Strong

leadership and territoriality were thus inextricably bound for the simple reason that if

trading routes became subject to continual raiding, the trading routes themselves would

change. Because, by their very nature, settled communities cannot migrate easily, strong

leadership was required in order to maintain the very *raison d'etre* of the settled

communities: trade.[32]

Militarily, the priorities of the settled communities were also quite different from

those of the nomads. As previously noted, for nomadic communities raiding was an

economic necessity. Because of its negative impact on trade, however, it was loathed by

townsmen.[33] In contrast to the nomads, the townsmen could be relied upon as a military

force, insofar as "they had a vested interest in the land, goods or to keep caravan routes

open."[34] However, there were limitations to the effectiveness of the town-based military

units to the extent that they could not be used in campaigns which would last too long or

take them too far from their community, as their interests were permanently attached to

specific areas.[35]

Although significant attention has been paid to the differing norms and values

which characterized the nomads and townsmen, it is important to realize that

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[32] Niblock "Social Structure and the Development of the Sa'udi Arabian Political System," in State, Society and Economy in Sa'udi Arabia ed. Tim Niblock (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 75-88.
[33] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 15.
[34] Ibid.

notwithstanding these differences, they were essentially involved in a symbiotic

relationship at the chieftaincy level. Authority was "recognized by an enforced tribute by

settled or nomadic groups upon other settled or nomadic groups, who expected protection

both from those who collected the tribute and from potential enemies."[36] However, this

does not seem to vitiate the central focus of the preceding analysis which centered upon

the formulation of the differing social norms and values exhibited by the nomads and

townsmen respectively. Thus, while inherently part of the same system, the way in

which they conceptualized the system as well as the goals they sought from it, differed

remarkably. This would have significant consequences for the unification of the Arabian

peninsula under Ibn Sa'ud, insofar as it points to a society in which varying and

sometimes conflicting social norms and values existed, thereby adding an element of

instability to the chieftaincy.

In order to properly understand the nature of governance in the towns, it is

necessary to delve into the political relationship between the nomad and sedentary

populations, which is best understood as one of mutual dependence based on tribal

power.[37] The European traveler, Lady Anne Blunt, who traveled throughout Najd during

the late nineteenth century, offers a very useful description of the nature of the

relationship between nomadic and sedentary populations when she states that,

> The towns put themselves each under the protection of the principal
> Bedouin Sheykh of its district, who, on the consideration of a yearly
> tribute, guarantees the citizens' safety outside the city walls, enabling
> them to travel unmolested as far as his jurisdiction extends, and this,
> in the case of a powerful tribe, may be many hundred miles and
> embrace many cities. The towns are then said to 'belong to such and
> such a tribe', and the Bedouin Sheykh becomes their suzerain, or Lord

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[35] This analysis of townsmen is drawn primarily from Niblock "Social Structure," 75-88.
[36] Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 73.
[37] Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 63, Vassiliev, History p. 33.

Protector . . .

A farther development then ensues. The Bedouin Sheykh, grown rich
with the tribute of a score of towns, builds himself a castle close to one
of them and lives there during the summer months. Then with the
prestige of his rank (for Bedouin blood is still accounted the purest),
and backed by his power in the desert, he speedily becomes the
practical ruler of the town, and from protector of the citizens he
becomes their sovereign. He is now dignified by them with the title
of Emir or prince, and *though still their Sheykh to the Bedouin, becomes
king of all the towns which pay him tribute* [italics in original].[38]

Although Blunt focuses on the means by which nomads gained control over towns it is

not clear that this process always occurred unilaterally in favor of the nomads. That is to

say, a strong leader in a town was just as likely to subjugate the surrounding tribal

groups, as the reverse.[39] Irrespective of the initiator, the extension of authority over other

groups, whether tribal or sedentary, through the extraction of tribute, formed a crucial

aspect of the political context of the Arabian Peninsula and led to the creation of

chieftaincies.[40]

The payment of tribute by one tribe to another, or by one town to another, was a

crucial aspect of political authority in the Arabian Peninsula. Not only did payment

imply recognition of the superiority and authority of the extracting tribe, it also implicitly

entailed the de-politicization of those who paid. As al-Azmeh notes,

As always, desert polity is based on the patrimonial ascendancy
of a particular tribe . . . which holds in tow an alliance of other
clans which are by definition tributary and excluded from power. . . .
The centralization of the extraction of surplus and the elimination
of the role of these nomadic tribes in extraction of surplus for their

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[38] Quoted in Vassiliev, History p. 54.

[39] For two opposing views on whether the nomads or sedentary population were more likely to control the
other see Henry Rosenfeld, "The Social Composition of the Military in the Process of State Formation in
the Arabian Desert," The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland vol. 95
(1965), pp. 75-85 and Talal Asad, "The Bedouin as Military Force: Notes on Some Aspects of Power
Relations between Nomads and Sedentaries in Historical Perspective," in The Desert and the Sown:
Nomads in the Wider Society ed. Cynthia Nelson (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies at the
University of California, 1973), pp. 61-74.

[40] Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 65.

own benefit . . . implied more than the technical reorganization of such extraction in general by relegating this task to a central authority which then redistributed to every group its proper due. It also implied political eradication, that is, abrogation of tribal right for the benefit of a political right exclusively exercised by the center.[41]

Thus, the importance of tribute payment to the political context and the establishment of authority in the Arabian Peninsula, goes beyond merely recognizing the authority of other tribes. It implicitly removed power and authority from those who paid the tribute by appropriating their political functions to the center.

As has been noted, the clan was at the absolute center of existence for all individuals, whether nomadic or sedentary, and it was upon this unit that people depended for their survival. The necessity to roam for pastures and water, and the act of raiding other tribes or collecting a tribute, which were both indispensable to the survival of the tribe, created a political context which was characterized above all else by its political fragmentation. Moreover, the localized nature of leadership and authority added to the disunity which prevailed. It is important to note in this context that economic power was the result of successful conquests not the cause. The political conditions were such that one needed tribal strength *prior* to raiding another tribe or establishing a dependency over a sedentary community. As Henry Rosenfeld noted in his study, "The Social Composition of the Military in the Process of State Formation in the Arabian Desert,"

> Factionalism is a concomitant of these [tribal] societies because each kin group, not accepting the exclusive control of resources, fundamentally considers itself the equal of others in regards to prestige, honour, status in rights. Their major mechanism for preserving this equality is their preservation of their right to act militarily. They are kin military groups which do not

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[41] Al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite Polity," pp. 78-79.

recognize monopolies in the use of force by any single group.[42]

Thus, the political situation which characterized the Arabian Peninsula prior to the emergence of the Wahhabi movement is best described as a conglomerate of petty chieftaincies where loyalties and authority were inherently localized.[43] It was precisely these conditions which allowed the anonymous author of The Brilliance of the Meteor, which was written by a contemporary of the first Wahhabi movement to state,

> There was no strong leader [in Najd] who would curb the oppressors
> and help the oppressed. But every emir was an independent ruler in
> his village . . . The bedouin were scattered tribes then. Each tribe
> was ruled by a shaikh . . . There were petty shaikhs in some tribes
> who could oppose the bigger shaikhs. The inhabitants of the Najdi
> towns fought permanently with each other.[44]

In order to properly understand the significance of chieftaincies to the political context into which Ibn Sa'ud entered in 1902, it is important to examine the nature of the political authority exercised by them. In short, if as was previously noted, kinship ties were a necessary but not sufficient reason to sustain chieftaincies, how then were they maintained? Throughout this analysis, particular attention will be paid to the inherent instabilities of chieftaincies, with a specific emphasis being placed on the contradictions created by a form of political organization which sought to overcome narrowly defined kinship identities in a social context which was determined by them. Some methodological considerations concerning the exercise of political authority more broadly will also be established, as these will shed light on the contradictions and instability engendered by the creation of chieftaincies.

Nazih Ayubi asserts that,

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[42] Henry Rosenfeld, "Social Composition," p. 174.
[43] Vassiliev, History p. 58; Ahsan Life and Thoughts pp. 46-47; Fakhro, Political Role p. 27; Wahba, "Wahhabism," p. 461; Rentz, "Wahhabism," p. 55.

Power in society has three structural dimensions: economic, political and cultural/ideological . . . power is about access to, or control of (a) means of production; (b) means of coercion; (c) means of persuasion.[45]

What is being argued is that the power to govern can come from one of three sources, either economic strength, coercive strength or cultural strength. Therefore, with respect to chieftaincies, there were three avenues of potential political power. However, regarding the modes of production which were characteristic of chieftaincies Ayubi goes on to state that,

This is basically a consumerist or circulationist, not a producer type of civilization. Wealth in such a society is mostly derived from the acquisition of 'ready goodies'. The superstructures in such a society are in no substantial way related to the infrastructure: political power is not derived from the relations of production but from a sense of group solidarity leading to domination and to the acquisition of privilege and ready wealth.[46]

Thus, there was no dominant mode of production capable of creating and sustaining power. Rather the mode of production or wealth is captured, and, therefore, the result of authority, not its source. Ayubi elaborates on this theme when he states that,

The nomads' repeated encroachments, combined with the poorly developed mode of production of their neighboring agrarian societies, had made the alterations in political power often repetitive rather than cumulative, in that most new individuals or groups taking over power had kept the economic conditions and the social formations as they had been previously, rather than introducing a new economic and social system.[47]

From the two excerpts above it, therefore, becomes clear that the modes of production are incapable in and of themselves to explain power over society within the context of the

[44] Quoted in Vassiliev, History p. 61.
[45] Nazih Ayubi, Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995), p. 38.
[46] Ibid, p. 50.
[47] Ibid, p. 49.

chieftaincy. This is not to suggest that economic power was inconsequential, rather it is

to suggest that economic power came as the result of political authority, not the other way

around.[48] Such a perspective is further reinforced through an examination of the

mechanisms of taxation or tribute. Embedded as it was, within the broader social-

political system, the right to collect taxes was the result not the cause of strength.

> Of all the State activities tending to substantiate a claim of
> effective possession . . . those having the greatest probative
> value are the collection of taxes and the preservation of public
> security. . . . *zakat* early became the chief general tax
> imposed on the Muslims. On him who has the right to collect
> it rests the corollary duty to protect those who pay it: no
> collection, as has been said, without protection.[49]

Within these parameters, authority and political power do not stem from economic

strength, rather economic strength comes to those with political authority. Such a

situation was an important factor in the instability which plagued chieftaincies insofar as

the ruling group had to continually prove their military strength in order to extract the

productive surplus from the tribes it dominated. This led to a context in which the

"tribute state was forced to recreate itself from year to year."[50] Thus, economic strength

cannot be isolated as an explanatory concept with regard to the creation of chieftaincies.

Although writing in the fourteenth century, the famous philosopher, sociologist

and historian, Ibn Khaldun, provides some very useful insight into the nature of authority

in tribal based societies and, as such, his theories are very much applicable to the present

discussion. Particular attention in this analysis will be placed on his understanding of

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[48] See for example, Ghassan Salame, "Strong and Weak States: A Qualified Return to the Muqqadimah," in
The Arab State ed. Giacomo Luciani (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 52.
[49] Quoted in Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 154.
[50] Rosenfeld, "Social Composition," p. 185.

tribal solidarity (*asabiyya*), the problems inherent to establishing authority in tribally dominated lands and the role religion can play in solidifying or reinforcing *asabiyya*.

According to Ibn Khaldun, man is by his very nature a social creature.[51] Because man needs to live together to satisfy his needs, civilization, whether nomadic or sedentary, is the necessary outcome. As a result, there is a need for "restraining influence and strong authority, since man, alone of all the animals, cannot exist without them."[52] Thus according to Ibn Khaldun, a ruler who presides over his subjects is a necessary condition for human life.

Tribal solidarity, for Ibn Khaldun, is based primarily on blood relations and is a natural feeling amongst men.[53] It can extend to others through a client – patronage relationship insofar as close contact operates "exactly or approximately in the same way, as does common descent."[54] The resultant tribal solidarity, *asabiyya*, leads tribes of common descent and their allies or patrons to band together in mutual help and self-defense. Authority is therefore based on *asabiyya*. It should be noted, in this context, that coercive power is the result of *asabiyya* and not its cause.

The implications of *asabiyya* for the establishment of a strong central authority are inherently negative. Ibn Khaldun states,

> The reason for this is the differences of opinion and desires. Behind
> each opinion and desire, there is a group feeling [*asabiyya*] defending
> it. At any time, therefore, there is much opposition to a dynasty and
> rebellion against it, even if the dynasty possesses group feeling,
> because each group feeling under the control of the ruling dynasty
> thinks that it has in itself (enough) strength and power.[55]

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[51] Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah vol 1, trans, Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), p. 84.
[52] Ibid, p. 84.
[53] Ibid, p. 264.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid, p. 332.

However, he also notes that it is from *asabiyya* that one establishes royal authority.[56] It is the strongest *asabiyya* which is able to subjugate other lesser *asabiyyas* and "dominate subjects, collect taxes, send out (military) expeditions, protect the frontier regions, and have no other power over them. ... This is generally accepted as the real meaning of royal authority."[57] Tribally based societies are, therefore, inherently difficult to govern as there will always be competing interests. Notwithstanding these problems, political authority can still be established, provided the *asabiyya* of the ruling group is strong enough to overcome its rivals.

One of the means of strengthening *asabiyya* is through religion. Here it is worth quoting Ibn Khaldun at length as his thought has important implications for the rise of the Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula.

> *Religious propaganda gives a dynasty at its beginning another power in addition to that of the group feeling it possessed as the result of the number of its (supporters)* [italics in original]
>
> As we have mentioned before, the reason for this is that religious coloring does away with mutual jealously [sic] and envy among people who share in a group feeling, and causes concentration upon the truth. When people (who have a religious coloring) come to have the (right) insight into their affairs, nothing can withstand them, because their outlook is one and their object of common accord. They are willing to die for (their objectives). (On the other hand,) the members of the dynasty they attack may be many times as numerous as they. But their purposes differ, in as much as they are false purposes, and (the people of the worldly dynasty) come to abandon each other, since they are afraid of death. Therefore they do not offer resistance to (the people with a religious coloring), even if they themselves are more numerous. They are overpowered by them and quickly wiped out. . . [58]

Within this excerpt it is, therefore, clear that religion can play a very important legitimizing role for the ruling dynasty and strengthen their *asabiyya* and authority.

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[56] Ibid, p. 381.
[57] Ibid.

Ibn Khaldun's understanding of the mechanisms of power in tribal society offers a number of useful contributions. First, his understanding of the nature of authority in tribal society, and in particular the supporting role which religion can play, supports the position that in order to understand the construction of authority necessary for the unification of the Arabian Peninsula, it is crucial to understand the content of Wahhabism. Second, his analysis of the difficulties involved in creating a strong central authority in a realm dominated by tribal *asabiyya* represents an important contribution to understanding the fragmented nature of political authority which characterized the peninsula. As such his theories shed significant light not only on how localized loyalties made political authority inherently difficult to sustain beyond immediate kinship ties, but also how these fragmentations could be overcome, to a certain extent, by cultural unifiers such as religion. However, he fails to articulate in sufficient detail how *asabiyya* or cultural unifiers such as religious beliefs, contribute to the exercise of domination, power or authority by one group over another.

Arguing for the importance of a culturally-based understanding of power, Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori define politics (i.e. the struggle for power over society) as,

> Competition and struggle over the meanings of symbols and control
> of the institutions that define and articulate social values . . . power
> resides not only in the possession of economic resources but also
> in "the control of cultural institutions" . . . the symbolic component
> of politics is especially significant because it can be used as an
> instrument of persuasion as well as coercion.[59]

Through such a conceptualization of politics, modes of persuasion become increasingly important in terms of access to power. Thus, it is through the manipulation of symbols

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[58] Ibid, p. 320.

and the construction of meaning attached to these symbols that one achieves power.

Although they offer a useful definition of politics, which allows for the importance of

cultural beliefs and practices, it is not clear, however, from their analysis how this is

related to the achievement of power. In short, they fail to articulate the method by which

ownership over cultural precepts translates into political power or authority.

The question of how cultural knowledge or precepts can be transformed into

political authority is dealt with extensively by the political theorist Antonio Gramsci and

his use of the concept of hegemony, which he defines as "cultural, moral and ideological

leadership over allied and subordinate groups."[60] According to Martin Carnoy,

> Gramsci realized that the dominant class did not have to rely
> solely on the coercive power of the state or even its direct
> economic power to rule; rather, through its hegemony,
> expressed in the civil society *and* the state, the ruled could be
> persuaded to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and
> to share its social, cultural and moral values.[61]

Gramsci's use of hegemony, therefore, supplements Eickelman and Piscatori's

conceptualization of politics as the struggle over the meaning of symbols. Moreover,

there is a fascinating link which can be drawn between Gramsci and Ibn Khaldun, insofar

as Khaldunian *asabiyya* seems to approximate in a very real sense Gramsci's hegemony.

According to Khaldun, kinship ties and cultural norms were an integral aspect of the

construction of authority, and religion was particularly well suited to the task. Similarly,

Gramsci suggests that by putting forward a culturally specific rationale for their rule, or

an ideology, leaders could create and maintain political authority through the actions of

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[59] Eickelman and Piscatori, Muslim Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 9-11.
[60] Antonio Gramsci, A Gramsci Reader ed. David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), p. 423.
[61] Quoted in Ayubi, Over-Stating p. 6.

the state. For the period under review that ideology would be Wahhabism, spread through the conquest movement, to engender hegemony or *asabiyya*.

The process by which hegemony successfully asserts itself is dualistic. Hegemony requires an ideology which must, according to Gramsci, "operate as a 'general conception of life' for the masses, and as 'scholastic program' or set of principles which is advanced by a sector of intellectuals."[62] In this case the ideology or scholastic program was Wahhabism and the sector of intellectuals responsible for its advancement was the Najdi *ulama* and the al-Sa'ud family. Gramsci, therefore, provides a useful contribution for understanding how cultural beliefs and practices can be translated into political power and is particularly pertinent with respect to the political context of the Arabian Peninsula, where as has been shown, power was embedded within the cultural framework.

Considerable attention has been paid to establishing the economic, social and political causes and implications of the tribal political system which dominated the Arabian Peninsula prior to 1902. From a contextual perspective, particular emphasis has been placed on highlighting the importance of kinship identity for political action and the instabilities this created for the formation of chieftaincies. Moreover, it was shown how economic and military relations were also affected by kinship identity, creating a political terrain dominated by factionalism. Such contextualization is crucial, because as noted at the outset, in order to properly understand Wahhabism as an ideology and in order to properly determine its social and political implications, the conditions in which it was operating and reacting need to be elucidated.

Methodologically the importance of examining Wahhabism as a factor in the unification of the peninsula has been justified through an examination of the various

ways and means of establishing political authority. Beginning with Ayubi, it was noted that power over society can manifest itself in three ways, economically, coercively and persuasively. It was also shown that within the context of twentieth century Arabia it was the mode of persuasion which predominated the establishment of political authority and that economic and military power were embedded within and encapsulated by the former. This perspective was further strengthened through an analysis of the thought of Ibn Khaldun who highlights the importance of *asabiyya* or group feeling to the achievement of political power. Such a perspective was reinforced by Eickelman and Piscatori's conceptualization of politics as being the struggle over symbols. Moreover, through an analysis of Gramsci it was shown how cultural authority can be translated into political authority through hegemony. This is not to suggest, however, that economic and military strength were unimportant to the unification process, but rather to note that the latter were embedded within and, therefore, dependant on the former. Thus, insofar as it is understood as an ideology of tribal unification, the emphasis on the content of Wahhabism as a crucial variable in the unification of the Arabian Peninsula seems to have been justified. Therefore, what will follow is an analysis of the thought of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, in order to determine how and why it was able to act as the ideological basis for a movement which would eventually envelop the entire peninsula under one centralized governing structure.

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[62] Quoted in Ibid, p. 84.

Chapter II: Wahhabism

Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is a controversial figure in the history of Islamic thought. His theology and personhood have been attacked from any number of positions. Emerging in the context of eighteenth century Central Arabia, where Islam had lost much of its original simplicity and unity and had been interjected with a variety of local superstitions and rituals, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab rejected the incarnations of Islam he saw around him. His critique of what he saw as deviations from the true practice of Islam led him to the somewhat radical step of labeling many of his contemporaries as infidels, nothwithstanding their self-professed adherence to the faith. A term usually reserved for those who clearly did not accept the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad as divine authority such as Christians or Jews, infidel had rarely been applied to practicing Muslims. In order to avoid some of these controversies, a couple of notes of caution should, therefore, be introduced here. First, what is being proposed is not a theological analysis of the Wahhabi movement. Therefore, although Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab justified his positions principally with reference to the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, it is not his justifications which are of primary importance. This leads to a second important consideration, namely, that no attention will be given to where his theories fall within the broader Islamic framework. Rather the focus here is on the implications of his thought with respect to the maintenance and operation of political authority. Thus, not only does the validity or invalidity of his argument within a broader theological framework seem inconsequential, so too do the theological justifications for his movement. Wahhabism and the beliefs contained therein will be treated as the starting point, or motivating factor, for the subsequent developments and as such their

place within the larger Islamic framework is not pertinent for the discussion which follows. What needs to be identified are the social and political implications of his doctrines which both motivated and legitimized the conquest of the Arabian Peninsula, not how Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab came to these beliefs and certainly not whether these beliefs were in accordance with broader theological positions.

In order to explain how Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the Wahhabi movement more generally came to be associated with the al-Sa'ud, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the years prior to his alliance with Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud, the ruler of the first Sa'udi state. The years preceding this alliance were formative ones for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, to the extent that throughout this period of time, his understanding of Islam, of the society in which he lived and of the necessity of implementing his vision of Islam onto the society in which he lived, came to be refined.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in Uyainah, in central Najd in 1703/04[1] to a family of religious scholars. His grandfather had been the *mufti* of Najd and his father was a *qadhi* in Uyainah.[2] In 1715/16, he left to make the pilgrimage to Mecca where he also spent time studying. During this period he also traveled to Medina and Basra where he studied under various member of the *ulama* who had an important impact on his understanding of Islam. In particular one can see a growing concern that the way Islam was being practiced had deviated from the truth path as laid down in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. A contemporary of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab chronicled that while in Medina, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab asked for his teacher's opinion about a group of people who were gathered around the chamber of the Prophet's tomb praying to him and seeking his help.

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[1] The dates for this section are the matter of some debate within the literature and as such should only be taken as approximate.

"The response was that it was a useless and futile [practice]."[3] His contempt for what he saw as deviations from Islam grew while he was in Basra and it was there that he first began to denounce the innovations which he saw all around him. He reports that during some of conversations he had,

> Certain men among the *mushrikin* [those who associate Allah with others] of Basrah used to bring equivocations and lay them before me. Then I would say while they were sitting in front of me: 'The whole of worship belongs to God alone,' whereupon they would all be left amazed and speechless.[4]

Apparently his message was not well received in Basra as he was forced out of the town by its rulers.

Returning to Huraimila in Najd in the mid -1730s, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab refrained from preaching aggressively against the innovations which he saw until his father passed away in 1740/41. However, shortly thereafter, his preaching embroiled him in a dispute which nearly cost him his life and resulted in him fleeing Huraimila in 1741/42. A power struggle between two tribes had developed over control of the town and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab approached one of the two groups about reforming their ways. In response, they attempted to kill him.[5] This episode was instructive for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as it impressed upon him the need for the political support if his reforms were to have any effect.

When he fled Huraimila for Uyainah, its ruler had already accepted his doctrines thereby giving him the necessary political support. It was during his time in Uyainah that he began, in a systematic way, to apply his doctrines directly to society. He felled trees

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[2] Fakhro, Political Role p. 40.
[3] Ibid, p. 45.
[4] Quoted in Ibid, p. 47.
[5] See Fakhro, Political Role p. 54; Ahsan, Life and Thoughts p. 66.

which were considered pious by the local population, destroyed the cupolas which had been built over mosques and razed tombs which were venerated, including one purported to belong to Zaid Ibn Khattab, a companion of the Prophet. Perhaps most dramatically, in order to show the extent to which he intended to apply his understanding of Islamic law, he stoned to death an adulterous woman.[6] It was during this period that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's preaching began to arouse the ire of some of the leading members of the *ulama* in Najd who accused the former of intending to "stir up the common folks to revolt against the authority of the established leaders,"[7] and who warned the rulers that "it was their obligation, as Muslim leaders responsible for the *shari'ah*, to put an end to Wahhabi errors and innovations."[8] Shortly thereafter the Governor of al-Hasa, and chief of the Bani Khalid tribe, Sulayman ibn Muhammad of Al-Humayd, upon whose goodwill Uyainah depended, demanded that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab be exiled or killed.[9]

In 1744 Ibn Abd al-Wahhab left Uyainah and moved to al-Diriya. He knew that he had a number of supporters within the town, including two brothers of the ruler Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud. An alliance between the two was quickly concluded, whereby Ibn Sa'ud pledged to support Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in his reform efforts in exchange for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's guarantee that if succeded he would not leave al-Diriya. The latter noted that "he hoped one day they would together be able to bring all Muslims under one flag and he (the amir) would win dominion over lands and men."[10] This alliance was quickly cemented with a marriage between one of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's daughters and Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud. The inter-marrying between these two families continues to the

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[6] Fakhro, Political Role pp. 55-56; Ahsan, Life and Thoughts pp. 68-69.
[7] Ayman Al-Yassani, Religion and the state in the Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia (London: Westview Press, 1985), p. 25.
[8] Ibid, p. 24.

present and constitutes an important aspect of linking the Wahhabi movement and its

fortunes with the al-Sa'ud. And with this compact, it is to the content of the movement

spawned by these two men that the focus must now turn.

Throughout Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought, what was being attempted was a re-

definition of orthodoxy.[11] While there is great disagreement within the Islamic faith as to

what constitutes orthodoxy, and certainly many accused Ibn Abd al-Wahhab of being

heretical, from a discursive perspective the important point to bear in mind is that,

> As Muslims their differences are fought out on the ground of that
> concept. It is too often forgotten that the progress of defining
> orthodoxy in conditions of change and contest includes attempts
> at achieving discursive coherence, at representing the present
> within an authoritative narrative that includes positive evaluations
> of past events and persons. Because such authority is a collaborative
> achievement between narrator and audience, the former cannot
> speak in total freedom; there are conceptual and institutional
> conditions that must be attended to if discourses are to be
> persuasive.[12]

The institutional conditions in which the Wahhabi movement flourished have been

outlined above and will be returned to in the following chapters through an examination

of the historical period between 1902 and 1932. As for the conceptual parameters of the

discursive attempt to construct orthodoxy alluded to above, they can be further elucidated

through Ernest Gellner's distinction between "High and Low Islam."[13] Distinguishing

between the legalistic, rule-observance oriented puritanism of urban scholarly Islam and

the folk Islam of the rural people, with its emphasis on mystical beliefs and the worship

of saints, Gellner argues that "each of these two religious styles had their place in the

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[9] Fakhro, Political Role p. 57; Ahsan, Life and Thoughts p. 69.
[10] Fakhro, Political Role p. 59.
[11] Asad, Genealogies p. 210.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ernest Gellner, PostModernism, Reason and Religion (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 9-20.

social order," and that the differences between the two were "not only gradual but . . .

often obscured and barely perceived." [14] The resultant situation is one in which those

who usually practice "a culturally low variant of the faith" could be persuaded to embrace

the "purer, unitarian high form under the influence of a wave of enthusiasm." [15] Thus,

from a discursive perspective, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought had the necessary audience

in which to succeed.

The means through which the articulation of this discourse translated into social

and political authority for the al-Sa'ud will be addressed in the concluding sections of this

analysis when Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's conceptualization of the state will be discussed. For

the moment it is sufficient to note, from a discursive perspective, the normative element

contained in the construction of Wahhabi orthodoxy. Al-Azmeh notes that,

> Wahhabism sought the abstraction of society according to a
> utopian [or orthodox] model, . . . that history which interjects
> between the fundamental examples of the past and today is
> liable to elimination. . . . For the import of fundamentalism
> is to require its (willing and unwilling) adherents to become
> subject to its requirements, that is to lay Wahhabite territory
> open to the authority of Wahhabism. . . . In short, Wahhabite
> fundamentalism puts forward a model whose task is to subject
> local societies with their customs, authorities, devotions, and
> other particularities to a general process of acculturation . . .[16]

Thus, the formulation of Wahhabi thought engendered specific norms in a discursive

context in which it found a ready audience. Moreover, once attached to the authority of

the al-Sa'ud, its normative discourse extended its reach from the purely religious or

theological realm to the social and political realm, thereby imparting political authority to

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[14] Ibid, pp. 10-11.
[15] Ibid, p. 10.
[16] al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite Polity," pp. 82-83.

its defenders. That is, the application of Wahhabism entailed the disciplining of social space which was demanded by its normative code, thereby engendering authority.

In order to properly understand the social and political implications of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought, there are four fundamental questions which must be answered. The first and most straightforward is to determine what the main organizing principle for society should be. In this case, clearly the answer is Islam, although it was Islam as understood by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Although blatantly obvious, this point needs to be made, as it formed the basis upon which the rest of his thought was based and the prism through which he interpreted the social and political context of his time. Society was to be governed by Islam, and the extent to which one was a Muslim determined the ramifications of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's beliefs. Put simply, if society was made up of nothing but sincere Muslims, as understood by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the implications of his thought would be negligible. However, as will be noted, this was not the case. This leads to a second set of questions, namely, what were the pre-requisites for being a Muslim? What beliefs or modes of living were incumbent upon those who claimed to be Muslim? Without anticipating the remainder of this analysis, it can be stated that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab viewed the population of the Arabian Peninsula as having deviated from the true path of Islam, thereby renouncing its claims to being Muslim. A further question therefore arises. How and why did society fail to achieve his vision of what constituted an Islamic community? What were the causes for the discrepancy he saw between the ideal and the actual and how was this to be explained? Finally, the last question to be answered is, how was this situation to be corrected? What steps could be taken to reconcile the gap that existed between theory and practice? It is only through answering

these questions that a comprehensive understanding of the social and political implications of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought for the construction of authority can be achieved.

According to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, to become a Muslim one must confess the unity of God, accept the message of the Prophet Muhammad in its entirety and act accordingly. He, therefore, identifies three aspects of Islam: submission, belief and right doing.[17] In examining the religious context of his time, however, he found that "many Muslims did not pay enough attention to the prescriptions of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* and began to think and act as if faith required nothing but the recognition of God as Lord and Creator."[18] This was diametrically opposed to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's understanding of Islam which emphasized that the true believer "motivated by faith and sustained by religious practice . . . should take an active role in the development of society,"[19] based on the precepts of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. It was this belief which prompted him to write that, "Islam is not only a form of words, an imitation of what others have said; at the Day of Judgement it will not be enough to plead that I heard people saying something and I said it too."[20] Therefore, to be a true Muslim, it was insufficient to merely profess belief in the unity of God and the message of his Prophet. The precepts contained within Islam had to form the basis upon which one behaved. Belief had to be made manifest through action.

By emphasizing the necessity of implementing Islam as the foundation or motivating factor for one's actions, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab placed Islam squarely within the

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[17] Muhammad Yusron, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab: What He Believes Based on His Writings (Master's Thesis, New York University, 1987), p. 49.

[18] Hani Nasri, Ibn Abd al Wahhab's Philosophy of Society: An Alternative to the Tribal Mentality (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 1979), pp. 40-41.

socio-political realm. It could, therefore, no longer be considered a personal set of

beliefs. It became, in effect, a blueprint for society or a normative order. Since, he

believed that the majority of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula failed to implement

Islam into their daily lives and were content to merely state their belief, his message

inherently becomes a challenge to society to reform its ways. As Ayman Al-Yassini

states in Religion and the State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

> The founding of new religious formations invariably ushers in a
> measure of social discord. The development of this discord depends
> on the extent to which these formations challenge the established
> norms and institutions. The challenge is most apparent when an
> attempt is made to redefine the boundaries and membership of a new
> community and to establish a new code of behaviour for followers
> or advocate a revival of old beliefs.[21]

The process described by Al-Yassini resembles precisely the project which Ibn Abd al-

Wahhab had undertaken, through his emphasis on the implementation of Islamic beliefs

in the socio-political sphere. The pertinence of Al-Yassini's observations will become

increasingly evident as the focus shifts towards ascertaining how, and why society had

deviated from the principles of Islam, according to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. For the present

purposes it is sufficient to note that by challenging society to reform its ways, he was

fundamentally challenging the basis of the authority of tribal rulers and seeking to replace

it with a conceptualization of authority defined by Wahhabi norms and beliefs.

In examining the social and political context which surrounded him, Ibn Abd al-

Wahhab declared that he was living in a period of *jahiliyya* (ignorance), equivalent if not

worse than that which had existed prior to the coming of Islam. According to Sayyid

Hasan, of all the places Ibn Abd al-Wahhab had visited he found that,

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[19] Nasri, Philosophy of Society p. 167.
[20] Quoted in Hasan, Life and Thoughts p. 92.

The condition of Najd was the worst. He saw that the religious
condition of the people had deteriorated and that all the *'ulama'*
of Najd and Hijaz had agreed with the innovations and had given
religious sanction to all the practices refuted by the Qur'an and
the *Sunnah*, barring a small number of them who would not dare
say anything.[22]

Such a perspective is supported by the eighteenth century Najdi historian, Ibn Bishr, who

stated that,

It was common for trees and rocks to be invested with super-
natural powers; tombs were venerated and shrines built near
them; and all were regarded as sources of blessings and
objects of vows . . . Moreover, swearing by other than God, and
similar forms of both major and minor polytheism were widely
practiced.[23]

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab saw the descent into *jahiliyya* as stemming from the fact that the

people were disunited. People followed their tribal leaders blindly, which led to growth

in tribal mentality at the expense of the universal unity of Islam, a theme which shall be

returned to below. Fundamentally, the blame for this situation was placed at the feet of

those in authority who failed to implement Islam, as understood by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab.[24]

The disunity of the Arabian Peninsula was evidenced by the political

fragmentation which characterized this period. According to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the

essential feature of such a divided society was,

Pride and haughtiness which prevents it from recognizing as right
anything but power . . . this leads to society denying any right beyond
what it itself confers. The society itself becomes the measure and
judge of what is right and what is wrong. It recognizes no law or
authority beyond itself, neither God nor Prophets. Nor are they
content to make such a claim for their group only but insofar as is
possible extend it to others outside their own circle. Each of these
social units, then claims to be the exclusive measure of what is right

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[21] Al-Yassini, Religion and the State p. 21.

[22] Hasan, Life and Thoughts p. 65.

[23] Quoted in Al-Yassini, Religion and the State p. 22.

[24] Yusron, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab pp. 57-59.

for all men.[25]

The quest for power which characterizes such a society further impedes the establishment of an Islamic order for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab because each group blindly follows the precedent of their ancestors, in order to retain their internal cohesion in the face of outside pressure. He states that,

> When they [the tribes] are in trouble or need perhaps they turn to God, but otherwise they rely on the power of their own tribe and tribal leaders all the while professing their faith. The apostates within the Muslim community . . . build their idolatry within the framework of Islam itself. This is in effect due to the hold that the tribal mentality has on people. Religious dogmas [are] created to justify the power of the leader. . . . Whatever is left of the true faith in individuals within the tribe is very weak and inevitably it is interpreted in terms of the dogma forced on them.[26]

Thus, according to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the disunity which prevailed in the peninsula engendered a quest for power based on tribal norms and values, with the resultant situation being a corruption of the faith and unquestioned loyalty to the tribe. It is within this context that his vehement denunciation of saint worshipping and other 'polytheistic accretions' can be seen as an inherently political act, in the Eickelman and Piscatori sense of the term. That is, the disciplining of social space through the politicization of public behavior, norms and principles, creates a context in which its enforcement entails the construction of authority. By attacking those religious values which served to strengthen loyalty to the tribe, at the expense of the unity of Islam, he was challenging the very nature of the authority which characterized the social and political system. Moreover, by attributing the fundamental cause of the *jahiliyya* to those in authority, i.e. the tribal leaders, his political challenge was even more explicit. Within his formulation of the

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[25] Quoted in Nasri, Philosophy of Society p. 59.
[26] Quoted in Ibid, pp. 52-3.

problems which beset the Arabian Peninsula, it was the tribal leaders who were responsible for the fractured political landscape and the entrenchment of the tribal mentality which vitiated the unity of Islam. It is worth noting here that his condemnation of political authority was born, at least partially, out of personal experience, as he had been forcibly removed from Basra, Huraimila and Uyanah by political leaders who failed to heed his message.

In order to overcome the *jahiliyya* which had enveloped the Arabian Peninsula, what was needed was a restoration of the unity of the *umma* under strong central leadership. The emphasis on unity, both in terms of recognition of Allah as The One and Only, and in terms of its application to social and political authority, was the paradigmatic element of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought.[27] While the various theological hues of unity need not be dwelt upon, it is important to note that for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, "the community of believers is a necessary entity and Islam does not exist except through the perpetuation of the community."[28] Not only was the perpetuation of the *umma* necessary, but crucially membership in the *umma* was to take precedence over all other social bonds.[29] Herein lies the crux of the social and political consequences of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's doctrines. A crucial component of Wahhabi thought is, therefore, its expansionistic element. By calling for the preeminence of the *umma*, the thought of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab engendered a social and political process which involved,

> The setting up of strict limits of exclusivity to a particular asabiyya
> (tribal power group), thus rendering all that is external to this
> expanding asabiyya social, political, and geographical territory

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[27] Ahsan, Life and Thoughts pp. 91- 95; Yusron, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab p. 79; Nasri, Philosophy of Society. pp. 39-43; John Sotos, Principles, Pragmatism, and the Al-Sa'udi: The Role of Islamic Ideals in Political Dissent in Sa'udi Arabia (Ph.D. dissertation, American University Washington, 1982), pp. 28-30.
[28] Yusron, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab p. 79.
[29] Sotos, Principles and Pragmatism p. 29; Moss-Helms, Cohesion p. 85; Al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite Polity," p. 83.

whose plunder and subjugation are legitimate, indeed incumbent
upon members of this exclusive group. *Kufr* (unbelief) is an
attribute of others and, in the accentuated Wahhabite form,
of otherness *tout court*. It is an attribute which makes conquest
and subjugation incumbent, under the banner of *jihad*, both
as the political act of expanding the polity and as a legal-
religious obligation.[30]

The means by which this conversion from tribal loyalty to loyalty to the *umma* was

effected was two fold. Initially attempts were made to gain the loyalty of recalcitrant

tribes through missionaries and letters sent to various leaders in a Gramscian effort to

produce hegemony. When this proved to be inadequate, recourse was had to war.[31]

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's understanding of Islam had profound implications for the

fragmented social and political environment which prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula.

Through his emphasis on the absolute and universal unity of Islam, he came to view the

decentralized tribal shaikhdoms as an affront to the unity of God. Therefore, his message

sought to overcome the disunity which characterized this period in favor of a centralized

polity guided by Islam.

As a means of concluding this analysis of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought there is

one final question which should be examined. Notwithstanding the fact that considerable

attention has been paid to his desire to see the fragmented political landscape of the

peninsula replaced by a unified polity, no attention, as of yet, has been paid to his actual

conceptualization of the state and how it claimed, justified and sustained its authority.

For Ibn Abd al-Wahhab the function of the state was "to see that justice prevailed, to

ordain good and to forbid evil, to bring about in reality the reign of unity and to prepare

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[30] Al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite polity," p. 76.
[31] Fakhro, Political Role pp. 79-92; Sotos, Principles and Pragmatism pp. 29-30.

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for the coming of a society devoted to the service of God."[32] Regarding Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's vision of the relationship between religion and the state, Derek Hopwood suggests that,

> Without the coercive power of the state, religion is in danger
> and without the discipline of revealed law, the state is a tyrannical
> organisation. The duty of the state is to bring about the rule of
> *tawhid* [unity] and to prepare the coming of a society devoted
> to the service of God. The mission of the Imam is to build and
> instil respect for the systems of orders and prohibitions
> which govern the various areas of life of the community.[33]

This was to be accomplished by a full and complete application of the *shari'ah*.[34] Due to the importance placed on the application of the *shari'ah* the ruler should govern in consultation with the *ulama* who are knowledgeable in these matters. In brief, the *ulama* were to advise the ruler on upholding the correct religious obligations, while the ruler was responsible for their application.[35] The state was, therefore, to reflect the unity of God and follow his precepts. There is an interesting parallel within Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's understanding of the state and the emphasis he places on religious beliefs forming the basis for behavior, insofar as the state becomes essentially a vehicle through which people's actions can be devoted to God. Crucially, therefore, the authority of the ruler is legitimate only to the extent that he implements Wahhabi beliefs and norms. Thus, this represents a fundamental re-orientation of the conceptualization of authority away from tribal norms and standards to ones defined by Wahhabi beliefs.

So long as the ruling group governed in the name of Islam (as understood by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab) and followed its precepts, it was the duty of the ruled to obey the orders

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[32] Hasan, Life and Thoughts p. 28. In his conceptualization of the state Ibn Abd al-Wahhab drew directly from the works of Ibn Taimiyya.

[33] Hopwood, "The Ideological Basis: Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's Muslim Revivalism," in State, Society and Economy in Sa'udi Arabia ed. Tim Niblock (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 33.

and injunctions of the ruler.[36] That the ruler is not to be opposed unless he transgresses

God's law seems to reflect Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's disdain for the political fragmentation

which is the necessary outcome of rebellion against a ruler. Furthermore, according to

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the means by which power was seized was largely irrelevant[37], so

long as the ruler followed the normative order established by his thought. A corollary of

this position is, therefore, to be found in the exclusivity, in terms of the position of the

ruler which it promotes. Because it is the *ulama* which defines orthodoxy in this

scenario, and because the al-Sa'ud were linked with *ulama* through the alliance of

Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in 1744 and therefore gained

legitimacy from them, opposition to the ruler becomes virtually impossible. Ibn Abd al-

Wahhab's understanding of the basis of legitimacy for the ruler to rule thus constructed

imparted a self-justifying meaning to the expansionist normative order.[38] In short

because the right to rule is based on the implementation of Wahhabi thought, and because

the al-Sa'ud had pledged themselves to such a role, opposition to them vitiates the norms

and values constructed therein and is therefore deemed illegitimate. Moreover, within

this context, the expansionist elements of Wahhabism become increasingly salient to the

extent that the legitimacy of power is determined by the implementation of Wahhabism,

not by the means through which it is implemented. The goal of the Wahhabi state, put

simply, is to create more adherents. As such the focus is on the end of the process not the

means. It can, therefore, be stated that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's conception of the state is

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[34] Hasan, Life and Thoughts p. 95.
[35] Al-Yassini, Religion and the State p. 30.
[36] Al-Yassini, Religion and the State p. 30; Yusron, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab p. 94; al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite," p. 78.
[37] Yusron, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab p.94; al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite Polity," p. 78.
[38] Al-Azmeh, "Wahhabite Polity," 87.

nothing more than an extension of his interpretation of Islam and in complete harmony with his critique of the social and political context of the Arabian Peninsula.

Considerable attention has been paid to examining the thought of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, in order to determine first how it challenged the basis and operation of the political authority which preceded it, and second how it functioned as an ideology of unification for the Arabian Peninsula. It has been noted that Wahhabi thought acted as a normative order, which emphasized expansion and unity in the name of Islam, as a reaction against the disunity which characterized the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, because the right to govern and the precepts according to which one governed were defined by his thought, opposition to Wahhabi governance is delegitamized, thereby allowing the al-Sa'ud, as champions of the Wahhabi movement, to claim the exclusive right to rule.

Thus far, the tribal political system and the ideology of Wahhabism have been singled out as two crucial elements which need to be understood in order to fully appreciate the creation and maintenance of authority throughout the period between 1902 and 1932, when under the leadership of Ibn Sa'ud the Arabian Peninsula was unified under one ruler. Tribalism, in which access to power is based on cultural or ideological authority as defined above, represents the political context into which the Wahhabi movement entered. Wahhabism, as an ideology, sought to build upon the basis of tribalism while establishing a normative order that sought to unify it under the exclusive authority of the al-Sa'ud. From a conceptual perspective, therefore, the importance of understanding the tribal political context and the construction of authority based on cultural precepts therein, has been determined. Because of this focus, Wahhabi norms

and beliefs have also been examined in order to ascertain, how as a set of cultural

precepts or as an ideology, it could impact on the creation and maintenance of authority.

And yet focusing purely on the ideology of the Wahhabi movement, even when

contextualized within the broader tribal political system, seems inadequate. This is

because, as Steven Caton reminds us,

> It is not enough to lay bare the ideology . . .; it is also
> necessary to relate it to key contexts of social action in
> which the elite does in fact persuade or compel . . .
> [the ruled] to accept its authority by manipulating
> efficacious political symbols.[39]

Thus the following chapters in Part II will be devoted to examining the period

under review in order to elucidate the interaction between the tribal political system and

the Wahhabi movement in the construction of Ibn Sa'ud's authority. In essence, the

perspective advanced so far outlines the two conceptual prisms which Ibn Sa'ud made

use of in this project.

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[39] Steven C. Caton, "Anthropological Theories of Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East: Ideology and the Semiotics of Power," in Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East eds. Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991) p. n/a.

Part II

Chapter III: 1902-1912

The first decade of Ibn Sa'ud's return from exile in Kuwait to the Arabian

Peninsula, between 1902 and 1912, represents the beginning of his attempt to re-unify the

land formerly held by his family during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This

period was witness to the initial re-establishment of Sa'udi authority in Najd and its

environs. The major campaigns of this period, the reconquest of Riyadh in 1902 and the

series of battles for al-Qasim between 1903 and 1908 conformed to a significant extent to

the political processes and behavior associated with chieftaincy politics and to chieftaincy

conceptualizations of authority. That is to say part of the explanation of how these events

unfolded and how Ibn Sa'ud re-established his authority is to be found in the instabilities

and fragmentations which resulted from the formation and preservation of chieftaincies.

However, with particular reference to the reconquest of Riyadh, some allowance must

also be made for the role of Wahhabi beliefs and values and Ibn Sa'ud's association with

them as the Wahhabi *Imam*, in terms of their legitimizing potential. Thus, over the

course of these initial years of the unification of the peninsula, both the dominant

political mode within the peninsula and the effects of the Wahhabi movement account for

how Ibn Sa'ud constructed his authority. Notwithstanding the role of Wahhabism as

legitimizer, the events of this period and the growth of Ibn Sa'ud's power perhaps are

more readily understood through recourse to typical chieftaincy notions of authority

insofar as throughout this period the normative, expansive and exclusive aspects of

Wahhabism which would predominate later periods were not in evidence. Throughout

the analysis which will follow considerable attention will therefore be devoted to

establishing the continuities, in terms of notions of tribal politics and authority that this period shared with preceding ones.

The story of Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of Riyadh in 1902 is well known and has come to assume almost mythological qualities. Yet this episode is instructive insofar as it reveals important elements in the social and political landscape of the Arabian Peninsula with respect to notions of authority. On the night of January 12, 1902, Ibn Sa'ud and forty of his supporters were camped outside Riyadh. Leaving twenty of them behind with instructions to return to Kuwait if they had not heard from him by the next day, Ibn Sa'ud made for the house of an al-Sa'ud sympathizer located near the Rashidi governor Ajlan ibn Muhammad's residence. Sneaking stealthily into the governor's house, they captured his wife and awaited Ajlan who was known to visit her after the morning prayers. When he arrived the following morning, they quickly killed him and made short work of his garrison, which consisted of approximately eighty men. Ibn Sa'ud lost only two men himself in the process. "His unexpected and brilliant success captured the Najdi's imagination and was later glorified in numerous legends and *qasidas* [traditional Arabic poetry] . . . The inhabitants of Riyadh swore allegiance to Ibn Sa'ud."[1] Both the suddenness and ease of this victory require some elaboration.

The narrative above provides little in terms of explanatory content. Anecdotal detail aside, Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of Riyadh in 1902, begs a number of questions which relate to concepts of political authority and legitimacy. What does this episode reveal about the nature of the Rashidi chieftaincy in particular, and tribal political organization more generally? Moreover, why did the inhabitants of Riyadh immediately swear

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[1] Vassilliev, History p. 212.

allegiance to Ibn Sa'ud when he commanded such a small force? What was the basis of his legitimacy? It is only through answering these questions that the significance of Ibn Sa'ud's conquest can begin to come into focus. Furthermore, the answers to these questions will help elucidate the broader, yet more subtle processes at work, in particular the interaction between tribal political organization (and its concomitant social norms and values) and the Wahhabi movement, in the construction of authority. Thus, in order to flush out some of these themes, the following analysis will begin with an examination of the Rashidi chieftaincy in order to show how and why it was vulnerable to challenges to its authority. The flip side of this coin is to determine why the inhabitants of Riyadh were receptive to Ibn Sa'ud's occupation. It is within this context that the legacy of the previous two Sa'udi chieftaincies as well as the role of Wahhabism will be highlighted as two important aspects of Ibn Sa'ud's legitimacy. It should be pointed out, however, that the following analysis of the first two Sa'udi realms and the Rashidi chieftaincy will be rather brief and generalized, to the extent that their respective histories fall outside the proper scope of this paper. This is not to imply a diminution of the significance of the former. In point of fact the conquest of Riyadh cannot be understood in any meaningful way without reference to them. Rather it is meant to highlight the scope and rationale for the way in which they will be interpreted. Thus, what will follow should be viewed as the contextual correlate to the narrative above.

The Rashidi conquest of Najd in 1887 cannot be understood in isolation. It is, therefore, worthwhile to begin with a brief recapitulation of the history of the first two Sa'udi realms which preceded the Rashidi occupation. The significance of the former is two-fold. First, from a historical perspective, they rose and fell in the hundred and fifty

years preceding the reconquest of Riyadh in 1902. As such they provide important contextual information for understanding both the rise of the Rashidi chieftaincy and Ibn Sa'ud's successful return to Riyadh. Second, the history of the first two Sa'udi chieftaincies played an important legitimizing function for Ibn Sa'ud's authority and his claim to Riyadh. Thus, it seems that an understanding of this history provides added depth to the conquest of Riyadh and further illuminates the principal themes of this analysis, namely the interaction of tribal political organization and the Wahhabi movement in the construction of Ibn Sa'ud's authority.

Beginning in 1744/45, the emirate of al-Diriya, under the joint leadership of Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, initiated a conquest movement that came to dominate the peninsula and which united its people to an unprecedented degree. Moving initially to secure the immediate surrounding areas, the emirate of al-Diriya expanded its power and control over the neighboring towns and tribes. As its power and influence grew, so too did its domains. The capture of Riyadh in 1773 secured the emirate of al-Diriya's control over Najd and marked the onset of a more extensive program of expansion, taking al-Diriya further afield and out of the confines of central Arabia. Thus, in 1796, after over fifteen years of struggle and warfare the emirate of al-Diriya conquered the Eastern Province of the peninsula, al-Hasa. With this conquest complete, the only power in the peninsula with any potential to act as a rival to al-Diriya was the Hijaz, backed by the Ottoman Empire. However, the support of the Ottoman Empire was insufficient to protect the Hijaz. Its main cities, Taif, Mecca and Medina, fell in rapid succession during the summer and winter of 1805/06. With this victory the emirate of al-Diriya had conquered most of present day Sa'udi Arabia and

was unquestionably the supreme power in the peninsula. Notwithstanding its dominance, however, the conquest of the holy cities of Islam aroused the concern of the Ottoman Empire which could not countenance such an attack on their prestige. Under the leadership of the Ottoman vassal in Egypt, Muhammad Ali and his son Ibrahim Pasha, the Ottomans made forays into the Arabian Peninsula with increasing vigor, in order to regain the Hijaz as well as strike a blow at the power of al-Diriya. These efforts culminated in the razing of al-Diriya in 1818 and the destruction of the first Sa'udi realm.

Although the former capital of Najd was burned to the ground in 1818, the al-Sa'ud established themselves in Riyadh in 1824 as Muhammad Ali withdrew from Najd to the Hijaz. In 1838, Muhammad Ali again sent troops into Najd where they defeated the House of Sa'ud. However, in 1840, "Muhammad Ali forsook Arabia after nearly three decades of largely fruitless ventures."[2] The Ottoman withdrawal signaled the beginning of the re-establishment of the Sa'udi realm. By 1843, under the leadership of Faisal ibn Turki of the al-Sa'ud, Riyadh was once again firmly in Sa'udi possession. He immediately set upon a course of expansion, moving against a Bahrani enclave in Damman in the Eastern Province the following year. By 1845 most, if not all, of al-Hasa had come under Riyadh's authority. Although imperfectly implemented, by 1850 the rulers of Qasim had been reduced to vassal status, as evidenced by their payment of tribute to Riyadh. And yet when Faisal died in 1865, his control over central Arabia was far from complete. There were constant revolts in Qasim, and Jabal Shammar, under the authority of the Rashidi family, who at this point were still loyal to Riyadh, was growing in strength. Moreover, nomadic tribes were in an almost constant state of war amongst themselves, which made it increasingly difficult to govern and establish order. Thus, the

state inherited by Faisal's son, Abdallah ibn Faisal, upon the latter's death was far from secure. Furthermore, and perhaps most important, Faisal's death initiated a period of fratricidal warfare between Abdallah and Muhammad ibn Faisal on the one hand and Sa'ud ibn Faisal on the other.

Between 1866 and 1876 the governorship of Riyadh switched hands eight times within the Sa'udi family.[3] It was precisely this process of internal warfare that allowed the Ottomans, under the leadership of the governor of Baghdad, Midhat Pasha, to conquer al-Hasa in 1871. Sa'ud's death in 1875 did not end the destructive cycle in Riyadh. Upon becoming the new ruler, Faisal's fourth son, Abd al-Rahman, began a campaign against his two older brothers as well as one against Sa'ud's sons who had their own designs on Riyadh. In 1878, weakened by the continued civil war in Najd, the al-Sa'ud had to recognize the sovereignty of Jabal Shammar over the province of Qasim. The loss of Qasim marked the beginning of a process, the end of which would signal the eclipse of Sa'udi fortunes at the hands of the Rashidi leaders of the Shammar. The loss of tribes and towns by the al-Sa'ud to the growing strength of the Rashidis continued unabated until 1887 when Abdallah appealed for help from Muhammad al-Rashid in response to yet another challenge from the sons of his younger brother Sa'ud. The Rashidis seized the opportunity to extend their influence over all of Najd, and by 1888, Muhammad al-Rashid had appointed one of his loyal supporters, Salim al-Subhan, as the new ruler of Riyadh while keeping Abdallah imprisoned as a royal guest in his capital Hail.

Upon Abdallah's death in 1889, Abd al-Rahman ibn Faisal became the titular ruler of Riyadh although real authority remained with Muhammad al-Rashid's

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[2] Rentz, "Wahhabism," p. 62.
[3] Vassilliev. History p. 200.

commander Salim. When Abd al-Rahman's attempted rebellion against the Rashidis failed in 1891, he along with his family, including his eleven year old child Ibn Sa'ud, fled to the desert, eventually settling in Kuwait at the request of its ruler Muhammad al-Sabah in 1893.

With the flight of the al-Sa'ud, the Shammar were now the undisputed rulers of central Arabia. Theirs was a typical chieftaincy in so far as their strength derived in the main from their tribal *asabiyya*. In the opinion of the chronicler of Khalid al-Faraj:

> The policy of the Al-Rashid might be characterized as 'divide and rule.'
> The rulers of Hail relied on their tribe, the Shammar, which was one
> of the most famous for valor and courage on the battlefield . . .
> They courted the Turks and indulged their wishes, because both the
> beginning and the end of the Iraqi pilgrims' way to the holy cities
> were in their hands, and the emir of Shammar depended on the
> proceeds from the pilgrims. Ibn Rashid recognized the suzerainty
> of Sultan Abdul Hamid. The Sublime Porte considered him one of
> his most devout vassals, and the force that had removed the Al Sa'ud
> and destroyed their emirate. The sultan showered gifts and decorations
> upon him and provided him with assistance. In 1897 the ruler of Jabal
> Shammar died childless.[4]

While it is outside the scope of this argument to attempt an in-depth analysis of the nature of the authority wielded by the Shammar, it is worth noting in passing that it conformed to the chieftaincy model outlined in Part I in a number of ways. First, as just mentioned, the strength of the Shammar was based on their kinship relations. Second, economic power was captured rather than produced by the Shammar. Thus, as Henry Rosenfled notes,

> The political eminence of the Rashid dynasty was based on its military
> ability to control an extensive and economically vital area of the desert
> region: to force towns and tribes within their area to offer recognition
> in the form of a tribute and/or tax payment and to some degree military
> service or allegiance; and to secure and maintain its own continuity that
> was primarily nourished and then supported through expansion of

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[4] Quoted in Ibid, p. 205.

commerce and control over trade and caravan routes.[5]

Third and finally, the position of the ruler was a crucial variable in the creation and maintenance of authority. The Rashidis benefited immeasurably from the fractionalization of authority which followed the death of Faisal Ibn Turki and likewise, the al-Sa'ud benefited from the period of instability which followed the death of Ibn Rashid. The period between the former's death and Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of Riyadh in 1902 was characterized by tribal feuding and incessant revolts. It was only the military strength of the al-Rashid which prevented the absolute breakdown of society,[6] and yet "protecting and guaranteeing its [the Rashidi territory] periphery required a monopoly on the use of force over time that was beyond the ability of the rulers to maintain."[7]

To return to the central issue under discussion, the conquest of Riyadh by Ibn Sa'ud in 1902, it is the fragmentation and instability engendered by the creation of chieftaincies that helps explain the suddenness and ease of the former's victory. The explanation for the success of Ibn Sa'ud lies in the lack of legitimacy accorded to Rashidi rule over Najd. Alexei Vasilliev elaborates on this theme when he states,

> Jabal Shammar [the tribe of the Rashidis] could not play the role of
> stable state formation. Based on the superiority of the Shammar, it was
> seen by other groups in the population as a tool for dominance of one
> particular tribal confederation rather than a supra-tribal, all-Arabian
> power. With its growing dependence on the Ottoman Empire . . . Jabal
> Shammar became an instrument of Turkish influence in the
> peninsula. The people's general discontent with Turkish rule and policy
> in Arabia then spread.[8]

The loyalty of the tribes and towns of Najd to the Shammar was a strategic response to the latter's military strength and as such can be viewed as being fleeting or time-specific,

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[5] Rosenfeld, "Social Composition," p. 82.
[6] Vassilliev, History p. 204.
[7] Rosenfeld, "Social Composition," p. 185.

insofar as there was no ideological or kinship unifier. The seizure of Riyadh by Ibn Sa'ud should therefore be understood within this broader context of tribal political organization, and the limits associated with kin-based authority.

The question still remains, however, why did the inhabitants of Riyadh support Ibn Sa'ud's conquest. For one, the historical association of the al-Sa'ud's leadership over Riyadh went back intermittently over 150 years, thereby imparting a considerable amount of legitimacy to his conquest. As well, through the seizure of Riyadh, Ibn Sa'ud had displayed traditional tribal leadership qualities such as courage, luck and the ability to lead. And yet perhaps the most important legacy of the previous two Sa'udi realms, in terms of imparting legitimacy to Ibn Sa'ud's authority, was the connection between the al-Sa'ud and the Wahhabi movement.

The extent to which the inhabitants of Najd still identified themselves as Wahhabi during the period preceding Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of Riyadh in 1902 is methodologically difficult to prove insofar as opinion polls and other modern methods of determining attitudes and beliefs were obviously non-existent. Moreover, in the period between 1887 and 1902, although ruled by the Rashidi tribe, Najd became for all intents and purposes an Ottoman province, which entailed a downplaying of 'monotheist identity' and Wahhabism.[9] Nevertheless, the al-Sa'ud were recognized as the defenders of Wahhabism and that the inhabitants of Riyadh were supportive of Ibn Sa'ud's claim on their town seems to argue that Wahhabism still played an important role in legitimizing this claim. It is precisely such hindsight which allows John S. Habib, drawing on contemporary Arabic sources, to conclude,

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[8] Vassilliev, <u>History</u> p. 205
[9] Ibid, p. 204.

To be sure, the strict passage of the Wahhabi faith had faded here and there in Najd, to some extent among the townspeople, but mostly among the bedouin. Crossing the barren wastes without benefit of religious teachers, medical doctors, or other formal assistance, the bedouin reverted to superstitious practices, charms, and amulets, which the original Wahhabi reformer thought he had obliterated forever. Once religious instruction was provided, however, the bedouin returned to the Wahhabi fold and became as dedicated and as militant as their ancestors. . . So strong was this leadership and so loyal were the people of Najd to this leadership that neither the Egyptian-Ottoman expedition against Najd, which dethroned the Sa'udi dynasty and destroyed their capital, nor the tragic intra-family feud which ultimately sapped the family's strength and caused it to lose all of Najd to the Rashid family could alienate completely the Wahhabi conscience of Najd.[10]

In particular the role of the *ulama* and the *muta'wwas* (Wahhabi missionaries) was crucial in keeping the Wahhabi movement and message alive during the period preceding Ibn Sa'ud's return to Riyadh. As agents of the Wahhabi *Imam*, both of these groups provided an important link between the former and population of Najd and formed a crucial component in Ibn Sa'ud's initial reconstitution of Sa'udi authority. Their support continued once the Shammar had been defeated. As David Edens states,

After the fall of Riyadh in 1902, Abd al-Aziz [Ibn Sa'ud] found strong ready support with the influential *ulama* and *muta'wwas* because his seizure of power made possible a renewal of the venerable Sa'udi-Wahhab collaboration in the service of God.[11]

Ibn Sa'ud's ability to draw on the Wahhabi heritage of Najd which had been nurtured over the preceding hundred and fifty years, therfore, formed an important aspect of his still nascent authority and his ability to retake Riyadh. And yet this episode in Sa'udi history, which marked the beginning of the unification of the Arabian Peninsula cannot be understood without recourse to the dominant political mode which characterized this period: the chieftaincy. Based as it was on the supremacy of one

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[10] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 10.

kinship group over another, the resultant political climate was one in which

fractionalization was preponderant and authority difficult to maintain. It was, therefore,

the very nature of Rashidi authority which allowed for the opportunity to reconquer

Riyadh. Thus, in order to appreciate the significance of the narrative which opened this

chapter, the roles of both the tribal chieftaincy and the legitimacy generated from the al-

Sa'ud's connection with Wahhabism need to be understood. This is why considerable

attention has been focused on discussing the historical precedents of the al-Sa'ud in Najd,

as well as how the Rashidis came to dominate the area, as they both formed part of these

processes which resulted in the former's return to Riyadh. Viewing these events from

this perspective allows for a much more nuanced understanding of how Ibn Sa'ud and a

small group of supporters were able to conquer a town that would remain the capital of

the Sa'udi state up to the present.

With the conquest of Riyadh complete and its defenses assured by 1903, Ibn

Sa'ud sought to enlarge his territories and authority, looking initially to the north towards

the province of Qasim. The series of battles fought over Qasim may be singled out as

being axiomatic with regard to the nature of authority typical of chieftaincies. In his

battles in Qasim between 1903 and 1908, Ibn Sa'ud relied primarily on a combination of

loyal nomadic tribes and the support of the settled populations. Although nomadic

groups played a role in these initial conquests, it was very much along traditional lines.

Concern was overwhelmingly with the survival of the tribe and, therefore, their loyalty to

Ibn Sa'ud was strategic rather than ideological or cultural. Henceforth, these initial

conquests were typical of traditional tribal politics to the extent that they were specific to

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[11] David Edens, "The Anatomy of the Sa'udi Revolution," International Journal of Middle East Studies vol. 5 (January 1974), pp. 55-56.

time and place and subject to reversals if the situation appeared to be changing. As such

they are representative of the transitive nature of political authority and loyalty which

characterized tribal chieftaincies.

The two main protagonists throughout this period were the Rashidis, whose troops

consisted mainly of the tribes of the Jamal Shammar and who were assisted by the

Ottoman government in terms of manpower and weaponry, and Ibn Sa'ud and those

nomadic tribes and townsmen from the Riyadh area who were loyal to him. These battles

would last from 1903 to 1908, and illuminated for Ibn Sa'ud the need for a more sound

footing upon which to base his authority for his planned unification effort than that

provided by nomadic tribes and townsmen.

Ibn Sa'ud initially moved against Unayza in Qasim in March 1904, with a force

comprised of 500 men, of which approximately 100 were townsmen.[12] He appointed a

local notable thought to be loyal to him as *amir* and then moved towards Burayda (also in

Qasim), whose inhabitants, perhaps in recognition of the growing power of Ibn Sa'ud and

not wishing to fall on the losing side of the battle, had sent a delegation to him requesting

his permission and aid in attacking the Rashidi garrison there.[13] By June 1904, the

remaining Rashidi forces surrendered and Ibn Sa'ud occupied the town, again appointing

a local *amir* whose loyalty he thought he could count on. Although Ibn Sa'ud was in

possession of the two towns, the Rashidis were not militarily broken. This is

fundamentally linked to the orientation of battles which emphasized small scale forces

and limiting losses. Retreating to fight another day was considered far more prudent than

suffering heavy losses, and this is precisely what occurred. By July 1904, the Rashidis

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[12] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 47.
[13] Vassilliev, History p. 216.

forces had been re-enforced by "2000 infantry . . . of Ottoman regulars, six light canons, large amounts of money in gold, supplies, and provisions,"[14] as well as nomads from various tribes loyal to them. Thus the scene was set for the continuation of the wars over Qasim.

The two protagonists next met in a series of battles in the area of al-Bukairiya in July 1904. Initially these skirmishes did not go well for Ibn Sa'ud and he retreated towards Shunana. By August and the peek of the summer heat, both sides avoided clashes. One of the results was that the nomads on both sides of the battle began to leave because they were "finding no spoils."[15] Thus, only the Ottoman detachments and the settled population of Jabal Shammar remained with the Rashidi forces, while only the settled forces of Najd remained with Ibn Sa'ud.[16] In late September 1904, Ibn Sa'ud defeated the Ottoman and Shammar forces near Shunana. Thus by the end of 1904, Ibn Sa'ud's position seemed to be strengthening.

Yet the battle over Qasim was far from over. In January 1905, the Ottomans sent another expedition, this time consisting of 3000 troops.[17] In April 1905, the Ottomans re-took Unayza and Burayda. The significance of these events lies in the fact that the respective *amirs* of the two towns did not offer any resistance to the Ottoman forces, seeing it as an opportunity to become direct vassals of the Ottomans, thereby increasing their prestige at the expense of the Rashidis and the Sa'udis.[18] Both the forces loyal to Ibn Sa'ud as well as those loyal to the Rashidis were now excluded from the towns. While Ibn Sa'ud decided to wait and bide his time, the Jabal Shammar resumed their

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[14] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 54.
[15] Vassilliev, History p. 218.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, p. 219.

raiding against the tribes of Qasim, which led the latter to renew their allegiance to Ibn

Sa'ud. This led to yet another battle between the Jabal Shammar and Ibn Sa'ud, in April

1906, the result of which was the death of the leader of the Jabal Shammar and the

reconquest of Unayza and Burayda by Ibn Sa'ud's forces. This precipitated renewed

conflict with the Ottoman forces. However, after two and a half years in central Arabia,

their forces were on the brink of starvation. Disease had begun to take an unbearable toll

and desertion was rampant. The Ottoman forces surrendered in late October 1906, on the

guarantee of safe passage to Medina and Iraq.

Even with the removal of the Ottoman forces, the battle for Qasim continued.

The *amir* of Burayda continued to attempt to gain his independence. Between late 1906

and 1908, he allied himself with tribes which had been previously loyal to Ibn Sa'ud but

who were now in revolt, in particular the Mutayr, under Faisal al-Dawish (who would

later come to play a prominent role in the *Ikhwan* revolt). A series of battles were fought,

culminating in the defeat of the rebellious tribes in September 1907 in the areas

surrounding Burayda. By May 1908, Ibn Sa'ud was able to re-capture the town, depose

the rebellious *amir* and appoint a new leader who had long ties with the al-Sa'ud family.

This time he left a garrison of troops under the control of his brother.[19]

A significant amount of attention has been paid to the battle over Qasim in order

to illuminate certain crucial aspects of the norms and values associated with warfare

during the early period of Ibn Sa'ud's attempts to unify the Arabian peninsula. This

period is largely characterized by its continuity with the traditions Ibn Sa'ud encountered

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[18] Ibid, pp. 219-221.
[19] This condensed version of the battle over Qasim is described almost uniformly by all sources. I have chosen to rely primarily on Vassilliev's account simply because his was the most succinct. Goldrup, Kostiner, Helms, Philby, and Dickson, give essentially the exact same account.

when he initially seized Riyadh, as outlined previously. Thus, at this stage, the conquest of Najd (of which the battle for Qasim formed a central element) was consistent with notions of tribal politics and authority. Central to any such discussion is the unreliability of nomadic tribes to a concerted war effort. Not only had Ibn Sa'ud been betrayed and abandoned by various tribes who initially fought for him, he was also betrayed by those tribes which he placed in positions of power on the assumption that he would be able to rely on their loyalty. Although it should be remembered that the nomads' unreliability in war was directly linked to questions of survival, both physical and economic, and thus not representative of any 'essential' qualities (or lack thereof) particular to the nomads, it must also be noted that the transient nature of support which Ibn Sa'ud could engender was reflective of this lack of stable, broad-based authority. Moreover, although townsmen had fought loyally at his side, he knew that as his conquests went further afield from Najd, it would be harder to maintain their support because of their vested interests in the towns. Thus, throughout this period, Ibn Sa'ud's authority over the areas he had conquered was emblematic of chieftaincy authority, to the extent that it was largely transitory and unreliable.

Two final notes should be added with regard to the initial conquest of Najd during the first decade of Ibn Sa'ud's drive for unification. First, although the Rashidis lost Riyadh and the surrounding areas, they remained in their capital Hail to the north of Riyadh and would prove to be a tenacious opponent for Ibn Sa'ud over the next fifteen years. Second, as part of his conquest movement, Ibn Sa'ud encouraged Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Latif, a leading Wahhabi theologian who had gone into exile in

Kuwait with him, in his reeducation of Najd in the precepts of Wahhabism.[20] This would

form an important pre-cursor to the *Ikhwan* movement, insofar as it provided the re-

introduction and re-intensification of Wahhabism, which had declined in Najd under

Rashidi rule.

Between 1908 and 1912, Ibn Sa'ud's drive to unify the Arabian Peninsula stalled.

His authority was still far from undisputed during these initial years following his return

from exile in Kuwait. This can be attributed, at least in part, both to the tribal political

context which he sought gain control over and the tribal political system which he was

building. That is to say, throughout this period Ibn Sa'ud was hampered by constraints

which were endemic to chieftaincies as a type of political organization. Moreover,

because the type of political organization which Ibn Sa'ud was creating was neither

qualitatively nor quantitatively different, up to this point from those which preceded it,

the instabilities engendered therein were essentially the same. Thus throughout these

years Ibn Sa'ud was particularly concerned with establishing and maintaining his

authority in Najd in the face of the various tribes who continued to strive for as much

independence from Riyadh as possible. His problems were further exacerbated by a

terrible drought which hit Najd in 1908, leading to a significant downturn in agricultural

production (in an area in which it was already very difficult to produce anything beyond

the level of mere subsistence) which led to widespread famine.

Insofar as the tribal revolts which characterized this period were axiomatic of the

centrifugal tendencies of chieftaincies, rather than representing specific grievances with

Ibn Sa'ud per se, the specific details of each instance need not be dwelt upon. There

were, however, two further developments during these years which, while not

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[20] Goldrup, <u>Sa'udi Arabia</u> p. 238.

immediately impacting upon the unification effort of Ibn Sa'ud and his construction of authority, would in subsequent years come to play an important role. These were the growing intervention of both the Ottoman Empire and the British government in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula.

The period under consideration marked the beginning of a long lasting conflict between Husain ibn Ali (Sharif Husain) and Ibn Sa'ud. Sharif Husain was named ruler of Mecca by the Ottomans during the fall of 1908. Acting as their vassal, Sharif Husain conquered the province of Asir on their behalf, between 1908 and 1910. During his return to Mecca he raided a number of oases which were located in proximity of the traditional border between Najd and the Hijaz, establishing his control over them. In the summer of 1910, during one of his raids into Najd on behalf of the Ottomans, Sharif Husain inadvertently captured Ibn Sa'ud's brother Sa'ud. After careful negotiations Sa'ud was returned to Riyadh in exchange for Ibn Sa'ud's recognition of Ottoman suzerainty and his agreement to pay them an annual tribute. Although Ibn Sa'ud never implemented the treaty, its significance lies in the fact that he was increasingly aware that his nascent state in Najd was surrounded by Ottoman possessions in the north (Jabal Shammar), in the east (al-Hasa), and in the west (the Hijaz). Moreover, the Ottomans made persistent efforts over the course of these years to make Ibn Sa'ud their vassal. Therefore, Ibn Sa'ud's decision to refuse the Ottoman request for military aid in Asir and al-Hasa in 1911 and 1912 respectively, reflected his desire to maintain his independence.[21] The tensions between the two were further exacerbated during this period when, in 1912, Sharif Husain refused to allow the Najdi population to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, offending both their religious sensibilities and the delivering a

terrible blow to the merchants of Najd who depended on its income. And while the perceived Ottoman threat would be extinguished by the end of World War I, the feud between Sharif Husain and Ibn Sa'ud would continue to simmer, and at times boil, until 1925, when the Hijaz was finally conquered.

One final development of this period which needs to be examined is Ibn Sa'ud's attempts to initiate formal relations with the British as part of his effort to construct more stable authority. Although these attempts were largely unsuccessful, insofar as Britain continued to refuse to become directly involved in the affairs of central Arabia, they were nonetheless significant to the extent that they were a harbinger of things to come. Ibn Sa'ud's meeting in 1911 with the British political representative in Kuwait, Captain Shakespear was important in spite of the fact that no agreement was concluded, because future negotiations, in particular the al-Qatif treaty of 1915, would correspond to the parameters laid out here. From Ibn Sa'ud's perspective the most substantive issue revolved around al-Hasa and his desire to annex it to Najd. In return for British acquiescence Ibn Sa'ud pledged to recognize the former's rights along the Trucial coast and agreed not to begin any hostilities without British approval. Thus, even though these meetings did not immediately produce a binding agreement, it is significant to note that the British had essentially recognized Riyadh's ambition for al-Hasa.

The initial decade of Ibn Sa'ud's unification effort was, to a significant extent, the product of the tribal political system in which he operated. The reconquest of Riyadh in 1902 and the securing of its immediate environs were typical examples of the inherent instabilities engendered by the creation of chieftaincies. Thus, the ease with which Ibn Sa'ud was able to occupy and gain the allegiance of Riyadh has much more to do with

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[21] Vassilliev, History p. 223.

the weakness of the Rashidi chieftaincy than the power of the al-Sa'ud and points to the difficulties associated with establishing comprehensive and wide-reaching authority in a society fragmented by kinship identities. This is reflected in the fact that Ibn Sa'ud was able to accomplish his goal with a relatively small force of men.

Throughout this process, Ibn Sa'ud was certainly aided by the historical connection of the al-Sa'ud with Riyadh, and in particular with his family's association with Wahhabism. The salience of Wahhabism as a legitimizing agent for Ibn Sa'ud was nurtured by the Wahhabi *ulama* who had remained in Najd during the al-Sa'ud's exile in Kuwait and who constituted an important link between the inhabitants of Najd and the ruling family.

The series of battles fought over Qasim should likewise be contextualized within the broader spectrum of tribal politics. This episode, along with the years between 1908 and 1912, are instructive for a number of reasons. First they reveal, quite dramatically the fragmented nature of authority in tribal chieftaincies. The continual tribal revolts and the resultant difficulties Ibn Sa'ud encountered in attempting to establish secure, centralized authority point to the fact that his position was still vulnerable. Therefore, thus far, Ibn Sa'ud's attempt to re-unify the peninsula conformed in the main to traditional tribal notions of politics, warfare and authority. Second, and perhaps more importantly in terms of Ibn Sa'ud's desire to re-unify the peninsula under his authority, was his recognition of this fact. The transient nature of nomadic support was clearly apparent throughout this period. Moreover, although considered loyal, Ibn Sa'ud was aware of the limitations on the effectiveness of the sedentary population as a military support base insofar as the farther afield his conquests took him the less capable they

were of participating because of their ties to specific locals. Herein lies part of the

explanation for why Ibn Sa'ud devoted considerable energy in attempting to establish ties

with the British as a means of overcoming some of these instabilities and increasing his

authority.

Ibn Sa'ud's most dramatic attempt to solidify his position in the peninsula and to

establish a broader basis upon which to build his unification effort would not be limited

to contacts with foreign powers however. Instead, as will be shown, he sought to draw

on the religious heritage of Wahhabism and create a fighting force with allegiances not to

their particular tribe but rather to the ideals and message of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-

Wahhab, and by extension, to Ibn Sa'ud as *Imam* of the Wahhabis. The role of the

Ikhwan over the course of the next fifteen to twenty years would, therefore, be pivotal to

the unification effort of Ibn Sa'ud and his construction of authority, representing an

attempt to overcome the limitations of tribal political organization and establish a

centralized political authority for the entire peninsula.

Chapter IV: 1912-1925

Between 1912 and 1925, Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of the Arabian Peninsula continued unabated. Over the course of this period Ibn Sa'ud extended his authority within the peninsula in four major military campaigns. In 1913 he captured the Eastern Province of al-Hasa. The oases of Khurma and Turaba on the Najd-Hijaz boundary fell in 1919. In 1921 he finally eliminated the potential Rashidi threat with the capture of their capital Hail, and in 1925 he conquered the Hijaz, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. These four conquests represent the major campaigns of expansion which occurred during this period. Thus, by 1925, the Sa'udi chieftaincy based out of Riyadh had successfully grown to encapsulate almost the whole of the peninsula and had eliminated its two main internal rivals, Sharif Husain in the Hijaz and the Rashidis in Jabal Shammar, leaving Ibn Sa'ud as the dominant domestic power. It was during this period that Ibn Sa'ud's conquest movement reached its apogee to the extent that the territory under his authority conforms in the main to the current Sa'udi borders.

This period of the unification effort saw the intensification of the use of Wahhabism both in terms of legitimizing subsequent conquests as well as Ibn Sa'ud's authority over them. Beginning with the capture of Khurma and Turaba, the Sa'udi drive to unify the peninsula increasingly subjected the local populations to the normative principles of Wahhabism. The unification effort was increasingly depicted in Wahhabi terms and motivated by Wahhabi beliefs. Thus, there was a noted shift from the traditional tribal warfare which characterized the first decade of Ibn Sa'ud's conquest movement and this period, insofar as the local populations were increasingly subjected to the authority of Riyadh in the form of Wahhabism. However, this is not to suggest that

the tribal norms and practices with respect to the construction of authority and power were no longer relevant. Rather it is in the intersecting and overlapping of these two elements – Wahhabism and tribal norms and practices – that the construction of Ibn Sa'ud's authority becomes intelligible.

Over the course of these crucial years Ibn Sa'ud sought to overcome the inherent instabilities and fragmentations which characterized tribal chieftaincies with the unifying aspects of Wahhabism. As was previously, noted Wahhabism was particularly well suited to this task as it subjected the local populations to its norms and standards through the disciplining of the social space. Moreover, as an ideology, Wahhabism was by its very nature expansive, demanding the conversion of those deemed unbelievers. Finally, because as one of its norms Wahhabism sanctified the position of the ruler, insofar as he upheld its principles, a fundamental aspect of the unification effort was acquiescence if not acceptance of the rule of Ibn Sa'ud as *Imam*. Nowhere was this attempt to breakthrough the limitations associated with the authority of chieftaincies, through the implementation of Wahhabi beliefs and principles, more apparent than in the creation of the *Ikhwan*.

The *Ikhwan* would come to play a pivotal role in the subsequent history of the unification of the Arabian Peninsula. Their significance was essentially two-fold. Although it was far more pronounced from 1918 onwards, the *Ikhwan* came to be the most important tool in Ibn Sa'ud's attempt to unify the peninsula. Based as it was on the implementation of the Wahhabi ideology within a tribal political context, the *Ikhwan* provide important evidence with regard to the interaction of these two processes and help elucidate the ways in which Ibn Sa'ud's hegemonic authority grew. Second, their

devotion to the Wahhabi cause would have important implications when, as a result of Ibn Sa'ud's continued conquests, the international community, principally in the form of the British, began to play an increasingly important role in determining the future shape of the peninsula. The conflict over the final form of the Sa'udi Kingdom, which would be settled in the years immediately following the conquest of the Hijaz in 1925, resulted in a rebellion by the *Ikhwan* against Ibn Sa'ud. And while the rebellion and its conclusion will be dealt with in the following chapter, in order to understand properly the final episode in the unification of the Arabian Peninsula, it is necessary to begin with an examination of this period and the role the *Ikhwan* played. The import of this period lies in identifying the role of the *Ikhwan* as the military leaders of the Wahhabi conquest movement, establishing how this period saw the intensification of Wahhabism as the declared ideology of the conquest movement and determining how increased international involvement in the affairs of the peninsula helped plant the seeds of a future conflict between Ibn Sa'ud and the *Ikhwan*. With respect to the construction and maintenance of Ibn Sa'ud's authority it is, therefore, important to ascertain how the *Ikhwan* came to be the most significant manifestation of his growing power, how this period saw the increasing justification of his authority in Wahhabi terms, and how this reconceptualization of authority away from tribal norms and practices towards norms defined by Wahhabism signaled the beginning of potential problems between the *Ikhwan* and Ibn Sa'ud, based on increased international intervention.

The *Ikhwan* movement represented the vanguard of the Wahhabi conquest of the Arabian Peninsula. After the first decade of his unification effort, Ibn Sa'ud was aware of the inadequacies of nomads and townsmen as pillars of military support and he,

therefore, sought to create a military force that "would have loyalties not only to himself

but also to an idealism that up to this point apparently played only a secondary role, and

which would be mobile enough to cross the length and breadth of the peninsula, and

sedentary enough to be in a specific locality when he needed them."[1] In order to solve

this dilemma and achieve his goal of creating a loyal instrument of expansion, the first

religious – military – agricultural settlement (*hijrah*, pl. *hujar*) was created near Riyadh at

al-Artawiyya, in 1912. Those who settled were called *Ikhwan*. In Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors

of Islam, John S. Habib defines the *Ikhwan* as follows,

> Those bedouin who accepted the fundamentals of Orthodox Islam of the
> Hanbali school as preached by Abd al-Wahhab, . . . , who through the
> persuasion of the religious missionairies and with the material assistance
> of Ibn Sa'ud, abandoned their nomadic way of life to live in the hujar
> which were built for them. . . . Tied inseparably to the definition of the
> *Ikhwan* is the concept of "immigration". . . the believer must quit the
> nomadic life, sell his flocks and migrate to a hijrah. Simulating the
> Prophet Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina which signaled
> the dawn of the Islamic era, the bedouin's hijrah symbolizes the
> irrevocable break with the nomadic past.[2]

Two notes of caution should be introduced here. First, a distinction must be drawn

between Wahhabis and *Ikhwan*. While the overwhelming majority of towns and villages

in Najd were Wahhabi, they were not *Ikhwan*.[3] The *Ikhwan* were an identifiably separate

group who had given up their nomadic life in order to devote their lives to the active

spread and implementation of Wahhabi precepts, through *jihad* if necessary. Second,

although Ibn Sa'ud sought to curb tribal independence and identity through the creation

of *hujar* and devotion to the normative principles of Wahhabism, he was largely

unsuccessful in this regard to the extent that the *hujar* remained largely tribe-specific.

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[1] Niblock, "Social Structures," p. 85.
[2] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 17.
[3] Ibid., p. 18.

Thus, tribal identity was not entirely suppressed by the *Ikhwan* movement. It was, however, made more malleable and controllable insofar as, as *Ikhwan*, they were compelled to accept the authority of Ibn Sa'ud. The inability to completely overcome the salience of tribal identity and to replace it with one entirely devoted to Wahhabi norms and standards would have important implications for the consolidation of the Arabian Peninsula between 1925 and 1932. Moreover, it provides an interesting example of the ways in which Wahhabi norms and principles and tribal norms and practices interacted to produce new conceptualizations of authority.

There are two themes in particular which are of crucial importance for the conversion process from nomad to *Ikhwan*. First, rather than representing a break with past traditions and norms, this conversion process is better viewed as being built upon them and redirecting them. Thus raiding was not prohibited, it was re-directed; rather than being pure sport, it was the execution of God's will.[4] While raiding was forbidden against other Wahhabis and *Ikhwan*, it was encouraged against the infidel, which according to the principles of Wahhabism, included non-Wahhabi Muslims. The *Ikhwan* movement should, therefore, be understood not simply as an attempt to subjugate and nullify the norms and values of the nomads, but rather as a re-orientation of nomadic principles towards a more stable and controllable basis.

Second was the growth of education in Najd after the first decade of Ibn Sa'ud's return to the peninsula.[5] This process was inextricably bound with the growth of the *Ikhwan* movement and constitutes an important aspect in the construction of hegemonic authority. With the eclipse of Sa'udi power in Najd in the late nineteenth century, and its

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[4] Ibid, p. 47.

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replacement by the Rashidis, the once active centers of learning in Riyadh had migrated

north towards Hail and Qasim. According to Goldrup, during this period, the education

available in Najd consisted of,

> a student [who] would seek out a teacher or to be more exact a man
> could himself read and recite or read the book to him. This was
> entirely without that student joining the body of any organized
> circle to learn from an established teacher or professor. It was
> simply a private tutorial system existing for those who had the
> interest and means to afford the time and services of what few
> educated individuals existed.[6]

However, with the return of Ibn Sa'ud to Riyadh, the situation began to change,

particularly after the period of his initial conquests. *Madrasas* (religious schools) began

to appear in Riyadh as well as in other towns in Najd. Emphasis was placed on

memorization of the Qur'an, in particular the Wahhabi interpretation.[7] It was the

graduates of this education who would be sent out to the *hujar* to instruct the *Ikhwan* in

the faith.[8] Thus, in a very real sense, the educational efforts of Ibn Sa'ud resemble

Gramsci's emphasis on the role of the state as educator, to the extent that he was actively

involved in re-shaping and re-formulating cultural and religious beliefs and practices, in

order to create a unified social element which he hoped would prove to be decisive in his

drive to unify the Arabian peninsula.

It is perhaps worth pausing here in order to examine in greater detail life in the

hujar as this will reveal a great deal about the nature of the movement and the basis upon

which Ibn Sa'ud's authority was built. In general terms, Ibn Sa'ud would invite a leading

nomadic chief to Riyadh to be his guest. While there, the chief would be instructed in the

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[5] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 248. This section on education in the towns is drawn almost exclusively from Goldrup, as he is the only author who deals with the subject in any sort of comprehensive way.
[6] Ibid, p. 249.
[7] Ibid, p. 238.

fundamentals of the Wahhabi creed under the supervision of the *ulama*. The British

Political Agent for Kuwait, Colonel Dickson described the process thusly,

> He [Ibn Sa'ud] would send for the Shaikh and tell him in blunt
> terms that his tribe had no religion and that they were all 'juhl'. He
> next ordered the Shaikh to attend the local school of *ulama*, which
> was attached to the great mosque in Riyadh, and there undergo
> a course of instruction in religion. At the same time half a dozen
> *ulama*, attended by some genuinely fanatical Akhwan . . . were
> sent off to the tribe itself. These held daily classes teaching the
> people all about Islam in its original simplicity. . .
> When the Shaikh of the tribe was supposed to have received
> sufficient religious instruction, he was invited to build a house
> in Riyadh and remain in attendance on the Imam. This again was
> part of the control scheme.[9]

Furthermore, while the leader was in Riyadh, junior members of the *ulama* would be sent

to the tribes to teach them the nature of the new faith. If the leader of the tribe refused to

accept the message, lesser tribal leaders would be invited in his place. An important

aspect of Ibn Sa'ud's authority over the *Ikhwan* was, therefore, centered around their

indoctrination and acceptance of the Wahhabi creed. Moreover, while in Riyadh the

leaders of nomadic tribes would be offered gifts and material assistance for the

construction of new *hujar*. At the peak of the settlement movement over one-half of the

nomads of Najd were settled, with the total number of *hujar* peaking at 121.[10]

Life in the *hujar* was organized, almost exclusively, around studying Wahhabism,

prayer and *jihad*.[11] Attendance at the mosque for the five daily prayers was compulsory

and those who failed to appear could expect to be punished.[12] The *ulama* of the *hujar*

were appointed by Ibn Sa'ud and sent from Riyadh, which allowed for a considerable

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[8] Ibid, p. 233.

[9] Niblock, "Social Structures," p. 86.

[10] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 230.

[11] Although there was an agricultural element to life in the *hujar* this seems to have viewed largely as a 'necessary evil'.

[12] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 60.

amount of control on the latter's behalf. Each *hijrah* also had an *amir* who was also

selected by Ibn Sa'ud and was responsible for the collection of *zakat* and maintaining law

and order. And yet, for the *Ikhwan*, pride of place went to *jihad*. Each *hijrah* was

divided into three groups for military purposes. The first and largest were those who

were in a continual state of readiness and would respond immediately to the call of *jihad*.

The second group can be broadly referred to as reservists and the third group were those

who would remain in the *hijrah* in order to maintain the agricultural basis of the

settlement.[13] The *hujar* came to be the most significant element in Ibn Sa'ud's forces.

Habib elaborates on this when he states,

> The geographical distribution of *Ikhwan* colonies enabled the striking
> arm of Ibn Sa'ud to be flexed in such a way that no part of the peninsula
> was more than a day's march from the *Ikhwan*. The tribal distribution
> provided links to all the major tribes of Najd. Ibn Sa'ud had, therefore,
> a network of military cantonments which served as outposts of loyalty
> and collection points of intelligence at the farthest distances from Riyadh
> during peace; in war, they became centers of mobilization and spring
> boards of attack against specific targets.[14]

What was being attempted was, therefore, the creation of a military organization which

would be hegemonically loyal (in a Gramscian sense) based on the ideology of

Wahhabism, as well posses the combination of mobile and sedentary qualities necessary

to be an effective force.[15] In Ayubian terms it could be postulated that the 'modes of

coercion' (i.e. the *Ikhwan*) were sustained by the 'modes of persuasion' (i.e. Wahhabism)

to create a viable, effective and loyal tool of expansion.

It was under the auspices of the *Ikhwan* that the conquest movement took on its

overtly Wahhabi form. Areas conquered by the former were expected to fall quickly into

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[13] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 236.
[14] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 59.
[15] Niblock, "Social Structure," p. 85.

line with the exacting social and political prescriptions demanded by the Wahhabi faith. However, this process did not begin immediately with the founding of al-Artawiyya in 1912. It would take time for the movement to grow to the point where it could be an effective tool for the unification of the peninsula. Thus, in examining the conquests which occurred during these years, it is important to note that it was not until the fall of Khurma and Turaba that the *Ikhwan* constituted the majority of Ibn Sa'ud's available fighting force.

The taking of al-Hasa by Riyadh in 1913 was a significant development in the unification of the Arabian Peninsula under Ibn Sa'ud and reveals important aspects of chieftaincy politics and authority. From the Sa'udi perspective the importance of al-Hasa lay in its natural wealth which made the latter a tempting target. In particular the existence of rich oases in the province, as well as the considerable revenue derived from the custom duties of its maritime ports, represented an alluring source of captureable wealth. Within this context it is important to recall that one of the principal characteristics of chieftaincies was that wealth was captured rather than produced, thus to whomever had the strength went the spoils. The centrality of the tribute relationship to this political context further elucidates the importance of seizing wealth. Because the tributization of other groups resulted in their effective de-politicization it was imperative that conquering parties capture sufficient wealth so as to be able to re-distribute it and maintain their political ascendancy. Prior to the campaign against al-Hasa, the growing chieftaincy of Riyadh did not posses the necessary means with which to effectuate such a relationship and it was, therefore, incumbent upon Ibn Sa'ud, if his unification effort was to be successful and his authority was to be respected, to seek out territories which would

allow such a process to occur. The unstable and insufficient economic basis of Riyadh

prior to the taking of al-Hasa is evidenced to a certain extent by the political impact and

implications of the 1908 drought in Najd, referred to previously. Alexei Vassilliev

elaborates on the importance of al-Hasa for Ibn Sa'ud when he notes that,

> The importance of al-Hasa for the emirate of Riyadh can hardly be
> overestimated. The territory previously controlled by the Sa'udis was
> devoid of natural resources: the date crop barely covered the needs
> of the nomads and the settled people, and the shortage of foodgrain
> meant that it had to be imported. The settled population depended
> almost entirely on imported cloth and the troops needed imported
> arms. The seizure of al-Hasa, together with access to the Gulf,
> ensured the vitality and further consolidation of the Sa'udi state.[16]

From the perspective of chieftaincy politics, the capture of al-Hasa was, therefore, crucial

insofar as it resulted in an economic windfall which would enable the Riyadh chieftaincy

to augment its authority and to pursue the conquest and tributization of the remainder of

the peninsula.

The actual subjugation of al-Hasa by Ibn Sa'ud was achieved relatively quickly in

the face of very little opposition. The Russian consulate in Basra reported that Ottoman

control over al-Hasa was "illusory" and "virtually non-existent."[17] Appointed by the

Ottoman Empire, the governor, Nadim Bey, lacked the legitimacy necessary to garner

widespread support from the local population, both nomadic and sedentary, thereby

facilitating Ibn Sa'ud's designs. Thus, when Ibn Sa'ud set out for al-Hasa in 1913, with

troops consisting mainly of nomadic and settled Najdis, although also including a small

number of *Ikhwan*, he faced very little resistance and was able to capture the province

with ease.

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[16] Vassilliev, History p. 232.
[17] Quoted in Ibid.

The capture of al-Hasa needs to be situated within the context of tribal political organization in order to fully appreciate the lack of legitimacy accorded to Ottoman rule. In this regard it is instructive to recall the salience of kinship identity in determining and maintaining positions of authority. Obviously, the Ottomans could not draw on this aspect of tribal political heritage to substantiate their claim to rule. Moreover, because the Ottomans were pre-occupied throughout this period with events in the Balkans leading up to World War I, they were unable to devote the necessary military power to secure and pacify the area. The resultant situation was one in which, typical of chieftaincies, power struggles and fragmentations occurred, resulting in widespread raiding and looting, in particular on the caravan and trade routes thereby further damaging the status of the Ottomans in the eyes of the settled communities which depended on these routes for their survival. All of these factors contributed to the readiness of the inhabitants of al-Hasa in welcoming the invading Najdis.

In an effort to shore up his rule after the conquest had been completed Ibn Sa'ud immediately set upon expelling foreign merchants from al-Hasa and raising the duties on imports to the province. Both of these measures were designed to supplement and augment the revenue at his disposal which in turn would open greater opportunities for the tributization of other tribes, towns and villages thereby engendering further authority. And while in the main this conquest can be explained in terms of the functioning of tribal politics, there was also an important element provided by the Wahhabi movement. The existence of a community of Shi'a in al-Hasa posed a potential challenge to Wahhabi authority and, therefore, for Ibn Sa'ud's purposes, had to be confronted.

The suppression of the Shi'a community was carried out by the newly appointed governor of al-Hasa, Ibn Sa'ud's cousin, Abdallah ibn Jiluwi, and from a discursive and hegemonic vantage point represents an important aspect of solidifying Sa'udi authority. Although the conquest of al-Hasa did not entail the forced conversion of the Shi'a to Wahhabism which characterized later conquests carried out by the *Ikhwan*, the suppression of the Shi'a was nonetheless an important aspect of maintaining the hegemonic and discursive power of Wahhabism as an ideology. Because the Shi'a did not recognize, from a discursive perspective, the authority of the Wahhabi *Imam* and were, therefore, not subject to its hegemonic appeal, they represented a threat to the nascent authority of the growing chieftaincy of Riyadh. Thus, the tributization and concomitant de-politicization of the Shi'a can be seen as the tribal political correlate of the preservation and sanctification of Wahhabism. In short, to allow the Shi'a to continue to practice their faith openly and without restriction would have vitiated the norms of Wahhabism thereby endangering the discursive and hegemonic basis of Ibn Sa'ud's authority.

The conquest of al-Hasa in 1913 exemplifies one of the principal themes of chieftaincy politics, namely the importance of capturing wealth in order to perpetuate the vassalization of certain groups through the enforcement of tribute payment. When viewed from this perspective the allure of al-Hasa for the Riyadh chieftaincy becomes apparent. Moreover the lack of legitimacy accorded to the Ottomans made them a vulnerable target within the political context of the Arabian Peninsula. However, in order to gain a complete picture of this portion of the unification effort of Ibn Sa'ud and his construction of authority, the role of Wahhabism must be taken into account, in particular

with respect to the suppression of the Shi'a community of al-Hasa. As was noted above, because they represented a threat to the hegemony Ibn Sa'ud was attempting to create, they had to be contained. As such this episode of the unification effort is instructive in terms of the interaction of tribal chieftaincies and the Wahhabi movement to produce political authority.

Prior to preceding to the next major campaign of Ibn Sa'ud's unification project, it is important to return briefly to the international arena in order to take note of the actions of the British, who in the context of World War I, were in the process of beginning to take a more active role in the affairs of the peninsula in order to counter the influence of the Ottomans. The search for clients in the peninsula led them to favor two leaders in particular, Ibn Sa'ud and Sharif Husain, although the latter was, at least initially, perceived to be the more promising of the two. In exchange for a subsidy of cash, arms and a series of vague promises concerning Arab independence after the war, Sharif Husain agreed to initiate an 'Arab Revolt' against the Ottomans. Thus, in June 1916, Sharif Husain declared his independence from the Ottoman Empire and began a series of campaigns to take control of the major towns and villages of the Hijaz. And, although Sharif Husain's declaration of himself as King of the Arabs in late 1916 was not officially recognized by anyone, the British did recognize him as King of the Hijaz in January 1917.

British relations with Ibn Sa'ud were also dictated according to the priorities of World War I. In particular, the British were concerned with the potential threat posed by the Rashidi rulers of Jabal Shammar who were allied with the Ottomans. Thus, towards the end of 1915 they signed the al-Qatif treaty with Ibn Sa'ud which recognized the

latter's claim to Najd, al-Hasa and their dependencies, as well as providing a monthly subsidy and some arms and ammunition. In exchange, Ibn Sa'ud agreed to respect the British possessions along the coast and to abstain from entering into relations with any other countries. The content of the treaty, therefore, conformed to the principles outlined during the 1911 meetings between the British and Ibn Sa'ud.

The significance of increased British involvement in the politics of the Arabian Peninsula would become manifest during the subsequent years as the conflict between Ibn Sa'ud and Sharif Husain continued to grow. For the present purposes, it is sufficient to note that these treaties marked the beginning of increased British intervention and that as Ibn Sa'ud's conquest movement and authority continued to grow, and his conflict with Sharif Husain over control of the peninsula took on increased proportions, the fate of the Arabian Peninsula would be increasingly determined by these three actors. For Ibn Sa'ud, the difficulties created by Britain's interventionist policy would be felt most acutely in his relations with the *Ikhwan* after the conquest of the Hijaz. However, the roots of the problem which would characterize the post-1925 Arabian Peninsula can be located as early as the Sa'udi conquest of the oases of Khurma and Turaba, which were situated near the traditional Najd-Hijaz frontier.

Khalid ibn Mansur ibn Luway, *amir* of Khurma, who had been a supporter of Husain, became embroiled in a dispute with another supporter of Husain, and, although Husain took some steps to rectify the damage inflicted upon Khalid, these were viewed as insufficient by the latter, who subsequently returned to Khurma, embittered with his

former leader. [18] By late 1917, the conflict with Husain deepened and Khalid began to

openly support the Wahhabi cause. As evidence of his changing sympathies, he replaced

the *qadhi* appointed by Husain and replaced him with one supported by the Wahhabis, an

inherently political act insofar as it implicitly suggested recognition of Wahhabi

authority. By the summer of 1918, Husain sent his forces to depose Khalid and replace

him as *amir*. With the help of the *Ikhwan*, Khalid was able to route the Hashemite forces.

Returning to the area in May 1919, with a much larger force, Husain took Turaba which

lay approximately 75 miles from Khurma and began a rampage of plunder and murder on

the Wahhabi inhabitants. Upon the arrival of more *Ikhwan*, they were yet again able to

inflict a heavy defeat on the Hashemite forces. These victories essentially opened the

gateway to the Hijaz, and although the *Ikhwan* were eager to move on Mecca and

Medina, they were held back by Ibn Sa'ud because in July 1919, while in Turaba, he

received these instructions from the British government:

> His Majesty's Government has ordered me to inform you that you must
> return to Najd as soon as you receive my letter, leaving Turaba and
> al-Khurma as neutral zones until negotiations of peace can be arranged
> between you and King Husain and borders be established. If you refuse
> to return after receiving my letter, His Majesty's Government will
> consider the treaty between you and it null and void and will take all
> steps necessary to thwart your hostile movements. . . .[19]

This conflict represented the first campaign that was fought almost exclusively by the

Ikhwan and marked the beginning of the intensification of the use of Wahhabism both as

a conquering force and as a justification and legitimization of subsequent conquests.

Thus, for instance, after his forced withdrawal from the area, Ibn Sa'ud continued to send

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[18] The nature of the dispute relates entirely to Hijazi politics, and was in fact over a largely trivial matter, and therefore need not detain us. However it does highlight the personalized nature of leadership over chieftaincies and the extent to which personalized disputes can result in entire tribes being affected.
[19] Quoted in Goldrup, <u>Sa'udi Arabia</u> p. 317.

letters and members of the *ulama* to the nomadic tribes as well as to the towns extolling

the virtues of Wahhabism and calling on them to join in "the struggle for monotheism,"[20]

thereby attempting to increase his hegemonic authority.

The dispute over Khurma and Turaba was axiomatic of the problems which would

beset Ibn Sa'ud between the conquest of the Hijaz in 1925 and the establishment of the

Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia in 1932. These problems would cut to the very core of his

authority insofar as it is recognized that one of the cardinal elements of his authority was

Wahhabism's ideology of expansiveness in order to further the quest to create true

believers. However, as his unification project continued to succeed, Ibn Sa'ud had to

take increasing notice of the international sphere, in particular the British, who were in

the process of becoming the dominant power in the entire Middle East. Thus as this

period saw the intensification of British intervention and the *de facto* if not *de jure*

implementation of limits to Wahhabi expansion, it precipitated an ideological crisis for

Ibn Sa'ud. Moreover, not only were the norms and standards of Wahhabism being

vitiated, but so too were those of tribal politics to the extent that the creation of limits and

boundaries for territories previously devoid of such institutions hampered the ability of

tribes to participate in raids and roam for pasture land, which was crucial for their

survival. It is, therefore, in the imposition of international norms which contravened

both the political context and the political ideology that the *Ikhwan* revolt can be located.

British intervention in Khurma and Turaba and Ibn Sa'ud's withdrawal was a pre-cursor

to the challenges posed to Sa'udi authority after the completion of the conquest of the

peninsula. However, so long as the Hijaz remained in Husain's hands and Jabal

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[20] Vassilliev, <u>History</u> p. 249.

Shammar was controlled by the Rashidis, he could redirect the *Ikhwan's* displeasure towards the conquest of those areas.

As was the case with Ibn Sa'ud's withdrawal from Khurma and Turaba, the Sa'udi conquest of Jabal Shammar in 1921 bares the imprint of increased international intervention in the affairs of Central Arabia. The influence of foreign actors was not limited to the manipulation of local forces to serve their wartime ends; it reverberated throughout the very political structures which characterized the peninsula. Thus, throughout this campaign, British and Ottoman involvement went beyond seeking to influence Ibn Sa'ud and the Rashidis for their own gain. Their very involvement could alter the fortunes of the two respective chieftaincies. An alliance with one or the other of the two international actors had the potential to create a dependency relationship whereby the local actors became reliant upon the subsidies of the former in order to perpetuate the tributary relationship necessary for the continued operation of their domains. Therefore, the reverberations of the Rashidi decision to remain allied with the Ottoman Empire throughout World War I would have important implications in terms of the ability of Jabal Shammar to maintain its authority in the aftermath of the former's capitulation.

Throughout World War I the British consistently applied pressure to Ibn Sa'ud to attack and seize Jabal Shammar. As early as the signing of the al-Qatif treaty in 1915, the British sought a Sa'udi initiative against the Rashidis. And, although a few inconclusive battles were fought between the two, Ibn Sa'ud essentially managed to avoid large-scale operations until he felt the situation was advantageous to his goals. It should be remembered that throughout this period Ibn Sa'ud's position outside Najd was still far from secure and that up to this point the Sa'udi chieftaincy was indistinguishable

from other chieftaincies in the peninsula, such as Jabal Shammar, in terms of the nature and scope of their authority. Therefore, Ibn Sa'ud's initial reluctance to wage hostilities against the Rashidis relates directly to questions of tribal authority and strength in a fragmented political context.

With the fall of Jerusalem in April 1918 the British no longer saw Jabal Shammar as a potential threat and ceased demanding its destruction. However this would not signal the end of foreign involvement in determining the fate of Jabal Shammar. In September 1918, acting on his own accord, the sometimes employee of the British government and continual supporter of Ibn Sa'ud, H. St. John Philby, offered Ibn Sa'ud twenty thousand British pounds to initiate a campaign against Jabal Shammar. Concerned as he was by Husain's pretensions to the whole of the Arab World, as evidenced by the former's declaration of himself as King of the Arabs in 1916, as well as his leadership of the Arab Revolt, Ibn Sa'ud accepted and gathered his forces, composed in the main of Najdi nomads and *Ikhwan*, in preparation for a campaign on Hail. While the campaign was a huge success in terms of the spoils that were gained, Ibn Sa'ud was denied his ultimate objective of conquering Jabal Shammar because of British intervention. As Jabal Shammar was approaching capitulation, the British ordered Ibn Sa'ud to stop his campaign out of fear of the implications such success would have on Sharif Husain and his ongoing revolt against the Ottoman Empire.

In November 1921, Jabal Shammar was formally annexed by Ibn Sa'ud and its inhabitants pledged their loyalty to him. By this time the British, while not actively supporting Ibn Sa'ud in his effort, no longer opposed it with same vociferousness due to the fact that the Ottomans had been defeated and Sharif Husain's Arab Revolt was

essentially over. However, from Ibn Sa'ud's perspective, international developments did play a crucial role in motivating the timing of the campaign, which followed immediately upon the announcement by the British Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill that Faisal and Abdallah, both sons of Sharif Husain, would be made kings of Iraq and TransJordan, respectively. Fearing the possibility of Hashemite encirclement on his northern and western flanks, Ibn Sa'ud sought to conquer Jabal Shammar before his rivals attempted to claim it as their own.

The campaign against Jabal Shammar, begun in April/May 1921, needs to be further contextualized in terms of the internal dynamics of the Rashidi chieftaincy. Between 1919 and 1921 leadership over the chieftaincy was unstable, continuously changing hands through murder and intrigue, thereby considerably weakening its ability to maintain authority over its tributized tribes. Thus, when the final battle for Hail was fought, the Rashidi chieftaincy was reduced to relying almost exclusively on their own kinsmen. It was precisely such a situation which allowed a contemporary historian to note that,

> Under the influence of the *Ikhwan*, Ibn Sa'ud's men shouted the *Ikhwan*'s bellicose slogans. The Shammar, who formed the bulk of Hail's troops, were again spurred on by their tribe's slogans, shouted by beautiful girls, their hair down, and riding on camels. These facts are interesting not only as a picturesque detail. The very choice of warlike slogans demonstrated the difference between the social structure of the two emirates: Jabal Shammar's base was tribal whereas Najd's was pan-Arabian, based on the *Ikhwan*'s Wahhabi monotheism. The Shammar encouraged each other by addressing the tribe's ancestor; the Sa'udi slogans promised paradise to those warriors who were killed in battle.[21]

Thus in the final analysis, the conquest of Jabal Shammar by the Sa'udi chieftaincy should be seen in two lights. First, on the domestic, level it serves an as example of the

implications of Wahhabism's expansive tendencies within a political context characterized by fragmentations and kin-based loyalties. One of the fundamental advantages which the Sa'udi chieftaincy held over its Rashidi rival was its hegemonic authority, expressed most concretely in the *Ikhwan*. As an ideology and source of hegemony, Wahhabism played a pivotal role in motivating the actions of the *Ikhwan* and in engendering a sense of unity which went beyond familial ties thereby imparting greater strength and stability to the Sa'udi conquest movement. Second, this episode points towards the increasing importance of international involvement in the affairs of the peninsula. As mentioned with reference to the campaign in Khurma and Turaba, the implications of this trend would be felt most acutely in the years following the conquest of the Hijaz.

With the conquest of Jabal Shammar completed and the Rashidi dynasty destroyed, Sa'udi attention turned to the Hijaz. However, in order to properly situate the outbreak of hostilities between Ibn Sa'ud and Sharif Husain, it is important to begin with an examination of the Sa'udi conquest of Northern Asir, located on the western coast of the peninsula, south of the Hijaz, which preceded the conquest of the Hijaz. With the outbreak of World War I the Ottoman Empire had withdrawn from Asir leaving it as an independent chieftaincy under the leadership of Hasan al-Aid. Tribal fragmentations quickly surfaced with a number of tribes who had a historical affiliation with Wahhabism dating back to the first Sa'udi chieftaincy, sending representatives to Ibn Sa'ud to pledge their loyalty to him. Ibn Sa'ud, as part of his attempt to spread his authority, responded by sending members of the *ulama* to re-indoctrinate the tribes in the nuances of Wahhabism. This proselytizing was followed in May 1920 by a small force of Najdi

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[21] Quoted in Ibid, p. 237.

tribes and *Ikhwan* who quickly captured the capital of Abha. Hasan al-Aid was taken to Riyadh where he was imprisoned for several months before being returned as the latter's vassal. Upon his return Hasan al-Aid began fomenting unrest with the active assistance of Sharif Husain, who viewed the Najdi expansion with unease and recaptured Abha. After the capture of Hail in 1921, Ibn Sa'ud responded to the situation in Asir by sending another larger detachment, this time made up principally of *Ikhwan* to retake the area. In 1922 they were able to recapture Abha without a fight. Again Sharif Husain tried to aid Hasan al-Aid but the Sharif's forces were decimated by the *Ikhwan* and Hasan al-Aid had to flee. This marked the end of the Asiri chieftaincy.

The significance of the conquest of Northern Asir is two-fold. First, it is another example of the interaction between a tribal political context and the Wahhabi movement in the construction of authority. The importance and personalized nature of leadership with reference to the maintenance of authority and the political fragmentations which ensued were both present in the al-Aid fall from power in Asir. Moreover, the strength derived from Ibn Sa'ud's position as *Imam* of the Wahhabis, both spiritual and temporal, induced many tribes to join the battle on his side. Finally Wahhabi beliefs made the conquest necessary from an ideological perspective, something which characterized all *Ikhwan* campaigns. Thus, the conquest of Asir illustrates the ways in which Ibn Sa'ud was able to make use of the tribal political context to spread Wahhabism thereby augmenting his authority.

The conquest of Asir also helps to explain the immediate reason and timing for the subsequent invasion of the Hijaz insofar as, as a response to Riyadh's successes in Asir, Sharif Husain barred all Wahhabis from performing the *hajj* in 1923. And while the

final showdown between Najd and the Hijaz certainly revolved around larger issues, the inability of the Wahhabis to perform the *hajj* was the immediate cause which precipitated, or at a bare minimum served as a justification, for the ensuing confrontation between the two parties.

In July 1924 Ibn Sa'ud convened an assembly of tribal leaders, *Ikhwan* and *ulama*, in order to determine whether or not the refusal of Sharif Husain to allow the Wahhabis to perform the *hajj* constituted a valid reason for declaring *jihad* against the former. Only after they had ruled in favor of declaring war did Ibn Sa'ud begin to make preparations for the campaign. The salience of Wahhabism as a motivating and legitimizing factor for the conquest of the Hijaz was further heightened by Sharif Husain's attempt to claim the title of Caliph in March 1924. This move had the dual effect of offending the *Ikhwan's* religious sensibilities – who viewed Husain as an infidel – as well as being perceived as an attempt at undermining Ibn Sa'ud's ideological authority, upon which much of his conquest movement had been built. Finally, the capture of the Hijaz, which included two of Islam's holiest cities, Mecca and Medina, held obvious religious significance and, therefore, added further impetus for the drive to eliminate Sharif Husain. Thus, in examining the conquest of the Hijaz and the further growth of Ibn Sa'ud's authority, the role played by Wahhabism, from a discursive and hegemonic perspective, was significant. Discursively, insofar as the motivation for the conquest was depicted in Wahhabi language and images, hegemonically insofar as the conquest was the necessary outcome of the discourse of Wahhabism, in order to maintain the authority of Ibn Sa'ud. In short, because much of Ibn Sa'ud's authority was predicated upon his role as leader of the Wahhabis and because Wahhabism demanded

active expansion in order to implement Wahhabi norms and beliefs, the conquest of the

Hijaz came to be portrayed in Wahhabi terms. Furthermore, expansion into the Hijaz re-

enforced the hegemonic authority of Ibn Sa'ud to the extent that to do otherwise would

have undermined the very basis of his authority by contravening the norms and beliefs

upon which it was based. As such, the ideology of Wahhabism called for the annexation

of the Hijaz, while the campaign against the Hijaz, seen in this context as the

actualization of the ideology, bolstered his hegemonic authority.

As was the case with the preceding campaigns of the conquest movement, the

drive against the Hijaz also owes something to the tribal political context in which it

occurred. In particular the Hijaz represented an enormous source of capturable wealth.

Possession of Mecca and Medina bestowed upon its owner the right to collect the revenue

garnered from the pilgrimage traffic as well as the lucrative trade routes which served the

pilgrims. Therefore, although Wahhabism played an important role in motivating and

legitimating the conquest of the Hijaz so too did the allure of the potential capture of

significant revenue which formed such a crucial aspect in the perpetuation of authority in

the tribal political context.

Having received a favorable reply from the tribal leaders, *Ikhwan* and *ulama* in

terms of the permissibility of declaring *jihad* against Sharif Husain, Ibn Sa'ud began

preparations for the campaign against the Hijaz. In September 1924, the *Ikhwan* burst

into al-Taif, located in a mountainous area near Mecca, and seized the town. The initial

capture of al-Taif was followed by three days of vicious plunder and murder as the

Ikhwan attempted to purge the town of its perceived non-Wahhabi accretions. Mosques

and shrines which did not conform to the simplicity and austerity demanded by

Wahhabism were destroyed and the inhabitants of the town who either refused to accept the principles of Wahhabism, or who failed to show the necessary level of piety in the eyes of the *Ikhwan*, were killed.

Although Ibn Sa'ud was able to re-impose a semblance of discipline on the rampaging *Ikhwan* and issued an ordinance against any repetition of such activities, the destruction of al-Taif had important implications for the rest of the conquest of the Hijaz, as well as for the period which followed. Because the Hijaz represented an important focal point for the whole of the Muslim world, it had been subjected to far more contact with the outside world than the rest of the peninsula. The population of the Hijaz was, therefore, relatively cosmopolitan having been exposed to the diversity of Muslim thought and practices for centuries. Thus, the *Ikhwan* onslaught on al-Taif created a climate of fear within the Hijaz for what lay in store when the rest of the Hijaz was subjugated by the *Ikhwan*. Second, the reigning in of the *Ikhwan* after the atrocities at al-Taif was part of an increasingly salient process whereby Ibn Sa'ud had to compromise, or at least soften, the implementation of Wahhabi principles. This development occurred with reference to the conquest of the Hijaz; however, it would find its most concrete expression in the delineation of borders with Iraq and TransJordan, which was carried out under British auspices and entailed the acceptance of firm limits to Wahhabi expansion.

Following his defeat at al-Taif, Sharif Husain was forced to abdicate by the tribal chiefs, leading merchants and senior *ulama* of the Hijaz who hoped to placate Ibn Sa'ud. His successor and son, Ali, fared no better and was forced to retreat from Mecca to Jidda when the *Ikhwan* captured the city in October 1924. The conquest of Mecca was followed in January 1925 by the beginning of an almost year-long siege of Jidda. At the

same time, Ibn Sa'ud sent a detachment of *Ikhwan* to lay siege to Medina with instructions not to capture the city without his approval. By October 1925 the inhabitants of Medina sent word to Ibn Sa'ud's court that they were ready to capitulate, only to a member of the al-Sa'ud, however, not the *Ikhwan*. By early December Ibn Sa'ud's son, Muhammad, entered the city and claimed it. Less than two weeks later, realizing that his position was no longer tenable, Ali surrendered Jidda to the al-Sa'ud and left the city. With the capture of Jidda the Hashemites had been removed from the Arabian Peninsula and Ibn Sa'ud had eliminated his last main external rival. More importantly the territory under his control was now encircled by British possessions which effectively meant the end of Sa'udi expansion, although as will be shown in the following chapter, this would not be accepted without a struggle by the *Ikhwan*. For the present purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that with the fall of the Hijaz Ibn Sa'ud was the dominant domestic power in the peninsula and that his expansion reached its allowable limits.

While the Wahhabi justification for the conquest of the Hijaz has been outlined above, it is important to provide a further contextualization of these events with specific reference to the role of the British and the creation of international boundaries in the region. This process was important not only because it had a bearing on the outcome of the conquest of the Hijaz, to the extent that the British were willing to sacrifice Sharif Husain in exchange for international boundaries, but also because of the impact it would have on the subsequent years and the *Ikhwan* revolt. As such, the implications of Britain's implementation of boundaries between Najd and Iraq, and Najd and TransJordan, reveals a great deal about the balancing act which Ibn Sa'ud would have to perform in maintaining his authority between Wahhabism and its active expansionism on

the one hand, and international norms and standards which sought to place limits on this

expansion, on the other.

As early as the fall of Jabal Shammar, the British were concerned with raids from

Najd into their territories in Iraq and TransJordan. In response they sought to create

internationally recognized boundaries between the three countries. However, as the

future commander of the Arab Legion in TransJordan, Glubb Pasha, noted,

> International boundaries had never been heard of in Arabia. . . . In
> practice, the Baghdad administration had never made any attempt to
> extend its control into the desert to a distance of more than two or
> three miles from the Euphrates. . . . It was essential for the very
> survival of the Nejed [sic] tribes that they be able to move northwards
> towards Iraq or Syria. . . . Conversely the northern tribes might at
> times be obliged to migrate for a whole season to Nejed [sic]. To
> draw a hard frontier across the desert seemed to the Nejdis [sic]
> to threaten the very existence of those tribes.[22]

In the context of tribal society, where raiding other tribes and roaming for pasture lands

were indispensable aspects of tribal life, the imposition of boundaries which limited their

ability to do either, represented a significant impediment to their continued survival.

Furthermore, and potentially even more troubling for Ibn Sa'ud, the acceptance of

boundaries contravened one of the fundamental aspects of the Wahhabi movement

insofar as it entailed a restriction on the ability of the Wahhabis to convert infidels

through *jihad*, by placing them outside their jurisdiction. It should be noted in this context

that both of these agreements defined raiding and *proselytizing* by tribes across the border

as acts of aggression. Thus, the signing of the Hadda and Bahra agreements in November

1925, which finalized the frontiers between Najd and Trans-Jordan, and Najd and Iraq,

respectively, should be seen as the culmination of a process whereby Ibn Sa'ud was

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[22] Quoted in Ibid, p. 256.

increasingly forced to compromise Wahhabi principles in the face of international pressure.

By the end of 1925 Ibn Sa'ud's Wahhabi conquest movement had successfully engulfed the Arabian Peninsula. For the first time since the fall of the second Sa'udi Kingdom the whole of the peninsula was now under the authority of one ruler, Ibn Sa'ud. The years between 1912 and 1925 were particularly active with respect to the expansion of the Riyadh chieftaincy. This period saw four major military campaigns which resulted in a huge increase in the area of land which fell under Ibn Sa'ud's authority as well as the elimination of his domestic rivals. Concomitantly, this period saw the intensification of the use of Wahhabi beliefs, norms and practices as motivation, justification and legitimization of the conquests which occurred. This trend was most apparent in the actions of the *Ikhwan* who came to be the most important tool in Ibn Sa'ud's conquest movement. To a very real extent, Ibn Sa'ud's position as *Imam* of the Wahhabis and the authority engendered therein was, therefore, responsible for the expansion of Sa'udi power which characterized this period.

However, it seems insufficient to note the expansion of Wahhabism without contextualizing it in order to make sense of how religious authority translated into political power. The tribal political context facilitated the rise of the Wahhabis to a position of dominance within the peninsula. In examining both the creation of the *Ikhwan* and the conquest movement embarked upon by Ibn Sa'ud characteristics typical of chieftaincies and their political behavior have been identified and explained. Thus, for example, it was noted that in examining the origins of the *Ikhwan* it was important to note how tribal norms and practices were easily interwoven and re-articulated within a

Wahhabi discourse. Or when reviewing the conquest of al-Hasa, it was pointed out how the lack of legitimacy accorded to its Ottoman overlords made it a tempting target for Ibn Sa'ud and made the local, non-Shi'a population more receptive to his ideology. Analyzing the Wahhabi campaign against Khurma and Turaba, the importance of personalized leadership was highlighted as one of the causes which helps to explain the 'Wahhabification' of that dispute. In short, the point to be made is that it is not enough to simply state that the Arabian Peninsula was conquered by Wahhabi forces throughout this period.

Without providing the necessary political context, in this case tribal chieftaincies, recourse to Wahhabism as an explanatory concept offers little insight into how this process occurred and how political authority was constructed and maintained through the use of Wahhabi symbols. In part I, significant attention was devoted to establishing how, from a conceptual perspective, cultural leadership or hegemony, was an integral aspect in the initiation and perpetuation of political authority within the tribal context which characterized the peninsula. This chapter has sought to apply that conceptual understanding of the relationship between the Wahhabi expansion movement and the tribal political context to the years 1912 – 1925. Therefore, the purpose thus far has been to show how Wahhabism came to dominate the peninsula by examining not only the impact and implications of the former, but also how the tribal political context facilitated such a development.

Finally, this chapter has attempted to trace the increased intervention of international actors, in particular the British, throughout this period as their presence and actions would have important implications for the period after 1925. In particular the

limitations placed on Ibn Sa'ud's ability to continue his expansion have been singled out. The most pertinent example of this process was the creation of international boundaries separating Najd, Iraq and Trans-Jordan, although other occurrences such as at Khurma and Turaba, and the Sa'udi initiative against the Rashidis in 1918 were also noted. The importance of this development relates directly to the nature of Ibn Sa'ud's authority insofar as territorial limits vitiated the norms and standards of both Wahhabism and tribal society. From a chieftaincy perspective, demarcated territorial boundaries had never been heard of. Perhaps, more importantly, the acceptance of borders represented an ideological crisis for Ibn Sa'ud to the extent that he was now placed in a situation whereby he had to respect international norms and standards, notwithstanding the fact that they were in direct contradiction with the norms and beliefs of Wahhabism, upon which he had built and maintained his authority. The implications of this contradiction would be made manifest most notably in the *Ikhwan* revolt.

Chapter V: 1925-1932

The years between the conquest of the Hijaz in 1925 and the coronation of Ibn

Sa'ud as King of Sa'udi Arabia in 1932 represent the final stage of Ibn Sa'ud's

unification of the peninsula. Unlike the preceding periods, however, this phase was not

characterized by active expansion, rather it was dominated by internal challenges to his

authority and domestic revolts against his rule. The revolt by the *Ikhwan* which broke out

shortly after the conquest of the Hijaz was the last major challenge to Ibn Sa'ud's

authority and represents the seminal event of this period. Beginning in 1926 *Ikhwan*

discontent with Ibn Sa'ud began to spread. As unrest grew, the rebellious *Ikhwan* acted

with increasing independence, initiating a series of raids into Iraq, Trans-Jordan and

Kuwait, which embroiled Ibn Sa'ud in a number of contentious disputes not only with the

former but also with the British. By 1929 the situation had degenerated further and Ibn

Sa'ud's authority had weakened to such an extent that the crisis could not be resolved

without recourse to war. In March of that year, the rebellious *Ikhwan* met the forces still

loyal to Ibn Sa'ud at the battle of Sibila and although it would be another three years

before he was declared King of Sa'udi Arabia, his victory there essentially marked the

end of the revolt and the conclusion of Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of the peninsula.

On the surface, the causes of the *Ikhwan* revolt can be traced to events

surrounding the conquest of the Hijaz and its aftermath. *Ikhwan* grievances against Ibn

Sa'ud consisted principally of complaints that his application of Wahhabi norms and

standards in the Hijaz was sporadic and incomplete and that his acceptance, if not

enforcement, of international boundaries was representative of his growing dependence

on infidel power and evidence of his betrayal of Wahhabism. The validity of these

perceptions need not be determined here; they will be returned to later in this chapter. The important point to note now is that in both instances it was the perceived incongruity between what Wahhabism demanded and Ibn Sa'ud's actions which became the main bone of contention, although it does need to be remembered that the implementation of international boundaries also hampered the ability of tribes to survive by restricting their ability to carry out raids against other tribes and roam for pastures, thereby adding another element to their discontent. Another critical component of this equation which should be recalled is that, unlike other occasions when Ibn Sa'ud had to compromise Wahhabi beliefs in order to achieve his goals, this time he could no longer re-direct *Ikhwan* frustrations towards other conquests. That is to say, now that the territory under his control was surrounded by British possessions, his conquest movement had reached its allowable limits. This is an important point to bear in mind in terms of the timing of the revolt and why it followed almost immediately upon the conquest of the Hijaz.

From a more substantive perspective, the entire episode represented an ideological and hegemonic crisis for Ibn Sa'ud, insofar as the limits he had to accept and the compromises he had to make were representative of international norms and standards which were irreconcilable with those of the *Ikhwan*. By failing to continue to expand and by not enforcing the social and political prescriptions demanded by his ideology, Ibn Sa'ud was deemed to be violating the principles of Wahhabism, thereby undermining his own authority. The *Ikhwan* revolt, therefore, threatened Ibn Sa'ud's rule by questioning his loyalty to Wahhabism, which in turn jeopardized his hegemony. Put briefly, Wahhabism was the ideology, spread through hegemony, which helped legitimize

and maintain Ibn Sa'ud's authority. By challenging his attachment to the former, the *Ikhwan* were fundamentally attacking the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's power.

The salience of Wahhabism to Ibn Sa'ud's authority is further illustrated in the manner he was able to isolate the *Ikhwan* throughout their rebellion. Most notably in this regard were the series of conferences he convened, to which he invited a wide cross-section of society, including tribal chiefs, *Ikhwan* leaders and leading members of the *ulama,* and at which he was able to assert his conformity with the precepts of Wahhabism while challenging the purported orthodoxy of the rebels. The significance of Wahhabi beliefs and norms to Ibn Sa'ud's authority is, therefore, confirmed to a certain extent by the fact that a crucial aspect of maintaining his authority and overcoming the challenge of the *Ikhwan* came down to defending his own religiosity while questioning and problematizing that of the latter. In essence, throughout the *Ikhwan* revolt, Wahhabism came to be the final interpreter or arbiter according to which Ibn Sa'ud and the *Ikhwan's* actions were judged and according to which loyalties were decided. As such its importance can hardly be overestimated.

Part of the explanation for Ibn Sa'ud's success in overcoming the threat posed to his authority by the *Ikhwan*, lay in his ability to isolate their theology and the actions justified therein. However, an equally important aspect of Ibn Sa'ud's ability to isolate the *Ikhwan* rested in his successful exploitation of existent social cleavages within tribal society. Thus, the distinction made between the norms and standards of nomadic tribes and sedentary town dwellers in Part I, took on renewed salience throughout this period as Ibn Sa'ud sought to secure the loyalty of the latter in his attempt to overcome the rebellious *Ikhwan*. Moreover, the distinction between being Wahhabi and being *Ikhwan*

should also be remembered. Although most townsmen were Wahhabi, they were not *Ikhwan*, and viewed the latter as "ignorant fanatics."[1] Notwithstanding the fact that the *Ikhwan* had settled, it should be remembered that this was accomplished largely through a re-direction and re-articulation of the goals of raiding. The nomad/*Ikhwan*, therefore, still valued the raid. It was, in fact, their principal goal as *Ikhwan*, although it had been re-formulated to fall in line with Wahhabi precepts. Furthermore, the townsmen, although still Wahhabi, loathed the disruptions caused by the incessant fighting which could threaten their livelihood. Therefore, the distinctions between the norms and values of nomads/*Ikhwan* and townsmen still existed and it was through exploiting these divisions that Ibn Sa'ud would find the room through which to manoeuvre and maintain his authority. However, prior to proceeding further with the ways in which Ibn Sa'ud defeated the *Ikhwan*, while maintaining his authority, it is important to examine in more detail the events leading up to the rebellion.

As noted above, the *Ikhwan* revolt was essentially the result of the imposition of international norms and standards on Ibn Sa'ud's unification project, the validity of which were not accepted by the Wahhabi movement. This conflict found its most contentious expression with regard to the implementation of the Wahhabi creed on the more cosmopolitan Hijazi's and the enforcement of the newly created international borders between Najd and Trans-Jordan, and Najd and Iraq, respectively. This period is, therefore, instructive with regard to the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's authority insofar as the nature of the challenge posed by the *Ikhwan* should reveal a great deal about the nature of his authority. That is to say that the means by which the *Ikhwan* sought to de-legitimize Ibn Sa'ud's authority, and the grounds on which they justified their opposition to him, are

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[1] Habib, <u>Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam</u> p. 18.

significant in terms of what they indicate about the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's rule. Therefore, in examining how the revolt played itself out, specific attention will be focused on how *Ikhwan* grievances against Ibn Sa'ud coalesced around these issues, and what they revealed about the nature of his authority.

The implementation of Wahhabi norms and beliefs on the population of the Hijaz represented a particularly difficult problem for Ibn Sa'ud. As noted above, the Hijaz, in part owing to the significance it holds for Muslims around the world, had been exposed to a variety of intellectual and religious currents circulating in the Muslim world. As such it had a more diversified understanding of Islam than that of the *Ikhwan* and would prove far more resistant to the imposition of the Wahhabi creed than had the rest of the peninsula. Hijazi fear of the 'Wahhabification' of their territory is evidenced to a certain extent by the attempts of the former to placate Ibn Sa'ud by the removal of Sharif Husain in 1924, in the hope that this would satisfy Ibn Sa'ud's ambitions without necessitating the outright conquest of the province, and to a greater extent by their refusal to surrender Mecca or Medina to the *Ikhwan*.

From the *Ikhwan* perspective, the capture of the Hijaz and the holy sites therein necessitated the strict implementation of Wahhabi norms and beliefs. Unperturbed by the international implications of their actions, the *Ikhwan* sought to purify the whole of the Hijaz much as they had done when they captured al-Taif, prior to being brought under control by Ibn Sa'ud. Thus, the dilemma faced by Ibn Sa'ud was how to reconcile the demands of the *Ikhwan*, on whose military exploits his conquest movement in particular, and his authority more generally, had come to rely, and the demands of the Hijazis and

the international community of Muslims, who sought to preserve the rich and diversified cultural history of the Hijaz.

The problems which would plague Ibn Sa'ud, and which were axiomatic of the larger themes outlined above, began as early as 1924, when one of the *Ikhwan* leaders ordered the burning of a huge quantity of tobacco belonging to Hijazi merchants because smoking was prohibited by the Wahhabis. In response to the pressure applied by the Hijazi merchants Ibn Sa'ud rescinded the order, and allowed the selling of tobacco to continue, while maintaining a public ban on its consumption. By continuing to allow the trade in tobacco, Ibn Sa'ud was able to exact his share of the revenue in the form of taxes. Thus, in this instance, the sanctity of Wahhabism was sacrificed in order to placate the Hijazi merchants who relied on revenue from the sale of tobacco, thereby gaining their support and helping to consolidate Ibn Sa'ud's authority over the Hijaz.

A further example illustrative of the problems which beset Ibn Sa'ud during this period is referred to as the *Mahmal* incident.[2] As a group of *Ikhwan* were preparing to pray, they heard the sound of loud music which accompanied the approach of the *mahmal*. While rushing to put a stop to this iconoclastic behaviour, over 25 *Ikhwan* were shot and killed by the Egyptian commander who was accompanying the pilgrims. Because of the international attention of the Muslim world on how the Wahhabis were governing the holy cities, Ibn Sa'ud was unable to impose the punishment which the *Ikhwan* felt should have been applied. While certainly an anecdotal story, it reveals a great deal about the nature of the dilemma faced by Ibn Sa'ud, which cut right to the heart of social norms and values which had allowed for the unification of the Arabian

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[2] The *mahmal* is richly decorated ritual palanquin sent by Muslim states with the pilgrim caravans to Mecca. See Vassilliev, "glossary," p. 561.

peninsula in the first place. That is to say, the *mahmal* incident is representative of the

compromises Ibn Sa'ud would have to make with regard to the implementation of

Wahhabi norms and beliefs in order to consolidate his authority in the Hijaz.

Finally, a note should be made about the introduction of modern technologies into

the emerging Sa'udi Kingdom. The *Ikhwan* were vehemently opposed to the introduction

of telegraphs, telephones, cars and airplanes which gradually took place during this

period. Their opposition was based explicitly on the perceived incongruence of these

modern innovations and their understanding of Wahhabism. However, from Ibn Sa'ud's

perspective, this technology represented an important means to supplement his authority

and power by enhancing not only his ability to spread his ideology, but his coercive

power as well. The resultant situation, according to the British Consul in Trans-Jordan,

was one in which the *Ikhwan* were reported to be,

> criticizing what they consider to be Ibn Sa'ud's own fall from
> grace. They see motor cars and telephones in Mecca, and the King
> sitting down at Jeddah [sic] to meet with the infidel, and they ask, . . .
> what has become of the simple austerity of old times.[3]

In the end, Ibn Sa'ud was able to convince the skeptical *Ikhwan* of the permissibility of

these innovations by showing their accordance with Wahhabism, for example by having

portions of the Qur'an read over the radio.

These examples reflect the compromises Ibn Sa'ud had to make in consolidating

his authority over the Hijaz and signaled a breach of the Wahhabi ideology, which had

been an integral part of Ibn Sa'ud's hegemonic authority. However, it should not be

assumed that with the conquest of the Hijaz, Ibn Sa'ud discarded the Wahhabi ideology

all together. Beginning in 1926, Ibn Sa'ud created the League for the Encouragement of

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[3] Joseph Kostiner, The Making of Sa'udi Arabia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 110.

Virtue and the Denunciation of Sin, which acted much like religious police who were charged with enforcing public conformity to Wahhabism. Attendance at prayer, manner of dress, payment of *zakat*, ensuring compliance with the prohibitions against alcohol and many other aspects of outward piety, fell under the jurisdiction of the League.

While the disciplining of social space was nothing new in Ibn Sa'ud's conquest movement, what differentiated its application in the Hijaz from other areas which came under Sa'udi control was that, in the Hijaz, it was not carried out by the *Ikhwan* as had been the case previously. In fact, the *Ikhwan* were specifically forbidden from enforcing public conformity with the precepts of Wahhabism in the Hijaz, although they were encouraged to report violations to the *ulama* appointed by Ibn Sa'ud, who would see to it that the proper punishment was meted out. Thus, even in this instance where Ibn Sa'ud sought to implement Wahhabi principles on the people of the Hijaz, his actions were tempered by his need to consolidate his authority. Compromises were, therefore, made which while being an anathema to the *Ikhwan* were necessary for Ibn Sa'ud and the maintenance of his authority.

Ibn Sa'ud's problems with the *Ikhwan* in the implementation of Wahhabism in the Hijaz were compounded by the signing of border agreements with Trans-Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait. These treaties defined raiding and proselytizing across the newly created borders as acts of state aggression. Thus, the consequences of tribal raiding were immediately magnified to the extent that once initiated, a raid across one of the borders opened the possibility of expanding the conflict to encompass the whole of the emerging state. Moreover, because these agreements singled out proselytizing across borders as acts of state aggression, Wahhabi expansion was also forbidden. In a very real sense,

therefore, the creation of internationally recognized boundaries would prove a test to Ibn Sa'ud's authority and his ability to maintain control over the areas which he had conquered.

The challenge posed to Ibn Sa'ud's authority by the placement of territorial limits on the emerging Sa'udi Kingdom was essentially two-fold. As noted previously, borders vitiated tribal conceptualizations of territory and potentially threatened their very existence by restricting their ability to roam for pastures and raid other tribes, both of which were seen as necessary for the preservation of the tribe. Therefore, from the tribal chieftain perspective, the implementation and enforcement of boundaries would prove to be a difficult task due to the very exigencies of tribal society. However and perhaps more important, from the Wahhabi perspective and in particular its extreme *Ikhwan* manifestation, the borders represented an impediment to the principal and defining characteristic of their ideology: expansion in an attempt to eliminate or convert perceived infidels. By accepting limits on the spread of Wahhabism Ibn Sa'ud was, therefore, contravening one of the cardinal elements of his ideology, and by extension, his authority. The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that the borders had been agreed to under British auspices, whom the *Ikhwan* viewed as infidels, rendering British authority to enforce the agreements invalid.

With the conquest of the Hijaz completed and its pacification well under way, the *Ikhwan*, having been denied any formal positions of authority or power, were ordered back to their respective *hujar*. Upon their return, and notwithstanding the border agreements, the *Ikhwan* quickly resumed raiding into Trans-Jordan and Iraq, a phenomenon which essentially had been ongoing since the fall of Jabal Shammar. More

important than the specific details of the raids which were carried out during this period

is the trend they represented. As Habib argues,

> What they [the *Ikhwan*] wanted, he could no longer allow; the
> continuation of the religious march, a march to nowhere because
> they had already reached the limits of their . . . expansion. Their
> Imam had affixed his signature to border limitations which he
> would either obey, or be forced to obey by the military might
> of the British Crown itself.[4]

Along similar lines, Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett suggest,

> the arguments which Abd al-Aziz had used to encourage the *Ikhwan*
> to conquer . . . [the Arabian peninsula] could now be turned against
> him with perfect logic; if a *jihad* against the Hijaz was lawful, why
> not a *jihad* against Iraq?[5]

This, then, would form the crux of the second issue around which the *Ikhwan* revolt

would be fought and also reveals a great deal about the nature of Ibn Sa'ud's authority.

From a conceptual perspective, the revolt can be seen as the expression of *Ikhwan*

discontent with the failure of Ibn Sa'ud to implement the ideology upon which his

authority was based.

At a meeting of *Ikhwan* leaders in late 1926, a petition was signed outlining seven

areas in which they felt Ibn Sa'ud had reneged on his duty as *Imam* and declaring their

intention to declare a *jihad* against the perceived infidels. These were presented to him in

January 1927 and censured him for the following:

1) Sending his son Sa'ud to Egypt
2) Sending his son Faysal, to London
3) Introducing the telegraph, telephone, and automobile into the land of Islam
4) Levying customs taxes on the Muslims in Najd
5) Granting permission to the tribes of Jordan and Iraq to graze their
   herds in the lands of the Muslims.

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[4] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 117.
[5] Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett, "The Precarious Monarchy: Britain, Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud and the Establishment of the Kingdom of Hijaz, Najd and its Dependencies, 1925-1932," in State, Society and Economy in Sa'udi Arabia ed. Tim Niblock (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 55.

6) Prohibiting commerce with Kuwayt. If the people of Kuwayt were infidels then Abd al-Aziz should wage holy war against them, but if they were Muslims, then he should not prevent commerce between the two nations.
7) Tolerating the dissenters of al-Ahsa, and al-Qatif. He should either force them to become Muslims or kill them.[6]

What is interesting to note about these complaints is that they were based on their perceived incongruity with the precepts of Wahhabism, which supports the proposition that the revolt, of which these represented the origins, was motivated by religious beliefs and practices. Even complaint number four should not be understood as a general refusal to accept taxation, but rather a refusal of taxes not based on the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Thus, it will be noticed that there is no mention of paying the *zakat*, because it was officially recognized by the *Ikhwan* as the legitimate right of the ruler. These complaints reflect an overwhelming desire to preserve the purity of Wahhabi society, and to contain if not expel, the influence of the infidels.

In response to this petition, the *ulama* issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) which, for the most part, supported the complaints of the *Ikhwan*. However, crucially it upheld, as the sole purview of the ruler, the right to declare *jihad*. Thus, in essence, the *fatwa* from the *ulama* bought Ibn Sa'ud more time in which to try to appease the *Ikhwan* by asserting that he alone had the authority to declare war against the perceived unbelievers. Ideologically, this represented a confirmation of the exclusive right of the al-Sa'ud to Wahhabi authority. That is, while accepting that Ibn Sa'ud had erred in some areas of implementing Wahhabism, the *ulama* deemed that these transgressions were insufficient to justify revoking Ibn Sa'ud's exclusive right to rule and declare war.

In addition to the petition outlining their complaints with Ibn Sa'ud's perceived subservience to the British and his failure to implement Wahhabism to their satisfaction,

the *Ikhwan* also began to attempt to usurp Ibn Sa'ud's authority by publicly challenging

his devotion to the Wahhabi cause. Particularly pertinent in this regard were the efforts

of three *Ikhwan* leaders, Faisal al-Dawish, Ibn Bijad and Dhidan ibn Hithlain, to convince

other members of the *Ikhwan* that they represented the true defenders of the Wahhabi

faith. It is important to note in this context that they were not challenging the ideology

upon which the peninsula had been unified, rather they were challenging Ibn Sa'ud's

desire and ability to implement it. As Habib notes,

> Ibn Sa'ud realized that the *Ikhwan* enjoyed popularity among
> many of his subjects, since al-Dawish and Ibn Bijad had succeeded
> in their whispering campaign among the tribes that they represented
> the legitimate interests of Islam, and that they were defending the
> cause of religion, while Ibn Sa'ud, having won the Hijaz through
> their prowess had now sold himself to the English and the
> Christians.[7]

In terms of the successful construction of hegemony, the nature of the opposition

of the *Ikhwan* to Ibn Sa'ud is instructive. That is to say, the framing of their discontent in

Wahhabi terms is evidence of the successful deployment of the Wahhabi ideology by Ibn

Sa'ud in constructing his hegemonic authority. From a discursive perspective, the

legitimacy or lack thereof, of authority, was contested on completely Wahhabi grounds

and in Wahhabi language. Thus, opposition to Ibn Sa'ud based on the precepts of

Wahhabism, is indicative of the importance of the Wahhabi ideology in building

hegemony to the extent that the entire discourse of legitimate political authority was

increasingly defined by it. Therefore, the discourse of opposition to Ibn Sa'ud's authority

reveals a great deal about the nature of Ibn Sa'ud's authority and the role played therein

by Wahhabism.

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[6] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 418.
[7] Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 129.

While the discourse of opposition was informed by Wahhabi norms and beliefs, the actualization of the revolt was influenced by the tribal political context. All three of the rebellious *Ikhwan* leaders referred to above were also leaders of their respective tribes. Initiating a raid was one of the cardinal elements of tribal politics, not only in terms of survival but also in terms of voicing political opposition and challenging political authority. It should be remembered that the *Ikhwan* movement had not erased tribal identity, nor had it stopped raiding. Both of these phenomenon had been re-articulated to fit within the larger Wahhabi ideology, and both would play an important role in the outcome of the revolt. It is interesting to note in this context the observations of the historian Khalid al-Farj, who was a contemporary of the period, and, who stated that,

> A study of the history of Najd reveals that the Mutair [Faisal al-Dawish's tribe] were always in the ranks of the Al Sa'ud's enemies. They were the first to receive Tusun Pasha in Hijaz and help his campaign in Qasim. They supported Ibrahim Pasha during the siege of al-Diriya and joined his troops . . . It was they who welcomed Khurshid Pasha and made for al-Kharj together with him. Lastly they were in the ranks of the Rashidis until Ibn Sa'ud defeated them.[8]

The *Ikhwan* revolt would, therefore, resemble behavior characteristic of tribal political opposition to the extent that, it took the form of raids, and was organized principally according to tribal identity. What distinguished the revolt from other tribal political behavior was the fact that it was motivated by the Wahhabi ideology. Instead of fighting for the glory of the Mutair, Faisal al-Dawish was fighting for the implementation of Wahhabism. Thus, the form and organization of the revolt would bear the markings of tribal political behavior, while the motivation and legitimization of the revolt should be located in Wahhabism.

Faisal al-Dawish sought to force Ibn Sa'ud's hand through a declaration of *jihad*

against Iraq. In November 1927, he and his *Ikhwan* supporters descended upon an Iraqi

police post located near Busayya. Erected in response to continued raiding by the

Ikhwan, the fortification was designed to provide early warnings of the arrival of raiders

and to facilitate punitive action. Ibn Sa'ud had already lodged a protest with regard to the

post, insofar as he perceived it to be in violation of the border agreements with Iraq.

However, the rebellious *Ikhwan*, under the leadership of Faisal al-Dawish, attacked the

fort, destroying it as well as killing the construction workers and the police force sent to

protect them. This precipitated a series of raids of back and forth across the border well

into February 1928. Moreover it placed Ibn Sa'ud in an untenable position to the extent

that he was left with two unappealing options in dealing with the raids. Either he had to

support Faisal's position and incur the wrath of the British Air Force, which was now

pursuing the raiders into Najd, or he had to support the 'infidel' British in their attacks on

his co-religionists.

Another conference was convened in Riyadh in November 1928 to which Ibn

Sa'ud invited the *Ikhwan*, leaders of the tribes, notables of the towns and the *ulama*.

Crucially, by this point relations between Faisal and Ibn Sa'ud had deteriorated to such

an extent that neither he, nor his two main *Ikhwan* allies, (Sultan Ibn Bajid and Dhidan

Ibn Hithlain) attended. The questions raised were once again overwhelmingly concerned

with perceived incongruities between Ibn Sa'ud's declared allegiance to Wahhabism and

his acceptance of alien norms and principles. Thus, for example, the legitimacy of the

newly established borders was questioned vis-à-vis the tenets of Wahhabism, as was the

permissibility of collecting non-Islamic taxes. The conference ended with the *ulama* and

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[8] Quoted in Vassilliev, History pp. 272-273.

other leaders supporting Ibn Sa'ud, contingent upon his removing some of the non-Wahhabi aspects of his authority, particularly the border posts which had been constructed between Iraq and the emerging Sa'udi state.

By inviting such a wide cross-section of society, Ibn Sa'ud was able to isolate the rebellious *Ikhwan*. In his speech he highlighted the peace and prosperity he had brought to Najd and depicted the problems with the British over Busayya as being the result of Faisal's intransigence. In a display of magnificent drama, he even offered to abdicate if those present could agree on a new ruler, and in a show of great emotion those present pledged their support to Ibn Sa'ud and begged him to stay on.

Ibn Sa'ud's position was further strengthened in February 1929 when Ibn Bijad raided some Najdi camel merchants. Because the attack was carried out on Najdi Wahhabis, the rebellious *Ikhwan* could no longer claim their revolt was motivated by a desire to eliminate the infidels. This, perhaps more than any other event, cemented the loyalty of the settled Najdis to Ibn Sa'ud and allowed the latter to go on the offensive and re-assert his claim to be the defender of Wahhabism.[9] Thus, when all avenues towards a negotiated settlement had been exhausted, Ibn Sa'ud was able to call upon the support of the townsmen of Qasim, a double-levy of Najdi townsmen, and those *Ikhwan* who had remained loyal, to fight the rebellious *Ikhwan* in March 1929.[10] The battle was fought on March 31, 1929, and resulted in a resounding victory for Ibn Sa'ud. Although the *Ikhwan* were able to regroup and mount another campaign in September 1929, the rebellion was essentially over. Thus, by January 1932, Ibn Sa'ud was declared King of Sa'udi Arabia.

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[9] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 427; Habib, Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam p. 137. Vassilliev, History p. 278.
[10] Goldrup, Sa'udi Arabia p. 428.

Throughout the rebellion Ibn Sa'ud managed to use the existing divisions within society to secure his victory. During this period he convened a series of conferences, to which the *ulama* were always invited, in order to display his religious orthodoxy. Moreover, as the majority of the population were Wahhabi, but not *Ikhwan*, he was able to isolate the latter along social cleavages which had existed prior to and throughout the *Ikhwan* movement; namely, that between nomad and settled people. It is within this context that the relevance of what might appear to be relatively innocuous events, such as the killing of Najdi camel shepherds, becomes apparent. Essentially, by appealing to the norms and values of the majority of the population, and thereby isolating the *Ikhwan*, he was able to use those norms and values as the basis for his authority.

Ibn Sa'ud's defeat of the rebellious *Ikhwan* represented the elimination of the final obstacle to be overcome in the unification of the Arabian Peninsula. Although, he would become embroiled in a dispute with Yemen over their respective claims to territory in the south-west corner of the peninsula, this did not represent a threat to his position of supremacy in the peninsula; rather it could be appropriately considered a territorial dispute between two emerging states. As such the outcome of the dispute need not be dwelt upon as it occurred after the consolidation of Ibn Sa'ud's authority and, therefore, did not impact upon it.

In terms of what the *Ikhwan* revolt reveals about the nature of Ibn Sa'ud's authority, its significance can hardly be overestimated. The result of the perceived incompatibility between imposed international norms and standards and the Wahhabi ideology, the revolt cut right to the heart of the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's authority. That is to say, the *Ikhwan*, embittered by the failure of Ibn Sa'ud to completely and uniformly apply

the tenets of Wahhabism to the Hijaz, combined with his inability to remove the restrictions on continued expansion implicitly contained in the creation of borders, revolted because these actions contradicted the ideology of the movement itself. Thus, in a very real sense, the revolt highlights the significance of Wahhabism to Ibn Sa'ud's authority insofar as his perceived failure to implement the ideology resulted in the last major threat to his rule.

The salience of Wahhabism to Ibn Sa'ud's authority was further evidenced by the discursive construction of the opposition movement against him. This is a crucial point to bear in mind as it relates directly to the operation of hegemony and is evidence of the increased importance Wahhabism took on, as an ideology, according to which actions would be judged and loyalties would be decided. That opposition to Ibn Sa'ud was constructed in explicitly Wahhabi terms substantiates the methodological focus on Wahhabism as a source of authority and testifies to its importance as an ideology to the extent that it became the norm or standard according to which Ibn Sa'ud was judged. In short, that questions of leadership and authority were now decided according to the principles of Wahhabism exemplifies the successful deployment of hegemonic authority based on the ideology of Wahhabism precisely because it had managed to replace other conceptualizations of authority with its own paradigm. Nothing speaks as forcefully to the importance of Wahhabism as a legitimizer of political authority in this context more than the fact that those who sought to replace Ibn Sa'ud felt compelled to make their challenge according to his ideology.

As has been suggested throughout this analysis, in order to fully appreciate the significance of Wahhabism to political authority and the actual mechanisms through

which this transfer occurred, recourse must also be had to the tribal political context. That the three principal leaders of the *Ikhwan* revolt were also the leaders of their respective tribes should, therefore, not come as a great surprise. What distinguishes this period from those which preceded it was the fact that the tribes were no longer fighting for their own glory but rather for the Wahhabi ideology. Moreover, it is impossible to explain how Ibn Sa'ud was able to overcome the threat posed by the *Ikhwan* without understanding some of the divisions which characterized tribal society, in particular that between nomads and sedentary dwellers. Thus, in the final analysis, it was Ibn Sa'ud's ability to construct his leadership within the Wahhabi discourse in such a way as to appeal to the majority of the non-*Ikhwan* population, which enabled him to overcome the threat posed by the revolt and retain his political authority based on his embodiment of the Wahhabi movement.

Conclusion

The thirty years between Ibn Sau'd's return to Riyadh in 1902 and his coronation as King of Sa'udi Arabia in 1932 witnessed a remarkable transformation in the political landscape of the Arabian Peninsula. What had previously been made up of competing, feuding and localized political authority had been replaced by an emerging centralized authority which controlled the entire peninsula. Whereas prior to Ibn Sa'ud's conquest of Riyadh the peninsula had been characterized by divisions between tribal chieftaincies whose authority was tenuous at best and who literally had to re-create themselves from year to year, after his conquest of the Hijaz and subjugation of the *Ikhwan*, these fragmentations had been overcome to an unprecedented degree and his authority had been placed on a more sound and durable footing. No longer subjected to the centrifugal tendencies inherent to tribal chieftaincies, the Arabian Peninsula under Ibn Sa'ud began to emerge as a unified polity. While it is outside the scope of this analysis to offer any conjecture on the extent to which a 'Sa'udi identity' was emerging, for the present purpose it is sufficient to note that this period, between 1902 and 1932, represented the beginning of the origins of the Sa'udi state, as it stands today.

The intention here has been to provide an analysis of the ways in which Ibn Sa'ud was able to construct his authority in order to precipitate such a transformation in the peninsula. To repeat the question posed at the outset, the purpose has been to ascertain how Ibn Sa'ud established his authority to effectuate such a process and to determine the role played therein by his leadership over, and embodiment of, the Wahhabi movement. In short, how did Ibn Sa'ud create the necessary authority to begin, maintain and legitimize his conquest movement, and to what extent was this affected by his association

with the Wahhabi creed. In approaching this topic, a two-pronged approach has been employed, which may be broadly considered 'analytical-historical'; historical, insofar as the subject matter is directly concerned with events in the past, analytical to the extent that historical record was subjected to a methodologically defined analysis in deconstructing Ibn Sa'ud's authority in order to determine its basis. Therefore, rather than representing a comprehensive history of the period under review, the purpose has been to analyze Ibn Sa'ud's authority during the unification of the peninsula according to theoretical or conceptual parameters, and to use the history of the period to illuminate these processes.

In Part I, two conceptual frameworks were used to explain how Ibn Sa'ud constructed his authority. Chapter I examined the nature of tribal political organization and the traditional tribal conceptualization of political authority. Emphasis throughout was placed on highlighting the fragmentations and instabilities which were endemic to chieftaincies and relating this to notions of tribal authority more broadly. That is, because positions of authority were determined in the main by cultural norms and standards such as kinship ties, courage, generosity and success in battle, the resultant situation was one characterized by inherent instabilities as various chieftaincies battled with each other for power and authority. The focal point of this analysis of tribal society was, therefore, to highlight the significance of cultural norms to political authority and to relate this to the transitory nature of political authority more generally.

This portion of the analysis of tribal society was heavily informed by two theorists, Ibn Khaldun and Antonio Gramsci. Khaldun's concept of *asabiyya* formed an important theoretical contribution to this analysis. Defined as 'group-feeling,' *asabiyya*

accounts not only for the construction of political authority but also explains the

fragmentations and instabilities characteristic of chieftaincies, according to Khaldun.

That is, because each kinship group has its own *asabiyya*, or cultural unifiers, each tribe

seeks to impose its authority on to the others. For the present purposes the most

important aspect of Khaldun's theory is that it seems to justify focusing on cultural norms

and practices, including conceptualizations of kinship, as the basis for authority in tribal

society. Moreover, Khaldun's observation that religion can be used effectively to

supplement authority based on *asabiyya* seems to justify focusing on the role of

Wahhabism as a source of cultural authority in Ibn Sa'ud's construction of political

authority, based on Khaldun's understanding of authority in tribal society.

Khaldun's emphasis on cultural norms, beliefs and practices forming an integral

part of the construction of political authority was supplemented by the thought of

Antonio Gramsci and his use of the concept of hegemony. It should be remembered that

here, hegemony referred simply to cultural authority, spread by a sector of intellectuals

(in this case the *ulama*), and as a general conception of life for the masses. Thus, in a

very real sense, Wahhabism can be seen as Ibn Sa'ud's *asabiyya* spread through the

conquest movement to engender hegemony which takes on added salience because of the

importance of cultural norms and beliefs to tribal conceptualizations of authority.

Gramsci's importance, therefore, lies in his corroboration of Khaldun's emphasis on

cultural norms and beliefs in the construction of political authority.

Having devoted considerable attention to justifying from a conceptual perspective

the importance of cultural norms and beliefs to the establishment of political authority in

a tribal political context, Chapter II sought to outline the political ramifications of

Wahhabism as an ideology for the socio-political movement which conquered the peninsula. Three aspects in particular were singled out in order to show the impact they had on Ibn Sa'ud's construction of authority. It was, therefore, noted that Wahhabism was inherently expansive as an ideology to the extent that its goal was the elimination or conversion of all perceived infidels, which included non-Wahhabi Muslims. Because of its emphasis on implementing its doctrines, Wahhabism subjected the populations which it came into contact with to its normative principles. By regulating public behavior according to its principles and disciplining social space, the enforcement of the Wahhabi ideology engendered further authority for Ibn Sa'ud. Moreover, by making the implementation of Wahhabism the declared goal of the unification effort, Ibn Sa'ud's cultural authority – in the form of leadership over the Wahhabi movement – became politicized. Finally, the third aspect of Wahhabism which was examined was the monopoly on positions of authority it bestowed upon the al-Sa'ud family. According to Wahhabi beliefs, the legitimacy of political authority was directly proportional to the extent to which Wahhabism was being applied and followed. So long as the al-Sa'ud remained the champions and defenders of the Wahhabi faith, they could not legitimately be opposed. Wahhabism effectively gave them a monopoly on positions of authority. Thus, as an ideology, and with respect to the construction of political authority, Wahhabism was identified as being expansive, normative and exclusive.

In examining both the tribal political context which characterized the Arabian Peninsula prior to and during Ibn Sa'ud's unification effort, as well as the ideology of Wahhabism, the purpose has been to establish the conceptual framework through which this period could be interpreted. In the broadest possible terms, the intention has been to

provide an analysis of tribal society which emphasized the importance of cultural norms and beliefs to positions of authority, and then to determine, from a theoretical perspective, what impact Wahhabism could have, as a cultural ideology and socio-political movement, on Ibn Sa'ud's construction of political authority. Having accomplished this task, the attention then shifted in Part II to an analytically informed interpretation of Ibn Sa'ud's unification effort and the concomitant construction of his authority.

As was stressed repeatedly throughout, Part II should not be read as a comprehensive history of the unification of the Arabian Peninsula. Rather, it represents an analysis of the events which were axiomatic of the construction of Ibn Sa'ud's authority throughout this period, based on the conceptual parameters outlined in Part I. That is, the basis of Ibn Sa'ud's authority over the course of this period is to be located in the interaction between the tribal political context and the emerging Wahhabi movement. And while this is certainly not the place to re-investigate the specific instances of the conquest of the peninsula, two observations can be made. First, the salience of the Wahhabi movement increased dramatically after 1912 with the creation of the *Ikhwan*. Second, the final obstacle in Ibn Sa'ud's project came from the implicit contradictions in justifying his movement with reference to Wahhabi norms and principles, when as part of the consolidation of his authority he had to compromise these beliefs in order to appease the British. It is interesting to note in this context that the story of the unification of the peninsula could end with the conquest of the Hijaz in 1925, insofar as Ibn Sa'ud was by then the dominant power. However, by examining the following years, and the *Ikhwan* revolt which challenged Ibn Sa'ud's rule, the nature of Ibn Sa'ud's authority and the role

played therein by his leadership over the Wahhabi movement come into greater focus. By examining the final internal challenge to Ibn Sa'ud's consolidation of political authority and the basis according to which this challenge was made, the increased importance of Wahhabi norms and beliefs to the construction of authority is apparent. Covering the period between 1902 and 1932, Part II, therefore, has sought to trace how Ibn Sa'ud constructed his authority, using the two concepts of tribal notions of political authority and Wahhabi notions of political authority as the analytical instruments.

Although examining what kind of polity Ibn Sa'ud was sovereign over falls outside the scope of this analysis, as a means of concluding it may be worth briefly noting its surface-level characteristics, as these will elucidate, to a certain extent, the nature of his political authority and the interaction between the tribal political norms and Wahhabi norms, which has been the focus throughout. Here a distinction between the form and the content of the Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia is important. That is to say, in the main, in 1932, the Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia resembled the form typical of chieftaincies. Structurally it was indistinguishable from previous chieftaincies insofar as it was built upon the tributization of other tribes. What distinguished it from its predecessors was its content. Whereas previously kinship had played the cardinal role in the construction of political authority, in the newly created Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia, kinship, while certainly not replaced, was supplemented by Wahhabi norms and beliefs. Thus, what one is left with is a polity based on the structures of a chieftaincy, infused with the ideology of Wahhabism. That the Sa'udi polity would combine both of these elements should come as no particular surprise since they both contributed to the creation, maintenance and legitimization of Ibn Sa'ud's authority in the first place.

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