

A HISTORY OF SAUDI ARABIA

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CHAPTER ONE

Society and politics, 1744–1818 and 1824–1891

The Ottoman Empire maintained a nominal suzerainty over the territory which is today part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after its major expansion eastward in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. When Salim I occupied Egypt in 1517, he inherited the guardianship of Hijaz as the last Mamluks gave him the keys of Mecca. The Ottoman Sultan issued a firman confirming the amir of Mecca, Sharif Barakat, in his position. The Sultans later appointed governors in Jeddah and Madina (al-Siba^ʿi 1984: 344), and ruled in Hijaz for four hundred years in cooperation with the Sharifian family.

While the incorporation of Hijaz in the Ottoman Empire was an extension of their rule in Egypt, their authority in eastern Arabia was an extension of their occupation of the Euphrates valley that began in 1534 when Sulayman the Magnificent conquered Baghdad. Hasa submitted voluntarily to the Ottomans in 1550 (Anscombe 1997: 12). This first phase of Ottoman occupation ended with the rebellion of the Banu Khalid in 1670 (ibid.). The Ottomans did not return to eastern Arabia until the time of Midhat Pasha in the 1870s.

The Ottomans, however, failed to extend their control into the interior of Arabia, known as Najd. Without a formal Ottoman presence, Najdi towns and oases were ruled by their own amirs, while tribal confederations maintained their independence and autonomy. In the eighteenth century, leadership in Najd, namely the first Sa^ʿudi–Wahhabi emirate (1744–1818), challenged the authority of the Ottoman Empire in Hijaz, Iraq and Syria. This challenge resulted in the occupation of central Arabia by Muhammad ^ʿAli's forces, on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, in 1818. By 1841, Egyptian troops retreated into Hijaz, leaving Najd in the hands of its local rulers. A second unsuccessful attempt to penetrate the interior followed the more definitive Ottoman occupation of Hasa in 1871. Once again, Najd remained autonomous. Local politics in this

central part of Arabia came to play a major role in shaping the modern history of the country.

THE ORIGINS OF AL SA^ʿUD (1744–1818)

Local Najdi amirs enjoyed relative freedom to rule in the small settlements of Najd. Both the Sharifs of Mecca and the Banu Khalid rulers of Hasa tried to extend their control over Najd with the hope of extracting the meagre surplus produced by its agricultural communities (Fattah 1997: 47). However, neither the Hijazi Sharifs nor the Banu Khalid chiefs were able to integrate Najd into their sphere of influence. Najd itself was not an attractive region as it produced little surplus in dates and livestock. Its own population had always looked towards the coast of Hasa and beyond to survive. Its small merchants travelled as far as Basra and India, to supplement their limited resources.

In the eighteenth century Dir^ʿiyah was a small settlement in Najd with a mixed population of farmers, merchants, artisans, minor *ʿulama* and slaves.¹ According to one source, the settlement did not have more than seventy households (Abu Ḥakima 1967: 30). Since 1727, a member of the Al Sa^ʿud clan, Muhammad ibn Sa^ʿud, had been the local ruler. The descent of Al Sa^ʿud is often attributed to the Maṣālikh of Banu Waʿil, a tribal section of the north Arabian camel-herding ^ʿAniza tribe (Lorimer 1908: 1053). The Al Sa^ʿud’s association with the ^ʿAniza, however, remains suspicious since no historical source suggests that this tribal section played a role in their later expansion in Arabia.

Most probably the Al Sa^ʿud were a sedentary group that founded the settlement of Dir^ʿiyah. The settlement recognised the authority of the Sa^ʿudi amir as a result of a combination of factors: his residence in the oasis and his ownership of cultivated land and wells around the settlement. It seems that the Al Sa^ʿud were originally of the landholding merchant class of Najd. Muhammad ibn Sa^ʿud (died 1765) was a landowner and a broker, financing the journeys of long-distance merchants (Fattah 1997: 47). Political skills of mediation and the ability to defend the settlement against raids by other oasis amirs and tribal confederations were important complementary attributes. In return for tribute from members of the settlement, the oasis amir became the defender of the inhabitants who served as his military force, enhanced by his own slaves. Collection of this tribute strengthened political leadership; it distinguished the amir and his lineage from that of other residents in the settlement.

Sa^cudi leadership in Dir^ciyyah is best described as a traditional form of rule common in many settlements in Arabia at that time.² In the 1740s, the amir of Dir^ciyyah enjoyed limited authority beyond his own settlement. With the exception of his ability to collect tribute, the executive authority of an oasis ruler was fairly weak (al-Juhany 1983: 179).

It seems that the Sa^cudi leadership was lacking in two respects: first, it lacked an identifiable tribal origin that would have guaranteed a strong association with a tribal confederation, similar, for example, to that of their contemporaries, Banu Khalid of Hasa. Second, the Sa^cudi leadership lacked any great surplus of wealth. The Al Sa^cud may have had some due to the collection of tribute from the settlement and involvement in trade, but this does not seem to have been a distinguishing characteristic. Their commercial interests at that time were not developed enough to ensure an income sufficiently substantial to enable them to expand their authority over other settlements or control a large network of caravan routes.

Given these limitations, it is not surprising that their authority remained confined to the small settlement of Dir^ciyyah. The fortunes of the Al Sa^cud began to change with their adoption of the Wahhabi movement, associated with the reformer Muhammad ibn ^cAbd al-Wahhab (1703–92).³

Muhammad ibn ^cAbd al-Wahhab belonged to Banu Tamim, a Najdi sedentary tribe whose members were inhabitants of several oases in Najd (Abu Ḥakima 1967: 24). His family produced several religious scholars, but was not distinguished by wealth. According to one source, Muhammad ibn ^cAbd al-Wahhab lived ‘in poverty with his three wives. He owned a *bustan*, date garden and ten or twenty cows’ (ibid.: 26). Following the path of his ancestors, Muhammad ibn ^cAbd al-Wahhab travelled to Madina, Basra and Hasa to pursue religious education and probably wealth (al-^cUthaymin 1997: 61–5). He returned to ^cUyaynah, where his father was a judge, to preach a new message.

The reformer distinguished himself by insisting on the importance of monotheism, the denunciation of all forms of mediation between God and believers, the obligation to pay *zakat* (Islamic tax to the leader of the Muslim community), and the obligation to respond to his call for holy war against those who did not follow these principles. Muhammad ibn ^cAbd al-Wahhab was concerned with purifying Islam from what he described as innovations and applying a strict interpretation of the *shari‘a*, both of which needed the support of a political authority. He considered cults of saints, the visiting of holy men’s tombs and sacrifice to holy men,

prevalent not only among the oases dwellers and the nomads of Arabia but also among Muslims encountered during his travels in Hijaz, Iraq and Syria, as manifestations of *bid'ā*. He formulated religious opinions regarding several practical matters. Among other things, he encouraged people to perform communal prayers and abstain from smoking tobacco. Most important, Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab insisted on the payment of *zakaat*. He ruled that it should be paid on apparent wealth (such as agricultural produce) and concealed wealth, stored in gold and silver (Abu Ḥakima 1967: 195). The reformer declared that the veneration of saints, trees and other objects led to *kufri* (unbelief), blasphemy and polytheism and that the doctrine of the oneness of God, *tawḥīd*, should be strictly respected.

Initially, the amir of ʿUyaynah, ʿUthman ibn Muʿammar, endorsed the reforms proposed by Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab, but later expelled him from the oasis under pressure from the Banu Khalid chiefs of Hasa. The reformer's severe punishment of those who were reluctant to perform communal prayers, his personal involvement in enforcing a rigid interpretation of the *shari'a* and his stoning in public of a local woman accused of fornication antagonised the inhabitants of ʿUyaynah and their chief. It seems that the Banu Khalid chiefs of Hasa and overlords of Najd at the time also resented the reformer and feared the spread of his message. They ordered ʿUthman ibn Muʿammar to kill Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab, but ʿUthman decided to expel him rather than risk *fitna* (dissent) among the people who came under his authority. Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab and his family were asked to leave ʿUyaynah. The reformer arrived in Dirʿiyyah, forty miles away from ʿUyaynah, with the hope of convincing its Saʿudi amir to adopt his message.

Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's reputation had already reached this small oasis. Muhammad ibn Saʿud received the reformer and granted him protection. Descriptions of the encounter between the ruler of Dirʿiyyah and Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab indicate that a pact was sealed between the two men in 1744. According to one source:

Muhammad ibn Saʿud greeted Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab and said, 'This oasis is yours, do not fear your enemies. By the name of God, if all Najd was summoned to throw you out, we will never agree to expel you.' Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab replied, 'You are the settlement's chief and wise man. I want you to grant me an oath that you will perform *jihād* (holy war) against the unbelievers. In return you will be *imam*, leader of the Muslim community and I will be leader in religious matters.' (Abu Ḥakima 1967: 30)

According to this narrative, the Sa^udi ruler agreed to support the reformer's demand for *jihad*, a war against non-Muslims and those Muslims whose Islam did not conform to the reformer's teachings. In return the Sa^udi amir was acknowledged as political leader of the Muslim community. Muhammad ibn ^uAbd al-Wahhab was guaranteed control over religious interpretation. The reformer started teaching his religious message in a mosque, specially built for him. He insisted on the attendance of men and children. Men who did not attend his special *dars* (teaching sessions) were required to pay a fine or shave their beards (ibid.: 32).

It is difficult to assess why the reformer had success in Dir^uiyah, although the Wahhabi reform movement certainly provided an alternative source of legitimacy for the Al Sa^ud. Muhammad ibn Sa^ud adopted a religious message that promised an opportunity to compensate for the limitations of his rule. More specifically, Muhammad ibn ^uAbd al-Wahhab promised him wealth, in the form of *zakat* and expansion under his religious guidance. It is also probable that rivalry between the amirs of ^uUyaynah and Dir^uiyah contributed to the success of a small settlement without particular political or economic significance. ^uUyaynah enjoyed far more prestige and importance than Dir^uiyah at that time.

The historical alliance between the Wahhabi religious reformer and the ruler of Dir^uiyah that was sealed in 1744 set the scene for the emergence of a religious emirate in central Arabia. Without Wahhabism, it is highly unlikely that Dir^uiyah and its leadership would have assumed much political significance. There was no tribal confederation to support any expansion beyond the settlement, and there was also no surplus wealth that would have allowed Muhammad ibn Sa^ud to assemble a fighting force with which to conquer other settlements. The settlement itself did not have sufficient manpower to initiate conquest of other oases or tribal territories.

From the early days of Sa^udi–Wahhabi expansion, the crucial element was to gain submission to the tenets of Wahhabi Islam among the population, both sedentary and nomadic. This submission led to the creation of a quasi-tribal confederation with which to conquer further territories in the absence of an identifiable 'Sa^udi tribal confederation'.

Wahhabism provided a novel impetus for political centralisation. Expansion by conquest was the only mechanism that would permit the emirate to rise above the limited confines of a specific settlement. With the importance of *jihad* in Wahhabi teachings, conquests of new territories became possible. The spread of the Wahhabi *da'wa* (call), the purification of Arabia of unorthodox forms of religiosity and the enforcement

of the *shari'a* among Arabian society were fundamental demands of the Wahhabi movement. The amir of Dir'iyah took the Wahhabi reformer, recently expelled from 'Uyaynah, under his wing, and accepted these demands. Wahhabism impregnated the Sa'udi leadership with a new force, which proved to be crucial for the consolidation and expansion of Sa'udi rule. Wahhabism promised this leadership clear benefits in the form of political and religious authority and material rewards, without which the conquest of Arabia would not have been possible. The resultant consolidation enabled the Sa'udi leadership to rise to prominence in the region.

The expansion of the Sa'udi–Wahhabi realm beyond Dir'iyah was dependent on the recruitment of a fighting force ready to spread the religious message of the reformist movement and Sa'udi political hegemony. The populations of the oases in southern Najd were the first to endorse Wahhabism and respond to its call for *jihad* against 'unbelievers'. Settled Najdis between the ages of eighteen and sixty were its first conscripts, the backbone of the Sa'udi–Wahhabi force. Some accepted Wahhabism out of conviction; others succumbed to it out of fear. It seems that the Sa'udi–Wahhabi emirate was based from the very beginning on the allegiance of the sedentary communities of Najd. Those who willingly accepted Wahhabism were expected to swear allegiance to its religio-political leadership and demonstrate their loyalty by agreeing to fight for its cause and pay *zakat* to its representatives. Those who resisted were subjected to raids that threatened their livelihood.

The same method of recruitment was used among the tribal confederations. Preaching and raids progressed simultaneously. While it was easy to maintain control over the oases, it proved more difficult to maintain the allegiance of the various Arabian tribes. The tribes generally managed to evade central authority due to their mobility and tradition of autonomy. However, once they had been subjugated, they proved to be an important fighting force, spreading the message of Wahhabism. They provided manpower with which to further the expansion of the Sa'udi–Wahhabi emirate. Participation in Sa'udi–Wahhabi expansion greatly appealed to the tribal confederations as it promised a share of the booty that resulted from raiding disobedient oasis dwellers and other tribes.

Coercion alone would not have guaranteed the level of expansion achieved by the Sa'udis by the end of the eighteenth century. Wahhabism promised salvation, not only in this world, but also in the next: submission to the teachings of Wahhabi Islam meant evasion of Wahhabi raids and promised spiritual rewards. Most accounts of the success of the

Sa^udi–Wahhabi polity highlight the fact that raids were congruent with tribal practice, and as such they encouraged tribal confederations to take part in the expansion of the Sa^udi–Wahhabi realm with the promise of material rewards. However, this emphasis completely overlooks the spiritual dimension, a strong motivating force behind the eager submission of some sections of the population who had already been timidly but persistently trying to develop a spirituality deriving from the simple and austere message of Wahhabism. The Najdi population exhibited an attraction to its teachings that were in line with the orientation of some of its religious scholars. Before the rise of the Wahhabi movement, and as in other parts of the Islamic world which were some distance from the traditional centres of learning, the Najdi *‘ulama* travelled to Syria and Egypt to train with their intellectual mentors (al-Juhany 1983). Upon their return, these *‘ulama* developed into ‘ritual specialists’, whose main concern was *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence, a tradition which continues among the Sa^udi *‘ulama* of today, although for different reasons.

The specialisation of the Najdi *‘ulama* in *fiqh* reflects the concerns of the inhabitants of the Najdi towns and villages, which centred on pragmatic issues relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, religious endowments, Islamic rituals and the Islamic legal codes. Najdi settlements had already aspired towards finding solutions for their practical problems and showed a religious awareness that predated the call of Muhammad ibn ^uAbd al-Wahhab (al-Juhany 1983: 252). While the reformer was still concerned with these practical issues, he distinguished himself from other Najdi *‘ulama* of the time by developing his ideas on *tawhīd*. Religious awareness in the Najdi settlements should not be overlooked as a factor facilitating the adoption of Wahhabism and the success of Sa^udi expansion.

The regular payment of *zaka*t to the Sa^udi–Wahhabi leadership was a token of political submission, but also of religious duty. While this religious duty might not have been felt particularly strongly among the tribal confederations, it was definitely apparent among the oasis population of southern Najd whose allegiance to the Sa^udi leadership had rested on more solid ground.

We can also point to the appeal of the doctrine of the oneness of God to the tribal confederations, especially the nomadic sections. Such groups might not have had the same fascination as the sedentary population with Islamic rituals or jurisprudence (as they had their own tribal custom to deal with conflict and transgression), but it is certain that the doctrine of *tawhīd* did strike a nerve amongst them. The message of Muhammad ibn ^uAbd al-Wahhab certainly did not fall on deaf ears. Even those tribal

confederations that fought against the Sa^cudi–Wahhabi political agenda could not resist the temptation of a simple Islam free of excessive rituals and mediation. For instance, in spite of its ferocious resistance to political Wahhabism, the Shammar tribe accepted the doctrine of *tawhīd* in the eighteenth century. A prominent Shammar shaykh declared that his Islam remained faithful to the tenets of Wahhabism although his ancestors had fought battles with the Sa^cudis since the middle of the eighteenth century. It seems that Wahhabism achieved the ultimate religious symbiosis between the nomads and the sedentary population by combining an uncompromising unitarian and puritanical Islam with an obsession with ritual specialisation and *fiqh*, thus responding to the needs of both the tribal confederations of the desert and the population of the oases of central Arabia.

Under the military leadership of Muhammad ibn Sa^cud's son, ^cAbd al-^cAziz (1765–1803), the Sa^cudi leadership expanded into Riyadh, Kharij and Qasim by 1792.⁴ Towns in central Najd received Wahhabi judges as representatives of the new religio-political order. Under the guise of spreading the Wahhabi message, the Sa^cudi leadership subjugated most of the amirs in Najd. Those amirs were allowed to remain in their settlements as long as they paid *zakat* to the Sa^cudi leader, a token of their submission to his authority.

After the completion of the campaigns in central Arabia, Sa^cudi forces moved eastward into Hasa and succeeded in terminating the rule of Banu Khalid. A substantial proportion of the population of Hasa consisted of Shi^cis, representing in the eyes of the Wahhabis an extreme case of *ahl al-bida^c* (innovators). The subjugation of Qatif in 1780 opened the road to the coast of the Persian Gulf and Oman. Qatar acknowledged the authority of the Sa^cudis in 1797. Bahrain followed suit and paid *zakat* to Dir^ciyyah.

The expansion of the Sa^cudi forces to the west and in particular into Hijaz brought them into conflict with another religious authority, that of the Sharif of Mecca. In spite of the strong resistance of the Hijazis, Sa^cud ibn ^cAbd al-^cAziz (1803–14) established temporary Sa^cudi hegemony over Ta'if in 1802, Mecca in 1803 and Madina in 1804. Sharif Ghalib of Mecca became a mere representative of the Sa^cudis. The Wahhabi ^culama ordered the destruction of the domed tombs of the Prophet and the caliphs in Madina in accordance with Wahhabi doctrine which forbade the construction of monuments on graves. According to Wahhabi teachings, graves should remain unmarked to discourage later visits and veneration by Muslims.

Sa[°]udi success in Hijaz encouraged southward expansion into [°]Asir, where local leaders adopted Wahhabism and for a while joined forces to march on Yemen. The strong resistance of the Yemenis, coupled with the unfamiliar geography of their mountainous country, prevented its incorporation into the Sa[°]udi–Wahhabi realm.

To the north-east Sa[°]udi expansion reached the fertile regions of Mesopotamia, threatening vital parts of the Ottoman Empire. In 1801 the holy city of Karbala[°] was raided and plundered. Raids on the cities of Mesopotamia continued between 1801 and 1812 without resulting in the establishment of a strong Sa[°]udi–Wahhabi presence there due to the distance from their power base in Arabia. Wahhabi preoccupations in Mesopotamia revolved around gaining booty from these rich provinces. A similar pattern was maintained in Syria. Sa[°]udi forces raided cities and pilgrimage caravans without being able to establish a permanent base. Expansion by raid reached its limits in the north as it did in Yemen. The sacking of Shi[°]a cities in Iraq angered its communities and resulted in the assassination of the Sa[°]udi leader [°]Abd al-[°]Aziz in 1803 by a Shi[°]a in the mosque of Dir[°]iyah in revenge for the plundering of Karbala[°].

Four factors facilitated the process of expansion. First, disunity and rivalry among local oasis amirs in Najd meant that the Sa[°]udis could gradually defeat them one by one. Second, internal disputes among members of the oases' ruling groups weakened their resistance and enabled the invaders to use dissidents for their purposes. Third, the migration of some Arabian Peninsula tribes to more fertile regions in Iraq and Syria aided the conquest. Under Sa[°]udi–Wahhabi pressure, several tribal confederations fled to Mesopotamia. Finally, the peaceful adoption of Wahhabism by the sedentary population of Najd provided grassroots support for the expansion even before it took place ([°]Abd al-Rahim 1976: 73).

The expansion of the first Sa[°]udi–Wahhabi emirate resulted in the creation of a political realm with fluctuating boundaries. The descendants of the Al Sa[°]ud, legitimised by the Wahhabi leadership, provided a permanent political leadership in accordance with the oath of 1744. However, there were no mechanisms other than raids to ensure the durability of either the polity or its boundaries, and tribal confederations retained their ability to challenge Sa[°]udi–Wahhabi authority. Withdrawing the payment of *zakat* and organising counter-attacks on groups and territories within the Sa[°]udi–Wahhabi sphere of influence were recurrent challenges. Although there were rudimentary attempts at formalising political, economic and religious relations within the emirate,

these were generally insufficient to hold the constituency together. There was a vague recognition of belonging to a Muslim community, but this did not preclude attachment to more specific tribal/regional identities.

Raids were rituals of rejuvenation, injecting fresh blood into the realm, especially when it was on the verge of disintegration. While these raids initially guaranteed expansion, they later proved detrimental to political continuity as the population began to resent the devastation they caused. When the Ottoman Empire responded to the Sa^ʿudi–Wahhabi challenge by sending the troops of Muhammad ^ʿAli into Arabia in 1811, tribal confederations that had already suffered the punitive raids of the Sa^ʿudis responded by switching allegiance to the foreign troops. Sa^ʿud ibn ^ʿAbd al-^ʿAziz died in 1814, leaving his son ^ʿAbdullah to face the challenge of the Egyptian troops. Muhammad ^ʿAli’s son Ibrahim Pasha led the invasion of Najd after Egyptian troops established a strong base in Hijaz. Ibrahim Pasha arrived at the gates of Dir^ʿiyah with ‘2,000 cavalymen, 4,300 Albanian and Turkish soldiers, 1,300 Maghrebi cavalymen, 150 gunners with around 15 guns, 20 weapons technicians and 11 sappers’ (Vassiliev 1998: 154). The Sa^ʿudis surrendered on 11 September 1818 after the total destruction of their capital and its fortifications. Ibrahim Pasha’s troops plundered Dir^ʿiyah and massacred several Wahhabi ^ʿulama. Those who survived were taken to Cairo together with ^ʿAbdullah (1814–18). He was later sent to Istanbul where he was beheaded. The sacking of Dir^ʿiyah marked the end of the first Sa^ʿudi–Wahhabi emirate.

A FRAGILE SA^ʿUDI REVIVAL (1824–1891)

After the withdrawal of Egyptian forces there was an attempt to re-establish Sa^ʿudi–Wahhabi authority in 1824 when Turki ibn ^ʿAbdullah, the son of the beheaded Sa^ʿudi ruler, returned to Riyadh, south of Dir^ʿiyah.⁵ Turki (1824–34) benefited from the partial retreat of the Egyptian troops from Najd under pressure from its local inhabitants. He was able to capture Riyadh with a small force gathered from among the inhabitants of several oases. After settling in Riyadh, Turki extended his control over ^ʿAriḍ, Kharj, Ḥoṭah, Maḥmal, Sudayr and Aflaj (Vassiliev 1998: 163). His authority in Ha’il and Qasim remained minimal, but he was able to reinforce recognition of Sa^ʿudi authority in the Hasa region in 1830 (Winder 1965).

Although Turki was a strict Wahhabi *imam*, he was careful not to antagonise the Ottoman–Egyptian troops who were still in Hijaz, guarding the security of the pilgrimage caravans. However, the greatest challenge

to Turki's authority came from internal dissension within his own family. In 1831 Turki faced the challenge of Mishari, a cousin whom he had appointed governor of Manfuhah. In 1834, Mishari successfully plotted the assassination of Turki while the Sa^udi forces were occupied in a war with Qatīf and Bahrain. Turki was killed while coming out of the mosque after the Friday prayers (Vassiliev 1998: 167). His son Faysal immediately returned to Riyadh from Hasa to restore his claim over the town. Faysal (1834–8) was assisted by the amir of Ha'il, °Abdullah ibn Rashid (1836–48), who 'killed Mishari with his own sword' (Lorimer 1908: 1097). Faysal defeated Mishari in 1834 and became the *imam* of the second Sa^udi–Wahhabi emirate.

Faysal's rule was disrupted again in 1837 when he refused to pay tribute to the Egyptian forces in Hijaz. The Egyptians sent an expedition to Riyadh. Faysal was captured and sent to Cairo. The Egyptians appointed a member of the Al Sa^udi by the name of Khalid ruler in southern Najd. The situation was maintained until a member of a collateral branch of the Al Sa^udi, °Abdullah ibn Thunayan, rebelled against Khalid, who fled from Riyadh to Jeddah. °Abdullah ibn Thunayan ruled in Riyadh until Faysal managed to escape from his captivity in Cairo and return to Riyadh in 1843. Faysal killed °Abdullah and started his second chieftainship, which lasted until his death in 1865.

After Faysal's death, his son °Abdullah (1865–71) became ruler in Riyadh. His half-brothers Sa^udi, Muhammad and °Abd al-Raḥman competed with him for the leadership, which proved to be detrimental for the Sa^udis. When °Abdullah, the eldest son, became amir, his half-brother Sa^udi resented his exclusion from power and began a military campaign to undermine his authority. Sa^udi started a series of contacts with the rulers of °Asir and °Ariḍ in the hope of gaining their loyalty against his brother. He also negotiated an alliance with the Murra, °Ajman and Dawasir confederations, which were trying to maintain their autonomy by allying themselves with °Abdullah's rival brother. The internal struggle between the Sa^udi brothers was fuelled by the desire of the various confederations to free themselves from Sa^udi domination (Abu °Aliya 1969: 156–97). Between 1870 and 1875 the Sa^udi brothers were not able to reach an agreement and continued to challenge each other.

Sa^udi died in 1875, leaving his brothers °Abdullah and °Abd al-Raḥman in fierce competition for the leadership. Immediately after Sa^udi's death, °Abd al-Raḥman became ruler in Riyadh while his brother °Abdullah and his nephews (Sa^udi's sons) continued to challenge his authority. In 1887 °Abdullah appealed to the ruler of Ha'il,

Muhammad ibn Rashid, to help him against his nephews. The ruler of Ha'il seized the opportunity to march on Riyadh. Sa'ud's sons fled to Kharj, leaving their uncle in jail. The amir of Ha'il freed 'Abdullah but took him as a hostage to his capital, leaving Salim al-Sibhan, one of his most loyal commanders, as the new governor of Riyadh (Vassiliev 1998: 201).

The new Rashidi governor of Riyadh pursued 'Abdullah's nephews and eliminated most of them in Kharj. 'Abdullah and his brother 'Abd al-Raḥman were allowed to return to Riyadh as 'Abdullah was both ill and old. 'Abdullah died in 1889, and 'Abd al-Raḥman ruled as a vassal of Ibn Rashid under the general governorship of Salim al-Sibhan.

In an attempt to restore his family's hegemony in southern Najd, 'Abd al-Raḥman co-operated with the people of Qasim and sections of the Muṭayr tribal confederation, as both resented the rising power of the Rashidis. A Sa'udi alliance against the Rashidis was being formed. Muhammad ibn Rashid gathered all his forces, consisting of the Shammar, Muntafiq and Ḥarb confederations and marched into Qasim. The Rashidis and Qasimis met in Mulaḥda in 1891, and Muhammad ibn Rashid was victorious. With the defeat of his Qasimi allies, 'Abd al-Raḥman fled Riyadh after an unsuccessful attempt to regain his power. He took refuge first among the Murra tribe of the Empty Quarter and later settled in Kuwait in 1893 under the patronage of the Al Sabah and with a stipend from the Ottoman government. The Ottoman government granted him a modest pension of 60 gold liras (Vassiliev 1998: 204). His capital, Riyadh, was taken by ibn Rashid's representative, 'Ajlan. It was the exile of the Al Sa'ud to Kuwait that allowed a friendship to develop with the Al Sabah rulers of this port. This friendship proved crucial for the return of the Al Sa'ud to Riyadh in the twentieth century.

While the disintegration of the first Sa'udi realm was partially due to the intervention of the Egyptians acting on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, the second realm collapsed for two reasons. First, the fragile Sa'udi leadership of the second half of the nineteenth century was further weakened by internal strife among members of the Sa'udi family. Second, the increasing power of a rival central Arabian emirate to the north of the Sa'udi base was able to undermine Sa'udi hegemony during the crucial period when the Sa'udis were struggling amongst themselves for political leadership.

With the flight of 'Abd al-Raḥman, the Sa'udi capital, Riyadh, fell under the authority of the Rashidis. The remaining members of the Al Sa'ud were taken as hostages to the Rashidi capital, Ha'il.

Riyadh remained under the authority of the Ha'il amirs until 1902 when 'Abd al-Raḥman's son 'Abd al-'Aziz, known as Ibn Sa'ud, returned from his exile in Kuwait, killed the Rashidi governor and declared himself amir of Riyadh: a third and final revival of Sa'udi rule began to take shape. This revival marked the beginning of the third Sa'udi state in the twentieth century.

THE RASHIDI EMIRATE IN HA'IL (1836–1921)

The fragile second Sa'udi–Wahhabi emirate (1824–91) coexisted with a new regional power to the north of Riyadh. The Rashidi emirate of Ha'il rose to eminence during the second half of the nineteenth century at the time when Sa'udi hegemony in central Arabia was declining.⁶

The Rashidi emirate was a polity deriving its legitimacy and power from one of Arabia's large tribal confederations, the Shammar. The impetus for centralisation came from an oasis-based leadership, that of the Rashidis, a tribal section already settled in Ha'il, an oasis in northern Najd (Al-Rasheed 1991). The Rashidis were the Shammar tribal nobility, ruling as amirs over the mixed population of Ha'il, which included Shammar tribesmen, Banu Tamim sedentary farmers and merchants, and non-tribal groups of craftsmen, artisans and slaves. Shammar nomads frequented Ha'il for trade and regarded the oasis as falling within their tribal territory. The presence of the Rashidis in the oasis was an extension of the tribe's claim over it. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Ha'il had served as a base from which the Rashidis had expanded into north Arabia and southern Najd. While the Sa'udi–Wahhabi emirates expanded under the banner of religious legitimisation, the Rashidis spread their influence over other oases and tribal confederations with the support of their own tribe.

The conquests of the Rashidi emirate were in fact a mechanism for spreading Shammar hegemony over others. When this expansion gathered momentum in the middle of the nineteenth century, Shammar tribesmen provided the military force. Shammar tribal sections were the backbone of the force that conquered oases outside Shammar tribal territory, and they also subjugated weaker tribal confederations and turned them into vassals. In the case of the Rashidis, the emirate and the confederation were initially one polity. This was an important factor distinguishing the nature of Rashidi authority from that of the neighbouring Sa'udis in southern Najd. The Rashidis did not have to 'convert' the Shammar to their cause, but acted in conjunction with them to

spread the tribe's hegemony. The Rashidi amirs were themselves drawn from the tribe and were tied into it through marital alliances. In contrast, the Sa^ʿudi leadership in Riyadh lacked tribal depth, which obliged it to depend on the alliance with Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab and his followers.

Why the Shammar rallied behind the Rashidi leadership should be understood in the context of mid-nineteenth-century Arabia. It would be simplistic to argue that tribal solidarity was the sole motivating force behind the confederation's support of this newly emerging leadership. The tribe had witnessed the growth of the first Sa^ʿudi–Wahhabi emirate, which had defeated some Shammar sections and forced them to migrate to Mesopotamia towards the end of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, in 1818, the Shammar were attacked by Ottoman Egyptian troops who mistakenly regarded Shammar territory as part of the Sa^ʿudi domain. By supporting the Rashidis, the Shammar were seeking a leadership which would guarantee their security and autonomy *vis-à-vis* both local and foreign rivals. In backing the Rashidis who were connected genealogically to the Shammar, the tribal confederation laid the foundations for organising its own defence and strengthening a unity which had previously been based upon the rhetoric of common origin and tribal solidarity. The centralisation of power in the hands of the Rashidis stemmed from this context of political upheaval, military turmoil and foreign intervention in Arabia. Subsequently, the Shammar were able to resist encroachments on their territory, not only by Egyptian troops but also by the re-established Sa^ʿudi–Wahhabi emirate in Riyadh (Al-Rasheed 1991: 47).

With the consolidation of Rashidi leadership, the amirs began to rely less on the Shammar and more on a mixed force of slaves and conscripts from the oasis. This was a development dictated by the inability of the leadership to control its own tribal sections. The partial shift towards a permanent non-tribal military force was an indication of a change in the power of the amirs. Initially the amirs were tribal shaykhs comparable to other Shammar shaykhs, but later their power increased as they became a sedentary nobility with its own political ambitions. This pattern was consolidated with the leadership of Muhammad ibn Rashid (1869–97), whose domain extended from the borders of Aleppo and Damascus to Basra, Oman and ʿAsir (Musil 1928: 248). The Qasim region and the Sa^ʿudi–Wahhabi capital, Riyadh, were incorporated into this domain. Representatives and governors were appointed in the conquered areas.

The Rashidi emirate relied on four groups for its expansionist campaign in Arabia. First, its leadership summoned the sedentary and nomadic Shammar to fight their rivals, who were designated enemies of the whole tribe. Skirmishes against the Shammar sections acted in favour of Muhammad ibn Rashid in his mobilisation of this tribal force. Second, other non-tribal confederations took part in his campaign as they were motivated by the prospect of booty. Third, the amir's slaves and body-guard formed the solid core of his military force. And fourth, conscripts from the towns and oases of Jabal Shammar provided a reliable military force which was used regularly for expansion. Their participation guaranteed the predominance of Ha'il, both economically and politically.

This expansion, however, did not lead to the establishment of control. The scanty resources of the region, coupled with the inadequacy of the transport infrastructure, militated against the full integration of these areas into a single unit. In this respect, the Rashidi emirate exhibited a pattern similar to that predominant in the first and second Sa'udi-Wahhabi emirates. Both the Sa'udis and Rashidis engaged in raids and conquest without being able to hold the conquered territories for an extended period of time. While control over the core of the emirate was relatively easy to maintain, the conquered territories represented a periphery difficult to supervise regularly or integrate thoroughly. While in the Sa'udi-Wahhabi emirates the payment of *zakat* was an indication of a group's submission to its authority, the payment of *khuwwa* (tribute) to the Rashidis expressed their control over other groups. Tribute was a tax levied not upon the collector's own community, but rather upon a conquered group which remained more or less autonomous (Pershit 1979: 149–56). Both leaderships, however, resorted to regular raids as a mechanism for ensuring the payment of either *zakat* or *khuwwa*.

While the Rashidi emirate was initially characterised by full integration between the leadership and the Shammar tribal confederation, expansion brought about the recurrent tension between a central power and its diversified and semi-autonomous constituency. At the height of Rashidi power, the constituency included other weakened tribal confederations in addition to the Shammar and the population of oases outside its traditional tribal territory. While frequent raids against rebellious tribes continued, a redistributive economy was also put in place. The amirs of Ha'il collected tribute from weakened groups to be redistributed among others, as rewards for loyalty and participation in the leadership's military campaigns. Tribal shaykhs visited the oasis and received hand-outs in cash and kind. The subsidy system functioned as a mechanism

for the circulation of wealth, thus promising loyalty in return for material gains. Subsidies from the centre to the periphery created economic integration between the Ha'il leadership and its constituency. More importantly, they created dependency on the revenues of the amirs among the sedentary and nomadic populations, who became incorporated into their political realm.

Economic integration between the leadership and its constituency was partially achieved in the Rashidi emirate, but military and political integration were difficult to create and maintain over an extended period of time. Tribal confederations that paid *khuwwa* remained more or less autonomous. The amirs of Ha'il had no monopoly over the means of coercion as it was difficult to break the military strength of the various confederations that came under their authority. The military strength of tribes was occasionally neutralised by frequent raids and subsidies, but in the long term these strategies failed to guarantee loyalty.

Control over the oases in Jabal Shammar was, however, a different matter. Ha'il, the urban core of the emirate, remained loyal to the Rashidi leadership as long as this leadership was capable of defending the wider interests of the emirate. The merchants, artisans and agriculturists supported the leadership because it was able to guarantee the safe passage of trading and pilgrimage caravans, thus allowing the flow of trade between Ha'il and the outside world to continue. An amir who extended his authority over the tribal confederations in the desert created secure conditions for travel in between Arabia's trading markets, thus benefiting the merchants and artisans of the sedentary communities. The loyalty of the oasis population was highly dependent on this factor. The Ha'il population withdrew its support only when the Rashidi leadership of the first two decades of the twentieth century became incapable of extending protection outside the walls of the oasis.

After establishing themselves as the rulers of Najd towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Rashidis lost their control over Riyadh when Ibn Sa'ud, the son of the exiled Sa'udi ruler in Kuwait, returned to his native town in 1902. Ibn Sa'ud killed the Rashidi governor of Riyadh and declared himself the new ruler. Between 1902 and 1921 the Rashidis and Sa'udis competed for control of central Arabia. This competition weakened the Rashidi emirate and led to its demise.

The decline of the Rashidi polity can be attributed to several factors. Rivalry between Britain and the Ottoman Empire in Arabia upset the balance between local Arabian power centres. The Rashidi amirs continued to be allied with the Ottomans even after several tribal

confederations and local amirs sided with Britain. After the Ottoman defeat in the First World War, the local Rashidi allies felt the rising pressure of the Saʿudis, who had secured a firm alliance with Britain. This factor alone could not fully explain the demise of Rashidi power in 1921. But the instability of Rashidi leadership, which manifested itself in internal rivalry between the various Rashidi branches, added to their already disadvantaged position in Arabia. A weakened leadership was not able to maintain the loyalty of the various tribal confederations, who shifted their allegiance to a more powerful centre – that of the Saʿudis. The emirate lost control over its tribal periphery; its leadership witnessed the shrinking of its territories without being able to reclaim them. The Rashidis had no monopoly over the use of coercion. This meant that autonomous and semi-autonomous confederations retained their ability to undermine the Rashidi leadership. These confederations remained a potential threat in the absence of any mechanism to contain their tendency either to challenge Rashidi authority directly or passively resist by withdrawing support needed at times of external threat.

THE SHARIFIAN EMIRATE IN HIJAZ

In Hijaz, the homeland of the most sacred sites of Islam, the Najdi pattern of emirate formation seems to have evolved with some striking similarities (al-Sibaʿi 1984; Peters 1994).⁷ The population of Hijaz had always been distinguished from that of Najd by its heterogeneity. Hijazi society included tribal confederations claiming unity through essentially eponymous genealogical links. Ḥarb, ʿUtayba, Billi, Hutaym, Shararat, Banu ʿAṭiya and Ḥuwayṭat were among the best known Hijazi tribal groups (Hogarth 1917: 17; Admiralty 1916: 100). Descriptions of the Hijazi confederations agree that they differed from those in Najd as they had no overarching tribal leadership capable of claiming authority over the whole confederation. It seems that the large Hijazi tribal groups were fragmented into small units under the leadership of a prominent shaykh, who could not claim authority beyond his section. This political fragmentation could be interpreted as a result both of geography and of the presence of an overarching leadership in the person of the Sharif of Mecca (discussed below). Yet Hijazi tribes were territorial groups, similar to those in Najd. Ḥarb, for example, controlled the area between Mecca and Jeddah: ʿUtayba dominated eastern Hijaz, with one section predominate in Taʿif and its environs (Hogarth 1917: 18).

Tribal confederations coexisted with other groups claiming holy descent from Quraysh and the Prophet Muhammad through his grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, known as the Ashraf. Descendants of the Ashraf lived in Mecca and Madina, but were also scattered among the Hijazi nomadic population, as well of course as in other parts of the Arab and Islamic world where they had been dispersed since the collapse of the ʿAbbasid Empire (Daḥlan 1993). The holy descent of the Sharifs predisposed them to play a prominent leading role in the emirates of Mecca and Madina from the eighth and ninth centuries, to the exclusion of other ‘non-holy’ descent groups. They also played a prominent role as religious specialists, for example judges and preachers in the holy cities and as heads of Sufi orders (*ibid.*).

In addition to Hijazi tribal confederations and Sharifian clans, the population of the Hijaz included Muslims whose ancestors or themselves had come from Turkey, Africa, India and Asia and who now resided in the major towns and ports. This diversity was extended to the religious domain as the various Islamic legal schools were recognised by the Ottomans. Sufi circles flourished in Mecca and Madina. Sharif Ḥusayn (1908–24) and his sons were Shafiʿi Sunnis. Equally important was the presence of a Shiʿa community, especially in Madina and among some Sharifian clans. According to Ende:

For many Shiʿite authors, the Sharifs of Mecca and Madina themselves were actually Shiʿites, who for obvious reasons, posed as Sunnites – an attitude considered lawful, as *taqiya*, under Shiʿite Law. Some sections of the Ḥarb (the Bani ʿAli) and Juhaina were also Shiʿa, settled around the date palms of Madina, where another Shiʿa group, the Nakhawla seem to have been living since the days of the early Islamic empire. (Ende 1997: 266–86)

This Hijazi diversity was reflected in a sharper distinction between the urban and rural areas. In Hijaz, the urban–rural divide was more pronounced than in Najd. The cosmopolitan urban centres of Jeddah and Mecca were not comparable in size, specialisation and sophistication to any settlement in Najd or elsewhere in Arabia. These were urban centres where travellers did not fail to draw the boundaries between the desert and the sown. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this sharp divide predisposed Hogarth to claim that ‘the Hejazi bedouins are of exceptionally predatory character, low morale, and disunited organisation’ (Hogarth 1917: 17). His negative remarks were probably based on views of the population of the urban centres such as Jeddah, which was distinguished from that of the surrounding tribal areas. In Najd the

rural–urban continuum would not have justified such representations. In Najd the oasis population and the tribal confederations often belonged to the same social category.

In this diverse region, the Sharifian emirate maintained a rather prolonged presence, predating that of both the Saʿudis and Rashidis in central Arabia. Sharifian authority had fluctuated since the sixteenth century depending on developments outside the region, mainly Ottoman policies towards this vital area. While central Arabian emirates faced the tension between their power and that of the tribal confederations, a further restraining agent burdened the Sharifian emirate, which was capable of both empowering and disempowering its leadership. In Hijaz, the amirs of Mecca were caught between the tribal confederations and the Ottoman Sultan and his representatives. A system of dual authority was established; the Sultan’s urban-based representatives dealt with commercial, political and foreign relations: the Sharif dealt with the affairs of the Holy Cities and the tribal confederations, a dualism which was occasionally violated. The two authorities competed without one being able to subdue the other.

This dual authority distinguished Hijaz sharply from Najd. The Ottomans were the official guardians of the holy places, but they could not exercise that privilege without the amir of Hijaz. According to Peters, this dualism provided a perilous equilibrium (Peters 1994: 335). Government in Hijaz differed from that in Najd, the latter being outside the direct control of the Ottoman Empire, although the Ottomans regularly interfered in its affairs. The climax of this intervention was reached with the invasion of Muhammad ʿAli early in the nineteenth century, which was an attempt both to prevent further Saʿudi–Wahhabi expansion and to impose Ottoman rule.

In Hijaz, the Ottoman Sultan retained the power to appoint the amir, whose garrison was funded from the Ottoman treasury. The Ottomans also paid the Hijazi *ʿulama* their salaries (Daḥlan 1993). While Ottoman military and administrative presence was pronounced in the cities, it was virtually non-existent outside them. The duty to control the territories and population in the regions between the major urban centres was delegated to the Sharif. Prominent Sharifs were rewarded for demonstrating exceptional ability to restrain the tribal confederations, especially during the annual pilgrimage season. In return for guaranteeing the security of the pilgrimage caravan from Damascus (using a military force consisting of the amir’s police force, slaves and an amalgamation of co-opted tribal groups), the amir of Mecca received regular subsidies and his urban

constituency was exempt from Ottoman taxes. Hijaz as a whole was exempt from military service in deference to its special and elevated status among the various Ottoman provinces. Its ports and trade were, however, subject to taxation.

The Sharif of Mecca continued to execute Ottoman policies. Daḥlan, a nineteenth-century *mufī* of Mecca, commented on how after the withdrawal of Muhammad °Ali's troops from Hijaz in 1840s, the Ottomans replaced the Egyptians in the region. The Ottomans confirmed the Sharif's subsidies that had already been put in place by Muhammad °Ali. They also expected the Sharif to carry out their policies not only in Hijaz, but also in the interior of Arabia. Sharif Muhammad ibn °Awn (1856–58) apparently went on an expedition with the Shammar tribe against Faysal ibn Turki, the Sa°udi ruler of the second Sa°udi–Wahhabi emirate. The Sharif imposed an annual tax of 10,000 riyals on the Sa°udi ruler, who continued to pay it until his death in 1865 (Daḥlan 1993). Again Sharif °Abdullah, Muhammad ibn °Awn's son, together with Ottoman troops conducted an expedition in °Asir in 1871, after Muhammad ibn °Aid rebelled against the Ottoman Sultan (ibid.: 25). The Sharif seized the port of Qunfudah, which had been controlled by the °Asiri tribe the Mughaydis (Bang 1996: 30).

Four major differences distinguished Hijaz from Najd: holy Shari-fian clans occupying positions of authority, a sharp rural–urban divide, cosmopolitan heterogeneous towns and ports, and an imperial power maintaining a military presence in the major towns and holding the right to appoint the Sharif, who often had been raised and educated in Istanbul under the control and patronage of the Ottoman Sultan (de Gaury 1951: 248). Once appointed in Istanbul, various Sharifs travelled to Mecca, often for the first time, if they had been held hostage in Istanbul. They were expected to rule in Mecca and among Hijazi tribes on behalf of the Sultan. The Sharifs used Ottoman subsidies to control and pacify the various tribal confederations that regularly undermined Ottoman authority by raiding pilgrims.

The Sharifs relied on their prestigious Hashemite descent to extract recognition of their authority both from city dwellers and tribal confederations; in addition their religious authority was sanctioned and backed by the Ottomans. This authority, however, was not sufficient to guarantee obedience. Like the amirs of Ha'il, Dir°iyyah and later Riyadh, the Sharifs of Mecca resorted to bribes and coercion in their effort to pacify the tribal confederations. The inherent tension between the tribal confederations and the emirates of central Najd was replicated in Hijaz.