Chapter Second

Establishment of the Saudi State
Saudi state which emerged as a Kingdom in the first half of the nineteenth century A. D., today ranks among the powerful countries of the Arab world. It is considered a fruitful effort of the house of Saud. According to earliest annals the Saudi family lived near the Oasis of Qatif in the mid-fifteenth century, but there exists no indication that they held any authority at that time. The head of the family then moved into Najd and founded the town of Dir'iyya near the heights above Wadi Hanifah situated at a distance of about ten miles from the present capital of Riyadh.¹

The fifteenth-century found the Arabian Peninsula politically fragmented. A number of independent lords held small townships which often were either in conflict with each other or with the nomadic tribes. The new lord of Dir'iyya was just another landlord. After the founding of Dir'iyya, nearly three centuries passed in relative historical obscurity until the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Arabian history observed a great revolution which was altered by two men who built the foundations of the house of Saud, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in 1703 A.D.² at Uyaynah, he belonged to the Masharifa clan of Banu Tamim tribe which was influential as well as noted for its traditions of knowledge and learning
in the whole of Najd. Both his father Abd al-Wahhab and his grandfather
Sulayman ibn Ali were reputed scholars of Najd.

After completing his education, he travelled widely, and visited a
number of cities. These journeys made Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd al-
Wahhab acquainted with the socio-religious conditions of the followers of
Islam. He was deeply perturbed, saddened and infuriated by the un-Islamic
practices in which they were involved, he launched a vigorous reform
movement which had far-reaching implications in the social, religious and
political life of the Muslims of the world in general and of the Arabian
Peninsula in particular. He faced oppositions in his reform movement and
was forced to leave the town. In 1744 he shifted to Dir‘iyya. The ruler of
Dir‘iyya, Muhammad ibn Saud, whose family had governed the town for
several generations, had already established his reputation for courtesy,
justice and honourable dealings with his people.

The Shaykh appealed to the Amir to help him by saying that if he
assisted him in these reforms, he was sure that one day they would together
be able to bring all the Muslims under one flag, and that the Amir would
win dominion over lands and me. Muhammad ibn Saud agreed to assist the
Shaykh in his mission and fight against his enemies.
Thus both of them entered into a solemn pact, whereby, should they succeed in forcing their system on their neighbours, the political authority should rest with ibn Saud whereas the religious leadership should belong to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab... In this way the year 1744 A.D. is very significant not only in the annals of Arabia but also in the history of Islam. The alliance, proved to be of tremendous importance over the decades.

It is remarkable to note that prior to the pact between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud, the Saud family was not so influential in the affairs of Arabia as were the Sharifs in the Hijaz, the Banu Khalid in Al-Hasa and the surrounding coastal district, the Mu‘ammar family in ‘Uyaynah. Al-Hasa or Al-Ahsa is a traditional oasis region in eastern Saudi Arabia that gives its name to the Al-Hasa Governorate, Al-Hasa has been inhabited since prehistoric times, and the area was certainly known as Al-Hasa during the time of the Prophet. Its early history is similar to that of eastern Arabian historical region of Bahrain. In later times, the Oasis was coveted by the Wahhabis from the Najd and by the Turks. Al-Hasa, the residence of Bani Khalid tribe was occupied by the Saudis for the first time in about 1795. Al-Hasa changed hands a number of times.

Al-Hasa, along with Qatif, was incorporated into the First Saudi State in 1795 but returned to nominal Ottoman control in 1818 with an
invasion ordered by Muhammad Ali of Egypt. The Banu Khalid were again installed as rulers of the region in 1824-31 i.e. Banu Khalid chiefs succeeded in maintaining their position and removed the Egyptians. But the Saudi amir was soon at war with the Banu Khalid and finally the Saudis re-occupied Al-Hasa in 1830-31. But in 1838-39 the second Egyptian occupation of Al-Hasa took place and finally Al-Hasa was Annexed by Turkey in 1871.\(^7\) In 1913, Ibn Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, annexed Al-Hasa and Qatif to his domain of Najd.

Banu Khalid tribe dominated the eastern region of modern-day Saudi Arabia (al-Hasa and al-Qatif) from 1670 to 1793, and again under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire for a brief period in the early 19th century. At its greatest extent, the domain of Banu Khalid extended from Kuwait in the north to the borders of Oman in the south, and wielded political influence in the region of Najd in central Arabia. The vast majority of the Banu Khalid are Sunni Muslims, historically following the Maliki and Hanbali rites. At present many families from Banu Khalid can be found in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar as well.\(^8\)

Al-Uyaynah is located in the central Najd. In the middle of the 18th century, Al-Uyaynah was the seat of the powerful Al-Mu'ammar family of the Bani Tamim. When Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab returned from his
travels around the Middle East and began to preach the pure form of Islam to which he was committed, he met with a mixed reception. In the end, Al-Mu'ammar family compelled him to leave the town. Abd al-Wahhab was welcomed by Muhammad bin Saud. The alliance formed between Muhammad bin Saud and Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab in 1745 that was to change the history of the Arabian Peninsula and Uyaynah was one of the first towns to fall under the sway of the new alliance.  

The Banu Khalid tribe ruled in Al-Hasa and Uyaynah was under the sway of Al-Muammar family which most probably accepted the authority of the ruler of Uyaynah.

Al-Hasa was in opposition to the Saudis of Dir'iyya, another most powerful state at that time. There was no demarcation of their boundaries; they were at war with each other. The situation in 18th century was quite different from that of the Prophet's period. No one tribe in central Arabia had been able to prove its leadership.

The Sharif of Mecca or Sharif of Hejaz was the title of the former governors of Hejaz and a traditional steward of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The term Sharif means noble in Arabic. The Sharif was charged with protecting the cities and their environs and ensuring the safety of pilgrims performing the Hajj. The office of the Sharifate of Mecca dates
back to the late Abbasid era. Since 1201, the Sharifate was held by a member of the Hashim clan, not to be confused with the larger clan of Banu Hashim to which all Sharifs claim descent. Descendants of this family continued to hold the position until the twentieth century. During the Ottoman era, the Sharifate expanded its authority northwards to include Medina, and southwards to the frontiers of 'Asir, and regularly raided Najd.

The Sharifate came to an end shortly after the reign of Hussein bin Ali, during the Arab Revolt of 1916. In 1924, however, in the face of increasing attacks by Ibn Saud, Hussein abdicated his secular titles to his eldest son, Ali bin Hussein, who was to become the last Grand Sharif. At the end of 1924, the Ibn Saud conquered the Hejaz and expelled him. The House of Saud has since exercised stewardship over the holy cities and the Hajj. These were the main principalities into which Arabia remained divided for a long period of time marked by constant strifes between them in a struggle for existence or supremacy. But in pursuance of the alliance both Ibn Saud and Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab began to assert themselves not only in the revival of religion, but consequence of which they militantly, as a consequence of which they launched a Jihad (holy war) on the rival Emirates. But it was no smooth sailing for the Shaykh and Ibn Saud. They were bound to face numerous difficulties and opponents. In the ensuing armed struggle, Ibn Saud suffered some humiliating defeats too. In
1765 A.D. his fortune seemed to have been at its lowest ebb when he was confronted with the combined forces of `Orayyar of Al-Hasa and Sayyid Al-Hasan ibn Hibat-Allah of Najran, who, bent upon putting an end to the new movement, had planned to attack Dir’iyya simultaneously. Meanwhile, an army led by his son Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad was defeated by the Najrani forces at Al-Hayir, between al-Khaj and Riyadh, without the aid of `Orayyar and his tribes who had not yet even arrived there. This defeat made the Amir nervous to some extent. But Ibn Abd al-Wahhab sought to solidify his courage by asking him to remember what had happened to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the battle of Uhud. Ibn Saud’s wife, an enthusiastic supporter of the new movement, also encouraged him to carry on the struggle against the opponents with added vigour. However, Ibn Saud and the Shaykh succeeded in negotiating a treaty with the Najran ruler, who set his prisoners free, and returned home. Later, when the Al-Hasa army arrived there along with the Bedouin allies from the Ijma tribe, and heard of the departure of the Najran forces, they also went back.13

The rising power of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the Saudi family was bitterly opposed by the ruler of Riyadh named Waham bin Dawwas who struggled against his opponents for more than a quarter of a century (1157-1187 A.H.).14 Nevertheless, when Muhammad ibn Saud died in 1765 A.D., most of Najd had been subdued.
Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn Sa`ud (1765-1803)

Muhammad ibn Sa`ud died in 1765 and was succeeded by his son `Abd al-Aziz \(^\text{15}\) whom he had nominated in his lifetime. `Abd al-Aziz was well acquainted with the administrative and military responsibilities which fell upon him. The new amir from his previous experience realized that the immediate threat to his rule was from Riyadh, therefore he diverted his full attention towards subduing it and which he eventually did in the eighth year of his rule in 1773. \(^\text{16}\) This victory boosted the morale of the Wahhabis who now felt strong enough to meet the Banu Khalid and even to carry the war into Al-Hasa` itself. The Wahhabis consolidated their position in Najd. `Abd al-Aziz was now assisted in his military campaigns by his son Sa`ud who was now being given independent charge of the force. In the following years small skirmishes with Al-Hasa` continued. Sa`dun, the ruler of Al-Hasa`, attacked the Wahhabis in 1778 in al-Kharj, in 1779 in al-Majma`a , in 1780 again in al-Kharj, and in 1781 in Burayda. \(^\text{17}\) Meanwhile a revolt amongst the Banu Khalid chiefs indirectly helped the Wahhabis. Sa`dun was overthrown and ousted from Al-Hasa`. He came to Dir`iyya and sought the assistance of `Abd al-Aziz to recapture Al-Hasa` for him. Sa`dun died within a year after reaching Dir`iyya. The Wahhabis under Sa`ud made repeated incursions into Al-Hasa` beginning from 1784. \(^\text{18}\) probably in order
to test the strength of the Banu Khalid after the resumption of their internal strife's. It was not until 1775 that Al-Hasa' was finally subdued by the Wahhabis and Barrak ibn 'Abd al-Muhsin, one of the Khalidi chiefs, was installed as governor (wali) of Al-Hasa' by 'Abd al-Aziz. It is also reported that while the Wahhabi forces under Sa'ud were engaged towards the Hijaz, Barrak tried to throw off the Wahhabi yoke but was rendered unsuccessful by Sa'ud. Barrak was able to escape and Najim ibn Duhaynim of the common people of Hufuf was ultimately appointed the governor of the place.

Meanwhile, the growing Wahhabi power was being viewed with concern by Sharif Ghalib of Mecca in the Hijaz. Sharif Ghalib was under the Ottomans and was a determined enemy of the Wahhabis. He had an interest in widening the breach between the Wahhabis and the Ottomans. Therefore, artfully and unremittingly, he spread reports of the Wahhabis being really infidels, in order to render abortive all attempts at negotiation with them. The Pashas of Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, who were nearest to the dreaded Wahhabis, were no less eager in representing under the blackest colours, the designs of these enemies of the Turkish faith. Very soon it became generally believed throughout that the Wahhabis were endeavouring to establish an entirely new religion, and that they treated all Turks with increased cruelty because they were Muslims.
The Wahhabis on their part displayed great intolerance, especially towards the Turks, whose morals they regarded of the logical soundness of Wahhabi doctrine, had recourse to calumnies and misrepresentation. Consequently each side virtually placed the other outside the place of Islam, and that the Wahhabis, who were the more warlike, declared the lives and the property of their antagonists to have been forfeited by religious infidelity and applied themselves to execute the sentence.\(^{22}\)

Hostilities between the Wahhabis and the Sharif of Mecca broke out in 1792 or 1793 and the war continued for several years in the form of desultory raids and counter-raids by the tribe's dependent upon either sides.\(^{23}\)

In the meantime the attacks of the Wahhabis on Kuwait had been affected between 1793 and 1795, and their raids on the borders of Iraq had started as soon as 1784. These raids increased steadily during the next ten years. Although these attacks were largely unsuccessful but "the ease with which the Wahhabis assembled a force, and the rapidity with which that force marched when assembled, astonished and confounded the slowly moving Ottoman."\(^{24}\) The first Turkish expedition against the Wahhabis was led by Ali Pasha in 1798 to Al-Hasa. There was no fight but a truce was arranged between the Pasha of Baghdad and the Wahhabis for six years.\(^{25}\)
But very soon in April 1801 a crowning humiliation at the hands of the Wahhabis under Sa‘ud overtook Sulayman Pasha of Baghdad. A force of about ten thousand men with at least six hundred camels broke into Karbala and made straight into the shrine of Imam Husayn. The town was given over to slaughter and pillage. In eight hours they wrecked and plundered to the best of their ability and then withdrew. The great dome over the tomb of Imam Husayn was demolished and the bejewelled covering of his grave carried off as spoil. This expedition proved to be a starting point of a general revulsion against the Wahhabis. It later on had disastrous consequences for the nascent Wahhabi state.

The next year in 1802 there was a deterioration in the relations between the Sa‘udis and the Sharif of Mecca. It culminated in the Wahhabis attacking and capturing Ta‘if in the Hijaz. They followed it up by marching on to Mecca which finally succumbed after two or three month’s defense. Sharif Ghalib withdrew to Jeddah with his troops. The Wahhabis meanwhile demolished all the domes built over the tombs of the heroes and heroines of Islam, and other sites connected with the Islamic legend. This lasted for several weeks and in the course of it every building offending against the standards of the Wahhabis was reduced to dust and rubble. Jeddah was also attacked by the Wahhabis but unsuccessfully. Sharif Ghalib accepted
Sa`udi sovereignty but later reoccupied Mecca after the return of Abd al-Aziz to Dir`iyya.

The same year i.e. 1803, `Abd al-Aziz was assassinated at Dir`iyya in the mosque of Turayf while offering prayers. The assassin was a Persian who professed to be a Darwish and was given all opportunity to satisfy his desire for learning something of the precepts and practices of the Wahhabis. Thus ended the period of `Abd al-Aziz, renowned for his humility, asceticism and justice, who carried out the precepts of the faith scrupulously and without favouritism.

**Sa`ud ibn `Abd al-Aziz (1803-14)**

`Abd al-Aziz was succeeded by his son Sa`ud as the new amir. In fact Sa`ud’s nomination was secured by Shaykh Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab himself as early as in 1787. Sa`ud was a seasoned military campaigner and his military career had already covered about thirty-five years by the time he ascended the throne of Dir`iyya.

Sa`ud’s military campaigns started as soon as he assumed the command of the state. His first major victory was in Hijaz when he reconquered Mecca in 1805. This time Sharif Ghalib himself was appointed the agent of Sa`ud in Mecca. Soon after he annexed Madina and
the whole of Hijaz came under the authority of the Wahhabis. Ghalib was made in charge of Hijaz with the orders to destroy all the domes and structures in Jeddah and Madina. Sa’ud also initiated certain reforms in the performance of the pilgrimage. He especially stopped the ancient tradition of the Mahmal which was brought from Egypt on pilgrimage as a rallying standard for their people. He also prohibited them from bringing drums, pipes and so on their pilgrimages. Sa’ud expelled all Turkish civilians and soldiers from Mecca and also expelled all suspicious persons from Madina. On Fridays the Khutba till now being delivered in the name of the Sultan of Turkey was stopped. Above all the effective loss of the Holy Cities was more than the Ottoman Sultan could countenance. Sultan Salim III, after failing to attack from Iraq after several attempts, ultimately appointed Muhammad Ali of Egypt as the viceroy of Hijaz in 1805 with orders to combat the Wahhabis. In 1811 with the intention of attacking the Wahhabis, Muhammad Ali dispatched a huge army under the command of his son Tusun Bey. Tusun occupied the port of Yanbo and attacked Madina the same year. But Tusun’s army was repulsed with heavy losses when it was attacked by a huge force of the Wahhabis. After large reinforcements having arrived from Egypt, Tusun again attacked Madina the next year in 1812. The city was occupied and plundered by Tusun’s army within a
fortnight of its attack. This victory was followed up by the occupation of Mecca, Jeddah and Ta‘if by the Egyptian army in 1813. The same year Muhammad Ali himself arrived in Jeddah on orders from Constantinople. Sharif Ghalib was arrested and deported to Constantinople. After achieving these victories the Egyptians returned home.\footnote{41}

In the meantime in Eastern Arabia the Wahhabis had attacked Zubayr and Basra in 1804, Najaf, Samawah and Zubayr again in 1806, and in 1810 a plundering expedition was carried out by ‘Abdullah b. Sa‘ud against Iraq when he penetrated to within a short distance of Baghdad. The same year an expedition against Syria was undertaken and it is said that about thirty-five villages were sacked within three days.\footnote{42}

In April 1814 Sa‘ud succumbed to fever in Dir‘iyya. His death was a serious setback for the Wahhabi cause for his was a steadying, if awe-inspiring personality.\footnote{43}

\textit{‘Abd Allah ibn Sa‘ud (1814-18)}

Sa‘ud was succeeded by his son ‘Abd Allah (r. 1814-1818). He was a man known for his wisdom and intelligence but lacked his father’s firmness and military abilities. The very beginning of his reign was marked by dissensions within his supporters. He faced internal opposition when he was challenged by his uncle ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad for the throne on the
grounds that being the son of Muhammad ibn Sa`ud he had prior claims, in the fight that followed he defeated his uncle. This was the chance that Muhammad Ali was waiting for. In 1815 Tusun Bey marched on Qasim, halfway between Madina and Dir`iyya. An agreement was reached between him and `Abd Allah wherein the latter renounced any claim to Mecca and Madina and Tusun returned to Madina. But Muhammad Ali refused to ratify the agreement since he wanted nothing less than total surrender.44 Thus the fight was to continue. Tusun was recalled to Cairo and Muhammad Ali sent another of his sons, Ibrahim Pasha, with a fresh force. Ibrahim Pasha landed in Hijaz towards the end of 1816 and slowly but steadily began moving towards the Sa`udi capital. He finally appeared before Dir`iyya in April 1818. The Wahhabi force surrendered after about five months' siege. `Abd Allah was arrested and sent to Cairo from where he was sent to Constantinople where, after being paraded through the streets, he was beheaded in the Square of St. Sophia along with some of his companions.46 In the meantime Dir`iyya was pillaged by Ibrahim Pasha along with all the adjoining territories. Ibrahim Pasha withdrew after nine months from Najd and Al-Hasa` leaving the area in the charge of the Banu Khalid who were the representatives of the Turkish government.47 Thus ended the first Sa`udi state.
REFERENCES:


2. Some scholars assert that he was born in 1691 A.D. while others hold that he was born in 1700 A.D. see T. P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, London 1885, p. 659 and A. M. A. Shustry, *Outlines of Islamic Culture*, (Bangalore 1945,) p. 28.

3. Amitav Mukherjee, *The Land Beyond the time*, (Delhi, 1981), p. 14


8. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

9. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*


11. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

12. Sheikh Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit*; p. 102


15. `Abd al-`Aziz was the son-in-law of `Uthman ibn Mu`ammar, the ruler of `Uyayna.

16. It was only after 28 years of intermittent fighting that the Wahhabis were able to finally annexe Riyadh.

17. See Ibn Bishr, op. cit., pp. 70, 71, 74 and 75.

18. For details of these raids see Ibn Bishr, op. cit., p. 83ff.

19. Ibn Bishr, op. cit., p. 112, reports that Barrak later on repented and joined the Wahhabi troops and was killed in one of their raids on Iraq.

20. Philby, op. cit., p. 87; Ibn Bishr, op. cit., p. 106, describes him as one of the populace of Al-Hasa.


23. For details see Amin Sa`id, Ta`rikh al-Dawlat al-Sa`udiyya (Beirut, 1964), 1, pp. 62-70.


26. Philby, op. cit., p. 93, states that it was Sa`ud himself who broke the spell of peace.

27. J. G. Lorimer, op. cit., p. 1060. For details of the sack of Karbala see especially Ta`rich Karbala wa Ha`ir al-Husayn, pp. 172-4; Amin Sa`id, op. cit., p. 62; Salah al-Din al-Mukhtar, Ta`rikh al-Mamlakat al-
\'Arabiyyat al-Sa\'udiyya, (Beirut, 1957), p. 73; J. B. Glubb, War in the Desert (London, 1960), puts the number of camels involved in the attack at 6,000.

28. In fact everything of value in the Town was taken off, Cf. Philby, op. cit., p.83. It is also said that more than 5,000 people were massacred in this expedition, cf. ja\'far Subhani, Ma\'al -Wahhabiyyin fi Khatathum wa\’ aqa\'idhum (Tehran, 1406A.H.), p. 16.


30. Philby, op. cit., p. 96. It is said that the assassin’s three sons had been massacred in Kerbala. He had pretended to convert to Wahhabism and had worked in the Wahhabi capital for a year waiting an opportunity to avenge his children. Cf. J.B. Glubb, op. cit., pp. 44-45

31. For a thorough account of the personality and administration of Abd al-Aziz see Salah al-Din Mukhtar, op. cit., pp. 77-85.

32. Hafiz Wahba, op. cit., p. 103.

33. His first independent military campaign had been in 1768, Cf. Philiby, op. cit., p. 63.

34. It may be recalled here that when Sa\’ud had conquered Mecca earlier he had left Sharif Mu\’in as his representative there. But soon after
wards Sharif Ghalib was able to take the city back again, Cf. Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

35. For Sa'ud's conquest of Hijaz see Amin Sa'id, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82.

36. For the history of the Mahmal, see F. Buhl, 'Mahmal' in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (shorter), pp. 313-14; also J. Jomier, *Le Mahmal et la Caravane Egyptienne des pelerines de la Mecque* (Cairo, 1953).


40. For a detailed account of Muhammad Ali's conquests on Arabia see Henry Dodwell, *The Founder or Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1967)

41. For the Egyptian conquest of Hejaz see Amin Sa'id, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-102. It is also recorded that there were some negotiations between the agents of Muhammad 'Ali and Sa'ud but the talks had no result, cf. Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

42. For details see Amin Sa'id, *op. cit.*, p. 83 ff.

43. A good assessment of Sa'ud's personality and his administration is found in Salah al-Din Mukhtar, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-42.

44. According to Philiby the terms of the agreement were: (a) to terminate hostilities; (b) to end Turkish intervention in the affairs of Najd; and (c) establish freedom of trade between Arabia and its neighbors, and to
assure the freedom of the pilgrimage for all concerned. cf. op. cit., p. 131.

45. Philby, op. cit., p. 132, states that Muhammad Ali duly confirmed the truce.


47. Ibid., p. 1091. For details of the Egyptian occupation see R. B. Winder, *Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 16-49s