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UMI
THE TRIBAL CONCEPT IN URBAN SAUDI ARABIA

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate

School of The Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

This study inquires into the consequences of modernization by examining the qabila concept and how it is expressed in the urban context. Specifically, it evaluates the persistence of the tribal (qaba‘il) concept in Saudi Arabia as manifested in the Hejaz among Nejdi qaba‘il groups. Because the qabilah has lost much of its traditional identity as a group of nomadic pastoralists in the modern Saudi State, this dissertation examines instead the social and symbolic manifestations of qaba‘il and their psychological self-definition.

In this study, I seek to answer two primary questions: How are we to define the qaba‘il (tribal) concept within the Saudi Arabian context? How is group identification maintained within the qaba‘il context? I focus on three qaba‘il that have migrated from Nejd to the Hejaz: the Beni Tamim, the Ateibah, and the Anazah. These qaba‘il faced groups of differing knowledge and customs and, ultimately, acquired an even stronger sense of group identity outside their place of origin. This research centers on the concept of “group identity”: that is, groups do not exist in isolation but in their interactions with one another. Qaba‘il boundaries in the urban setting are symbolic in that they distinguish and identify the group rather than physically demarcating a tribal territory—as used to be the case in a traditional, rural setting.
The findings of this study have shown the following: (1) *qaba’il* group identification, maintained through the enforcement of the ideology of the dominant society, Wahhabism, re-enforces *qaba’il* religious ideology (chapter 6); (2) the *qaba’il* concept in Saudi Arabia is best defined using an indigenous definition that refers to a cultural category identified contextually and situationally (chapter 7); and (3) through ascribed membership within *qaba’il* families, *qaba’il* values are maintained and inculcated (chapter 8). These findings indicate that understanding the *qaba’il* concept as a form of group identification is essential in understanding Saudi sociocultural dynamics. In light of the reality of tribes in Saudi Arabia, antiquated notions—that tribes are primitive, that they are nomadic, and that the term “tribe” is pejorative—need to be re-examined and reconceptualized to meet the changing contexts of tribal people throughout the world as they experience the processes of human mobility, forced relocation, and/or nationalism.

This dissertation makes significant contributions to the field of anthropology and the ethnography of Saudi Arabia and, a developing area of study, the Gulf region.
O mankind! We created
You from a single pair
Of a male and a female
And made you into
Nations and tribes, that
You may know each other

—Qur’an XLIX 13
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation evaluates the persistence of the tribal (qaba'il, sing. qabila) concept in Saudi Arabia as manifested in the Hejaz among Nejdi qaba'il groups. Because the qabila has lost much of its traditional identity as a political unit in the modern Saudi state, this dissertation examines instead the social and symbolic manifestations of qaba'il and their psychological self-definition.

In this dissertation, I use the term qabila to refer to a cultural category that is defined contextually and situationally in Saudi Arabia. Scholars studying other territories use the term “tribe” to refer to groups similar in behavior and character to qabila. Qabila elements in the Hejaz in Saudi Arabia are an integral part of Saudi society. This study inquires into the consequences of modernization by examining the qabila concept and how it is manifested in the urban context. I focus on three qaba'il that have migrated from Nejd to the Hejaz: the Beni Tamim, the Ateibah, and the Anazah. These qaba'il faced groups of differing knowledge and customs and, ultimately, acquired an even stronger sense of group identity outside their place of origin. This research centers on the concept of “group identity”—that is, groups do not exist in isolation, but in their
interactions with one another. *Qaba’il* boundaries in the urban setting are symbolic in that they distinguish and identify the group rather than physically demarcating a tribal territory—as used to be the case in a traditional, rural setting.

The concept of tribe has been disputed within the field of anthropology. Sahlin (1968), Colson (1968), Marx (1977), and Asad (1972), among others have concluded that the term “tribe” has been overused in such a variety of contexts throughout the world that the word is now meaningless as an analytical construct, without a standard and fixed definition, and should be abandoned. However, this presents a dilemma for anthropologists working in the Middle East who study groups referring to them as being tribal. Therefore, in studies conducted on the Middle East, it is incumbent upon scholars to find a meaningful way to use the term “tribe” to refer to groups that persist in being cohesive.

The Problem

In the course of modernization, the *qaba’il* of Arabia have undergone great changes in which they have lost much: their traditional territories, their massive herds of livestock, as well as their previous importance as socioeconomic and political units. Many *qaba’il* have left their traditional occupations and lands to move to urban centers. What has been retained is not individual *qaba’il* or tribes but a sense of “tribalism.” Tribesmen exhibit certain behaviors and a sense of self-identity, which sets them apart from all other sectors of Saudi society, as they are challenged in their new urban setting to maintain their group coherence.
**Research Questions**

My research examines the degree to which tribalism persists in modern Saudi society: How are we to define the *qaba 'il* (tribal) concept within the Saudi Arabian context? How is group identification maintained within the *qaba 'il* context? The response to these questions would answer the larger anthropological questions which were raised concerning the efficacy of the tribal concept to anthropologists and how present theory on group identification can explain the persistence of tribalism.

To address these questions, I draw on data collected over a span of twenty years during which I lived in or made extended visits to the Hejaz in Saudi Arabia. I stayed in Jeddah for three months in the summer of 1978, nine months in 1983, two years from 1984 through 1986, nine months in 1994, followed by return trips every summer in subsequent years until the present. During this time, I acquainted myself with the women who belonged to one of the three *qaba 'il* that I observed and became involved with the communities in which they interacted. The city of Jeddah served as the setting for my fieldwork, and the concentration of *qaba 'il* in Jeddah allowed easy access to approximately 143 individuals belonging to the Beni Tamim, Anazah, and Ateibah. The city of Jeddah was ideal for observing the *qaba 'il* members interacting with other groups as it is a heterogeneous society. During all of my fieldwork, I lived with my husband and children in a villa that was part of a *qaba 'il* family compound.
Theoretical Framework

To better understand the many dimensions to the *qaba'il*—or tribal—concept, as well as the different ways scholars have approached the topic of tribes and group identity, I review available theoretical frameworks under the following categories:

1. Modern Anthropological Definitions of Tribe
2. Ibn Khaldun's Model of Tribal Cohesion
3. Modern Scholars' Concepts of Identity

The meaning of "tribe" and "tribalism" has been a topic of debate among anthropologists beginning with Morton Fried's (1968) article "On the Concepts of Tribe and Tribal Society." While consensus among scholars has been to avoid the term "tribe" due to its ambiguous nature and overuse, anthropologists working in the Middle East have felt compelled to use it when referring to a group that persists in being cohesive. This is despite the fact they are no longer a "tribe" located in their original territory and living together in a "tribal" community. Some scholars in the Middle East consider the political character of tribes to be so important that they regard it the defining element, even though in a number of cases, tribes are no longer political entities with any real political power.

One Muslim scholar who brings unusual insight to the study of tribes and tribalism is the fifteenth-century, North African, Islamic historian, Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE). Ibn Khaldun's description of the psychology of tribal groups is relevant to understanding the persistence of tribalism in the Middle East. Ibn Khaldun is
most well known for his analysis of state formation, growth, prosperity, and eventual
destruction. His work is valuable for understanding the character of tribal psychology
which persists today as it did during Khaldun's time and continues to play an important
role in national governments.

More recently, anthropologists have been looking at group identification as a way
to understand the nature of groups, group dynamics, and group cohesion—a concept
close to tribalism. Modern scholars’ concept of identity has shifted from “Who am I?”—
that is, “What are my blood ties?”—to “Who do I think I am, and who do others think I
am?” While Freud and others have emphasized psychological identity, other scholars
have looked at the individual in relation to society. Barth’s (1969) work is important to
the study of identity, for it lends a new perspective to the study of identity by focusing on
what happens when different cultural groups come into contact. My dissertation focuses
on the changes in identity within tribes, questioning how and why tribes and tribalism
have not died out, even after the migration of tribesmen from rural to urban centers.

Working Definitions

The following definitions of Arabic words are intended to guide the reader
throughout this dissertation as I have used these words liberally rather than relying on
less accurate translations.

*Qabila* (pl: *qaba'il*) = patriclan or a member of a patriclan.

Tribe = a tribe is best understood as a cultural category that members and others apply in
a variety of situations and contexts and define situationally and contextually. A
tribe is an idea, a cultural construct, involving a set of principles that vary with the circumstances. Ideas concerning tribes have political, social, and symbolic manifestations.

Arab = a qabila member who inhabits the Arabian peninsula or a citizen of an Arab country whose mother tongue is Arabic.

Beni Tamim = one of many qaba'il whose original territorial lands were located in Nejd, the interior of Arabia.

Anazah = one of many qaba'il whose original territorial lands were located in Nejd, the interior of Arabia. The qabila to which the Saudi Arabian ruling family belongs.

Ateibah = one of many predominately camel pastoralist qaba'il whose original territorial lands were located from the interior to the western reaches of Arabia.

'Asabiyya = group feeling or solidarity.

Bedouin = English term for the Arabic word bedu.

Bedu = camel herding pastoralists of Arabia.

Pastoralist = an individual whose primary source of living is provided through raising, maintaining and selling livestock.

Nejd = the region located in central Arabia also referred to as “the interior.”

The Hejaz = the region located in western Arabia.

Dira = qaba'il territory.

Wahhabism = the fundamentalist form of Islamic theology practiced in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
Background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occupies four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, about 865,000 square miles. It is comprised of approximately 16.9 million citizens and its landscape is characterized by mountain ranges, dry riverbeds, deserts with occasional oases, and urban centers. Saudi Arabia is a monarchy ruled by a king with assistance from an appointed Council of Ministers. All Saudi Arabians have the right of direct petition to the monarch, the regional governors, or other government officials. Saudi Arabia’s official religion is Islam which forms the basis of the nation’s legal system.

There are two religious holidays, \textit{Eid Al-Fitr}, celebrating the breaking of the annual \textit{Ramadan} fast, and \textit{Eid Al-Adha}, celebrating the pilgrimage to Mecca. Saudi Arabia follows the Islamic calendar which is based on lunar cycles. The Islamic year is 354 days long, and Fridays are reserved as the weekly day of rest and worship.

Saudi Arabia is a tribal State ruled by a royal house organized as a tribe, in this case, the Anazah tribe of Ibn Saud (Khuri 1980). Its organization is based upon the foundation laid by Ibn Saud. The house of Saud is comprised of the patrilineal descendants of Ibn Saud and his brothers. Princes in the Royal House can become part of important sub-groups which gain ministerial office while other ministries are allocated to members of the Shaiykh family (Davis 1987: 265). Tribes in Saudi Arabia are a source of the Saudi value system which includes kin-related political behavior and social solidarity.
In the Arabian peninsula, one can detect not only a physical border between the interior (Nejd) of the peninsula and the coastal land (the Hejaz) but also an ethnic border. Ethnically, Nejd has maintained a relatively homogenous population while the Hejaz has always been heterogeneous. The Arab population in the Hejaz divides itself into two categories: (1) the indigenous people of Arabia who belong to a patriclan (qabila) and (2) those whose descent is unknown.

The indigenous people of Saudi Arabia who belong to one of many qaba' il have maintained their own identity, separate from that of the other Arabian citizens, and consider themselves the true sons of the country. Before the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Beni Tamim, the Ateibah, the Anazah, and other qaba' il in Arabia had territories throughout the peninsula. With the 1953 royal decree, their territories were taken away, and tribal control of territorial grazing and migration was diminished. Tribal-owned lands became public rangelands open to anyone wishing to use them regardless of tribal affiliation. Additionally, the loss of tribal lands reduced the effectiveness of qaba' il as a political unit. Their political power eroded with the establishment of government offices which administered according to localities instead of tribal divisions. This impeded any collective action tribal members could take.

As a result of these political-economic transformations, qaba' il membership is now perceived by Saudi society solely as a social category characterized by the persistence of tribal identification (Cole 1981: 145). Therefore, as of the 1950s, qaba' il maintained their identity, not through a physical locale, but through customs and
traditions. Cole asserts a position supported by my fieldwork, that people who belong to a *qabila* share more common characteristics with people from other *qaba’il* in terms of behavior and social identity than they do with people from other, non-*qabila*, sectors of Saudi Arabian society.

Tribalism has tended to replace tribes as such in the basic fabric of Saudi social life. . . . the fact of tribal origin still conditions aspects of behavior in the emerging national society—e.g., type of work one will follow, whom one can marry—and it is a way of categorizing people socially. What is significant now, however, is to say that one is of tribal origin rather than from any one particular tribe. (Cole 1981: 145)

Historically, *qaba’il* in the Arabian peninsula have been engaged in traditional forms of economic subsistence activities, both pastoralism and agriculture. The pastoralists who owned large herds of camel, sheep, and goats held the greatest wealth of the nation. This economic role has since been overshadowed by the wealth derived from oil. Those tribesmen who still follow the pastoralist way of life are far from being incorporated in the modern economy since they continue to practice subsistence-based herding. Despite their animal wealth, this has relegated tribal pastoralists to a marginal position in the Saudi economy (Ibrahim & Cole 1978: 4). With the coming of oil, those *qaba’il* in Arabia who relied on date farming and other agricultural pursuits also underwent a dramatic change in their way of life. Like pastoralist *qaba’il*, agriculturalist *qaba’il*, too, migrated to major cities and had to seek out other forms of livelihood.

In the broadest sense, a *qabili* (sing. tribesman) has no foreign blood and derives from a *qabili* mother and father. A *qabili* is patrilineally defined. To be a *qaba’il* member, one must be born into it since it is an ascribed trait: a *qaba’il* lineage must be
pure and traceable back to a known ancestor. Qabili recognize each other through family names, such as Al-Harbi, Al-Rasheed, Al-Saud. To be accepted, a qabili must be from a known group from within the Kingdom.

Qaba’il groups comprise the essence of the term “Arab.” “Arab” was first applied to the nomadic bedouin pastoralists (who were considered to belong to a qabila) as well as the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula. “Arab” has also been used to refer to what is known as the ethnic “racial” group which came from this area. Additionally, in the seventh century, when the qaba’il armies left the Arabian peninsula to spread the word of Islam, they took with them not only their faith, which was monotheistic, but also their language, culture, and value system. As they expanded throughout North Africa and the Fertile Crescent, they introduced Islam to the people of those countries who adopted the qaba’il language and customs. Consequently, “Arab” now means any of those people who inherited the language and customs of the qaba’il. The term “Arab” also connotes certain qaba’il values, particularly those ancient ones transmitted through tales of Arab valor. Among these are ḏasabiyya (fierce loyalty to one’s kind), muruwwa, (bravery), compassion and consideration for others as well as generosity and hospitality.

The non-qaba’il Arab groups are recognized by the many nationalities across the Arab world from which the groups originated. Of these groups, some live in the Kingdom temporarily on work contracts, others are newcomers, while others have lived there for generations and are Saudi nationals. These Arab communities have also brought with them traditions and customs from their homelands, most notably their cuisine and the school of Islam that they follow. Although they may have lived for many
generations in the Kingdom, one indicator that may separate them from the indigenous Saudi population is their family name. For instance, Al-Masri (the Egyptian), Al-Maghrebi (the Moroccan) or even Ba’arma where the “Ba” prefix is commonly part of a Yemeni name.

Another sector of Saudi society includes al-frangi or Western non-Muslims. These groups are usually Europeans and Americans in Saudi Arabia on corporate contracts. Besides the Europeans and Americans, there are many non-Arab Moslem populations that have lived in the Hejaz for hundreds of years coming for pilgrimage or work or fleeing war in their own country. These non-Arab groups settled in one of the ethnic quarters in Mekkah or in Jeddah. Mekkah’s history of ethnic group settlements is longer than that of Jeddah. In fact, the areas where these groups settled are named for them, such as Mesfala, the Bangladeshi quarter, Souk al-Lail, the Jawi souk, or Tandabawy, the African quarter. In Jeddah, which is more recently developed, the incoming populations live in pockets of ethnic groups that continue to maintain their own identity, traditions, and customs. This tendency to cluster in discrete groupings is a phenomenon prevalent in many areas of the Middle East and has been referred to by scholar Coon as representing a human mosaic in which each ethnic group can be symbolized by a single ceramic tile (Coon 1951: 8).

My dissertation’s focus on the three qaba’il will help distinguish, not only these groups and the ways they have maintained their qaba’il identity, but also their interrelationships with other neighboring ethnic groups among whom they live and with
them they interact. Ultimately, it is noteworthy that the *qaba 'il* are not isolated, living within distinct physical borders, but integrated in a dynamic, multi-ethnic, Arabian society.

**Organization of the Study**

The first three chapters, Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology, are intended to orient the reader. Chapters four and five offer physical and historical background information about the land and its people. The next three chapters, six through eight, look at the different ways that the *qabila* concept manifests itself. Finally, Chapter Nine drafts the concluding remarks of the dissertation.

Chapter One, which is the current chapter, introduces the research problem, the focus of the study, the background for the study, and the theoretical frameworks. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature. Chapter Three, the Methodology, presents the methods used, the setting, and time.

Chapter Four, The Physical Background, provides the physical context for the study since the current location of the *qaba 'il* in the Hejaz is central to my discussion. In this chapter, I review the major regions, including the coastline, the desert, and the city, that have been home to *qaba 'il*. Chapter Five discusses the historical significance of Saudi Arabia which has been home to urban-based civilizations and pastoral nomads as well as the birthplace of Islam. The chapter presents the history of the Ottoman invasion of parts of Arabia and the role of Wahhabism and tribes in shaping the modern Saudi State and society.
Chapter Six discusses Muslim beliefs and practices of the *qaba'il* community. Central to the *qaba'il* worldview is the Wahhabi fundamentalist theology which is the form of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia. The place of religion is paramount in Saudi Arabia as *qaba'il* members are strict Wahhabists.

Chapter Seven examines the *qabila* in terms of its sociopolitical organization, its traditional models, its political leadership and its local government. It is important how *qabili* situate themselves in relation to others and how they perceive themselves in society—i.e., the chapter explores *qabila* as a cultural category that reinforces their sense of identity.

Chapter Eight covers the *qaba'il* family and kinship ties. It examines how *qaba'il* values are inculcated in the home. This chapter is important to a study of the *qaba'il* concept because it is within the extended family that values are formed and reinforced.

Chapter Nine finalizes the dissertation with concluding remarks. There, I discuss the applications of my study to the larger anthropological questions, which were raised concerning the efficacy of the tribal concept to anthropologists, and how present theory on group identification can explain the persistence of tribalism. Additionally, within this framework, I also discuss the limitations of such applications. Finally, I conclude with some suggestions for future research on the topics of tribalism and group identity.
Endnotes

1 One group from Yemen that has lived in the Hejaz is known as the Hawdrawmi. The Hawdrawmi have maintained long-term ties in the Hejaz by settling there as businessmen and traders and are most active in areas of commerce.

2 To some degree, they also preserve their traditional dress which emphasizes their separateness as clearly distinct peoples although their clothing is necessarily modified by Muslim sensibilities.

3 A major drawback to Coon’s metaphor is that it cannot explain interactions between groups. The model, which is an attempt to apply functionalist theory to the Middle East, has been criticized for this shortcoming. Dale Eickelman asserts, although the model is useful (Eickelman 1989: 49) “for conveying some of the bare geographical and ethnographic facts concerning the Middle East modes of livelihood, physical characteristics of the population, religious and linguistic groupings and political organization... [like structural functionalism] it is less adequate in explaining the interrelations among these elements or their known historical transformations.” Another critic, anthropologist Daniel Bates, finds the metaphor problematic because (Bates 1983: 84), “it offers little insight into the historical processes that underlie the formation of group identities, how these change over time, and, more important, how people use them to gain access to resources and power.” Although this metaphor has been dropped by anthropologists, it is still used by other social scientists.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL BASES OF A PROBLEM

As stated in the previous chapter (Chapter One), this dissertation seeks to answer two primary theoretical questions: How are we to define the qaba'il (tribal) concept within the Saudi Arabian context? How is group identification maintained within the qaba'il context? The larger anthropological questions concerning the efficacy of the tribal concept to anthropologists and how present theory on group identification can explain the persistence of tribalism provide answers to these questions. I evaluate these questions through a study of the culture of three Nejdi qaba'il who reside in the Hejaz, the western region of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, in this literature review, I discuss the body of literature from three sources relevant to the dissertation: anthropological definitions of tribes, the theoretical literature on group identification, and a historical study of tribalism.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To better understand the many dimensions to the qaba’il—or tribal—concept, as well as the different ways that scholars have approached the topic of tribes and group identity, I will review available theoretical frameworks under the following categories:

(1) Definitions of Tribe

(2) Modern Scholars’ Concepts of Identity

(3) Ibn Khaldun’s Model of Tribal Cohesion

Modern Definitions of Tribe

The meaning of “tribe” and “tribalism” has engendered much debate among scholars. Anthropologists have been discussing the possible meanings for tribe since Morton Fried first opened the subject with his seminal article “On the Concepts of Tribe and Tribal Society” (Fried 1968; 1975). Since then, scholars have asked: “Are tribes biologically based (Fried 1968: 11)?” or “the products of states (Sahlin 1968)?” or “political groups defined by territory (Evans-Pritchard 1969)?” or “constructions of reality in the minds of ‘tribal’ members (Tapper 1990: 56)?” Leach (1954) on the other hand, changed the question to “Do tribes exist?” In his view, “the ethnographer has often only managed to discern the existence of a tribe because he took it as axiomatic that this kind of cultural entity must exist.” Sahlin’s (1968) literature review of tribal societies revealed such enormous variety in culture, religion, social organization, and politics that he argued the term is without value. Others feel that the overuse of “tribe” has stripped the meaning of any analytical value and should be abandoned (Colson 1968: 16).
201; Marx 1977: 359). Others yet, such as Asad (1972), would drop the term on political grounds. According to Asad, it was a means for colonial governments to manipulate social groups in order to dominate them.

However, many anthropologists working in the Middle East feel compelled to use the term “tribal.” This is because their work is with a “tribal” group, a group who persists in being cohesive though no longer traditionally a “tribe.” Bassam Tibi (1990: 138) has commented, “anthropologists who work in the Middle East are familiar with people...who claim tribal origin...who are proud of their tribal heritage...furthermore, in the Arab context, the adjective tribal does not bear the negative connotation it does in...Africa.” Tapper (1990: 50) also uses the term but asserts that for “tribe” to have any usefulness, researchers need to find an analytic terminology which takes into account the indigenous categories and applies widely enough to be useful for comparison purposes (Tapper 1990: 50).

There are several notions of tribes which have been popularly used by anthropologists that become problematic when applying them to a Middle Eastern context (Richard Tapper 1990: 49-56). The first roughly equates tribe with primitive society and was applied to pre-colonial communities in the world. This application loses validity in the Middle East where tribes have never been isolated primitive groups, but have coexisted with, and even determined, the formation of states (p. 50). Problems also exist with the second idea that tribes were usually thought to share common cultural-linguistic features. None of the major Middle-Eastern cultural groupings, such as the Arabs, Persians, Turks, or Berbers can be called tribes. According to Tapper, one could
not call these people tribal on grounds of scale, complexity, and lack of union. However, the term is commonly used for major subdivisions of these same groups (p. 52). Instead of identifying these groups according to cultural and linguistic commonalities, the main criterion for identifying tribal Middle Eastern groups has been based upon patrilineal descent. Among the better-known Arabian tribes with extensive genealogies that fit this categorization are the Rwala (Lancaster 1981) and al-Murrah (Cole 1975).

Another notion strongly associated with tribes in the Middle East is that of tribal political structure (Marx 1977: 343-345; Tapper 1990: 54). The political character of tribes is considered by some scholars to be so important that they regard it the defining element. For example, according to Southall (1970: 29), “no tribal society which has lost its political autonomy can continue to be a tribal society in the fullest sense.” Emmanuel Marx (1977: 358), however, found this to be untrue based upon his research with nomadic bedouin in the Negev. According to his analysis, tribes here are “units of subsistence” comprised of thousands of members which do not establish a corporate polity or possess institutionalized leadership. The bedouin he observed range over an “area of subsistence” that is exploited economically, not a territory which would suggest an area under their control. Membership in a descent group affords the pastoralist rights to pasture and water with other members of the tribe (pp. 358–359). Marx proved that in the Middle East tribes can exist without political institutions.

Another notion that needs correction is the idea that tribes are generally nomadic pastoralists (Tapper 1983b: 8; Beck 1986: 16). Although the variable terrain of the Middle East is well suited to pastoralism, with large arid and semi-arid areas used for
seasonal grazing, pastoralism is not necessarily the norm for all tribal people. According to Beck (1986: 16) in a number of countries such as Yemen and Algeria, there are substantial portions of the population with tribal groupings that do not rely on nomadic pastoralism as a way of life. Also, there are nomadic pastoralists in Iran and elsewhere with no historical or current tribal associations.

Another problem with the use of tribe is that, due to the inherent vagueness of the indigenous categories, attempts to translate the meaning of tribe have often fallen short (Tapper 1983b; 1990: 56; Beck 1990: 188). Tapper (1990: 56) asserts that Middle Eastern indigenous categories such as ta 'ifa, and il have all been translated as “tribe,” but are no more specific than “family” or “group.” Even in the segmentary terminology, “individual terms are ambiguous, not merely about level, but also in their connotations of functions or facets of identity—economic, political, kinship, and cultural. As with equivalents in English practice, the ambiguity of the terms and the flexibility of the system are of the essence in everyday negotiations of meaning and significance.” Beck (1990: 188) raises a similar issue concerning attempts by specialists at translations of Qashqa’i indigenous terms which are not accurate. According to Beck (1990: 188) “they...use a variety of terms to depict their social, territorial, and political groups (including oba, bunku or bailu, tireh, tayefeh, and il) all of which, English-speaking scholars and others have translated as ‘tribe.’ These terms represent (among other things) the hierarchy of sociopolitical groups found among the Qashqa’i...some of the terms
were interchangeable in local usage, and they varied according to context, circumstance, speaker, and audience. The English word ‘tribe’ cannot possibly represent adequately the subtleties and ambiguities involved.”

As shown above, it is difficult to establish a terminology which will adequately cover the varied environments and conditions of tribal societies. One possible means, used by Beck and Tapper, is to suggest a number of distinctions which may be applied to tribes or tribal society within the Middle East; although none should be considered the principle defining feature, nor should all of the features grouped together be considered to constitute a tribe.

Lois Beck’s notion of tribe comes the closest to meeting the definition for describing the qaba’il concept in an urban setting. According to Beck, “a tribe is best understood as a cultural category that tribal people and others apply in a variety of situations and contexts and define situationally and contextually. A tribe is an idea, a cultural construct, involving a set of principles that vary with the circumstances. Ideas concerning tribes have political, social, and symbolic manifestations” (Beck 1990: 188).

The issues in deriving a definition for tribe, which have been raised in the above discussion, cannot be easily dismissed. Clearly, what constitutes a tribe is chameleon-like in character and changes within each environment and context, thus making it difficult to come up with a universal definition. For my own purposes, I borrow from Beck’s approach to defining tribe, which is psychological in nature, as well as situational and contextual. It comes closest to describing the cultural category of qabila as used in my dissertation.
More recently, anthropologists have looked at group identification as a way to understand the nature of groups, group dynamics, and group cohesion, a concept close to tribalism. In the following section, I review the different ways that scholars have approached the concept of identity in order to understand and explain the persistence of tribes in the modern urban setting of the Hejaz and to see whether the new research on identity will help answer how tribes in the Hejaz have persisted.

Modern Scholars' Concepts of Identity

In this section, I examine the body of literature on identity and group identification and identify different approaches used by scholars to analyze the concept. Some scholars have looked at identity in terms of a psychological perspective, others in terms of identity categories, and yet others in terms of cultural boundaries. This review will demonstrate the linkages between these approaches as scholars attempted to refine their theories in order to answer the questions: What is identity? Why is group identity maintained? Each approach to group identification has been refined over time, but as illustrated in the existing literature, there remain areas for further refinement.

Early scholarship on the study of identity has been disjointed and sporadic while most of the important anthropological research has taken place later in the 20th century. My purpose here is to summarize and link the primary work in this area of study. There have been contributions to this field from a number of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, education, and anthropology.
According to Anya P. Royce (IU lecture, 2000), concerning the concept of identity, the question asked by social scientists has shifted in recent years from “Who am I?”—that is, what are my blood ties?—to who do I think I am, and who do others think I am? In other words, the concept of identity has come to rely less on blood ties and more on character and personality.

In the field of psychology, Sigmund Freud answered the question of identity by emphasizing its psychosocial character. When he addressed the Society of B’nai Brith in 1926, he referred to his Jewishness as an “inner identity” in which he shared a “common mental construction” with other Jews (Erikson 1968: 21). While Freud only referred to identity in a fleeting manner, another important figure in the field of psychology, Eric Erikson, moved toward a more profound understanding of identity. In *Identity and the Life Cycle,* Erikson (1959: 109) discusses the complexities of defining identity. Identity can connote a number of meanings for the individual such as (1) a sense of individual identity, (2) a continuity of personal character, or (3) a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group’s ideals and identity. Erikson (1968: 16-17) further elaborated that it was possible to suffer a loss of one’s identity which could result in confusion and impairment of the central ego. He used the term “identity crisis” to refer this mental state which he observed in soldiers who were suffering from the loss of their sense of self and personal history.

The emphasis on identity as a social definition of “Who am I?” continued in the field of sociology. Modern sociologists such as Peter Berger (1963: 98, 100) defined identity as being socially ascribed since it is through social interaction that individuals
maintain their identity. Berger also noted that there was a difference in the way identities were assigned in modern societies versus more traditional settings. In modern environments, an individual's identity was "uncertain and in flux," whereupon in more traditional locales, it was definite and permanent (p. 48).

In the field of anthropology, one of the earliest works on identity was by A. L. Kroeber (1923) and Ralf Linton (1936). They did not fully define identity but discussed the individual in terms of personality. According to Kroeber, the individual was born a blank slate and became a sum of life's experiences and societal influences. Therefore, one's identity was conferred by others in society. Linton dwelled upon the influence of culture on personality; for him, the personality of each individual developed and functioned as a result of interaction with that culture.

It was not until the 1950s that British anthropologists began to examine the concept of identity in relationship to tribalism. Those anthropologists who conducted fieldwork in Africa were exploring tribalism in terms of identity categories. Max Gluckman, in *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand* (1958), explored the relationship between the Zulus and the British colonialists. Gluckman noted the importance of context in influencing the choice of identities which are used by the Zulus in their interactions with the British. He also emphasized the identity of the colonialists, the dominant group of the two, by analyzing the contexts in which they interacted with the Zulus and studying the situations in which they distanced themselves. By focusing on interactions of the groups and the importance of context, Gluckman foreshadowed Barth's work on boundary maintenance between groups.
Clyde Mitchell, in *The Kalela Dance* (1956), studied tribal dance on the Copperbelt of North Rhodesia and noted the changing identity of African tribesmen in response to urbanization. He addressed the problem of how some scholars thought that with the migration of tribesmen to urban centers, tribalism would die out since it was a rural phenomenon (1956: 30). Mitchell found, however, that migrants maintained tribal identification through tribal dance even though it was performed in a modified version with urban elements incorporated. Mitchell's study shows that since tribal identities persist among migrants, tribalism was not exclusively a rural phenomenon. He concluded, in a response reminiscent of Erickson's explanation for identity crisis, that tribalism reinforced a sense of identity when migrants have been uprooted and disconnected from family members left behind in rural villages (Mitchell 1956: 44).

In a follow-up study of Mitchell's work, A. L. Epstein, in *Ethos and Identity* (1978), asserts that there are two ways for an individual to view his or her “tribalism,” either through an external perspective or an internal perspective (p. 7). Epstein, who cites Erickson, takes a psychological view of identity, stating that identity formation is a lifelong endeavor that is shaped by social factors as well as psychological ones. He further suggests that the individual draws upon a cognitive map of the urban landscape in which he or she pools together and classifies other groups as well as her own. For Epstein, there are many types of identities from which tribesmen may draw upon (p. 101). Both Mitchell and Epstein focused upon how changing the context in which the group found itself allowed for shifting identities.
Each of the above anthropologists focused upon context to situate the relationship of one group to another. In doing so, they examined identity categories and the reasons that individuals chose one category over the other, whether psychological, political, or economic. As such, they are a precursor to Barth’s boundary approach to identity. However, in part because these studies are a byproduct of colonial anthropology, the anthropologists failed to take the next step forward and move beyond the analysis of culture content.

Frederick Barth (1969) lent a new perspective to the study of identification by shifting the discussion from the content of ‘tribe,’ or ethnic identity, to the boundaries that mark the areas of groups coming into contact. This approach gave anthropologists a new method for studying group identification. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (1969), he undertook the “problems of poly-ethnic organization.” Barth had studied interaction and identity among the Swat Pathans located in Pakistan and bordering Afghanistan. This group needed to be flexible in redefining themselves because of shifting social and political environments. In his introduction, Barth wrote about the role of interaction and contact in ethnic identity: “ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance but are quite to the contrary, often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built. Interaction in such social systems does not lead to its liquidation through change and acculturation; cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence (1969: 9-10).
Essentially, group identity does not naturally persist but must be maintained in a deliberate manner by members who demarcate their boundaries from other groups in a way that differentiates them. Barth suggests this can be understood by looking at groups as organizational types whereby membership is based upon self-ascription and ascription by others. Therefore, the area of focus becomes the boundary between groups and the categories they recognize. Accordingly, groups do not exist in isolation but “only in contrast to other such groups... the boundary does not bound something off from nothingness, but rather it distinguishes” (Barth 1969: 14-15).

Among those who followed Barth’s boundary theory and expanded on it is Judith Okely. In *The Traveller-Gypsies* (1983), Okely explored the ways that Gypsies in Great Britain maintained their distinctive identity when pressured by the dominant non-Gypsy society to assimilate. Okely found one way Gypsies remained separate and different was through pollution beliefs concerning the body, cleanliness, space, and animals that express and reinforce a symbolic boundary between themselves and others. There were some Gypsy cultural traits, however, which were shared with the greater dominant population. Because of such cultural overlap, Okely stressed the importance that “Gypsies’ beliefs cannot be seen independently of those of the larger society... because they create and express symbolic boundaries between the minority and majority” (p. 78). Therefore, it is important to examine any boundary, whether symbolic or not, from two perspectives, that of the insider and the outsider (see Figure 1 below).
Sandra Wallman (1978; 1986) took Barth’s notion of boundary maintenance and tried to answer why ethnic identity persisted more in some contexts than others. Wallman (1986) based her question on two populations in different areas of London. Although the population mix was similar for the two communities, one area was racially more polarized than the other. To this end, she added more contexts in which these boundaries were made more visible. Among the variables she included in her studies were economic factors, such as types of employment and occupation patterns, and social factors such as types of housing. Through such analyses, Wallman sought the contexts for ethnic boundaries. In her article, “The Boundaries of Race: Processes of Ethnicity in England” (1978), Wallman discussed how social boundaries have not only two different sides but two different meanings. She described how a social boundary was both an interface element, which marks a change in what is happening and delineates between inside and outside, and an identity element, which marks the significance given to the change and shows the relation of the participant to it; i.e., showing the differences between “us” and “them” (p. 207). Therefore, Wallman expanded and explicated Barth’s boundary concept by adding a further dimension to the importance of delineating clearly those elements that belong to the insider and outsider. (see Figure 1 below)
We identify 'us' in opposition to 'them'. We use the boundary for our purposes, according to our need(s) at this time/in this context.

The border around the familiar, the normal, the unproblematic.

They identify themselves by contrast to the rest of us. They use the boundary for their purposes.

The beginning of another system. Performance, appearance, activity, social or symbolic structure is different.

**Figure 1.** A four-part social boundary model (Adapted from Wallman 1978: 207)

Barth and Wallman, however, have been criticized for not paying attention to how boundaries are absorbed. According to Donnan and Wilson (1999: 25), Barth paid too much attention to one side, that of internal identification, rather than the other, that of external constraint. Other scholars, such as Jenkins (1997: 23), were concerned with making a clear distinction between group identification and social categorization. Group identification transpired from within while social categorization took place from outside the boundary and across it. Donnan and Wilson (1999: 25) expressed concern that if this
distinction was not made, then it was easy to ignore power relationships—subordination and domination—between the groups. Dominant groups were in a stronger position to make others adhere to their categorizations.

Edward Spicer (1962; 1971) also used Barth’s approach on maintaining group identification. When he studied the Yaqui of Mexico and Arizona, he took Barth’s notion of interaction further and delineated three areas that were essential for group identification to persist: language, political organization, and shared moral values. Spicer focused on the history and posited a relationship between human beings and their cultural artifacts. According to his theory, motivation to maintain group identity was tied to people’s cumulative image in symbols meaningful to those who identified with a particular historical experience (Royce 1982: 45).

Spicer found that Barth’s emphasis upon the boundary between groups instead of the cultural content within them was problematic for his study. By disregarding the cultural content of a group, Barth had excluded from study the symbolic images and historic experiences that are so meaningful in group identification formation and maintenance. According to Pandian (1985: 44-45), the use of such symbols are of paramount importance since they facilitate the “conceptualization of group heritage” and serve as an anchor for identity systems. Therefore, Spicer’s contribution of including these symbols within his analysis presents a useful model for consideration.

As shown above, much precedence exists for a boundary maintenance approach to the study of group identification. Each of the above approaches, the psychological perspective, identity categories and cultural boundaries enhances our understanding of
group identification. However, none of the above perspectives suffices by itself for a complete understanding of the processes involved. Therefore, this dissertation relies on various parts of the above mentioned works done on boundary maintenance to explain "how is group identification maintained within the qaba 'il context." Because of their approaches to group identification and social categorization from the perspective of insiders and outsiders respectively, I have drawn most heavily upon a combination of works by Okely and Wallman. I have chosen their theories because they were compatible in addressing questions concerning group identification.

Ibn Khaldun's Model of Tribal Cohesion

Ibn Khaldun presents another theoretical framework which seeks to understand group dynamics based upon a model of cyclical dynastic change as discussed in the *Muqaddimah* (tr. Rosenthal, 1989). Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE) was a fifteenth-century, North African, Islamic historian whose multi-volume work some scholars consider to be the first major anthropological study (Honigman 1976: 49). Khaldun's work is valuable for understanding the character of tribal psychology, which persists today as it did during Khaldun's time, and continues to play an important role in national governments.

Ibn Khaldun's description of the psychology of tribal groups is relevant for understanding the qaba 'il concept today. Ibn Khaldun is most well known for his analysis of state formation, growth, prosperity, and eventual destruction. In the *Muqaddimah* (Book One of *Kitab al-'Ibar, the Books of Exemplars*), he presented a
treatise on world history in which he sought to discover the laws of social life in what he termed 'ilm al-'umran (science of civilization). Ibn Khaldun based his description on several assumptions concerning human nature, thus making him one of the first historians to apply a psychological dimension to his sociopolitical analysis. Khaldun’s model indicates a pattern of expansion, conquest, and collapse that has been the means for establishing new political entities throughout the Middle East. However in the 20th-century, states became stabilized as existing dynasties integrated into the international system of modern nation states.

Ibn Khaldun asserts that in order for civilization to prosper there must be 'umran. According to the Hans Wehr Arabic dictionary (1976), 'umran is derived from the Arabic root verb 'amr, meaning “to thrive, prosper, flourish; to be or become inhabited, peopled, populated, civilized, cultivated.” Therefore, 'umran, depending on the context, may signify sedentary life, the process of civilizing, or the socialization of people. For Rosenthal (1989: xi), in his translation of the Muqaddimah, the term amr means “to populate.” As an area becomes populated, 'umran, or the process of civilizing, occurs (ibid.).

Ibn Khaldun also believed that for a group to succeed there must be an effective leader designated from among themselves. This leader, Khaldun argued, could rule through injunctions or “with the help of a group feeling that enables him to force the others to follow him” (ibid.). Strong leadership, in Ibn Khaldun’s view, is part of 'umran and thus essential to human existence.
The most dynamic human quality required in the development of a civilization is 'asabiyya, group solidarity, a word derived from the Arabic root verb 'asb, to bind, and used to mean "clannishness" or "tribal solidarity." For Ibn Khaldun, 'asabiyya signifies the fundamental bond of society and the basic motivating force in human history (Gabrieli 1978: 681); it is a "group feeling [that] produces the ability to defend oneself, to offer opposition, to protect oneself, and to press one's claims. Whoever loses it is too weak to do any of these things" (Rosenthal 1989: 98). An earlier use of the word 'asabiyya is found in a hadith (collections of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) where it has a negative connotation. When the prophet was asked, "Does 'asabiye mean loving one's people?" he replied, "No, 'asabiyya means helping one's people in unjust actions" (Lacoste 1984: 103).

For Ibn Khaldun, 'asabiyya, tribal bonding, or the sentiment of group solidarity, results primarily from kinship, blood ties, and common descent. For modern-day tribesmen, kinship ties and purity of lineage are still very important, and group cohesion continues to be perpetuated in this way. The relevance of Ibn Khaldun to understanding Saudi tribal society comes from his psychological and social analysis of the importance of 'asabiyya among tribal people. 'Asabiyya is a characteristic which Khaldun felt was so central to tribal identity, that once it was lost, a tribesman was a tribesman no longer.

The strongest and most intense form of solidarity are an individual's silat al-rahim, or blood ties. "Respect for blood ties is something natural among men...it leads to affection for one's relations and blood relatives...[and the feeling that] no harm ought to befall them or any destruction come upon them" (Rosenthal 1989: 98). Furthermore, if
the kin relationship between individuals is close, then "it leads to close contact and unity, the ties are obvious and clearly require the existence of solidarity without any outside prodding" (ibid.). 'Asabiyya is further reinforced by strong emotions such as shame which compels the individual to intervene and protect his relatives. As all group characteristics, 'asabiyya, too, leads to exclusion and a sense of superiority as well as a desire for psychological dominance over other groups (Rosenthal 1989: 108).

Ibn Khaldun based his study of 'umran on his observations of the tribes of North Africa and Arabia which had undergone a volatile period of political upheaval during his lifetime. Scholar Thomas Barfield (1990: 155-156; see also C. Lindholm 1989: 334-355), compared tribal leadership in the Middle East with that in inner Asia and has described the tribal structures of this time as "kinship...groups that acted in concert to organize economic production, preserve internal political order, and defend the group against outsiders. Relationships among people and groups were mapped through social space rather than geographic territory. Political units and the territories they occupied existed primarily as products of social relations." Barfield also pointed out that groups without tribal affiliation were organized in a converse fashion, "with social groups defining themselves in terms of a common residence, system of cultural beliefs, or political affiliation" (ibid.). Tribal groups included not only nomadic pastoralists but also sedentary people such as Berbers who lived in marginal mountains and desert areas.
Ibn Khaldun thought the camel pastoralists (bedu), possessed the strongest sense of group cohesion. Only people held together by an intense bond of solidarity could survive the hardship of desert life and survive nomadic pastoralism (Rosenthal 1989: 97). Once they leave this rugged environment and become sedentary, their sense of 'asabiyya disappears, and they lose their cohesion (ibid.).

The unity of the tribe was strongest when ties were based upon common descent and the belief of their purity of lineage. According to Ibn Khaldun (Rosenthal 1989: 99), the camel bedu kept their lineage pure and untainted through the centuries by living deep in the desert, isolated from other populations. Other bedu, who engaged in semi-nomadic pastoralism and lived near fertile land, intermarried with local groups, "sullying" their lineage and becoming mixed (Rosenthal 1989: 99-100). When there was no purity of lineage, there was no sense of group solidarity.

Tribal groups with strong cohesion maintained a riasa, or leadership, determined by 'asabiyya and founded on the authority of a powerful family (Lacoste 1984: 106). Ibn Khaldun states: "This highest group feeling could go only to people who had a house and leadership among the tribe. One of those people must be the leader who had superiority over them. He was singled out as leader of all the various group feelings because he was superior to all the others by birth" (Rosenthal 1989: 132). According to Barfield (1990: 161) this was not to suggest that leadership was hierarchical. Status differences among lineages were minor and temporary since power changed every few generations. Additionally, Arab tribal society was egalitarian, which tended to minimize differences in rank and status.
While group cohesiveness among the *qaba'il* had, to a large extent, survived the migration to urban settings, one of the characteristics of *qaba'il* that was absent among the groups in the city that I interviewed was the act of turning to a tribal leader. In the time of Ibn Khaldun, tribal *sheikhs* ruled by virtue of consensus and did not have the power to enforce orders. While they were a “restraining influence among bedouin tribes” and wielded influence among members through respect and veneration, they lacked royal authority in subduing their own tribal members. Today, *qaba'il* members turn to each other within the immediate and extended family rather than to a tribal leader. I observed within the family dynamics of *qaba'il* that their inter-group relations had the characteristic style of (1) seeking group consensus, (2) treating each other with care in order not to antagonize, and (3) being considerate of other members in the group. These behaviors were signatures of *qaba'il* cohesiveness.

Barfield had stated that the type of analysis one makes of tribal systems is determined by the level of focus: “the closer we get to the bottom ranks of any tribal system, the more the system relies on actual descent and affinal ties; the higher we go in the same structure, the more political its relationships become” (Barfield 1990: 157). Ibn Khaldun’s thesis has furnished a means for analyzing both levels.

Ibn Khaldun’s model for cyclical dynastic change is not without problems. Ibn Khaldun takes a cultural materialism stance in implying that ecology shapes social personality. He does this through a lengthy comparison of the bedouin with the city dweller (Honigmann 1976: 49). Additionally, Ibn Khaldun viewed the bedouin mindset of tribal identity as “primitive” in nature, and when exposed to the civilizing factors of
urban life, it changed. Anthropologists have since shown that tribal identity survived urbanization. However, Ibn Khaldun’s emphasis on the psychological dimension of group identification, as well as the importance of ‘asabiyya or group cohesion, still merits acknowledgment today and was significant for my study of the persistence of tribalism in the Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

The above review of the literature on group identification and the definition of tribes have demonstrated the necessity to re-examine the concepts which led to the formation of the particular research questions I explored and established as the analytic focus in this dissertation. The literature has shown that the traditional approach to group identification in terms of identity categories has been replaced by Barth’s cultural boundaries which, in turn, have been further examined and explicated. Scholars have found that cultural boundary studies need to be enriched with more cultural content and clarified as to the distinctions between the insider and outsider’s perspectives. Consequently, this dissertation asks, How is group identification maintained? Why does it persist? Because of their approaches to group identification and social categorization from the perspective of insiders and outsiders respectively, I have drawn upon a combination of works by Okely and Wallman. I have chosen them because they provide a clear means for describing group identification and interaction.
The literature has also set the stage for my discussion of qabila in terms of tribalism. The current debate among anthropologists regarding the use of the term tribe has relevance today and has served as a catalyst for examining the meaning of tribe in the context of Saudi Arabia. This term’s utility, with respect to group identification, will be addressed in Chapter Seven where I will offer an analysis of the qabila concept as it is viewed in Saudi Arabia today.

In this chapter, we have established the need for a study, the theoretical approaches, and the research questions. In the following chapter, we will focus on the description of field site, selecting the setting, the specific methods of data collection and analysis that were used in this research.
Endnotes

1 See Talal Asad’s (1973) *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* for an examination of the relationship between British anthropology and colonialism in Africa.

2 Ibn Khaldun’s *Books of Exemplars (Kitab al-‘Ibar)* is a dissertation on the history of the world (al-Azmeh 1982: 10). It is divided into two sections: the *muqaddimah* (a prolegomenon) and the *tarikh* (an historical narrative).

3 State is defined as an entity which has a recognized authority for claiming legitimate and exclusive power. See Hourani (1991: 306) for an interesting discussion concerning different types of authorities which have existed in Islamic history.

4 Rosenthal also, however, translates ‘*umran* as “social organization,” which has the advantage of stressing the social meaning of the word ‘*umran*. But, in this writer’s opinion, this is problematic because the root does not imply or give a sense of the organization of society. M. Mahdi (1957: 184, 186, 187) introduced another meaning for ‘*umran*, calling it the science of culture. Mahdi saw the essential meaning as, “being in good order, instituting, cultivating, promoting, etc.”
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To properly carry out this research, I have reviewed existing literature and posed research questions generated by the literature in the first two chapters. In this chapter, I discuss my manner of data collection and evaluation. To do this, I offer a context for my study, followed by a brief introduction of the research setting, time, language used, and living arrangements. I discuss the incorporation of library research and cover the types of ethnographic methods used in collecting the data. According to Fetterman (1977), an ethnographer’s task is to not only collect information from the emic, or insider’s point of view, but then to explain the data from an etic, or scientific, point of view. Zaharlick (1992) and Zaharlick and Green (1991) add to this that the ethnographer studies people in an interactive-reactive fashion. That is, the researcher gathers the data, analyzes, assesses and reassesses. Then the ethnographer questions once more and analyzes again before arriving at any conclusive findings. The interview questions used for data collection in this research focused around the core questions of How does *qaba’il* identity continue to
persist? What cultural traits are employed as symbols of qaba’il identity? This chapter concludes with a discussion concerning the limitations of the study and methods of data analysis.

LIBRARY RESEARCH

Prior to my formal dissertation fieldwork, I researched library sources available in the United States through The Ohio State University. This library research served to supplement my participant observation, interviews, and discussions. The area I focused on centered upon understanding Saudi Arabian society and culture as this was essential for a present-day examination of qaba’il within Saudi Arabia. I also reviewed the history of the Arabian peninsula which dates back to pre-Islamic times.

At the library of the School for Oriental and African Studies in London, I gained access to hard-to-obtain ethnographic studies which had been conducted in Asir, the southwestern region of Saudi Arabia. Of particular interest was seminal work on the region, Mountain Farmer and Fellah in ‘Asir Southwest Saudi Arabia: The Conditions of Agriculture in a Traditional Society (1981), written by Palestinian social geographer Kamal Abdul fattah. He gave one of the first systematic descriptions of traditional agricultural practices, settlement patterns, and indigenous architecture. Also of interest was European scholar Walter Dostal’s (cooperating with Andre Gingrich and H. Riedl) compilation of Ethnographic Atlas of the Asir (1983), an ethnographic atlas of Asir including more detailed information on material culture than had previously been published. Dostal’s Saudi assistant, A. Aloshban, wrote an important dissertation 'Al
Qabila', Inter-Group Relations and the Environmental Context of Bani-Shiher in Southwestern Saudi Arabia (1987). This was one of the first studies of the qabila concept in Saudi Arabia and important to forming my own research questions on group identification in the Hejaz.

I also drew upon research facilities within the Kingdom. I explored the ARAMCO archives in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where I had an opportunity to delve into their books, old documents, and picture archives. The latter, the heart of which is the Max Steineke collection, was comprised of thousands of photos taken throughout the Kingdom and spanned decades from the 1930s until the present. Steineke, an American geographer, crossed the peninsula numerous times and gained an intimate knowledge of the Kingdom. The pictures fully portray the change of cities from small towns and document the vanishing art of handicraft making in small villages.

Among the pictures I saw were depictions of traditional life in the Nejd before the oil boom. The pictures showed the region of Nejd, and the towns of Anaizah and Riyadh in an historic setting much like it may have looked like before the qaba' il migrated to Jeddah. Since I never had the opportunity to travel to the town of Anaizah, which was the home town of the Beni Tamim members who participated in my research, these pictures were crucial for contextualizing the homeland from where the Beni Tamim originated. I studied pictures of the old town of Anaizah as well as adjacent date farms owned and operated by the Beni Tamim. Additionally, I saw pictures of the town of Riyadh before the oil boom. Riyadh was the home town of the Anazah tribal members
who participated in this study. Having since seen Riyadh again during a recent visit, I was able to compare the old town of Riyadh from the photographs to the larger, more developed city it has become today.

I also was offered the opportunity to browse through a small collection of books belonging to the Saudi Arabian Natural History Society which were mostly about the cultural ecology of Arabia, its flora, fauna and people. This material provided a good understanding of what was being researched locally by Westerners working with Saudi government offices. The materials I accessed at the Natural History Society helped in writing Chapter Four on the physical setting of the Arabian Peninsula. Additionally, I met several American and British researchers who were naturalists and from whom I learned much about the geography, plants, and animals of the region.

FIELDSITE

Circumstances for Research

Fieldwork for this dissertation took place from January to August of 1995 (and each subsequent summer since) in the port city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. However, my first exposure to the city dates back to the summer of 1978 when I visited in the company of my husband, a Saudi national. During this time, I became acquainted with the women who belonged to qaba'il communities of the Beni Tamim, Anazah, and Ateibah, and our interactions piqued my interest in their way of life.
In the following years, I made return trips with my husband to Jeddah, where we spent our summers, and in 1984, we set up residence and began raising our family. As I was a graduate student in Liberal Studies at OSU, we also maintained our residence in Columbus, Ohio. The time that my family and I spent in Jeddah continued to expand my knowledge of Saudi culture in general and of qaba'il culture in particular.

It was not until a decade later, in 1987, when I enrolled in the graduate program in the Department of Anthropology at OSU, that I began to consider researching the life and culture of Saudi qaba'il groups. At that point, I had begun to informally collect my data, keeping a log of such information as descriptions of wedding ceremonies, naming practices, children's lullabies, funerals, and the minutia of daily life.

The total amount of time I spent around the qaba'il whom I studied spanned more than twenty years, from my first trip in 1978 until the present. Although I did not initially record my observations, my earlier visits formed the necessary foundation for later research. I had the luxury of time to establish many enduring relationships, some of which were personal, and all of which were later invaluable when I returned as researcher and requested interviews and information.
Time

As mentioned above, I formally launched my fieldwork in Jeddah while living there from January through August, 1995. During this time, I conducted my preliminary interviews with approximately half the qaba'il community. I returned to Jeddah for three months each subsequent summer, from 1996 through 2000, when I conducted follow-up interviews.

Many times I witnessed special practices and observances including the holy month of Ramadan, the Hajj, and Eid. During my trip in 1995, the participants in my research were fasting for Ramadan which occasioned conversations about their observances of this holy month. I also had many opportunities to attend weddings since the preferred season for these is during the summers when I happened to be there.

The selection of summertime for research also had its limitation. Summer is a time for travel, and it was not uncommon to find that the participants I needed to follow up with were gone on vacation during part of the summer months. Typically, I caught up with them either at the beginning or the end of the summer.

Selecting the Setting

I selected the city of Jeddah for the setting of my fieldwork both because of its convenience, since I had a home there, and also because it is a major port city where Nejdi qaba'il have established residence for at least the last three generations. They have moved to Jeddah and adjoining cities from Nejd, the inner region of the Arabian peninsula, where their dira, traditional tribal territories, are located.
I chose to study these groups in the Hejaz rather than in their original setting of Nejd because, while other researchers have already looked at rural qaba 'il in their own territories, there has not been any research on qaba 'il cultures that have been transplanted to an urban setting in Saudi Arabia. Existing outside their traditional territories, I could study not only the shared cultural traits of these qaba 'il groups, which constitute the corpus of features required to consider oneself qabila, but also look specifically at their adaptation to modern urban life and how their interactions with non-qabila communities have defined their self-identification. The concentration of qaba 'il in Jeddah allowed easy access to approximately 143 individuals belonging to the Beni Tamim, Anazah, and Ateibah. Since I was able to return to Jeddah over a span of twenty years and remain a known member of the community, I was able to follow various life cycles and events of a number of people. This allowed the compilation of a composite record of data.

Another reason for choosing Jeddah as a study site is that it is a heterogeneous society. In addition to the qaba 'il, the city has attracted a variety of populations because of its location in Arabia as a major port city and the gateway to Mecca. People from many corners of the Muslim world congregate and settle in Jeddah. Among the many groups are Bukharis, Somalis, Indonesians, Arabs, Europeans, and in fact more recently, Bosnian refugees. This ethnic diversity and multicultural blend presented a community of non-qaba 'il that provided outsider opinions concerning the qaba 'il. As a result, the data from their interviews were included in this study as well. However, I did not utilize their responses to the same degree as the qaba 'il members since the latter were my focus of study.

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The location of Jeddah did grant an opportunity to successfully pursue my research questions: How have these qaba’il groups maintained their group identification? and What cultural traits are employed as symbols of qaba’il identity? For here, in this westernmost region of the kingdom, exists an ethnic border which Nejdi qaba’il entered upon migrating from the interior. Faced with groups of differing knowledge and customs, the Nejdi qaba’il have cultivated a strong sense of group identity.

WAYS OF ENTERING

Language

It is considered essential for the researcher entering the field to be able to communicate in the indigenous language of the community with whom he or she is living. For myself, I encountered an unexpected language dilemma as I entered the field. As an undergraduate, I had studied Arabic which, for various reasons, did not completely help me during the interviewing process. The dialect I learned at OSU was colloquial Lebanese, whereas the qaba’il in Jeddah spoke Nejdi Arabic. Furthermore, true to the polyglottal character of Jeddah, a number of qaba’il had been educated or lived in neighboring Arab countries and therefore spoke yet other Arabic dialects.

In the early years of my research, this meant if I wanted to interview in a dialectal form of Arabic, which would be most comfortable for my participants, I had to use an interpreter. Fortunately, young people in Saudi Arabia are regularly taught the English language which made it easy to locate an interpreter in any household. At other times, I
simply conducted my interviews in English because some of my interviewees spoke English. In later years, I gained enough proficiency in the Hejazi dialect to communicate more directly with each interviewee; however, due to the number of dialects present in the community, there was still the drawback of needing to use, from time to time, a third party to communicate.

**Living Arrangements**

During all of my fieldwork, I lived in a villa that was part of a qaba 'il family compound. This is the traditional manner in which qaba 'il members live with their families and extended family if they can afford to do so. Living in this manner provided me immediate entry to extended family members and other qaba 'il members who were close friends and acquaintances.¹

The compound in which we lived was comprised of five separate villas contained by a wall. The patriarchal male and his wife occupied one villa, and his sons occupied the other villas. There was an open area in which all the children could interact each day. The five households would come together on a regular basis to share meals. Living together as an extended family had its advantages for purposes of my research. For instance, when visitors came to one household, the other household members would join them. This considerably widened my social network. Additionally, compound life placed me in the middle of domestic life interaction with women and children and young adults.
Each house had its staff of domestic helpers which included a Pakistani driver and several Filipino housekeepers. Since women are not allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia, I relied heavily on our driver to get around to my interviews. Additionally, I relied on the housekeepers for childcare while attending functions since babysitters in the Western sense were not available. The domestic helpers eased the logistics of my life in Jeddah. They also served as great sources of information, both rumor and fact, since they knew domestic helpers who worked in other households in the community. These men and women broadened my network considerably and, ultimately, became friends who helped my family transition to life in Saudi Arabia.

While living in the Kingdom, I made concessions in the way I dressed and acted in order to not draw attention to myself as an outsider. In public, I wore the traditional black cloak known as an abayah. This is a modest dress that covers a woman from head to toe. In some contexts, I also wore the ghata, veiling my face. Indoors, I made similar attempts to wear modest clothing such as long loose dresses, high necklines, and long sleeves. I avoided pants or any form-fitting clothing. Additionally, I made modifications in my mannerisms and gestures. Female qaba'il manners require formality in public, with little or no laughter, a dignified stance, unhurried walking, and controlled body movements. These I picked up almost unconsciously.

Wearing Saudi garb and conducting myself in such a manner resulted in friction with the Western community. American and British friends were noticeably uncomfortable whenever we encountered each other in public places. Furthermore, they were ill at ease with any Saudis dressed in traditional garb, a fact which Saudis were
aware of and used to their advantage, especially in business meetings, where they felt it
gave them the upper hand. Westerners, however, seemed to equate Saudi dress with a
moral statement, and in the case of veiled Arab women, Westerners read oppression into
wearing the veil instead of seeing it as a marker of cultural identification.

Saudis, for their part, responded positively to my attempts to dress and act like
one of them. They very much appreciated the efforts I made to fit in among them.
According to Patton (1987: 99), “...over the long run, the people observed will respond
to the observer more on the basis of what the observer does than what the observer
says...[it is] the kind of relationships the observer establishes with others which will
determine how people respond to the observer...” Thus, I found that observing
traditional practices was essential to my being accepted within the community, and doing
so, allowed me to form friendships and allies with the qaba’il women with whom I
interacted.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

A number of data collection methods and techniques are used for insuring the
integrity of the data collected while doing ethnographic research. According to
Fetterman (1989: 42), these “methods and techniques objectify and standardize the
researcher’s perception,” although each ethnographer finds that he or she must adapt the
techniques to fit the local environment. The principal methods I used in this study were
participant observation and interviewing.
Participant Observation

In order to understand group identity among the Nejdi qaba’il, I relied heavily upon participant observation. This is a method whereby the researcher lives in a community and observes the daily activities. It is immersion in a culture in a way that allows the ethnographer to see patterns in behavior over a period of time (Fetterman 1989: 45). It permits the researcher to learn first-hand how the group views the world and how they behave in different circumstances (Howard 1986: 416). Ultimately, the researcher gains the advantage of seeing life from the insider’s perspective, that is, with an “emic” point of view.

Living in a qaba’il family compound presented ample opportunities for me to interact as both a participant and observer. Each day had a routine which I followed with other qaba’il members. We woke at 5:30 a.m. to the call of the early morning prayer as it resonated from mosque to mosque in our quarter. The devout rolled out ornate prayer rugs and attended to their religious duties before starting the day. Then it was time to wake the children, dress them in uniforms, and load them with heavy schoolbags before they darted out the door by 6:30 a.m. As each household in the compound slowly awakened, the women would send drivers to a local bakery for fresh bread and foul (mudamas beans) for breakfast. After men left for the office, the women busily took care of domestic cleaning until 9:30 a.m. Shortly thereafter, we would leave the compound for shopping at the suq or to visit female friends or family members. By noon, we were back to the villas and cooking lunch. At this time, men came home for a lunch break and a short siesta before leaving for evening visits or business.
I made arrangements to meet with other female friends after 5:00. This required clever planning, however, since our activities had to be skillfully timed in order to not be in a public place during sunset or evening prayers. All establishments closed for prayer while men went to the mosque to pray. Since qaba' il women did not attend mosque, it was incumbent on us to devise strategies for meeting each other or arranging to be picked up by drivers at these times. By 8:00 p.m., we were back to the villa putting supper on the table. Every day had its pattern, its set routine, which was observed by, not only the compound members, but the community at large. It was through participation in daily life that patterns of behavior, both small and large, became apparent.

There were times in which I played the role of the observer. I attended special events such as weddings with qaba' il women to observe and document the festivities involved. Also during the religious month of Hajj, I watched the rituals from Mekkah on television and interviewed qaba' il members who had participated in the holy event. There were a number of occasions when I used this method of data collecting, and I relied on it frequently.

Interviews

Another important means of collecting data is through interviews. According to Patton (1987: 109), it is a primary method for entering another person’s world and, thereby, being able to understand their perspective. I used two types of interviewing techniques for this study: formal and informal.
The formal interviews were conducted in our formal sitting room where I received guests. A second setting for the interviews was at each interviewee's home where I visited them. I used formal interviews in the few situations where I conducted interviews with qaba'il elders. In these instances, I asked a number of open-ended questions concerning qaba'il group identity and traditional ways of life in Nejd. My intention was to establish background data on qaba'il history and document significant qaba'il events. No recording devices were used in these settings because the participants were not comfortable with the interview process.

Informal questioning provided a more successful means of gathering data. As Howard (1993: 44) has stated, "Even when formal interview techniques are used, [it is possible to] derive a great deal of information in a less formal manner." This technique worked best within the qaba'il community, and in most cases, I sought to minimize my role as a researcher. I simply talked with the participants rather than using tape recorders or an obvious notepad to record conversations during the interview. Informal interviews were spontaneous and took place anytime I was in the company of qaba'il members. I found that time spent together during visits was productive in terms of highlighting questions pertaining to my research topics. Often, I would follow the lead of the person talking and ask questions based upon the conversation topic so as not to give the appearance of forcing the conversation.

I preferred informal interviewing for the additional reason, that in Saudi culture, it is not good etiquette to pose direct questions. I was fortunate that my situation in Saudi society would many times eliminate the necessity for asking a question so very directly.
As a new bride and westerner, I arrived in Jeddah without knowing the rules of behavior for society. Qaba'il friends and family, aware of my circumstances, took it upon themselves to give me instruction on proper qaba'il behavior. The role of teacher is still maintained by a number of my friends, so that even today, they will provide a ready answer if I appear to not understand a particular behavior or event.

Informal interviewing worked well with other women and mothers. As the mother of three children, I was an accepted member of the women's circle. We shared similar parental concerns and anxieties that transcend cultural boundaries. The fact that I had children allowed me time around other mothers so that I could both observe and ask questions about child rearing in a spontaneous and natural way. Additionally, having two daughters brought constant comment concerning the proper upbringing for a modest Saudi female. In the upcoming years, as the girls matured into teenagers, they donned veils and conducted themselves appropriately as Saudi women. Their transformation from girls to women invited remarks from Saudi female friends who themselves were mothers to young women.

During interviewing it became apparent that certain topics, particularly women’s issues, were especially sensitive and had to be handled carefully. Most Saudis are very private people and are uncomfortable when discussing anything that they think will be published. The need to protect the privacy of Saudi women was an even more hypersensitive issue following the publication of several articles on Saudi women by foreign journalists. These articles circulated in the community, and the Saudi women who were interviewed were publicly named in them. This, coupled with the fact that the
women's pictures were published, created a scandal among the families. By Western standards, the articles were innocent, yet, when viewed through the Saudi social fabric, they appeared to portray the women in a morally questionable manner.

Publications, such as the ones mentioned above, created a general suspicion within the Saudi community of any type of publicity. As a result, I have been very careful in this dissertation not to use individual names nor to disclose specific family names or otherwise bring attention to a given group except under the broad category of the qaba'il name: Beni Tamim, Ateibah, or Anazah. When I needed to use an individual name, I created pseudonyms.

Field Notes

Field notes are essential in any anthropological endeavor. Following every interview, I recorded the data and my observations in the form of field notes. Additionally, I kept daily field notes of my observations even when I did not have a formal interview scheduled. As Lofland (1971: 102) has stated, "Field notes provide the observer's raison d'etre. If he is not doing them, he might as well not be in the setting." Usually, I penciled my field notes into notebooks at the end of each day. On a weekly basis, I used the notes I had jotted down to write a fuller version into the computer. Periodically, I read through my notes and raised questions for future interviews.
DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, I was the primary researcher who conducted the interviews, collected the data, made observations, took field notes, and carried out a qualitative analysis of the data. My reliance upon participant observation, rather than surveys and questionnaires, produced a body of detailed data drawn from a community of Nejdi qaba’il living in the Hejaz. These included: 65 members of the Beni Tamim, 43 members of the Anazah, and 35 of the Ateibah qabila. These 143 individuals comprised my population for the qaba’il data. I chose to not study each qaba’il group separately because many were intermarried and doing so would have very difficult.

Further data was supplied by the non-qaba’il individuals who had been born and raised in the Hejaz but were of varying non-Saudi qaba’il descent. Among them were Saudis of Yemeni descent (10), Egyptian descent (4), and Indian descent (4). Additionally, I gained reliable data from a number of Westerners who were long-term residents of the Kingdom. I met these individuals through contacts in the American community in Jeddah. There were 33 Americans and 12 British who contributed insightful information to my research.

I knew many of these qaba’il members over a span of years and this made it possible for me to keep a running log of important life changes such as new marriages, births, divorces, and deaths. In fact, even if I had not seen an individual for several years, due to their being transferred to a new job or study abroad, I was able to continue collecting data because their relatives would keep me informed about important events in their lives. It is considered good manners to ask about family members and recite each
one by name when visiting. Therefore, I always conscientiously inquired about each son, daughter, husband, mother, father, etc. This custom enabled me to have continuity in my research and made it possible for me to follow trends in marriages, divorces, as well as changes in occupation and residence patterns.

In addition to intimate insider’s views on qaba’il life, insights from non-qaba’il were very important in helping me understand the outsider’s perspective. In a heterogeneous society such as Jeddah, where many ethnic groups exists, there are many emic points of view. These not only include the qaba’il and how they view themselves and others, but the Saudi non-qaba’il groups with whom they interact. Therefore, I also spent time within the community, visiting and interviewing non-qaba’il Arabs as well as westerners. Their perspective of Nejdi qabila members were at times antagonistic, at other times embracing; their views certainly lent a crucial dimension to this study and offered the outsiders’ view of the qabila. My interviews and exchanges with non-qaba’il immeasurably enriched my understanding of how these Nejdi qaba’il were perceived in the Hejaz.

Each day, I would record the events of daily life within the qaba’il community. I also took notes on the fifteen weddings I attended, twenty-four visits for newborn babies, two funerals my husband attended (since women are not allowed to attend funeral processions; they mourn at the home of the relatives of the deceased), nine condolences I attended, six holy months of Ramadan that I observed, and six holy months of the Hajj.
that I had the opportunity to observe. Additionally, I kept notes of ongoing interviews with individuals, drafted fifteen to twenty case studies in varying detail, and collected two life histories.

I recorded the data in the form of field notes which were penciled into notebooks and then transferred onto computer disks. Periodically, I would read through my notes and raise questions for future interviews. According to Patton (1987: 149), “Content analysis involves identifying coherent and important examples, themes, and patterns in the data.” Therefore, I would then divide these notes into categories and enter them into the computer. I took all these notes and identified appropriate categories as my focus became more narrowed on the theme of identification. For analytical categories, I looked at those occasions in which group identification was discussed, and I analyzed how each group displayed its self-definition.

Once the theoretical and methodological backgrounds for this dissertation were established, I began discussing and critically examining the findings. The patterns that appeared as a result of analysis have been reported in chapters six through eight of this dissertation. When possible, I entered this material into the dissertation in the form of anecdotal citations. Inserting these field note selections as examples of larger points helped illustrate overarching themes present in qaba'il culture. The anecdotes not only illustrated cultural themes, but provided support for the validity of the findings I reported.
Endnotes

1 *Qaḥāʿil* family members have a strong preference for living close together. If they don’t live in a compound, they live in apartments or villas in the city located close to other family members. These behaviors hint at the strong tendency toward maintaining family cohesiveness and their *qabaʿil* identity in an urban environment.
CHAPTER 4

PHYSICAL SETTING

The Arabian peninsula is a land of many contrasts characterized by deserts and oases, plateaus and escarpments. It stretches from southern Syria to the Indian Ocean and from the Red Sea to the Persian/Arab Gulf. It has been the home of countless Arabian tribes, all of which have been paramount within their own territories. Today, it is divided politically between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Yemen. Of these countries, Saudi Arabia is the largest, occupying nine tenths of the peninsula. This is roughly equivalent in size to the United States east of the Mississippi.

Saudi Arabia is divided geographically into six major regions: Nejd, the Hejaz, Asir, al-Hasa, Rub al-Khali, and the Northern Region. These regions are essentially geophysical divisions. Each is distinguished by its own particular history, ecological variability, and economy. Nejd, or the inner region, is central among the six geographical regions. To the north of Nejd lies the Northern Region. To the west are the Hejaz and Asir, and to the east, al-Hasa. South of Nejd lies the vast desert expanse, Rub al-Khali, also known as the “Empty Quarter.”
Of these regions, Nejd has been a central territory for the three *qaba'il* that I researched. The Hejaz is where the *qabila* migrated within the recent history of the Kingdom, and where they currently live. The Northern Region includes part of the land where part of the original territories used to be located for two of these *qaba'il*, the Beni Tamim and the Anazah.

The Anazah, who were nomadic camel herders, historically occupied the north central part of Arabia. Their territory stretched in a triangle from the Syrian desert (Hamad) to the base of the Nafud desert in central Arabia to near Aleppo. The participants in my research who belonged to the Anazah originated in two cities within central Arabia, Aneizah and Riyadh.

The Ateibah were camel pastoralists, and were situated in the eastern side of the *Hejaz*, extending to the central Arabian steppes. Their pastures stretched east to Qasim and Woshim and south to the northern part of Asir. The participants in my research who belonged to the Ateibah originally lived in small hamlets scattered between the Hejaz and Nejd.

The Beni Tamim, who in ancient times played an important role in the caravan trade, occupied a large area between the Syrian desert to the north and Riyadh to the south. In time, the Beni Tamim came to form a large portion of the settled population of Nejd and Jebel Shammar, where they have worked mostly in agriculture and as shepherds. They were the primary inhabitants of most of the oases in central Arabia.
Southeast of Riyadh is an area named Hawtah Beni Tamim,\(^1\) which was known to be occupied by the Beni Tamim. The participants in my research who belonged to the Beni Tamim originated from the Nejdi town, Aneizah.

The following sections discuss in detail the six major geophysical regions in Saudi Arabia: Nejd, the Hejaz, Asir, al-Hasa, Rub al-Khali, and the Northern Region. Each section includes a detailed description of the physical features, the climate, settlement patterns, ethnic populations, crops, flora, and fauna—all of which contributed to shaping the lives of the qaba'il members who live there.

**NEJD**

Nejd, "highland," is geographically the inner region and constitutes the political center of the modern Saudi Kingdom. Nejd consists of a rocky plateau, tilting from west to east and descending from 1,525 m (5,000 ft.) to 610 m (2,000 ft.). Desert land flanks Nejd on its northern, eastern, and southern sides, while a series of major ridges and tablelands cross the plateau in a northeasterly-to-southeasterly direction.

The population of this area is divided between sedentary townsmen who inhabit the fertile oases and the *bedouin* pastoralists who adopted a nomadic way of life where more arid conditions prevailed. Traditionally a symbiotic relationship has existed between the two communities, with the pastoralists relying on the townsmen for food supplies and general manufactured goods, and the sedentary people depending upon the
bedouin for protection while traveling. Qaba 'il in Nejd, were both pastoralist and settled. Among the principal qaba 'il which inhabited this area are the Ateibah, Subay, Dawasir, Beni Tamim and Mutayr.

One of the first Westerners to penetrate the interior of Arabia, the Jesuit priest William Palgrave, described the plateau as being intersected by a maze of valleys that are cut into the limestone ridges. “In these countless hollows,” Palgrave (1865: 339) writes, “is concentrated the fertility and the population of Nejd.” He writes about suddenly coming upon a “mass of emerald green,” hidden from sight as “one journeys over the dry flats above.” The most prominent of the ridges which cross the Nejdi plateau is Jebel Tuwaiq, “the little garland (or twist) mountain,” an impressive limestone formation rising 300 m (980 ft.) above the surrounding plateau (Fisher 1978: 497). Explaining the relationship of Jebel Tuwaiq to the Nejd highland, Palgrave (1865: 338) describes it as being “the middle knot of Arabia, its Caucasus,...a stranger and more complicated labyrinth of valleys, bends, ins and outs, gullies, torrent-courses, and perpendicular precipices cannot be imagined.” For centuries Jebel Tuwaiq and the other ridges of Nejd have influenced the migratory routes of nomadic groups penetrating the region, from both north and south (Lipsky et al. 1959: 21).

Nejd’s climate, influenced by the surrounding desert, is more-or-less uniform. The intense heat of its summer months is perhaps the best known aspect of Arabia’s climate. The average summer temperature is 44°C (112°F), with readings of up to 48°C (120°F) being not uncommon. As in other desert regions, the heat becomes intense
shortly after sunrise and drops only after sunset. However, the dryness of the interior makes this heat more bearable in Nejd than along the coasts, where the humidity is very high.

The end of the summer season is eagerly awaited by townspeople and nomads alike. The Bedouin have traditionally watched for the coming of the cooler weather by searching the night sky for the rising of Suhayl, the constellation of Canopus, whose appearance marks the end of the fierce Arabian summer. H. R. P. Dickson (1949: 14), political advisor to the Amir of Kuwait in the 1930s and long time resident of Kuwait and Arabia, writes:

[the Badawi] longs and prays for the rise of Canopus, whose coming always brings relief. This is in the first week of September, but as early as 25 August men will get up hours before dawn to see if they can catch a glimpse of the star. At long last it appears... almost instantly the badawin feel cooler, man and beast need less to drink, and water left out at night gets cooler by dawn, whereas before it remained hot throughout the night.

After the severe summer months, the rest of the year by comparison is considered rather pleasant by the inhabitants of Nejd. The transitional period between the summer and winter is marked by comfortably cool nights and sunny days, when daytime temperatures average around 30°C (84°F). In the winter, temperatures drop below freezing, but snow and ice are uncommon. Nonetheless, the almost total absence of humidity and a high wind-chill factor make it seem bitterly cold (Nyrop et al. 1982: 53).

Winter usually brings with it only a few sparse rains, rarely exceeding a mean of 10 cm (4 in.), and several years may pass with no precipitation at all. However, when it does rain, it can pour in torrents. Travellers’ accounts often mention the intensity of the downpours. Palgrave (1865: 335) described how entire streets in the Nejdi town of

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Zulphah were swept away by the torrential rains. But for the *bedouin* themselves, these downpours are seen as a blessing. Dickson (1949: 18) describes a *bedouin* encampment caught in an early season rain:

The men rush to the camels and sheep, the women to the tent ropes, and then with a dull roar which grows every instant deeper and closer the downpour comes at last. Then cries of joy as the open spaces round the camp begin to fill with water... Everyone is delirious, for they have been drinking brackish and even salt water for the last nine months... God is great! God is good to the Muslims!... at last dawn breaks and the daylight reveals each tent, like a Noah’s ark, perched safely on its Ararat in a sea of fresh water.

Rains in the Tuwaiq mountains bring water cascading over the rocky sides of the escarpment, ultimately to collect in underground hollows at the base of the mountains. Some of these subterranean pools at the foot of Jebel Tuwaiq may be up to 50 m (164 ft.) deep (Fisher 1978: 497). Consequently, artesian wells and springs are plentiful in the Jebel Tuwaiq area, giving rise to extensively irrigated oases where Saudi farmers cultivate cereal, fruit, and vegetable crops. One of the most important domesticated plants found here is the date palm. Its fruit is its major staple, its wood can be used for construction, the fronds woven into baskets, mats, and fans, and the midribs made into fences.

The densest concentration of oases settlements in Nejd is to be found within the crescent of the Tuwaiq Mountains (Fisher 1978: 498). Riyadh (pop. 667,000), “the garden,” is the most significant of these and is the capital of the modern Saudi Kingdom. Other important towns include Aneizah, Burayda, and Ha’il. In contrast to the fertile soils and plentiful water resources of the oases, elsewhere in Nejd soil and water resources are scarce and of poor quality.
To the north of the Tuwaiq mountains lies "the Great Nefud" desert. With a mean elevation of approximately 900 m (3,000 ft.), it covers some 40,000 sq. km (25,000 sq. miles) of sand dunes. Characteristic of the Nefud are its longitudinal dunes. Walpole (1971: 14) describes them as being many kilometers in length with some up to 90 m (300 ft.) high. Wind-eroded sandstone outcrops form strangely-shaped pinnacles and crags amidst the dunes. There is a reddish cast to the Nefud sands, the consequence of iron oxides mixed in the grains (Salah 1978: 396).

In the Nefud, winds rise and fall with great rapidity, warping the sand dunes into a crescent shape and aligning them in many directions (Fisher 1978: 496). Palgrave (1865: 92), describing his passage through this desert region, writes:

We were now traversing an immense ocean of loose sand unlimited to the eye, and heaped up in enormous ridges running parallel to each other from north to south, undulation after undulation, each swell two or three hundred feet in average height... in the depths between, the traveler finds himself as it were imprisoned in a suffocating sand pit, hemmed in by burning walls on every side; while at other times, while labouring up the slope, he overlooks what seems a vast sea of fire, swelling under a heavy monsoon wind, and ruffled by a cross-blast into little red-hot waves.

By no means totally devoid of life, in certain areas of the Nefud water is retained near the surface. This water supply makes it possible for farmers to cultivate dates, vegetables, and soft fruits as well as cereals such as wheat, barley, and millet (Rentz 1978: 540). The largest of the oases are located in the west, where run-off from the heaviest rains flowing down the mountains of the Hejaz find their way eastward into artesian basins (Fisher 1978: 497).
On the eastern side of the Nefud is a sandy corridor, which curves southward into the larger Dahna-Rub al-Khali expanse. The underlying impermeable sandstone retains the infrequent rainwater near the surface, allowing grass to grow for a short period of time in the spring. This enables nomadic herders to pasture their animals, for a brief period each year, within the Nefud itself (Fisher 1978: 497).

The Dahna desert stretches for more than 640 km (400 miles) south of the Nefud, forming a narrow arc only 50 km (30 miles) wide. Although its water resources are relatively scarce, the Dahna desert, like the Nefud, furnishes the bedouin with winter and spring pasturage (Walpole et al. 1971: 14).

In the cool season, because the forage will support their camels, the bedouin range farther into the desert without resorting to wells. The spring rain is accompanied by the growth of grasses, wild flowers, and herbs, plants well suited to the sandy soil of the desert terrain. There are also perennial shrubs and bushes, such as hadh (*Cornulaca arabica*), upon which the camels thrive. These plant materials are put to use by the bedouin in a variety of ways: dry bushes are used for firewood, twigs for toothpicks, and certain leaves for shampoo (Rentz 1978: 540).

In the past, large herds of gazelle could be found here. The bedouin used saluki, their hunting hounds, to bring down these creatures. There are three types of gazelle, the *ri’im* (*Gazella subgutturosa marica*), the ‘afri (*Gazella dorcas saudiya*), and the idm
(Gazella gazella arabica), which live within the boundaries of Arabia (McKinnon 1990: 27). Today, the gazelle have been so heavily hunted that their numbers are drastically reduced. The Arabian oryx (Oryx leucoryx), another game animal, has also been over hunted; it is now found only in the most remote parts of the Rub al-Khali (ibid.).

THE RUB AL-KHALI

The second major geographic region of Saudi Arabia, the Rub al-Khali, or “Empty Quarter,” lies to the south of Nejd. With an area over 500,000 sq. km (310,000 sq. miles), it is larger than the whole of France. Indeed, it is one of the largest deserts in the world (Fisher 1978: 499). The topography of this great expanse of sand varies from west to east. In the west the elevation is about 600 m (2,000 ft.), and the sand is soft and fine; in the east the elevation drops to about 180 m (600 ft.) and much of the surface is covered by stable sand sheets and salt flats, the latter called sabka. Scattered through the Empty Quarter, but prominent in the east, are longitudinal sand dunes; elsewhere one finds complex patterns of sand mountains, some as high as 300 m (1,000 ft.). Most of the area is waterless (Walpole et al. 1971: 15).

In spite of the harshness of the terrain, there are populations of townsmen who inhabit the camps and small towns which have sprung up along the fringes of the desert in response to the development of oil fields within the area. Additionally, nomadic bedouin pastoralists have traditionally occupied this area, moving their animals and tents on a migratory path along the edge of the Empty Quarter. Among the better know qaba’il in this area are the Al-Murrah who are legendary for their tracking abilities.
There are certain desert animals that thrive in these sands. Rentz (1978: 541) tells us, for example, about rodent-like creatures, such as the *djarbu* (known in English as “jerjoba”) and its related kin, known to the *bedouin* as *djirdhi*. Snakes move through the desert sands at night and they stay under rocks in the daytime to escape the heat. Some of them, such as the horned viper and the Arabian cobra, are poisonous. The *bedouin* maintain that one of the snakes, the *yaym*, found among the hot sands, is actually capable of flying over large distances (Rentz 1978: 541).

Until the early 1930s the Empty Quarter remained almost unknown to the Western world. The first account in English of this desert region is by Bertram Thomas (1932), who explored the area in 1930. Another Englishman, H. J. Philby, followed him only a few years later (Philby 1933).

**THE NORTHERN REGION**

Directly to the north of Nejd lies a third geographic region, known as the Northern Region. It is bounded on the west by the *Hejaz*, on the north by Jordan and Iraq, and on the east by the Eastern Region. The southern border, which is contiguous with Nejd, begins at the outermost limits of the Nefud desert.

The Northern Region, at its broadest width, extends over 500 km (370 miles) and, from north to south, stretches more than 250 km (180 miles). It is characterized by a number of plateaus, and a single *harrah*. The latter is an area of scarred rocks, ancient lava flows that have left the surface devoid of vegetation.
Both sedentary townsmen, who inhabit the oases, and nomadic *bedouin* pastoralists occupy this region. Traditionally, there has been much travel by caravans through this area which provides a direct land route from south and central Arabia to the Levant. *Bedouin qaba'il* were involved in raiding the caravans as well as providing protection for the travellers and their goods. Additionally, because pastures in this region are particularly good for grass, the bedouin raised not only camels but sheep and goats too resulting in a semi-nomadic way of life. Among the principal *qaba'il* which occupied this area were the Anazah, Ruwalah, and Shararat.

The climate in this region is very similar to that of Nejd. The most pleasant times of the year are spring (March through May) and fall (September through November), when the days are sunny and warm, and the nights are mildly cool. Summer (June through August) and winter (December through February), on the other hand, are characterized by extreme temperatures. In the summer, daytime temperatures in the shade may exceed 48°C (118°F); in the winter, nighttime temperatures not uncommonly drop below freezing (MAW 1984: 21).

**THE HEJAZ**

To the west of Nejd lies the *Hejaz*, the fourth geographic region of the Saudi Kingdom. It is 240,000 sq. km (150,000 sq. miles) in area extending approximately 1,100 km (700 miles) from the Gulf of Aqaba in the northwest, to Asir in the southwest. From the Red Sea to the interior, the Hejaz varies in width from 160 to 300 km (100-200 miles).
The Hejaz is dominated by an extensive mountain range, geologically part of the Great Rift that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to Kenya in East Africa. At its northern extremity, it is between 1,000 to 1,500 m (3,200 to 4,800 ft.) above sea level. As one moves southward the massif becomes higher and more rugged, with summits reaching 2,000 to 3,000 m (6,600 to 9,800 ft.) a.s.l. (Fisher 1978: 465). Parts of the eastern slopes of the mountains often show the characteristic scarrings of harrat. On their western side the mountains are flanked by the Red Sea littoral (ibid.).

The climate of the Hejaz is moderate compared to those of Nejd and the Northern Region, making it a more hospitable environment for human habitation. In the Hejaz temperatures during the summer months rarely exceed 48°C (118°F), with a mean of 31°C (88°F). In the winter a pleasant 21°C (70°F) is normal (MAW 1984: 21).

The population of this area is comprised of sedentary townsmen and the bedouin pastoralists. Settlements sustained by farming and trading are characteristic of the area. Additionally, fishing communities dot the coastline. Pilgrims who came for Hajj in Mekkah and stayed have added another ethnic dimension to this population. Traditionally, the qaba'il, both settled and nomadic, have maintained interrelationships between the urban centers, the oases and the fishing communities whereby an exchange of goods and services flowed. Among the principal qaba'il which inhabited this area are the Quraish, Juhaynah, and the Huwaytat.
Populated areas are found wherever there are stable water sources. Farming communities are located in shallow valleys, where wadis channel the infrequent seasonal rains (less than 100-130 mm per annum) into springs and wells. Farmers, adept at marshalling these water resources, cultivate crops such as sorghum and maize (Fisher 1978:466).

The major oases cities in the northern part of the Hejaz are Medina, Tabuk, and Ala. Historically their importance lay in their locations along the north-to-south caravan trade routes between Syria and Yemen. Almost 1,400 years ago the Prophet Muhammad escorted caravans along the Mekkah-Medina stretch of this caravan route (Fisher 1978:466).

The holy city of Mekkah (population 120,000) is the Hejaz’s most famous urban center. Unlike some of the other cities, it is located on an alluvial wadi rather than in an oasis (Fisher 1978:467). Seventy-five km (47 miles) inland from its access port of Jeddah, Mekkah lies in a long irregular hollow among stark mountains, whose sides are so precipitous that, in ancient times, all that was needed for the city’s defense were gates built at three vulnerable points (Salah 1978:37).

On the western side of the range, running parallel to the Red Sea, is a very narrow coastal plain. In the north, where it is sandy and arid, this plain is virtually uninhabitable. As one moves southward it becomes broken up by deep narrow inlets from the sea, called sharm. These provide good harbors and, consequently, fishing settlements have grown
up around them. Elsewhere, coral reefs make access to its coast difficult for ships (Fisher 1978: 466-467). Fishing along the coast offers a good catch, with mackerel, grouper, and red snapper the locally favorite varieties in the fish markets.

The port city of Jeddah, “Bride of the Red Sea,” is situated about halfway along the Red Sea coast. Here a gap in the coral reefs permits easy access to the port, from where pilgrims travel on to Mecca. Local legend has it that Eve began her search for Adam in Jeddah; others claim that it was to this place that she returned from Paradise. It is also said that she is buried here (Hawting 1984: 319).

ASIR

The fifth major geographical region of Saudi Arabia is Asir, lying directly south of the Hejaz. It stretches inland for more than 290 km (180 miles) from the Red Sea to the western border of Nejd. From its northern border with the Hejaz to Yemen in the south, Asir extends about 370 km (230 miles).

Asir’s terrain varies as one moves inland. First there are the coastal lowlands, extending some 65 km (40 miles) into the interior. These lowlands, called “Tihamat Asir,” comprise a salty tidal plain of limited agricultural value (Nyrop et al. 1982: 50). Beyond Tihamat Asir lie the rugged Sarawat mountains, which rise to an altitude of over 1,000 m (1,120 ft.) before gently descending into Nejd and the Rub al-Khali (Lipsky et al. 1959: 23). The upper slopes of the Sarawat Range catch the south-westerly monsoon rains that fall between June and September. The rainfall during these months averages 305 mm (12 in.) out of an annual total precipitation of 508 mm (20 in.). During late
September to October rainfall is limited; instead a fog rolls in from the coastal plain, restricting visibility for days on end. During these months, temperatures begin to drop to under 20°C (68°F) during the day (MAW 1984: 21).

The inhabitants of the Asir are a mix of sedentary farmers and nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists. Farming settlements are more predominant in the highlands while *bedouins* following a nomadic style of life are found in the more arid areas of the region. Adding to the ethnic diversity of the Asir are African migrants who have built traditional *kraal* style villages along the coast of southern Tihama. Among the principal *qaba'il* which inhabited this area are the al-Ghamid, Zahran, and the Qahtan.

As a consequence of the precipitation, farming communities are predominately found along the higher slopes of the Sarawat Range. The local inhabitants have terraced the mountain sides, on which they grow cereals such as millet, wheat, barley, and maize, along with fruits, like apricots, citrus, and pomegranates, and vegetables, like onions and carrots.

Historically, coffee and *qat* (*Catha edulis*) were among Asir’s principal crops. But today neither is cultivated as extensively as in the past (Fisher 1978: 474). Coffee used to be exported through the Yemeni port of Mocha, hence the name of this variety of coffee. *Qat* is a narcotic shrub, with a mildly intoxicating effect when chewed or drunk. Once widely used by the local population, its cultivation is now restricted by the Saudi government. It continues to be grown, however, in Yemen (Fisher 1978: 474).
Asir region is known within the Kingdom for its varied wildlife. Numerous troops of baboons live in the highlands, where they raid the millet fields; sometimes these monkeys gather on the outskirts of urban areas where they invade garbage dumps and city parks (Rentz 1978: 541). The area is particularly rich in birds of prey that soar amidst Asir’s abundant lofty peaks where they nest. Falcons, eagles, vultures, and owls are all to be found here. Smaller birds such as the cuckoo, thrush, Syrian nightingale, and hoopoe collect around the cultivated areas (ibid.).

The upland Asir is a region strikingly different from any other in the Saudi Kingdom because of its terraced hillsides, juniper forests, many seasonal streams, and perennial wild flowers. Eastwards from the highlands, the terrain once again begins to resemble that of the rest of the Kingdom. The eastern slopes of the Sarawat mountains drop gently into a plateau, itself gradually merging with the Rub al-Khali. Rainfall on this plateau is infrequent, but there are a number of fertile wadi. The most important of these are Bishah and Tathlith, where relatively large-scale oasitic cultivation is possible.

**AL-HASA**

Al-Hasa is Saudi Arabia’s sixth geographical region. Its width from the edge of the Dahna desert to the sea averages about 160 km (100 miles). It stretches over 320 km (200 miles) along the Arabian Gulf, from Kuwait in the north to Oman in the south (Lipsky et al. 1959: 23). Daytime temperatures range from 38°C (100°F) in the winter to 49°C (120°F) in the summer. The humidity is high throughout the year, frequently reaching 100 percent for extended periods. This, together with the warm air, produces
dense night fogs. Annual precipitation is about 20 mm (0.8 inches) on average (MAW 1984: 21). Winds blowing in from the north help to alleviate the discomfort of the high humidity, making the coastal area bearable in summer and comfortable in winter (Nyrop et al. 1982: 53).

Both sedentary townsmen, who inhabit the oases, and nomadic bedouin pastoralists occupy this region. Traditionally, there has been much travel by caravans through this area which provides a direct land route from south and central Arabia to the Levant. Bedouin qaba’il were involved in raiding the caravans as well as providing protection for the travellers and their goods. Additionally, because pastures in this region are particularly good for grass, the bedouin raised not only camels but sheep and goats too resulting in a semi-nomadic way of life. Among the principal qaba’il which occupied this area were the Bani Khalid, Awazim, and Ujman.

The coastline of this easternmost region is diverse, comprising sandy plains, marshlands, and salt flats. Nevertheless, it is endowed with numerous natural springs that greatly enhance the region’s agricultural potential. Indeed, the largest oasitic settlements in all of Saudi Arabia are found here. The most important of these is al-Hasa Oasis, which has an area of 150 sq. km (60 sq. miles) and boasts some 12,000 hectares (30,000 acres) of irrigated land. It supports two towns: Hofuf and Mubarraz. The former (once the capital of the region) has a population of 60,000, the latter 28,000. In addition, there are 52 villages and hamlets, whose combined population exceeds 150,000. This and the other oases of the al-Hasa region are famed for their high quality dates and plentiful water resources (Walpole et al. 1971: 15).
Outside of the oases, the principal urban settlements are Dhahran, Dammam, al-Khobar, and Ras at-Tanura. These have grown in direct response to the international petroleum trade. Dammam, on the coast, has a population of 100,000 and is the new capital of the region. Ras at-Tanura, to the north of Dammam, was developed by ARAMCO (the Arabian American Oil Company) as the terminal for its pipeline from the Dhahran oil fields.

CONCLUSION

As the above examination of Saudi Arabia’s six regions shows, there is considerable climatic and physical diversity in the Arabian Peninsula. Some have a significant coastline; some are mostly desert, while others yet support good arable land. The variety of physical features in these regions, the climate, settlement patterns, crops, flora, and fauna, have influenced the lives of the qabila members who have occupied the deserts and oases, and later, the cities.
Endnotes

1 The word Hawtah comes from the verb hata which means “to surround” or “enclose” or else from haet which means “wall.” In the context of Hawtah Beni Tamim we may infer that it refers to the original area where the Tamim used to put down their camp in the form of an enclosure. The name lives on in modern Arabia to refer to an area southeast of Riyadh. None of the Beni Tamim participants in my study had actually visited the area. However, they were quick to refer to it as an example of how expansive the Tamim population was in Nejd.

2 The Arabic term ghazal, by which English speakers identify the whole species, in Arabic actually refers only to the newborn kid (Rentz 1978: 541).

3 On Jebel Souda, the highest point in the region, the government has opened a falcon breeding center.
CHAPTER 5

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter discusses the historical background of the Arabian Peninsula starting with prehistoric Arabia, through the rise of Islam, the era of the Prophet Mohammad, followed by schisms in Islam, and ending with the rise of the modern state of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The qabila whom I have researched, the Beni Tamim, the Ateibah, and the Anazah, are people who rose from this land and who absorbed this particular history and tradition of Islam and of the pre-Islamic pagan beliefs in the land.

The strategic location of Saudi Arabia has given its people a significant heritage and unique customs which they have carried with them, and which is the central focus of my research: what particular habits and customs have been transferred and kept as the three qabila moved within the peninsula? How did these customs and habits survive time and modernity?

This chapter takes a look at the rise of Wahhabism, the predominant fundamental form of Islam that rules the land and is adhered to by the qaba'il population, and ends with Saudi Arabia as a major oil-exporting state caught between modernity and conservatism. Since my research is on what has changed and what has stayed the same in
qabila life and practices, this chapter on the history of the Arabian Peninsula situates the reader and helps the reader appreciate the extremes between which the Kingdom and its people are caught. Ultimately, I am interested in diagnosing the ways that the qabila have accommodated change.

PREHISTORIC ARABIA

The Arabian peninsula has not always been as arid as it is today. From very early times, prehistoric humans have settled along lakes and waterways. During the Middle Pleistocene ice age (approximately 700,000 B.P.), when Europe was virtually frozen terrain, Arabia enjoyed a temperate climate, lush vegetation, and abundant water resources (MAW 1984: 9; McClure 1976: 755). Shallow lakes and verdant grasslands supported large animals such as Hippopotami, Rhinoceros, and Crocodile (Zarins et al. 1979: 38). But wet luxuriant periods such as this were characteristically followed by long dry periods. Cycles of alternating wet and dry periods followed one another for millennia before human occupation. The most recent of these dry periods began around 6,000 years ago and has continued into the present (MAW 1984: 9).

Neolithic cultures began to appear in the Arabian peninsula sometime around 10,000 years ago. During this time there were gatherer-hunter populations that began to establish sedentary communities and to domesticate animals. While agriculture seems to have originated north of Arabia, among the Natufians in Palestine and among the inhabitants of Jericho (Fagan 1974), the neolithic peoples of Arabia appear to have concentrated primarily on the domestication of animals. Saudi Arabian archaeologist
Abdullah Masry (1977: 11) has suggested that these people lived in “partially settled communities based on small-to-medium sized mammal herding, possibly [of] domesticated cattle and sheep.” Thus far the earliest neolithic settlements discovered in Saudi Arabia are situated in the eastern, central, and, to a lesser extent, northwestern wadi systems (ibid.). Early-neolithic herders favored springs and river banks for their semi-permanent settlements.

Numerous petraglyphs depicting humans, animals, and hunting scenes (dating from 6,000 to 2,000 B.C.E.) have been discovered throughout the peninsula. These give us a valuable glimpse into the lifeways of early neolithic peoples in this part of the world. The petraglyphs suggest that the population at that time lived in small groups and was dependent on hunting for its livelihood. They show hunters with sticks and bows-and-arrows bringing down gazelle, oryx, wild goats, and wild camels (Anati 1968; Zarins et al. 1980: 10; Zarins 1982: 20). The rock art reveals much about the appearance of the people themselves. Etchings of women with hair in ringlets hanging down their necks have been discovered on petraglyphs at Jubba in north-central Arabia, which date from 8,000 to 5,000 years ago. One etching clearly shows a woman with tattoos around her neck. Archaeologist Zarins (1982: 25) describes the female figures as having “breasts...bountifully proportioned and covered by halter tops...waists [that] are pinched in and thin...[and] buttocks [that] are fairly prominent.” Male figures are depicted with “flat-topped headdresses...and what appear to be necklaces, chest ornaments and belts.” Each male figure has a penis sheath, held in place by a string or cloth with its ends protruding behind like a double tail.
By the fourth millennium B.C.E. the prehistoric inhabitants in the area of Wadi Sirhan, in the northern part of the peninsula, were building megalithic structures, probably for ritual purposes (Zarins 1979: 73-76). The evidence for this can be found at Rajajil, just to the south of Sakaka. Here there is a complex of sandstone pillars some up to 3.5 meters (11.5 ft.) high, positioned in a straight line facing the rising sun. Lacking evidence of living structures, or the remains of hearths, this megalithic complex may have served religious purposes. Archaeologists think it may have been a ceremonial center because, not far away, are a number of pillars, an ancient well, the remains of several semi-sedentary villages, and some tumuli (Zarins 1978: 76).

By the final stages of the Neolithic, that is the third millennium B.C.E., there were numerous settlements in the central part of Arabia. The remains of such settlements have been discovered at Wadi Dawasir and in the Aflaj and Khajir oases. Such settlements are characterized by stone complexes, including rather enigmatic triangular- and kite-shaped forms that may have served as livestock pens (Zarins et al. 1979: 24-29).

Between 3,000 and 2,500 B.C.E. some early Arabian people succeeded in domesticating the dromedary, or one-humped camel (Bulliet 1990: 56). The domestication of the camel brought with it a new way of life, in which herders could engage in long distance travel in a manner previously quite impossible (Ochsenwald and Fisher 1990: 15).
Meanwhile in the verdant hills of the southwest, as well as in the oases throughout the peninsula, other people were able to develop mixed economies that combined animal husbandry and horticulture. During this period there is also evidence for early contact between the inhabitants of the peninsula and people from contiguous regions (Masry 1977: 11).

In northern Arabia pottery shards have been discovered that resemble those found at Beidha in modern Jordan, thus suggesting a late neolithic contact between the southern Levant and northern Arabia. Similarly, in the eastern section of the peninsula, both south of Kuwait and inland near Hofuf, archaeologists have discovered pottery shards associated with the 'Ubayd culture of southern Mesopotamia. Clearly there was also considerable contact between eastern Arabia and Mesopotamia (Masry 1977: 11; Burkholder 1984: 17; Oates 1986: 79). In fact, this contact foreshadows the extensive ties that later developed between these two areas (Masry 1977: 11). As the peoples of Arabia came to be associated with a number of culturally distinct civilizations, "the ensuing dialogues," writes Masry (pp. 11-12), "were very crucial... in defining the character of each specific region of Arabia."

HISTORIC ARABIA

When Arabia first enters the historical record we find that there is no single homogeneous political power or population that characterizes the whole peninsula. Instead, there are diverse groups of people inhabiting different areas. The populations living along the margins of the peninsula in 1) eastern Arabia (known through Akkadian
and Sumerian inscriptions), 2) southern Arabia (known through south Arabian inscriptions), and 3) northern Arabia (known through Liyanite, Thamudic, and Safaitic inscriptions) are the best recorded in ancient inscriptions. Those who inhabited western and central Arabia are the least well known. Information on their way of life has come down to us orally through classical Arabic poetry, as well as references to them through the Quran and oral traditions collected by Arab historians some hundred years after the death of the Prophet Mohammed (d. 632 C.E.).

The pre-Islamic history of Arabia is important because so many of the social institutions and religious practices were either maintained by the Muslim Arabs or else they reacted against them. Among those elements which were retained are *al-Arabiyya*, or the Arabic language and the tradition of oral poetry, an urban life style which dates back many centuries, and the possession of sacred religious sites which are points of pilgrimage. Those elements which were rejected include polytheism, the office of *kahin* or one who foresees the future, and certain social practices such as female infanticide.

**EASTERN ARABIA**

One of the earliest historical accounts of Arabia has been left by the Sumerians and dates to the middle of the third millennium B.C. It describes Dilmun, a civilization located along the eastern coast of Arabia and on the island of Bahrain (Hourani 1975: 6, Masry 1977), as a mythical place without illness, old age, or death (Rice 1985: 79-80):
The land of Dilmun is holy, the land of Dilmun is pure,
The land of Dilmun is clean, the land of Dilmun is holy,...
The lion kills not,
The wolf snatcheth not the lamb,...
The dove droops not the head,
The sick-eyed says not "I am sick eyed,"
The sick-headed says not "I am sick headed"
Its old woman says not "I am an old woman,"
Its old man says not "I am an old man."

Later inscriptions from the third and early second millennia B.C.E. describe Dilmun as a thriving commercial center. Due to its strategic position on the Gulf, it was able to grow into a prosperous entrepôt linking Mesopotamia with the Indus Valley (Rice 1985: 72). Dilmun's industrious merchants provided the city states in the Tigris-Euphrates valley with goods such as timber, dates and onions, and a precious commodity, which Sumerian texts refer to as "fish eyes", probably pearls (Rice 1985: 81). Sailing into Dilmun's harbors were ships laden with such commodities as cedar wood, grain, and flour from the Sumerians (p. 177), and ivory (possibly also pottery) from the Indus Valley (p. 177, 180). At the height of Dilmun's prosperity wealthy settlements thrived on the Arabian mainland. There were sizable settlements near Tarut Island and Abqaiq near Dahran, where Dilumite merchants traded local products (such as dates) for imported goods.³

The people of Dilmun shared some religious beliefs with the Sumerians, as evidenced by the limestone, Sumerian-style, statues that were found on Tarut Island. Archaeologist Rice (1985: 215-216) describes one statue as having a:
Broad, rather podgy face with wide, adoring eyes with which the
Sumerians were accustomed to portray themselves when engaged in
prayer. He is nude, which suggests that he is a priest or an official, since
in early Sumerian times there is evidence that the priests conducted their
rites in a state of ritual nudity.

Dilmun’s prosperity began to decline when mercantile trade between the Indus
valley and the city states of Mesopotamia began to wane. By 700 B.C.E. Dilmun had
fallen under the control of the Assyrians who, after devastating Babylon, claimed most of
Mesopotamia (Bibby 1967).

SOUTHERN ARABIA

By the first millennium B.C.E. (or possibly later, cf. Groom 1981: 23; Crone
1987: 15) another part of Arabia, the southwest, had grown into an economic power.
This indigenous population (in the literature simply referred to as “South Arabians”) was
located in modern-day Yemen. Here a number of city states: Ma’in, Saba’, Qataban, and
Himyar (with their respective capitals: Qarnaw, Marib, Tamn’a, and Shabwa) vied among
themselves for regional control (Shahid 1970: 7). These South Arabian kingdoms
flourished, in large part, because monsoon rains allowed the region to develop a strong
agricultural base, and thus to support a dense population (Donner 1981: 12).

The ancient society of South Arabia was highly stratified, much as it is today
(Sargeant 1977). There were peasant farmers, skilled craftsmen, and artisans (who
carved ornate statuary and built temples), and engineers (who designed sophisticated
irrigation works, including the well-known dam at Marib). The cities of South Arabia
were graced by multi-columned temples and elegant palaces. These city states were
governed by priest-kings known as mukarrib, an office which eventually became
secularized and known as malak, or king (Doe 1983: 105).

The people of the city states spoke dialects of a Semitic language related to
Amharic, and developed their own South Arabian script (Doe 1971: 22). While the
earliest South Arabian inscription is thought to be from the seventh century B.C.E. (Vida
1944: 30), establishing a chronology for these city states is fraught with difficulties
(Saunders 1965: 5; Vida 1944: 31; Beeston 1959; Crone 1987). Nevertheless, much of
what we know of this South Arabian civilization has been deduced from inscriptions
found on monuments and rock faces in the region, which provide the names of ancient
clans and ruling families, as well as those of major deities. Many of the gods were astral;
paramount among them was a moon deity, variously known as Ilumquh, ‘Amm, Wadd, or
Sin. His consort was a sun goddess, Dhat Hamym, “she who sends forth strong rays of
benevolence”. Temples, as well as any new building projects, were dedicated to such
deities (Shahid 1970: 9; Doe 1971: 25-26).

Around 900 B.C.E. South Arabia’s naval fleet gained control of the Red Sea and
established a flourishing trade with Egypt, Abyssinia, and India. The South Arabians
monopolized the incense traffic from the Hadramawt, as well as the spice trade with India
(Saunders 1965: 5). South Arabia grew from a regional into an international power,
primarily through its trade in frankincense (Boswellia) and myrrh (Myrrhis). These
resins (known respectively in Arabic as luban and murr) come from trees growing in the
Hadramawt, Socotra, Somalia and Ethiopia. There was considerable international demand for frankincense, particularly because of its use in ritual activity (Crone 1987: 13; Groom 1981: 1-21).

The South Arabian city states of Saba’ and Ma’in entered into fierce competition for control of the incense trade, but developed different marketing strategies (Saunders 1977: 5-6). The Sabaeans conducted their trade by sea, using a large mercantile fleet that plied the Red Sea waterway. They traded the African variety of incense obtained from their colonies in Ethiopia (cf. Crone 1987: 22). The Minaeans, on the other hand, exported the local Arabian incense and conducted their commerce via overland trade routes through the northern part of the peninsula (Saunders 1977: 5-6).

Information on the chronology of the Ma’in kingdom is scanty; it probably flourished from about the 5th century B.C.E. to around the 2nd century C.E. (Doe 1971: 69-70). At the height of its power, Ma’in had direct control over the western Arabian coastline. It also gained control over the northern town of Daydan (al-‘Ula) from which it controlled the incense route as it passed through the western part of the Arabian peninsula (Saunders 1965: 5; Doe 1971: 69-70).

The Sabaeans eventually won the competition in trading their respective incenses (African and Arabian) and were able to corner the entire market, so that only African resins could be purchased in Greece and Rome (Saunders 1964: 6). With the economic decline brought about by the loss of the incense trade, together with the seizure of its
northern outpost by the North Arabian Nabateans in 312 B.C.E., the political power of
the Ma‘in kingdom began to decline and it was eventually absorbed into Saba’ (Saunders
1964: 6).

The Sabaeans, in their turn, were unable to sustain for long the economic and
political power they had won at the expense of the Minaeans. Saba’s commercial power
was undermined by the Ptolemies (Greco-Egyptian rulers of Egypt) when, in 317 B.C.E.,
they reopened an ancient canal linking the Nile with the Red Sea. From now on Egyptian
ships could sail directly into African, and even Indian ports. This development
effectively cut the Sabaeans out of the trade both in Indian spices and African resins
(Saunders 1977: 7). In 115 B.C.E., the Sabaean monarchy was overthrown by a
neighboring South Arabian state, Himyar.

The Himyar Kingdom was the last of the ancient South Arabian polities to rise in
this area (Doe 1971: 58). According to archaeologist Doe (ibid.), the Himyarites engaged
in trade with the East Africans, sending ships along the African coast as far south as
Zanzibar. They also traded with Rome, primarily from their port of Muza. By the time
of the Himyar kingdom, however, trade between South Arabia and the outside world was
far less extensive than it was in earlier periods. Himyar’s political power rested primarily
on its agricultural wealth, not on its control of maritime trade.

In the third century C.E., southern Arabia was invaded by Christian Abyssinia
which, for a short period, controlled a large part of the southwest coast of the Arabian
peninsula before withdrawing its forces. One consequence of Abyssinian domination
was the baptism in 360 C.E. of the Himyar king Tha’ran Yuhan’im (Doe 1971: 80). As a reflection of the political climate of the period, the Himyar rulers were at times Christian and, at other times, espoused Judaism.

Both Judaism and Christianity had adherents in Southern Arabia. A Jewish community was established here by the fourth century C.E when the Himyar king Asad converted to Judaism (Guillaume 1954: 11). The first Christian was the Greek Bishop Theophilus Indus of Baghdad, dispatched by the Byzantine Emperor Constantius II, in the mid-fourth century. Bishop Indus built a number of churches, the largest of which was in Aden. But, Christianity proved most popular among the inhabitants of Najran, an Arab town located north of the Himyar kingdom. Najran, already an important pilgrimage center because of its pagan shrine, became for about 150 years a major center for Arab Christianity (Doe 1971: 27-28).

The majority of South Arabians did not espouse Christianity. Most remained polytheist, who were sometimes antagonistic to the Christian (ibid.). For example, in the 6th century C.E., Dhu-Nuwas, Himyar’s last ruler (whose mother was a Jewess) initiated a campaign to rid his country of Christian elements. He destroyed the churches, and in 523 C.E. invaded Najran. Dhu-Nuwas required that all the Christians of Najran to convert to Judaism. When they refused to do so, he commanded that huge trenches be dug, and filled them with timbers to form a great fire pit into which the recalcitrant Christians were thrown alive (Saunders 1965: 13). When news of this atrocity reached the Abyssinians
they returned in force to South Arabia and defeated the Himyar army in a battle during which Dhu-Nuwas perished. The Himyar kingdom now became an Abyssinian province (Saunders 1965: 13; Doe 1971: 15).

During this second period of Abyssinian rule the great dam of Marib collapsed; its waters spilled into the desert causing large areas of agricultural land to dry up and revert to sand (Doe 1971: 97). This event, along with the political turmoil that resulted from the Abyssinian invasion, seems to have caused some South Arabians to migrate northwards; others remained, but abandoned sedentary agriculture for nomadic pastoralism (Saunders 1965: 14).

In 570 C.E., the year of the Prophet Muhammad’s birth, the Abyssinian governor of South Arabia, Abraha, invaded the Hijaz and attacked Mekkah. His army, which included an elephant (Muslims still refer to the year of the Prophet’s birth as the “Year of the Elephant”), was defeated and Abraha returned to South Arabia. Here he faced a revolt by the local people, who called upon the Zoroastrian Persians to assist them in expelling the Abyssinians (Saunders 1965: 13-14). In 575 C.E. South Arabia became a Persian province, a status it retained until it was conquered by Muslim forces in the 7th century (Saunders 1965: 14; Doe 1971: 15).

NORTHERN ARABIA

A third congeries of Arabian peoples lived in the northern part of the peninsula. They are mentioned in historical records that date to the 9th century B.C.E. An Assyrian inscription of 854 B.C.E. tells of how “Gindibu the Arab” led a force, with a thousand
camels, against the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III, and engaged in fighting along the border of the Syrian Desert (Saunders 1965: 5). A series of later Assyrian reliefs portray King Ashurbanipal’s campaign in the 7th century B.C.E. against the “land of Aribi”. They depict the Aribi people as riding camels and using tents for shelter, much in the style of more recent bedouin pastoralists (Vida 1944: 33).

The people of Aribi portrayed in the Assyrian reliefs are presumably a North Arabian population of camel pastoralists. But, at this time there was also a sedentary, urban-based population, with flourishing towns at Dawmat al-Jandal (modern Jawf), Tayma, and Daydan. About a hundred years before the 7th century reliefs were carved, we learn of the citizens of Tayma being required to pay tribute to the king of Assyria (O’Leary 1973: 53). Urban merchants were involved in the caravan trade linking Arabia with Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Egypt. Sometime in the 5th century B.C.E. Daydan fell under the control of the South Arabians, whose domination lasted (as noted earlier) until the rise of the Nabatean kingdom in the fourth century B.C.E.

The Nabateans controlled not only Daydan, but also, by 321 B.C.E., Tayma, and Mada’in Saleh, and settlements located in Wadi Dawasir, now part of north central Saudi Arabia (Patrich 1990: 21). The Nabatean kingdom, at its apogee, stretched from the Negev desert in the west to Wadi Sirhan in the east, and from Bostra in the north to Mada’in Saleh in the south. Petra (now in southern Jordan) was the kingdom’s capital; it was a city of luxurious, multi-hued buildings and monuments, all carved into sandstone cliffs.
The Nabateans, although they spoke a dialect of Arabic, used Aramaic (a Semitic language originating in the Levant) for their official inscriptions and coinage (Vida 1944: 36). It is largely through such inscriptions that we are able to reconstruct some of the details of Nabatean culture. The Nabateans were polytheists. They worshipped a paramount god, whom they called Dushares, literally “Lord (dhu) of the Shara mountains”,7 as well as two major goddesses, Allat and al-‘Uzza (Hammond 1973: 95-96). The name Allat is simply the female form of El (the generic form for deity in Semitic languages); as Hammond tells us (ibid.), it was widely used by Arabic-speaking peoples at this time. The Nabateans worshipped Allat as the consort of Dushares as well as a goddess of war and fertility, while they associated Al-‘Uzza, “the powerful one” with the planet Venus, seeing her as a war goddess also. Allat and Al-‘Uzza were believed to be rivals. Other important Nabatean deities included the female Al-Kutba, literally “the scribe”, and Shai al-Qaum, meaning “protector of the clan” (Hammond 1973: 97).

The Nabateans had both iconographic and aniconographic representations of their deities. Icons took the form of carved stelae, stone slabs incised with basic anthropomorphic features (such as eyes and nose, but no mouth). Anicons (objects that have no representational likeness to the deity they symbolize) included uncarved stelae (otherwise similar to the carved ones), as well as completely unworked small stones (Hammond 1973: 100). The stelae (whether carved or not) were either fixed stone slabs set into niches cut into walls, or else they were portable, designed to be carried about with the devotee. Aside from their aniconic function, nothing else is known about the ritual use of the small stones (Patrich 1990: 83).
The Nabateans put up large rectangular temple buildings with finely detailed façades. They also built much smaller altars, usually carved into rock faces, but sometimes made from slabs of stone and left as free-standing constructions (Hammond 1973: 101). There were priests who participated in religious ceremonies, but the details of their liturgical activities are unknown (Hammond 1973: 105).

From the Nabatean inscriptions we learn that their polity was ruled by a malak, or king. There was also a malaka, or queen, sometimes called the “Sister of the King” (Hammond 1973: 107). (Whether or not Nabatean royalty practiced sibling-marriage, in the style of Egyptian pharaohs, is unknown.) There were a number of government officials, among the most important being a chief minister who, according to Hammond (1973: 108-109), oversaw finance and justice and probably held a military rank as well. There were ambassadors to neighboring countries, and military leaders, the latter also charged with administrative duties (ibid.).

Nabatean society comprised urban dwellers, oases peasants, and nomadic herdsmen. In the towns there were occupational specialists, such as engineers, masons, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, sculptors, and artists. These people put up buildings that were both architecturally sophisticated and artistically elegant. They also knew how to construct complex hydraulic works (Hammond 1973: 110-111).

The city-based traders, merchants, and manufacturers were involved in the lively commerce, made possible by the Kingdom’s location along major trade routes. As mentioned earlier, the cities of Tayma, Daydan, and Mada’ in Saleh were important northern transit points. During the Nabatean period these cities served as major
transshipment centers, feeding gold, silver, spices, perfume, balsam, bitumen and fine ceramics into the Greco-Roman world (Hammond 1973: 65). Merchants stored commodities at sites such as el-Barid (now in Jordan), where huge caverns, hollowed out of cliffs, served as warehouses (ibid. p. 67).

Nabatean farmers, utilizing an elaborate system of canals, cisterns, dams and terraces, grew cereals, vegetables, fruit trees, and grapes. The major cereal crops were wheat, barley, and durra (a type of sorghum). Fruit trees included figs, pomegranates, dates and olives. Farmers kept oxen as beasts of burden; they also herded sheep and possibly goats as well (Hammond 1973: 73).

The Nabateans were, in all likelihood, nomadic herdsmen before adopting a sedentary lifestyle. In the early Nabatean period, historians mention townsmen as being part traders, part caravaneers, and part brigands; they also owned large numbers of livestock (Hammond 1973: 12-13; Bowersock 1983: 16-17).

The Nabatean kingdom survived for more than four hundred years. In 106 C.E. it was annexed by the Romans, who incorporated it into their “Provincia Arabia” (Saunders 1965: 39; Hammond 1973: 38). This province also included parts of southern Syria and Jordan that were never ruled by the Nabateans (Bowersock 1983: 1). Provincia Arabia remained more or less intact until the advent of Islam in the 7th century.
The Nabateans had been allies of Rome even before the annexation of their kingdom. In 25 B.C.E., they assisted a Roman army in its attempt to reach South Arabia along the land route from the north. The expedition was a failure, the entire Roman force being lost in the desert. The Romans never again tried to enter central Arabia (Vida 1944: 38).

Beyond the northern confines of the Nabatean state was another important kingdom, in what is now southern Syria. This was Palmyra, strategically located along the northern part of the trade route to Mesopotamia. According to the historian Vida (1944: 40), the Palmyrenes were "Aramaized Arabians". Their inscriptions were in Aramaic but their personal names were Arabic, which suggests an Arab origin (ibid.). But, the population of Palmyra was obviously mixed both ethnically and linguistically. Aramaic, Greek, and Latin were all spoken here.

From the third to the sixth centuries two other important Arab border states, located north of the Arabian peninsula, rose to prominence. One was Ghassan, the former Palmyra, but now with a true Arabic-speaking population. The other was Hira, located on the border of what is now southern Iraq. These two Arab polities were respectively under the authority of the Byzantine and Persian empires. Both were Christian in religion (Lewis 1966: 32). Ghassan was suppressed by the Romans in 584 C.E., while the Arab rulers of Hira were replaced by Persians administrators in 602 C.E.
WESTERN-CENTRAL ARABIA

West central Arabia, the area of the peninsula which would give birth to the new religion of Islam is very poorly documented during the early period. For information on the people of the western region we must rely upon the Quran and oral traditions. Concerning central Arabia, almost nothing definite is known about the inhabitants of this area with the exception of mention of the Kinda who had a kingdom in central Arabia in the 5th century C.E.

Arab society in west central Arabia, in the 6th century immediately preceding the rise of Islam, comprised two categories of people. On the one hand, there were qaba’il desert nomads, on the other settled populations of townsmen and farmers (cf. Saunders 1965: 3; Lewis 1966: 34-35). Both sets of people spoke Arabic, and at least some of the settled population shared qaba’il membership with the nomads. Despite linguistic and societal affinities, the two sets of people had evolved very different lifestyles. The bedouin were warrior-pastoralists dependent on raiding and herding for their livelihood; the sedentary population engaged in oasis agriculture or urban commerce. However, a symbiotic relationship had developed between the nomads and the sedentary peoples in which the bedouin depended upon the settled peoples to buy their livestock and hire their services; the sedentary population (particularly the urban dwellers) for their part depended upon the bedouin for the protection of their towns and merchant caravans.

Among the principal towns located in west-central Arabia before the birth of Muhammad were Yathrib (Medina), Mekkah, Taif, and Najran.
The merchants of west-central Arabia, residing in towns (such as Yathrib [Medina], Mekkah, Taif, and Najran) strategically located along the trade routes which linked the Levant and South Arabia engaged in the trade. There is however, considerable dispute among scholars as to which particular goods provided the basis of commercial activity during this period. The majority favors incense trade (Lammens 1928: a223; Watt 1953: 13; Hodgson 1974: 154). But, historian Patrica Crone takes an opposing view, maintaining that by this time, Greeks and Romans, obtained their incense by sea from Africa (Crone 1987: 51). Peters also questions the importance of incense. He suggests, at least for the Mekkahns, that leather and raisins were likely to have been more important trade items (1944: 75).

These Arabian towns also housed shrines in which a number of deities were worshipped. Pre-eminent among the deities was the supreme being Allah "creator of the universe." Associated with this male deity were three goddesses: al-Lat, al-’Uzza, and Manat. The Mekkahns believed these three to be Allah’s daughters (Guillaume 1954: 7). Al-lat, was associated with the sun and revered as the mother goddess. She was the goddess for the Thagif qabila and the center for her worship was a square shaped stone shrine in Taif, near Makkah. The second of the three great goddesses was al-’Uzza, the "mighty one", who was the patron deity of the Quraysh. She was linked to Venus and was the goddess of strength. The third deity Manat, was the goddess of fortune, both good and bad (Guillaume 1954: 8).
The pre-Islamic religion of these Arabians included the veneration of stones and trees. Each *qabila* had its own patron deity, which was worshipped in the form of a betyl, or sacred stone. A stone could be designated as *ans* (literally substitute), and worshipped as a person’s *qabila* deity (Faris 1952: 28). Trees too were regarded as sacred objects and seemed to have held special significance in the local belief system. The Quraysh worshipped a tree called *Dhat Anwat*, (literally that on which things are hung) found on the road from Mekkah to Taif. They also worshipped the goddess al-'Uzza in the form of three trees that grew in a valley not far from Mekkah (Noldecke 1908: 666).

The belief in *jinn*, or spirits thought to haunt deserted and desolate places, was an important aspect of the pre-Islamic religion of the Arabia. These spirits were capable of causing harm, they could also be manipulated as, when a *kahin*, one who foretold future events in rhymed speech, was believed to be possessed by a *jinn* (Henninger 1981: 11, 14).

Pre-Islamic Arabs built shrines to house the more important of their deities. This as we have seen with Al-lat who was worshipped at a special shrine in Taif. Probably the most important of these deity shrines, at least at the time of the Prophet, was that known as the Ka’aba, or cube, in Mekkah. This cube-shaped shrine housed images of Allah, his three daughters, and others. Also, at one corner of the Ka’aba was a stone, *al-hajar al-aswad*, or the black stone. Near the shrine was a sacred well known as zamzam (Hodgson 1974: 156). Though the sources are not clear, it seems possible this water may have been used for ritual ablutions before praying at the Ka’aba.
Pilgrimage, whether to the Ka’aba or other sacred sites was an important aspect of the religion of the people of Arabia at this time. For example, outside of Mekkah, at Mount Arafat specially attired pilgrims performed a series of rituals during certain sacred months, when all violent actions and feuding were suspended (Noldeke 1908: 668; Martin 1987: 338; Peters 1994: 116-117). The object of the pilgrimage, to which deities it was addressed, has not come down to us. However, we do know that the participants began their pilgrimage at Arafat where they stood together before passing through Muzdalifah on to the valley of Mina where they threw stones at a number of pillars. After Mina the pilgrims participated in a great feast (Noldeke 1908: 668). The honorific of haggagu (a male who has performed the pilgrimage) appears to have been common at this time (ibid.).

All available evidence points to the fact that pre-Islamic Arabs of the west-central Arabia were polytheists. Nevertheless, there were living amongst them some Jewish and Christian communities (Guillaume 1954: 11). By the time of Muhammad there were Jewish communities scattered throughout the Hijaz with a particularly large one at Medina which may have comprised half that city’s population. Jews also owned land in a number of oases and prospered in the iron trade as suppliers of arms and agricultural implements (p. 12). By the time of the Prophet there were certainly some Christian communities in the Hijaz with two Christian tribes, Judham and ‘Udhra, mentioned in the literature. It is not recorded to which sect of Christianity that these tribes belonged, but they were almost certainly monophysite probably supporting communities of monks who espoused an aesthetic religious life. Najran, in southwest Arabia was a center for Arab
Christian. Moreover, Christianity was well established in adjacent areas of the Peninsula with which the Arabs were familiar. For example, in the northwest in Syria, in the northeast in Hira near the Euphrates River in modern Iraq, and the southwest in Yemen (Guillaume 1954: 14-15; Hodgson 1974: 157). Whether or not there was a resident Christian community in Mekkah at the time of the Prophet is unknown, although there was certainly a Christian presence there. Christian traders passed through that city. Abyssinian militia and craftsmen were employed by the local merchants (De Lacey). Moreover, Waraqa the cousin of the Prophet’s wife was said to be Christian (Hodgson 1974: 157-159).

MUHAMMAD AND THE RISE OF ISLAM

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was born in Mekkah in 570 C.E. and died there in 632 C.E. He was a member of the prosperous Quraysh qabila. He was orphaned as a youth and raised by his uncle Abu Talib, whom he accompanied on trading trips to Damascus, later becoming an accomplished trader in his own right. At the age of 25 he married a wealthy widow, Khadijah, 15 years his senior, who was to be his only wife until her death. Muhammad took control of Khadijah’s trading business (Watt 1980: 11-13).
Sometime during Muhammad's 40th year he experienced a religious crisis that compelled him to seek the solitude of a cave outside of Mekkah. Here he meditated and, Muslims believe, received divine revelations from Jibril (the Biblical Gabriel). After casting aside his initial doubts, he began to preach the messages that he believed Jibril to have given him.

At first the people of Mekkah seemed to have accepted Muhammad as a rather innocuous preacher (Watt 1961: 21). He taught that there was only one god, Allah, and that there would be a final day of judgment, when all people would have to account for their actions. Over time, however, the tone of Muhammad's message changed. From being a simple rasul, or "prophet, he became a nadhir, or "warner", declaring dire consequences would befall those who did not heed his message (ibid.). This change in stance provoked opposition from many people, even from members of his own family.

As opposition mounted, those who accepted Muhammad's teachings were often persecuted. Increasing hostility to the new sect, whose members called themselves Muslims, or "those who submitted", forced Muhammad, in July 622 C.E., to abandon his home in Mekkah and lead his followers to Medina. This flight from Mekkah to Medina (about 320 km., or 200 miles, as the crow flies) is known to Muslims as the hijrah, or "migration". The Islamic calendar takes this event for its beginning, with the hijrah era beginning on July 16, 622 C.E. (Saunders 1965: 26). In Medina Muhammad consolidated his religious, political, and military control over the new Muslim
community. Following numerous armed clashes with his opponents, in 630 C.E. Muhammad entered Mekkah at the head of his victorious Muslim army, thus successfully uniting the two cities under Islam.

THE MUSLIM STATE

Muhammad’s death in 632 C.E. (10 A.H.) left the Muslim community without a leader; he had no sons, nor had he appointed a successor. A consensus among the leading families in the community allowed the leadership to pass to Muhammad’s closest companion, Abu Bakr, on whom was bestowed the title khalifa rasul Allah, or “successor of the messenger of God”. The khalipha’s duties included being head of state, supreme judge, leader in public worship, and military commander (Hodgson 1974: 207; Fisher and Ochsenwald 1990: 37-38).

In less than a year Abu Bakr and his armies had conquered most of the Arabian peninsula. In the newly gained regions, except for Jews and Christians, all non-Muslims were required to convert to Islam. Jews and Christians were tolerated as ahl al-Kitaab, “people of the book” (followers of other sacred texts revealed by God); but they had to accept the legitimacy of Muslim rule.

Abu Bakr having secured the Islamization of the peoples of the Arabian peninsula, dispatched his armies on a jihad, or “holy war”, into Syria, Palestine, and Iraq (Saunders 1965: 43-44).
Omar, followed by Uthman, succeeded Abu Bakr as khalifa. Uthman, who belonged to the powerful Umayyads, began his twelve-year reign (644-56 C.E.) by placing his own family members in important political positions. He appointed his brother Abdul Allah as governor of Egypt and two cousins as governors of Kufah and Basra (both in Iraq). His second cousin (F.F.B.S.S.) Mu’awiyah who had become ruler of Syria under Omar remained in this office under Uthman (Saunders 1965: 61). The Umayyids profited hugely from the booty, which poured in from the conquered regions, but their common soldiers were very poorly paid. Consequently, some members of the Islamic community began to oppose Uthman, declaring his nepotism and greed were un-Islamic, contradicting the brotherhood of the Muslim community (Fisher and Ochsenwald 1990: 46). Such opposition culminated in 656 C.E., when a group of malcontents forced their way into Uthman’s Medina home and murdered him. A few days later, Ali, the Prophet’s cousin (F.B.S.) and son-in-law, was named khalipha.

FIRST SCHISM IN THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

Ali’s succession to the khalifate, following Uthman’s death was accepted by a majority; but his legitimacy was immediately challenged by Mu’awiyah who claimed that Ali had conspired with Uthman’s murderers (Fisher and Ochsenwald 1990: 47; Hourani 1991: 25). A year later, the forces of Ali and Mu’awiyah met in battle at Siffin, on the upper reaches of the Euphrates. But the battle was terminated without a victor. According to Islamic tradition, Mu’awiyah’s soldiers (who may have been losing the fight) placed pages from the Quran on the tips of their spears. The two sides agreed to
negotiate their differences, but a stalemate ensued, with Ali refusing to step down and Mu’awiyah remaining opposed to his khilafah. Subsequently, some members of Ali’s faction deserted him, charging that he should not have yielded to a negotiated settlement. These people became known as Kharijites, “the seceders” (Hodgson 1974: 217-218).

One of them, four years later (661 C.E.), assassinated Ali in Kufah. Mu’awiyah convinced Ali’s son Hassan to renounce any claim to the khilafah, to which he himself was now named, thus becoming the second ruler of a family dynasty, the Umayyids (from 639 C.E. to 750 C.E.).

The Shi‘at Ali, or Ali’s Party, refused to accept the legitimacy of the Umayyid rule this leading to the first major schism among Muslims. Those who followed Ali became the Shi‘i, and those who followed Mu’awiyah, are the ahl as-Sunnah (people of the path) and referred to as the Sunni (Hodgson 1974: 222). Shi‘i Muslims maintain that their Imam, or religious leaders, are direct descendants of the Prophet, through Fatima and Ali. They believe that Ali gained special knowledge of what was lawful and just through his familial relationship with the Prophet. For this reason Shi‘i declare the descendants of Ali have the sole right to lead the Muslim community (Hodgson 1974: 372). The Sunni, for their part, utterly reject Shi‘i claims. They maintain that the caliphate was solely an elective office and that kinship with the Prophet had no place in deciding one’s position in the Muslim community. Today the Sunni constitute the majority of the Muslims, both worldwide and in Saudi Arabia. In the Saudi Kingdom,
the Sunni interpretation of Islam is also that of the State. There are, however, some Shi’i among the citizenry, although they constitute a small minority that has its center located on the eastern coast and in parts of the southwestern region.

ARABIA: THE EUROPEANS AND THE OTTOMANS

When Ali moved the seat of the caliphate from Medina to Kufah, his action permanently removed the seat of the Islamic Empire outside of the Arabian peninsula. No other khalifa (Arab or otherwise) would rule from the Arab homeland which subsequently became little more than a provincial backwater as far as Muslim power is concerned. Nonetheless, its reputation as the birthplace of the Prophet and the location of the holy cities of Mekkah and Medina lent it a special status to those who ruled it. (The cities fell under the jurisdiction of the khaliphat but were under the day-to-day control of local Sharifs).

The Arab khaliphat ruled from Damascus (the Umayyids) until 750 C.E., at which time a new capital was established in Baghdad by the Abbasids which lasted until 1258 C.E. Afterwards the khaliphat was an appendage for the Arab Mamlukes in Egypt until 1517 C.E., when the Turkish Ottomans took over. The last caliph was disposed in Turkey in 1922 and the office abolished in 1924 (Aram 1968: 38).

During the Arab caliphate many of the coastal cities of Arabia were prosperous entrépôts for Muslim merchants engaged in long distance trade. The staples of this trade were paper and ink, porcelain, lacquer, silk, and gold, drugs, brocades, from China, and spices such as pepper, rubies, coconuts, ivory from India and southeast Asia. The fertile
southwestern coast of Arabia, offered Arab horses, ostriches, camels, palm wood, tanned skins produced agricultural products for trade (Hourani 1951: xx; Halliday 1974: 48). From Yemen, there were tanned skins, giraffes, colored gems. Heavy-laden with cargo, Arab galleys passed from Muscat on the Gulf, to the ports of Aden and Jeddah on the Red Sea, and on to one of the Egyptian ports. Ultimately the goods arrived in Cairo, from where they were distributed throughout the Mediterranean world (Hourani 1992: 111).

The 1500s, however, brought extensive changes in the pattern of world trade that directly affected Arabia.

In 1498 the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama landed in India and opened a new direct trade route from Europe to the far east. The Portuguese established bases in India from which they traded directly with Europe, thus destroying the middleman role of the Egyptian Mamlukes with India (Lewis 1958: 158). The Mamlukes rallied to defend their routes, but the Portuguese, with superior ships, defeated the Arab fleets (ibid.). Ports along the Arabian peninsula now lost their commercial significance.

The Portuguese, having established their hegemony over the far eastern trade now sought to extend control to include the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf (Lewis 1958: 158). The Mamlukes responded by establishing garrisons in western Arabia in order to protect both their commercial and religious interests from the Portuguese encroachment. The Mamlukes taxed the people of the Hijaz in order to pay for them (Nyrop et al. 1982: 24).
In 1517 the Mamlukes fell before the Ottoman Turks, leaving the greater parts of Egypt and Syria under Turkish rule for the next four hundred years (Lewis 1958: 160). Soon the Turks had expanded their empire as far as Morocco and, with the addition of Iraq in 1639, now became rulers of almost the entire Arabic-speaking world.

In the Arabian peninsula the Ottomans penetrated as far as al-Hasa on the Gulf and to Mocha in Yemen on the Red Sea. The Ottomans contested control of the waterways with the Portuguese who had established themselves in Bahrain, Muscat and Hormuz (Nawwab 1981: 93). Some areas of Arabia, however, resisted Ottoman rule. In the southern part of the peninsula, Yemen, which had become a Turkish province in 1537, regained its independence in 1635. To the west, the Sharifs of Mekkah and Medina though recognizing the sovereignty of Ottoman remained autonomous rulers with political affiliation to Cairo rather than Constantinople itself until the turn of the century (Lewis 1958: 160). The bedouin however, living in the interior of the Nejd mostly surrounded by desert, remained more or less independent of Turkish rule until the rise of Abdul Aziz Al Saud in the 19th century.

RISE OF THE MODERN STATE OF SAUDI ARABIA

By the 19th century the political situation in the Arab peninsula was complex. The Turks had command of the east coast, the British controlled the Trucial States, and the bedouin qaba’il in the interior were autonomous.
Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud (1880-1953), also known as Ibn Saud, single handedly forged the modern state of Saudi Arabia. Ibn Saud was born in 1880, and grew up in exile living with his father in Kuwait and other Arab cities, where he planned his political campaign to regain the Nejd for the Al Saud family. In his first foray, Abdul Aziz took Riyadh in a night raid with a small group of men (Fisher and Ochsenwald 1990: 546). He spent the following years fighting a series of battles to establish his control over central Nejd. Then he moved east finally conquering the whole of Al-Hasa, a territory which was later found to be rich with petroleum oil (ibid.).

World War I brought to the foreign interests to the forefront in Arabia. With Turkey allied to Germany, the British and Italians supported local Arab rebellions to undermine Turkish authority. The Italians and British attached Turkish telegraph lines and railroads. Meanwhile, Sharif Hussein the Amir of Mekkah, aided by T. E. Lawrence, attacked Turkish positions in order to force them out of the Hijaz (Lawrence 1927; Lawrence 1935; Nyrop et al. 1982: 30).

After the war, Ibn Saud seized Hail in the north, leaving only the Hijaz, where Sharif Hussein had appointed himself king of the two holy cities (Nyrop et al. 1982: 31). In September 1924, Ibn Saud’s forces attacked Hussein’s forces in Taif. One month later they occupied Mekkah. In the following year Jeddah surrendered, giving the Hijaz to Ibn Saud (Fisher and Ochsenwald 1990: 548). Three years later Ibn Saud signed an agreement in the capital city of Asir, by which that territory came under his jurisdiction
Thus, all the regions that form present-day Arabia were brought under Saud’s control. In 1932 Ibn Saud issued a proclamation naming the country the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Nyrop et al. 1982: 31-32).

Abdul Aziz’s next step was to establish a formal government. He established the four regional divisions of the country: the Nejd, the Hijaz, al-Hasa, and Asir, appointing a member from the royal family to rule each one. The Nejd was ruled by crown prince Saud, the Hijaz by Amir Faisel, al-Hasa by Abdullah ibn Jiluwi (Ibn Saud’s cousin) and Asir by Amir Turki (Nyrop et al. 1982: 33).

When Ibn Saud died in 1953, his eldest son Saud Al Saud, succeeded him as king and named a younger son, Faisel as crown prince. Saud did not have his father’s qualities for leadership. His reign, which lasted from 1953-1964, was characterized by extravagance and wastefulness. The Saud family became increasingly dissatisfied with his rule and eventually deposed him in 1964, appointing Faisel as king (Diller 1990: 217).

During Faisel’s reign (1964-1975) he brought about a number of important political and social reforms (cf. De Gaury 1966). He adopted strict measures to end waste and incorporate efficiency, while modernizing the state and society. In addition, Faisel drafted a body of fundamental laws, organized a consultative council, established a Ministry of Justice, abolished slavery, and in general set the pace for rapid economic and social development (Fisher 1990: 553). Faisel was also an innovator in education. He initiated a massive educational program which opened vocational training centers and
new institutes of higher education as well as establishing the first elementary schools for girls (Nyrop et al. 1982: 40-41). His rule lasted ten years, until he was assassinated on March 25, 1975 by a young nephew.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION

In the 1700s Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab began to preach a “pure” Islam that called for eradicating from the original teachings “superstitious beliefs” as well as mystical ideas and practices associated with saint worship (Rentz 1969: 270-272). Abdel Wahhab, born in the Nejd in 1703, went to Damascus where he studied a theology that advocated a literal interpretation of Quranic precepts and rejected any compromise of strict monotheism.

Indeed, this theology regarded the association of any object with God as *shirk*, the most heinous of sins. In keeping with this view, visiting the tombs of saints, no less than venerating trees and rocks, was seen as *shirk* and thus absolutely forbidden (*ibid.*). Along with *shirk*, al-Wahhab stressed the importance of *tawhid*, God’s uniqueness in deserving worship and the absolute devotion of his worshippers. *Bida’*, “innovations”, occur when there is a violation of God’s oneness. Such was the case in the later period of Islam. Therefore, by returning to the ways of the Prophet, strictly following the Quran and Hadith, both *shirk* and *bida’* would be avoided.

After preaching this strict and unpopular doctrine he was rejected by both the religious community and the local people wherever he traveled. In 1742 he found refuge in his hometown al-Uyaynah where the local ruler supported his cause and enabled
al-Wahhab to implement his teachings. He began by razing the tomb of Zayd al-Khattab, as well as those said to belong to the Companions of the Prophet. Additionally, he enforced the law of stoning an adulterous woman to death. Both incidents marked the establishment of applying tawhid and alamr bi al-Ma’rif wa al-Nahi an al-Munkar, “Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil” (Al-Yassini 1982: 62-3).

In 1744, he came to Dariyah, the home of the ruling Al Saud family. Here he found an ally in the person of Muhammad Al Saud. Together the two planned a jihad to reestablish Islam in the Nejd and cemented their arrangement through marriage alliances (Nyrop et al. 1982: 24-25). As part of their agreement, Wahhab and Al Saud joined the religious leaders, the ulama, in partnership with secular leaders, the umara (pl. of amir). The Al Saud would be the political power and the Al Shaykh (Wahhab’s descendants) would be the religious power (Rentz 1969: 272). To implement this doctrine the Al Saud family would fight for and propagate Wahhabi beliefs. This union created the first Saudi Wahhabi state.

Al Saud attacked Medina in 1801 and Mekkah in 1805. When the Wahhabis took over Medina and Mekkah, the Ottoman’s retaliated sending a force battle the Wahhabis. In 1816 Al Saud retreated to Dariyah, where he was killed (Nyrop et al. 1982: 27). The Saudi leadership reestablished their state at Riyadh once again putting into place the political and religious mission of the first. At the end of the nineteenth century conflicts between the Saud and al-Rasheed family forced the Saud family into exile, bringing to and end the Saudi-Wahhabi state.
The twentieth century revival was brought about by Abd al Aziz Saud. As we have seen from above, he not only re-conquered the territory of the original Saudi-Wahhabi state but also expanded it. An important addition was the inclusion of Mekkah and Medina under Wahhabi control. In 1924 when the Sharif al-Husayn abdicated, Abd al-Aziz erased the power of the Mekkan *sharifs* in Arabia by taking the Hijaz and proclaiming himself king (Rentz 1969: 272-273).

The success of Ibn Saud was in large part due to the *Ikhwan al Muslimiin*, “the Muslim Brotherhood” (Al-Yassin 1982: 65). Early in his conquests, Abdul Aziz had seen how Wahhabism could be a means to settle the *bedouin* and gain their loyalty. He convinced the desert Arabs that, in order to remain ready for a *jihad*, or holy war, they needed to settle in sedentary communities so that they might be in a constant state of readiness. He established about 200 settlements, known as *hijar*, mostly agricultural communities, which were a combination of religious and military camps. As warriors of the faith, they remained prepared to carry out Ibn Saud’s territorial conquests (Rentz 1969: 273; Shamekh 1975: 105-106; Al-Yassini 1982: 64-65).

After Abd al-Aziz conquered the Hijaz, the *Ikhwan* continued to carry out attacks against surrounding neighbors. They called for further *jihad* against Syria and Iraq and opposed all dealings with non-Wahhabis. Moreover, they resented Ibn Saud’s attempts to restrain them from their *jihad* and in 1928 revolted against al Saud. The period of militant Wahhabism came to an end when Abd al-Aziz crushed the revolt two years later and destroyed remaining *hijras* (Rentz 1969: 274).
Abdul Aziz’s rule was based upon the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam and his role was to preserve the tenets of the faith (Nyrop et al. 1982: 32). In order to modernize and yet satisfy the religious conservatives Abdul Aziz used a political strategy later Saudi monarchs would seek to imitate. He observed Wahhabi tenets, yet found acceptable ways within that code to introduce social innovations. A particular problem was the adoption of foreign mechanical devices such as automobiles, telegraphs and telephones which traditional Wahhabis felt were *bida‘*, innovations. The borrowing of such products should be condemned (Rentz 1969: 273). As historians Sidney Fisher and William Ochsenwald (1990: 548) observe:

[Abdul Aziz] carefully appraised and judged... [all social innovations]... The introduction of the telephone and radio into Arabia, for instance, was bitterly opposed by the arch conservatives among his Wahhabis, who argued that these instruments must be the agents of the devil since they could carry the voice so far. Ibn Saud neatly disputed that contention by pointing out that these instruments would bring the word of God and that one would be able to hear the Koran read by worthy ulema. The telephone and radio thus came to Arabia, and in doing so helped centralize and stabilize the power of the state over all its far-flung territories.

Abdul Aziz acknowledged the forces of religious conservatism, but he was pragmatic. He established in 1929, the “Committee for Encouragement of Virtue and Discouragement of Vice”, which was run by the *mutawwiin*, or volunteers, whose function was to eradicate laziness and immoral practices such as smoking, singing and the drinking of alcohol. But he balanced this action with important legislation that stated secular law could supplement Sharia law (Nyrop et al. 1982: 32).
The Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia has become intertwined with the Saudi state and state policies. State policies therefore reflect the mission of the Wahhabi. Ibn Saud’s pragmatism characterizes the Wahhabi movement within this period. But, overall Wahhabism remains conservative (Voll 1986: 315). Today, after Saudi Arabia has become a major oil-exporting state Ibn Saud’s successors have continued to favor both a pragmatic and conservative policy.

MODERNITY AND ORTHODOX ISLAM: ACCOMMODATING CHANGE

Khalid Al Saud, Ibn Saud’s oldest living son succeeded Faisel. His brief reign (1975-1982) was marked by the first modern uprising in the Kingdom, when several hundred rebels overtook the Kaaba and the Grand Mosque in which it is located. They proclaimed one of their number as the Mahdi, or Messiah, who was sent to rule the Kingdom. Among their denouncements were corruption and widespread immorality in the country. Although the uprising was suppressed, any movement toward secularization by the government was halted (Fisher and Ochsenwald 1990: 554).

Fahd, also a son of Abdul Aziz, followed Khalid as king. A younger brother, Prince Abdullah was appointed crown prince. Under King Fahd’s rule (1984-present), the country continued to experience religious unrest. In order to suppress these threats the Saudi government increased the role of the religious authorities in governmental affairs. These leaders were increasingly called upon to issue fatwas, or religious announcements, sanctioning government actions. Additionally, in 1986 King Fahd
replaced his official title of Monarch with *Khadiim al-Haramayn al-Shariifayn*, or “The Guardian of the Two Holy Mosques” which stressed his spiritual role over that of the temporal (Diller 1990: 218).

In recent years the Saudi government has had to face a number of external threats from neighboring countries (Miller 1990; Schofield 1991; Tschirgi 1991). In August 1990 Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and prepared to move into Saudi Arabia. American allies, concerned due to the strategic location of the Kingdom and the threat to the country’s oil fields, came to the military defense of Fahd. The war ended in February 1991 with the defeat of the Iraqi army.

Following the war the Saudi government made its first move toward democracy, by appointing 300 members to the *Majlis al-Shuraj*, or the Consultative Council. During the Gulf War the Saudi regime was plagued by demonstrations by its own citizens protesting various grievances. Religious fundamentalists complained against modernity and foreign influence in the Kingdom, while women protested in Riyadh for their right to drive automobiles. The Saud regime implemented the *Majlis* hoping to accommodate those who want tradition as well as those who want a more rapid modernization.

**CONCLUSION**

In this dissertation, which is on what has changed and what has stayed the same in *qabila* life and practices, it is essential to study the history of the land. In the past, Arabia was an economic power due to the incense trade. Today, that resource has been replaced by petroleum. Moreover, the Arabian Peninsula’s strategic location has made it a buffer.
for early civilizations, colonial powers, and present-day world powers. The qaba 'il members in Saudi Arabia are caught between modernity and conservatism, which is outlined in this chapter. As shown, the country has moved from Wahhabism, the predominant fundamental form of Islam that is strictly followed in Saudi Arabia by the qaba 'il population, to the building of the modern nation state and the discovery of oil, which brought with it much prosperity.

As this chapter has shown, Saudi Arabia has served through pre-Islamic times as a religious center, a role it continues even today as the seat of Islam, drawing millions of pilgrims internationally each year to the Kingdom. As Saudi Arabia enters the modernized world, religion has proved to be the most important factor in shaping present-day Arabia, which is the focus of the following chapter.
Endnotes

1 Considerable knowledge about this period was gained when archaeologists unearthed a collection of over 35,000 cuneiform tablets at a Mesopotamian temple site in Nippur. This find included a Sumerian poem of the Flood, which contains one of the first references to Dilmun, describing it as "the place where the sun rises" (Bibby 1969: 77).

2 There is some controversy as to the exact location of Dilmun. Most scholars (Bibby 1969; Caspers and Govindankutty 1978; Caspers 1979; Hourani 1975: 6; Rice 1985) favor Bahrain, with its strategic location in the Gulf, as fitting the description for Dilmun. The greater Dilmun area was not limited to Bahrain, but included most of the eastern littoral of Arabia, the modern day Al-Hasa region, along with Tarut Island and the Failakah Islands in the north (Rice 1985: 276). Indian historian Romila Thapir (1978), using linguistic evidence, prefers to place Dilmun in Kathiawar, on the west coast of India (but see also, Casper and Govindankutty's [1978] highly critical review of her thesis).

3 Archaeologists speculate that this period marks the beginning of the transition of small fishing villages into large settlements on the coast of Arabia and the development of agriculture into oases cultivation in the interior of the eastern region (Rice 1985: 216).

4 Frankincense was burnt in temples in honor of the gods as well as at funerals and in homes. It was also used in cooking to flavor food, as a medicine, and in perfumes. Myrrh was burnt as an incense, mixed with other ingredients in perfume, ingested or made into plasters for medicinal purposes, and rubbed on, or placed inside, bodies being prepared for embalming (Groom 1981: 14-21).

5 Crone (1987: 19-21), however, believes the competition was between Saba' and Hadramawt, not Saba’ and Ma’in. She bases her argument on the fact that frankincense originated in the Hadramawt and it was the Hadrami kings who traditionally controlled the overland route. But, discounting Minaean involvement in the incense trade makes it difficult to explain why they would have established urban colonies in the north of the peninsula.

6 Several sources suggest that there were additional Ma’in colonies in the north, viz. at Tayma and Jawf (Bawden 1975: 84; Masry 1981: 3). However, only Daydan is historically verified as a colony.

7 The Shara mountain range is located on the southern part of the Jordanian plateau. Its peaks rise to over 1,525 m (5,000 ft.), before dropping into the plain of Hisma (Bowersock 1983: 8).

8 Moreover, she notes that traditional Arabian spices such as cancamum, tarum, ladanum, and sweet rush, previously exported in large quantities, were no longer in demand (Crone 1987: 51).

9 Hussain assumed leadership of the house of Ali when Hassan died in 670 C.E. He also refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Umayyids. On the 10th of Muharram, 680 C.E., when Hussain was visiting Kerbala, in southern Iraq, with a small force of men, Yazid’s troops surrounded and killed him (Fisher and Ochsenwald 1990: 66). Subsequently, Shi’i Muslims would regard him as a martyr and observe the anniversary of his death as a major ritual event. Moreover, Kerbala became one of the most holy Shi’i pilgrimage centers.

10 There are several good biographies about the life of Ibn Saud. David Howarth (1964), in A Desert King: A Life of Ibn Saud gives a detailed account from Abdel Aziz’s youth to his unification of Arabia. Other notable accounts include Amin Rihani’s (1928), Ibn Saud of Arabia: His People and His Land which is now dated, and D. Van Der Meulen (1957), The Wells of Ibn Saud which also explores the influence of important European figures such as St. John Philby and T. E. Lawrence. French officer Gerald De Gaury (1951) provides a fine introduction to the house of Saud in Rulers of Mekkah.
By 1930 the Kingdom had been unified by Ibn Saud and hijār were no longer being established since their military function had ceased to be of importance. For a discussion of modern day nomadic settlements in the Kingdom see Ahmed Shamekh (1975) and Hussein Al Fiār (1977).

See J. E. Peterson, The Arab Gulf States: Steps Toward Political Participation (1988), for a general discussion of the changing expectations in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf towards fuller political participation. He also gives a brief history of the changing role of the Majlis Al-Shura in Arabia, which Abdul Aziz initially drafted in 1926 to include council members from the Hijāz (p. 112).
CHAPTER 6

QABA’IL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

With the description in the preceding chapter of the rise of the Saudi state and the role of Wahhabism in mind, in this chapter, I examine symbolic religious values in order to more directly address “how qaba’il identification is maintained.” I will use the analytical framework presented by Okely (1983) and Wallman (1979), which explores group identification from the perspectives of insiders and outsiders.

The chapter begins with a discussion of Islam as the official religion of the Saudi state. Saudi Arabia was formed by a tribal family who adhered to a fundamentalist Islam, known as Wahhabism. This explains why the Saudi state strictly requires all Muslims in the Kingdom to abide by a literal interpretation of Islam. Through strict application of Islamic law to all facets of life, the Saudi government enforces the Wahhabi interpretation as the dominant form of Islam in the Kingdom.
As we will see in this section, enforcing the ideology of the dominant society, Wahhabism, re-enforces qaba 'il religious ideology. However, there also exist some Muslim members of the community in Jeddah, who do not subscribe to Wahhabism, nor who are qaba 'il. Consequently, there are lines of separation expressed as boundaries between the qaba 'il and non-qaba 'il population.

In the last two sections of this chapter, I will examine the beliefs and practices of qaba 'il members, and how qaba 'il apply their religious tradition to every facet of life. Spicer (1962; 1971) posited that in order for group identification to persist, there must be shared moral values. He also asserted that motivation to maintain group identity was directly connected to symbols meaningful to those who identified with a particular historical experience. Wahhabism presents such shared moral values which form the core of qaba 'il identification.

ISLAM IN SAUDI ARABIA

The Saudi Arabian state officially governs according to the legal principals set out in the sharia, Islamic law, which embrace the whole of the believer’s personal and social life. During his lifetime Muhammad was at once prophet, judge, lawgiver, and social arbiter. The utterances that the Prophet Muhammad is said to have received directly from God, and which were later compiled into the Quran, served as the principal foundation of the sharia. The other primary reference for all Muslims is the hadith, a record of the details of the Prophet’s life or his sunnah (personal code of behavior), as well as his words outside of prophecy.
The *sharia* explains how the devout individual should live righteously, as well as how the community should conduct its affairs. *Qudah* (judges) apply the *sharia* to particular situations, first according to the statements in the Quran that directly apply to the case under consideration; second, by what is written in the *hadith*; third, by what is written in the *ijma*’ (the consensus of past legal experts); and fourth, by applying *qiyas* (analogy) or how the Quran or *hadith* might pertain to modern circumstances that did not exist at the time the documents were compiled.

Various schools of Islamic jurisprudence differ as to the emphasis they place on these four major sources of Islamic law. Each school seeks to be all-embracing, that is, to govern every aspect of personal and community life; but each has its own special *fiqh* or insight into the nature of divine law. Sunni Islam recognizes four different schools of jurisprudence: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i, and Hanbali, each named after a medieval scholar known as a *fuqaha* or jurist.

The modern-day Saudi Arabian state takes the Hanbali school (named after Ahmad Hanbal, d. 855) as the basis for its religio-legal system. The Hanbali view asserts that the test of the Quran and *hadith* should be applied literally to present-day legal affairs. As such, Hanbali judges are not permitted to exercise personal reasoning when deciding a case. In Saudi Arabia, Wahhabi theology and Hanbali jurisprudence support and reinforce one another.

Wahhabism was founded in Arabia by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Al-Wahhab in the 1700s. He based his theological insights on the teachings of Ibn Taymiya (d. 1328), a Hanbali scholar of Damascus (Rentz 1969: 270-272). Ibn Taymiya believed
that what is not mentioned in the Quran or the Hadith had no place in Islam. He also refuted the doctrine of *ijma’* (consensus) and insisted that the state must implement Islamic law among its citizens. The Damascene scholar proselytized against any type of innovation, saint worship, any kind of Prophet cults, as well as any intermediary between God and His human worshippers (Al-Yassini 1982: 62-63). Ibn Taymiya rejected the validity of competing schools of Islamic jurisprudence. He also taught *jihad* (holy war), not only against Christians, but also Shi’i Muslims.¹ These beliefs formed the core of Wahhabi Islam as it is practiced in Saudi Arabia.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAM IN SAUDI ARABIA

Orthodox Islamic teachings maintain that every individual has equal and direct access to God. Nobody—saint, *imam* (priest), or even the Prophet himself—can mediate between an individual and Allah. Despite such teachings, however, a number of hierarchically organized religious offices have evolved within Islamic society. The Prophet Muhammad was succeeded by the four caliphs, Abubaker, Omar, Uthman, and Ali, leaders who wielded both temporal and spiritual powers. The institution of the caliphate, in which secular and religious authority were united in the person of the caliph himself, continued until the fall of the Ottoman empire. Present-day rulers of Saudi Arabia have upheld the tradition of uniting in their persons secular and religious authority. Thus, the present Saudi monarch, King Fahd, is regarded both as secular head
of state and as the country's supreme spiritual leader, or imam. To stress his religious role he has recently added the title, Khadiim al-Haramayn al-Shariifayn (The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques), to his secular title, King of Saudi Arabia.

While the head of state wields spiritual powers, the interpretation of religious doctrine and Islamic jurisprudence are the domain of a learned elite known as the ulema. Members of the ulema are religious scholars, teachers, and bureaucrats, who may or may not function as religious specialists. They constitute a special group which acts as the guardians of the sharia which closely connects with state government and which serves as qadis or judges, school administrators, and government officials. They are also beneficiaries of waqf land, i.e., land given to charity by wealthy patrons.

The most important member of the ulema is the Grand Mufti, the country's chief judge. The last mufti was a member of the al-Shaykh family, the direct descendants of Muhammad al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism. The present mufti is Sheikh Bin Baz. In general, strong conservative views prevail among the Saudi Arabian ulema. The Saudi Arabian ulema champion the Wahhabi orthodoxy and profess a strict literal interpretation of Islam.

Whereas the ulema attend to the interpretation of religious doctrine and especially the sharia, the day-to-day administration of rituals is the domain of the imam. The imam is responsible for leading the congregational prayers in the mosque and delivering the Friday sermon or khutba. Any male member of the community may serve as imam, but in the cities at least, the officiates are usually trained Quranic teachers.
LINES OF SEPARATION BETWEEN THE QABA’IL AND NON-QABA’IL

The Saudi state strictly requires all Muslims in the Kingdom to abide by a literal interpretation of Islam. Secularism is not only absent from the lives of Saudis, but it is inconceivable. Religion is at the heart of the country’s social, political, economic, educational, and legal institutions. Islam determines the functions of government and jurisprudence and specifies even the nature of banking. For instance, payments of interest are regarded as usury, which is forbidden in Islam. Regarding education, all Saudi schools are religious institutions that produce Muslims for a Muslim society. It is not even possible to imagine separate religious and secular spheres in such a society. The religion is exclusionary, in that no non-Muslim building or religious organization is permitted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

To ensure that individuals in society conform to Islamic mores, mutawwa (religious police) monitor the behavior of people in public places. The enforcement of the strict Wahhabi code leads to exclusionary boundaries that form within the Saudi society and that separate groups from one another. One manifestation of the exclusionary principle in the Kingdom can be seen in the lines of separation between the qaba’il and non-qaba’il population. For example, this is clearly evident in the different reactions the religious police provoke from qaba’il and non-qaba’il populations. One of the duties of the mutawwa is to monitor malls, restaurants, ice cream parlors, and any facility where people congregate that could lead to the unseemly mixing of males and females. Most restaurants are required to have partitions separating sections for male and female patrons. Recently, a Baskins and Robbins ice cream store, that could not comply with
this requirement due to cramped space, banned unescorted women inside the premises because of a mutawwa injunction. Non-qaba’il Hejazi Muslims scoffed at the insistence upon separation of the sexes and found the ice cream parlor restriction to be extreme. They informed me that when they visit other households, men and women sit freely together, which, they maintained, has always been the case with people from Jeddah. The tradition of the separation of the sexes, they told me, originated in the interior and has no basis in Islam. Qaba’il members, on the other hand, maintain strict separation of the genders, in private as well as public places. For them, it is a way of life and when asked I concerning its origin, they consider it rooted in Islam.

The muttawa also monitor for morality by checking women for compliance to modest dress codes. This includes forcing women to cover their faces with a veil in public. Non-qabila Hejazi Muslims that I interviewed disagreed with the mutawwa’s actions and have complained that veiling is a Nejdi or qabila tradition, not an Islamic requirement, since it is not mentioned in the Quran. In their view, all that matters is that a woman dresses modestly, and a tarha (headscarf) and abayah (long cloak) are sufficient. In fact, they mentioned that in earlier years in the Hejaz, women did not cover their face with a veil, that this custom has been recently introduced. As such, they were antagonized by the mutawwa. Qaba’il members, however, reacted differently to the mutawwa actions. Qaba’il women regularly cover their faces with a veil whenever they left their houses. Therefore, they had an expectation of the veil being part of the modest dress code.
Another way these lines of separation are manifested is through the practices of different schools of Islam. The Beni Tamim, Anazah, Ateibah, as most Saudis, adhere to Wahhabi theology which reinforces these precepts by stressing doctrinal purity. The Wahhabi oppose saint worship, any kind of Prophet cults, any intermediary between God and his human worshippers, and most popular religious practices. Many *Hejazi* non-*qaba‘il* Saudis privately celebrate the Prophet’s birthday, mourn for the dead (at monthly intervals) well beyond the 3-day period observed by the Wahhabis, and participate in popular fertility rituals. When non-*qaba‘il* participate in such non-Wahhabi practices they are discreet and do so in private.

It is essential to remember that despite the religious lines of difference, and the symbolic boundaries between the groups, *qaba‘il* and non-*qaba‘il* populations are Muslims and share similar core beliefs. In fact, so much is shared between the dominant Wahhabi community and other groups, it is impossible to see these non-*qaba‘il* groups independently of the dominant *qaba‘il* groups, especially since there is much borrowing and intermingling of notions between the two, i.e., very religious *Hejazi* non-*qaba‘il* families may adhere to veiling their women and some *qaba‘il* women, particularly those who have traveled abroad or members of the youngest generation, may disregard family practice of veiling and simply wear a headscarf.
AMAL: THE PRACTICE OF ISLAM

In order for group identification to persist, there must be values in common. In this section, I review those core beliefs shared by qaba’il members in daily life as postulated by the Wahhabi faith. Wahhabism provides the foundation from which qaba’il derive the values that define them. Qaba’il members recognize that the din (religion) of Islam is divided into two categories: amal (practice) and iman (faith). From an early age, members of the Beni Tamim, Anazah and Ateibah are taught the five pillars of Islam to achieve salvation. These are known as arkan al-Islam (pillars of Islam), which include the shahada (profession of faith in one God), salah (prayer), zakat (religious tax), saum (fasting), and hajj (pilgrimage).

The first and the most important of the pillars of Islam is the shahada, the profession of faith: “Ashahadu an la-illaha illa Allah wa-Muhammad rasul Allah. I profess there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.” The recitation of the shahada before witnesses is the one and only requirement for conversion to Islam. Parents whisper these words into the ears of their babies. Grandparents raise their index finger, signifying one, i.e., the oneness of God, and then utter this phrase in order to instill the belief in their grandchildren. Men of sixty, women of forty, patriarchs and matriarchs alike, exclaim these words when impatient or frustrated. Before the devout travel or undertake a hazardous enterprise, they will profess their belief in the oneness of God. The phrase is spoken to newborns immediately when they arrive and to the elderly when they are about to die. It is repeated daily, at the start of each of the five prayers, and is ubiquitous in the day-to-day affairs of all.

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Qaba'il, like other Muslims, are also required to pray in a prescribed manner five times a day, as dictated by the second pillar of Islam. The ground where a Muslim stands to pray must be clean and Muslims will usually say their prayers on a special prayer rug. These compulsory prayers are: salat as-subh, the pre-dawn prayer; salat al-zuhr, the midday prayer; salat al-'asr, the afternoon prayer; salat al-maghrib, the prayer that follows sunset; and salat al-isha', the evening prayer. The Prophet, it is said, placed more importance on prayer than on any other religious duty, thus making the performance of salah obligatory for all Muslims. The only exception to the daily requirement is made for women during their menstrual period and for mothers during the forty days after they have given birth. For this reason, a woman's state of ritual purity is always ambiguous and under scrutiny, whereas that of a man is never questioned.

In a qaba'il household, on any given day, men and women wake before sunrise when the voice of the muezzins resound over the streets and houses of the city, in the fields and countryside. This call to prayer draws the supplicants to stand and pray before their God. Thereupon, they must ritually purify themselves before saying their prayers. This state of ritual purity is known as tahaarah. There are two ways to do this: wudu' and ghusl. Supplicants take water from the tap, moisten their hands, stroke their feet, rinse their hands and forearms then their face, ears, nose and mouth and finally symbolically run their hands through their hair to purify it as well. If however, the supplicant has had sexual relations the previous night, then it requires more than wudu' to purify him or her. In that case, ghusl (a bath) must be performed. Ghusl is also needed for women who have finished menstruating or for men who may have experienced an
ejaculation while asleep. If the believer is not at home during the time of prayer, they may use the facilities at the mosque, where men and women may ritually purify themselves. Facilities for women are separate and secluded from the gazing eyes of strangers.

While in a state of ritual purity, it is important that one not come into contact with anything considered to be defiling. This may include bodily fluids, contact with women whose ritual purity is uncertain or coming into contact with pets. Clearly, the notion of ritual purity extends beyond one’s person and includes one’s dwelling place as well.

Men tend to pray in groups and usually at the mosque. Even when they are away from the mosque, they will pray together either by forming a prayer line on the sidewalk, in the office, or in the family compound. Women, on the other hand, are not expected to pray at the mosque. The qaba’il women interviewed for this research tended to not pray in groups because of household and child rearing duties which necessitated that they pray in turn at the house. Only on special occasions do women assemble at the mosque for a public prayer, such as during Ramadan or during the eids.

While praying, the faithful must face the qibla, or “direction,” of the Ka‘bah in Mekkah. In the mosques where people gather for public prayer, the direction of the holy site is indicated by the location of the mihrab, a niche in the center of the wall. In hotels the qibla is marked in each room with an arrow. No such markers are used in private homes; therefore, guests sometimes need to be orientated by their host.
It is also obligatory to give alms (zakat) to the poor as stipulated by the third pillar of Islam. The amount of this zakat is determined according to Islamic law. In the past, for example, the amount was based on the number of animals owned, the amount of foodstuff produced, and the quantity of gold and silver possessed. Today, zakat is set at about 2.5 percent of an individual’s annual income; it is the only tax collected by the Saudi government. Muslims are also required to give an additional zakat, called sadaq, in the form of food and money to the poor during the holy month of Ramadan. Alms are primarily given to the poor and to charitable organizations. Giving charity to the needy is inculcated at a young age among the qaba’il members. Mothers, when seeing beggars on the street, give their children a handful of riyals which they in turn hand directly to the beggar. Children also witness fathers inquiring about needy families that should receive zakat or sadaq. Sometimes zakat will be paid to charitable institutions such as Women’s Welfare groups and even those collecting aid for Muslim brethren in foreign lands such as Africa, Bosnia, and Afghanistan.

Another religious obligation is saum, or obligatory fasting during Ramadan, the fourth pillar of Islam. Each year, the exact date of the start of Ramadan varies because it is based on the lunar calendar. When the new moon has been sighted, the fast begins. Although in other parts of the Muslim world people rely upon calendars, in the Kingdom it is still decided according to the traditional method whereby two trustworthy Muslims visually sight the new moon, still decides the dates. The process begins when the Supreme Judicial Council in the Kingdom calls upon Muslims to start looking for the
new moon and requests that they inform the nearest sharia court of the sighting. The Supreme Council also calls upon governors and imams of mosques to encourage the public to look for the crescent.

The Ramadan fast is particularly meritorious as the Prophet himself observed: those who fast “will be pardoned all their venial sins” and that at this time, “the gates of Paradise are open, and the gates of hell are shut... only those who observe it will be permitted to enter at the gate of heaven called Raiyan.”

Qaba’il members eagerly await the official start of Ramadan. The government usually broadcasts the news on television and radio. Qaba’il members call family and friends and enthusiastically greet each other with Ramadan greetings. “Kull am wa intum bikhair.” This is a sacred and festive occasion.

Each day during Ramadan, from sunrise “when a white thread is clearly distinguishable from a black thread” (Quran 2: 187) until sunset, devout Muslims must abstain from all food and drink. Smoking and sexual intercourse are prohibited during the day as well. In fact, nothing should pass the lips. Non-Muslims are expected to not eat or drink or smoke in public at this time as well. Should a person eat in public, they are sure to receive reprimands from those around them.

During this holy month, all adults should also refrain from evil deeds, such as lying, cheating, cursing, or causing harm to another. This is also a time when it is considered meritorious to forgive one’s enemies, end feuds and reconcile with friends and family members. In one case among the Ateibah, there were two adult male cousins who, due to a dispute, had not spoken to each other through the year. An uncle invited
them to dinner and they reconciled, talking the night away, out of respect for this holy
month. It is a time of heightened spirituality for the devout and a time when those who
were more lax in their duties can make up for neglecting their religious obligations for
the prior year.

Young children are exempt from fasting. The age children begin fasting depends
upon their respective families. Some qaba 'il families take the Koranic advice that
children must be instructed in Islam at the age of seven to mean that children should fast
at this age as well. Other families wait until their children express a desire to fast.
However, most children want to try fasting to show they are good Muslims. Adults
encourage this but also make sure that the children don’t become ill from fasting. Also
exempt are people who are ill, women who are pregnant or nursing infants or people who
are traveling away from home. But people who have missed certain days of fasting are
expected to compensate at some later date (Quran 2: 183). If they do not make up for the
missing days, they must pay fidya (expiatory alms).

The rhythm of life throughout modern-day Saudi Arabia radically transforms
during Ramadan as everything is rescheduled to accommodate the fast. People wake
before sunrise for an early morning meal. Businesses, government offices, and schools
shorten their hours in order to accommodate fasting workers and students. This is also
necessary in order to allow people sufficient time to return home and prepare for iftar, the
breaking of the fast. In addition, restaurants remain closed during fasting hours but have
extended hours in the evenings.
Merchants also stay open late into the night to take full advantage of the buying spree as people begin purchasing gifts; this is considered commercially the most lucrative time of the year. Shopkeepers decorate their storefronts in celebration of the holy month. Shopping centers and supermarkets may display cars as prizes to be given away at the end of the month. Contests, special sales, and discount offers are made at many stores.

Just like the life of the country changes, so does the daily life of the family. In the qaba'il household, usually those who fast wake before sunrise in order to consume a meal which tides them over until the breaking of the fast that evening. In the past, each neighborhood designated a man to go in the streets and inform people to awaken since the time of sahoor was upon them. Now people arise to the sound of alarm clocks or a cannon which fires before dawn to awaken the faithful so they can consume their meal. The army provides a cannon for each district.

Sahoor can be seen as a late dinner or early breakfast. The sahoor is eaten anytime between 1:00 to 3:00 a.m., although some families may eat just before sunrise. The meal eaten could be something simple, such as a bowl of foul, moudamas beans, or it could be a three-course meal eaten in the company of friends. After the sahoor meal is eaten members of the family go back to sleep. Then the day is spent as usual, except as noted above, with shortened working hours and school schedules. In the homes, women busily prepare food to be served after the fast is broken. Then, toward late afternoon, people return home in preparation for the iftar. Half an hour before breaking the fast, members of the family sit together in anticipation of hearing the cannon fire. When the cannon is heard, members break their fast by drinking water. This is followed by the
consumption of dates and a thimble-sized cup of green Arabian coffee. The dates and
green coffee are customary among the qaba'il families and signify their qabili status. A
variety of dates are laid out, many of which come from Nejdi date farms. In contrast,
non-qabila families tend to eat ethnic foods which are common to their own native
countries. Immediately after iftar, everyone rushes to perform the mughreb prayers.
Men of the family will pray as a group outdoors, whereas women will perform their
duties inside their homes.

Then everyone sits for the asha, or dinner. The food prepared throughout the day
is now laid out in great abundance and consists of a variety of dishes to both suit the
tastes of adults and children alike. Qaba'il families have a number of dishes that are
traditionally eaten. This meal always starts with a soup, as well as foul and tameez bread.
Regional Nejdi dishes, such as margoog, a stew made of vegetables and wheat
dumplings, are also an important part of the meal. Asha is a joyous and festive occasion
and provides gratification for those who have spent the day fasting, yet thinking about
this meal the whole time. Following the meal, the men go to the neighborhood mosque
where they pray then listen to taraweeh, a special reading of the Quran started at the
beginning of the month and completed on the last day of Ramadan.

The end of the Ramadan fast is celebrated by al-'id as-saghir (the Little Festival),
also known as al-'id al-fitr (the Festival of Breaking Fast). The timing is also determined
by the sighting of the new moon. Again, the Supreme Judiciary Council calls upon the
people for the sighting. Witnesses again register their sightings at their sharia court.
Celebrated for three or four days, the 'id is a holiday of great cheer and signifies that the
devout have completed the obligation stipulated by the fourth pillar of Islam. On this
day, friends and family get together and children receive gifts of gold coins, jewelry, and
new clothes.

On the morning of the 'id, men gather at one of the musallahs. These are
temporary open places established by the government to accommodate thousands of
people who come and perform their prayers for the 'id. The musallahs are furnished with
carpets and equipped with microphones to broadcast the prayers. Throughout the city,
signs are posted on the main streets directing the public to the musallahs. Women
normally attend the prayers in the neighborhood mosques, which can hold a large number
of people and where the salat al- 'id (‘id prayer) is held. This special prayer, far shorter
than the Ramadan taraawih, comprises two raka ‘a. After performing the prayer, the
faithful return home to have breakfast and prepare for their visits to family members and
friends.

Normally, Muslims distribute zakat at this time. Some pay this obligatory alms in
kind, i.e., in rice or dates. In fact, during the last 10 days of Ramadan, one may witness
in the suqs a heavy rush of people hurrying to buy grain to pay the zakat. Poor people
may stand around vendors and receive zakat on the spot. Welfare organizations set up
collection boxes at marketplaces and busy streets to collect zakat from those Muslims
who prefer to pay it in cash. Among the Ateibah, I observed family members pooling
their zakat and distributing it among the more needy families in their neighborhood.
Among the Beni Tamim, the men distributed their money through funds set up at the
workplace while the women passed zakat to those in need through their network of

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female friends and family members. Apart from _zakat al-Fitr_, Ramadan is also the time when many people give the _zakat_ stipulated in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} pillar of Islam. Poor people, many women, will line up outside the gates of wealthy families waiting for the occupants to enter and leave and will ask for money.

Finally, the last or fifth pillar of Islam requires the _hajj_, or pilgrimage to Mekkah. Every physically, mentally, and financially capable adult Muslim who is physically, mentally, and financially able must make the pilgrimage at least once in his or her lifetime. For the faithful, the pilgrimage to Mekkah is the culmination of a lifetime of devotion to God.

Pilgrims visit the holy city during the month of _Dhu al-Hijjah_, the twelfth month of the lunar calendar. At this time, over a million of the faithful from all over the world converge upon Mekkah, the most sacred site of Islam. It is located 50 miles to the north of Jeddah. It is a place where only Muslims may tread. In the past, pilgrims arrived by caravans and traveled along commercial arteries. Today, they arrive on boats and planes in vast numbers. The Saudi government assumes responsibility for providing the facilities to accommodate such a huge influx of people every year. The pilgrims have their own airport terminal and fleet of buses which immediately convey them from Jeddah to Mekkah.

Professional guides known as the *mutawwifin* (sing. *mutawwif*) assists pilgrims during their stay in Mekkah. Professional guides known as *daleels* direct the pilgrims through the ritual of pilgrimage itself as well as help them in other ways, since many of these visitors do not speak Arabic. Often the profession of *daleel* runs in families that
have been established in Mekkah for many generations. These families may come from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds such as jawi (Indonesian), buchari (central Asians), habashi (Abbasinians), etc. Typically, the guides specialize in offering services to groups who share their own ethnic background.

The mutawwafin have representatives who operate out of Jeddah and direct pilgrims to the services of the guides in Mekkah. These wukala (sing. wakil) also help the hajjis during the brief time they enter the country and upon leaving. In addition to these, there are also the adilla (sing. dalil) who act as guides for the pilgrims while they are in Medina, and yet another group the zamazimah (sing. zamzami) who provide pilgrims water from the holy well of zamzam.

Qaba'il men and women, like all other Muslim pilgrims, must first prepare themselves before departing for hajj. They must make sure that their business affairs are settled, that their families are taken care of, and that they are mentally prepared for the great spiritual excursion to come. Men prefer to travel with companions, and women must be escorted by muharram, close male kinsmen. From the time they leave their homes, the pilgrims must pay strict attention to all their religious obligations, diligently performing their daily prayers, and conducting themselves in a manner befitting a good Muslim.
They must time their arrival in Mekkah carefully so they can perform rituals on specific days, thereby obtaining special grace. Therefore, a certain sense of urgency exists in the pilgrims’ movement. Likewise, qaba’il members who may be behind in Jeddah follow the pilgrims’ movement, noting on certain days which rituals should be performed.

Pilgrims enter Mekkah in a special state of purity, known as ihram. Whether a Muslim enters the holy city during the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, or at any other time of the year (known as ‘umrah), preparation for ihram is the same. First, the believer must leave the sphere of the profane world, which is accomplished at one of the miqat (stations) found along the main roads that lead to Mekkah. From the east, there is Qarn al-Manazil between Taif and Mekkah, and Dhat-Irq north of Taif through Wadi Fatimah, and from the south the ihram miqat is Yulamlam.

Qaba’il pilgrims from Jeddah are likely to stop at the closest miqat to their point of departure. Here the pilgrim must perform certain obligatory rituals. First, they must profess their intention of visiting Mekkah known as niya: “Oh God, I intend to take the hajj, and I’m taking ihram for it. Make it easy for me—and receive it for me.” Then they perform a complete ablution. Men cut their hair and pare their nails. Then the ritual garments are donned and prayers are said. The men are required to wear a special pilgrim’s garb of two unsewn white sheets (known as ihram). One of these sheets, called the izar, reaches from the waist to the knees; the other, the rida’, is slung over the left
shoulder. There is no specifically prescribed dress for women, but *qaba‘il* women customarily wear their *abayahs* which cover them from head to foot. The strictures stress the equality of all, rich or poor, exalted and meek, before God.

Throughout the journey, up to the point where the pilgrims enter Mekkah they must chant the *talbiyye*, which they first utter upon completing the rituals in the *miqat*:

Labbayka-allahumma, Labbayk

La sharika laka, Labbayk!

Inna al-hamda wal-ni’ amata laka wal-mulk!

La sharika laka, Labbayk!

When the pilgrims enter Mekkah, they go to the sacred mosque. The *ka‘aba* a square black stone structure, is located at the center of this mosque. This place is the spiritual heart and geographical nucleus of Islam. It is toward the *ka‘aba* the devout must face when performing their obligatory prayers five times a day. Here, they will perform the *tawaf*, which involves circumambulating the *ka‘aba* seven times in a counter clockwise direction. The first three rounds are made at a fast pace, the last four at a walking pace. At this time, the pilgrims recite set phrases glorifying God and seeking His favor. Each time the pilgrims pass the black stone, they either kiss or touch it. This is not to be confused with worship of the stone; the pilgrims touch it because the Prophet Muhammad did so, and through this gesture they establish a physical link with the Prophet. After the *tawwaf*, the pilgrims go to the Station of Abraham and there perform two cycles of individual prayer. Then they will drink water from the holy well of zamzam. Then they touch the black stone one last time and leave the Great Mosque.
Sa‘y, or running, is the ritual of running between two hills, as-Safa and al-Marwah. This should be done immediately after completing the tawwaf. The men climb to the top of as-Safa, say the prayer of intention, then go to the other elevation, and repeat their prayers in the direction of the ka‘aba. Women need not climb to the top and may even be discouraged from doing so since the press of pilgrims is intense. The sequence ends at al-Marwah.

On the seventh day of dhu-Hajj pilgrims go to the Great Mosque to hear a special khutbah, sermon. Those who have arrived late must enter the state of ihram. This is the last chance for anyone to become eligible to partake in the necessary rituals.

The eighth day, called yawm al-Tarwiyaah, the black cloth covering the ka‘aba is replaced and the building is washed with water. After witnessing this important ritual, the pilgrims leave for Mt. Arafat—12 miles to the east of Mekkah. In the past, the hajjis, wishing to do as the Prophet did, would walk to Mina, the halfway point between the ka‘aba and Mt. Arafat. They would resume their journey the next day, arriving at Arafat by midday. Today, however, with the massive influx of visitors, public transportation is provided by the government to convey the pilgrims to their destination.

The ninth day is the day of wuguf, or standing. Here, the pilgrim must be in attendance once again at Mt. Arafat. The day begins with the pilgrims praying at Nimrah mosque. Then they go to Jebbel al-Rahman and begin their spiritual watch where the wuguf begins. The vigil lasts until sunset. During this time, two sermons begin from the mountaintop. At sunset, the pilgrims “rush” to Muzdalifah, about four miles away, where they say sunset and evening prayers.
The tenth day is the stoning of the *jumrahs*. In the morning, they leave Muzdalifah for Mina, which is approximately 3-4 miles west toward Mecca, where they cast stones at each of three pillars or *jumrahs*. After each stone is thrown, they say the *takbir*, "Bism Allah, Allahu akbar." One of my *qaba'il* friends who witnessed this ritual said that fellow pilgrims become so impassioned that, after using up all their stones, they proceed to throw their sandals, shoes, or even items of clothing.

The 10th-13th days are the *eid al-Adha*, the feast of Sacrifice, where the pilgrims, after the tradition of Abraham, ritually slaughter an unblemished animal (sheep, goat or camel). Traditionally, the pilgrims would eat some of the meat and distribute the rest of it to the poor. Today, because of the huge volume of pilgrims, the government provides a service by sacrificing animals on behalf of the pilgrims elsewhere and the meat is shipped to needy Muslims outside of the Kingdom. The sacrifice which the pilgrims perform in Mecca is one part of the pilgrimage rites in which Muslims everywhere join in during *eid al-Adha*, by also slaughtering an animal and distributing some of the meat to the needy.

The pilgrimage concludes by men having their hair cut, which is known as *tahallul*. Women, however, are not required to do so. Thereafter, one who has completed the pilgrimage will thereafter be referred to as *hajji* (female *hajjiyye*), a title which confers a great degree of respect and admiration, for it says that this person has fulfilled all that is required by God.
The *qaba 'il* members who have gone on the pilgrimage and have fulfilled all of the requirements may also go by the title of *hajji*, but seldom do so. *My* *qaba 'il* interviewees say the title has more meaning for fellow Muslims from far away places, whereas those who live close to the holy city and can go on the pilgrimage with relative ease feel that using the title is unnecessary. *Qaba 'il* members take advantage of their close proximity to the holy city and travel there frequently on special occasions such as the month of Ramadan, when they will travel there to break their fast, attend special prayers, and listen to the Friday *khutbah* at the Great Mosque. These excursions to Mekkah and the Great Mosque are deemed to be especially meritorious by devout *qaba 'il* members.

Like the Beni Tamim, Anazah and Ataybah, other Muslims may also visit the holy city throughout the year. It is possible to perform the lesser pilgrimage, known as *'umrah*, during these out-of-season excursions. The pilgrims nevertheless follow the same procedures as above. While *'umrah* does not make one a *hajji*, it is still considered praiseworthy. For this reason, pilgrims are always present in Jeddah and Mekkah, regardless of the time of year.

**THE IMAN (FAITH) OF ISLAM**

In this section, I examine the core faith that *qaba 'il* members share as taught by the Wahhabi religious tradition. It is this faith that gives *qaba 'il* members a source for self-definition. In addition to the five pillars of Islam mentioned above, the Beni Tamim, Anazah and Ateibah espouse a belief system rooted in *Quranic* scripture, known as the
arkan al-iman (the pillars of faith). These include belief in Allah, in al-mala'ikah (the angels), al-kutub (the books of the messengers), al-rasul (the messengers), al-youm al-akhir (the day of judgment) and al-qadar (predestination). This belief system has as much influence over one’s actions as the five pillars of Islam. These beliefs are taught to qabila children as part of their religious education and, as with other aspects of religion, they manifest themselves in various aspects of day-to-day life. As such, they are an important part of Arabian and qaba’il religious consciousness and identity.

One is to affirm the unity of God. Islam is, above almost all other religious traditions, completely monotheistic. No compromise is to be made regarding the unity of God. It is for this reason that one never finds Islamic iconography in the Kingdom. This also manifests itself in other aspects of life. Thus among strict qaba’il adherents, their houses are sparsely furnished and devoid of photographs and images, in the manner of the Prophet and his companions. When queried, the devout will respond with the hadith which states, “Those who make or draw pictures will be asked to breathe life into them on Judgment Day.” This means that anyone who renders images presumes the powers of God and will burn in hell. I have seen a number of Ateibah homes decorated with only abstract drawings and nothing else. When I asked the interviewees why they shun pictures, even photographs of their children, they replied, “To associate anything with Allah is shirk.” (Shirk is considered the most heinous of sins.) Thus images, pictures, statues, objects, and amulets that represent God or his power are also forbidden according to the strict Wahhabis. Manufactured images such as 3-D objects are thought to be more heinous than pictures or photographs. Therefore, the mutawwa, (religious police), have
been known to enforce this belief when monitoring goods coming into port by ripping the heads off children's dolls, Barbies or toy policemen. Similarly, custom officials find published human images also offensive. Therefore, human images whether in popular magazines or in school books will be defaced with a line across the neck thus making the image acceptable.

Qaba 'il members also believe in the existence of several supernatural entities. Among these is the belief in mala 'ike, or angels. The Quran (35: 1) describes the mala 'ika as “beings created from light.” They are sexless creatures, thought to be benefactors who intercede with Allah on behalf of humans. The Quran (42: 3) also states that “the angels proclaim the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth.” The Beni Tamim with whom I spoke regarding this matter seem to believe that each person has a guardian angel who watches over him or her throughout their lives. Two other angels are assigned to each person, one to record good deeds and the other, evil ones. When a man dies these angels receive his soul and later on the Day of Judgment he will present their records to Allah (Quran 6: 61). The existence of angels is taken quite literally by the qaba 'il members, their presence depending on the sanctity of the household. Beni Tamim, Anazah and Ateibah members would not allow pets such as dogs into their household because these “unclean” animals would befoul their homes and drive off the mala 'ika. However, this concern does not extend to using dogs as working animals on farms where the animals are outside all the time.
Then there is the pervasive belief in jinn. During my discussions with qaba'il members I found that many indeed believe in these supernatural entities. The doctrinal foundations of this belief are found in surah (15: 27) where it states that God created “man of clay and the jinn created we before a flaming fire.” This verse is taken to mean that jinn truly exist.

They are believed to be invisible beings capable of assuming various shapes. They may appear in the guise of humans, and animals such as dogs, scorpions, serpents, rabbits, etc. One of my Ateibah interviewees related a tale involving a jinn in the form of an animal. It seemed that her uncle was driving a jeep in the desert around maghreb (sundown) when suddenly a rabbit jumped in front of him on the road. He struck the creature but continued driving, not giving the matter much thought. The next day, he became extremely weak and lost control of the lower parts of his body. He remained thus afflicted until he died many years later. According to my interviewee, the incident with the rabbit involved a jinn. Her uncle had clearly run over a rabbit possessed by a jinn, and not any ordinary jinn, but in fact a prince of jinns. Thus like the rabbit jinn that became crippled after being struck by the car, her uncle was doomed to remain a cripple until the end of his days.

Jinn are said to be everywhere, but are thought most likely to frequent dark and watery places as well as woods and bushes. Some of them are known to frequent the roofs and attics of houses. These creatures are known to be most active just before
sunrise and more so at sunset. This is why, it is said, the Prophet advised that people stay home at sunset, as this was the time when these creatures were likely to infest, or possess, a person.

There are both good or evil jinn. Evil jinn can cause physical ailments, possess people, produce mental illness, and may even cause death. Jinn are also capable of tempting believers into evil ways. Qaba'il members regard these entities as dangerous and mischievous, but say that true believers can protect themselves by reciting certain verses from the Quran. The ayat kursi is believed to be particularly efficacious.

In some cases, people who are affected by these supernatural creatures may seek the help of religious experts. These sheikhs who are jinn specialists usually perform their services for a fee. Such services are often in high demand when people are in a religious state of mind, such as during Ramadan when these unseen beings become especially active. One of the Anazah related a story of jinn possession involving a non-qaba'il neighbor, a young married girl who had just given birth. This young mother and her husband lived in a small apartment attached to a mosque. Her husband was employed as the assistant to the sheikh of the mosque. Shortly after they moved into their apartment the woman started to behave strangely. She began by feeding her infant Coca-Cola instead of milk. She was said to have done many other bizarre things that convinced her bewildered husband that his wife was possessed by a jinn. Upon the advice of a local elder, he took her to see a sheikh in Mekkah, who was knowledgeable in these matters. That sheikh is said to have read the Quran over her body and may have even struck her a few times. The woman then began speaking in an abnormal voice, thought by those
present to be that of the possessing jinn. The creature inhabiting the patient declared that it would never leave the woman’s body as long as she continued to live in the apartment adjoining the mosque. The husband, believing that he had no other choice but to comply with the jinn’s wishes, did what he thought necessary. He cemented shut his quarters in the mosque where they lived before, and his wife soon found herself in a beautiful new apartment with a great view of the city.

Jinn also infest houses. One of my Beni Tamim interviewees told me about a man who had a new house built for him and his family in a new but still remote allotment. It was a fine house, spacious, with several bedrooms and all the modern conveniences. However, the first night the family slept in their new home, they heard strange rumblings, creaking, and other inexplicable sounds. Their investigations revealed no natural causes which convinced them that supernatural forces were at work. Someone jealous of their new beautiful house had cast the evil eye upon it, thereby summoning jinn to haunt it. The man vacated the house and refused to return. The family’s beautiful new house remains uninhabited to this day.

A particularly malicious type of jinn, according to traditional qaba’il lore, is known as a ghul. The ghul is an enchanter able to take many shapes, including that of a woman. Ghul are said to haunt desolate places and to feed upon humans who come their way. In the modern Saudi context, qaba’il parents sometimes use ghuls to scare small children.
It is important to note, that religious specialists such as the sheikh that the
husband visited in the earlier account have little credibility among the religious
authorities. They are referred to as musha’awidin, or charlatans, and are believed to take
advantage of gullible people by encouraging them in their beliefs in order to relieve them
of their money. It is not the belief in jinn which religious authorities oppose, since the
jinn are mentioned in the Quran. It is, however, the heretical, magical practices which
gullible and superstitious people resort to in connection with the belief in jinn.

Two other important pillars of faith are al-kutub (the books) and al-rasul (the
messengers). The idea of al-kutub refers to the belief that God has sent to “mankind” a
long line of messengers, of whom the Prophet Muhammad was the last and most
important. Therefore, Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Dawood (David), and Isa
(Jesus) are all considered to be prophets of God to whom divine revelations were sent.
The message which God sent to each of these prophets is embodied in the sacred books,
the Tawrat (Torah) through Musa, the Zabur (Psalms) through Dawood, and the Injil
(Gospels) through Isa. For this reason, Jews and Christians are referred to as ahl al-
 kitaab, meaning people of the book who profess a kindred faith to that of Islam. People
who adhere to any other religion, on the other hand, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and
Zoroastrianism, are considered to be Godless and unclean. For instance, Muslim men are
permitted to marry Christian women who are of the book (although Muslim women are
not allowed to marry Christians) but are not allowed to wed Hindus. While investigating
qaba’il genealogy, I discovered cases of qaba’il men having married Christian slave
women imported from Russia. On the other hand, marrying those who are not of the
book is out of the question for Muslims. For example, I never encountered a marriage involving a woman who is not *ahl al-kitaab* and a *qaba 'il* man. In fact, this prejudice is so deeply seated that many *qaba 'il* would not consider even eating food prepared by anyone belonging to this category.

Although Muslims may tolerate people who are of the book, they believe that Muhammad was the Seal of Prophets, meaning that he was the last of a long line of messengers sent by the creator to reveal the word of God to mankind. Similarly, the Quran, which represents the most complete of all the revelations as transmitted to Muhammad, is considered by Muslims to be the final and most complete of all previous revelations. Muslims believe, therefore, that people everywhere should adopt Islam in accordance with the wishes of Allah. Only those who have been led astray by naïve ignorance persist in their adherence to other religions. My *qaba 'il* interviewees explained this point to me, observing that according to God’s wishes, Jews should have converted to Christianity, and then all of the Christians should have adopted the faith of Islam as soon as the Prophet revealed his message to the world. It is for this reason that Muslims are at once tolerant and biased against Christians and Jews. Although the belief in the people of the book may in fact be used to justify tolerance for others, in the context of Wahhabi Islam, where it is taken literally, it has become the basis of an ideology of exclusion.

Preparing for the afterlife is yet another teaching of Islam that the Wahhabis interpret literally. As with the other pillars of Islam, they turn to the word of the law, the Quran, which fully describes *al-yaum al-akhir*, the last day and its reward of heaven or
hell. Beni Tamim, Ateibah, and Anazah, like all Muslims, believe that at death the body turns to dust, while the soul sleeps. At a predetermined time known only to God, it is said an angel will blow a horn and the dead shall rise from the earth. This day is called *Yaum al-Qiyamah*, meaning Day of Resurrection and it is the day that Allah will judge each person according to how they lived their lives. Angels will produce the record of each person’s deeds, both good and bad, which Allah will then weigh on a *mizan* (scale). If the *mizan* tips with the weight of good deeds, the person will go to *al-jannah* (literally “garden”) or heaven; if the scale is light from lack of good deeds, the person will be condemned to *an-nar* (the fire) in *jahannam*, or hell. My Beni Tamim interviewees describe *al-jannah* as a lush and beautiful garden well watered with sweet smelling flowers, crystal clear pools and springs, where the righteous may partake of the best foods served to them by *hour*. *Hour* or “immortal youths,” are described in the Quran as being dressed in “green garments of silk and brocade... and adorned with bracelets of silver” (*Quran* 76: 10-25). This conception of heaven is in sharp contrast to the arid countryside bereft of plants familiar to those living in the desert communities in the Kingdom.

*Jahannam*, on the other hand, is a horrible place, where the throngs of the wicked, pressed one upon the other, are consumed by terrible conflagrations and unbearable heat. There is no water to be found; instead, there are only springs where hot gases issue. The imagery here is highly reminiscent of the deep desert at the height of the hot and terrible
summer. I have observed qaba‘il mothers admonishing their children by shaking a finger and saying “nar” or fire, to remind the child that one should act virtuously in order to escape the fire of jahannam. Many qaba‘il members seem to take these beliefs literally.

The religiously devout live their lives constantly keeping in mind that their every action on earth will be held as a testament on the day of judgment. Those who desire the gardens of paradise dare not neglect their religious obligations. A most certain way to secure a place in paradise is to give up one’s life in the cause of religion, in other words, being martyred in the jihad.

The final article of faith is the belief in al-qadar, fate or predestination, which is a manifestation of Allah’s absolute power. According to the teachings of the Prophet, God has preordained five things for his faithful: the duration of their life, their actions, their residence, their travels, and their portions. Muslims believe that whatever happens in this world, whether good or evil, is preordained by Allah. Furthermore, they believe that all events are fixed and have been written on a lauh mahfuz (preserved tablet), which holds the record of all that was and all that will be. In real life, such literal interpretation translates into a profoundly fatalistic approach to life. For instance, Muslims will face peril fearlessly and accept death when it comes. This, of course, does not relieve them of their moral, ethical, or social responsibilities, for God also gave humans the ability to make rational and logical decisions. This belief manifests itself in the day-to-day behavior of qaba‘il members. It is obvious when one observes the daily events in a qaba‘il household. Whether they are planning something as trivial as their next meal or a major decision such as buying a new house or undergoing surgery, they always say
inshallah which means “God willing.” This has been explained to me as follows: people must endeavor to do as best as they can, but since God has preordained all actions, they must place their trust in God, and seek solace by saying inshallah.

The beliefs known as the pillars of faith, which have been described in this section, are rooted in scripture, and comprise an important part of the Beni Tamim, Ateibah, and Anazah worldview. Moreover, these beliefs are manifested in interpersonal behaviors, in how qaba’il members view people of other faiths and in their own destiny in this life and the one to come, as well as in countless other subtle and subconscious behaviors, all of which contribute to qaba’il identity.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have examined the religious beliefs and practices of the qaba’il in the context of Islam in the Hejaz. We have seen how the Saudi state-imposed Wahhabism dominates the society and how lines of separation are formed between qabila and non-qabila populations. These lines of separation result because the Beni Tamim, Ateibah, and Anazah follow Wahhabism, a very fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, while other non-qabila members in the community do not subscribe to the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. While qaba’il have much in common with Muslims everywhere, this chapter describes and examines their particular form of Muslim beliefs and practices that establish the basis for their group identification.
Endnotes

1 Despite the overwhelming support that the state and the people of Saudi Arabia give to Wahhabi Islam and Hanbali jurisprudence, there nevertheless exists in the Kingdom a small Shi’a minority, most of whom (approximately 100,000) are located in the oases of al-Hasa and Qatif in the Eastern Province (DIAM 1979: 3). All these eastern Shi’i are members of the Jafari sect, which recognizes 12 imams as successors to the khalifa Ali. These Jafari Shi’i perceive themselves as discriminated against by the Wahhabi-dominated government. Two other small groups of Shi’a are found on the west coast: the Makramis, who were at one time the majority in Najran, and the Zaidi, found near Mekkah. Shi’ite practices differ somewhat from those of the Sunni. For example, Shi’ites celebrate the Prophet’s birthday, a practice frowned upon by the Wahhabi Sunni. Shi’ites also attend prayer in husainiya (prayer halls) as well as in mosques.

2 Normally based in towns, these qadi arbitrate all legal matters in the Kingdom, both religious and secular.

3 Some jinn, the Beni Tamim say, are Muslim, others are kafir, non-believers. Those jinn who are Muslim are held to observe the basic obligations of the religion—praying, fasting, and going on pilgrimage—but are invisible to humans when performing such duties. There are both good and evil jinn, although all are suspect to some degree. Evil jinn are known as shi’ateen (devils); they are said to live longer than mortals.

4 The reason given for this by interviewees is that the child takes the father’s religion. Therefore, if a Muslim woman married a Christian or Jewish man the child would be brought up outside of the Muslim faith.
In the preceding chapter, I examined the importance of Islamic religious values in maintaining qaba'il group identification. In this chapter, I will discuss “What is a qabila in urban Saudi Arabia,” and “What is its relevance for modern society?” Within the qaba’il members’ social universe, there are two social categories: qaba’il and non-qaba’il. One is recognized as a qabila member through self-ascription as well as ascription by others (Barth 1969).

An analysis of what comprises a qaba’il shows that within a modern urban setting, the qaba’il concept translates to a mental construct based upon descent, maintained through endogamy, and exhibited through tribal markers and behavior. The ideas concerning tribes, which are the focus of this dissertation, have political, social, and symbolic significance. This chapter is divided into three sections: What is a Qabila?, Qaba’il and Non-qaba’il Categories, and Political Leadership.
WHAT IS A QABILA?

Within this section, I discuss the salient indices for qaba'il membership. I first describe traditional folk models of qabila and discuss their relevance for contemporary qaba'il members. Next, segmentary lineage theory is examined. In regard to the urban Hejazi context, this theory has little relevance to non-rural populations. As evidenced by the Nejdi qaba'il in Jeddah, only two levels have salience, the uppermost level designating the tribal affiliation and the lowest level which comprises the bait, or household. Qaba'il membership is based upon descent, and genealogical pedigrees are displayed to verify one’s tribalness. Membership is maintained through endogamy, although it is not a strict endogamy since foreign non-qaba'il and non-Arab women have married into qaba'il groups. Nejdi tribal markers, such as manners of dress, types of food, and the prevalence of symbols serve as indicators of qaba'il authenticity. These tribal markers have even been adopted as symbols of national Saudi heritage since the ruling family, Al-Saud, is also tribal and originated in Nejd.

Folk Models of Qabila

Traditional Arab genealogists define qabila within a framework of descent, which extends back to “Adam,” believed by them to be the first man created by God. The Biblical patriarch Abraham is thought to be the patrilineal ancestor for all northern Arabian tribes, through his son Ishmael. Qahtan, the Biblical Joktan (Genesis 10: 25), is the patrilineal ancestor for the southern tribes which originate in Yemen. Of the three qaba'il in this study, the Beni Tamim and Ateibah trace their origins to Ishmael, while the Anazah derives its origins from Qahtan (see below, Figure 2).
Figure 2. Folk Model of Quba’i Genealogies (adapted from Bidwell 1986)
All qaba’il branch out from either Qahtan or Ishmael, forming al-Sha‘b al-‘Arabija, the Arab people. This genealogical framework is both encompassing and exclusionary. It is encompassing, in that it provides a conceptual ideology for qaba’il members to identify themselves within a qabila that extends back to Adam (Aloshban 1987: 122). Additionally, this ideology shows the relationships of the other qaba’il to each other, thereby legitimizing each group. The ideology is exclusionary in that it does denote non-qaba’il within this framework.

Arab genealogists view their society, i.e., the relations between people, through segmentary units that are expressed genealogically. Using the segmentary model as a reference, they are able to both trace their pedigree and identify themselves in relation to other qaba’il (Aloshban 1987: 126). According to the Arab perspective, the first and largest grouping would be the shu‘b al-‘Arabija, the Arab people. The next largest grouping would be the qabila the most dominant section within the lineage segmentation. Following the qabila are the primary segments, al-amara, which form the maximal lineages. Next are the secondary segments, al-batan, which form the major lineages. Al-fakhid, the tertiary segments, are the minor lineages. Finally, al-faisla, the lowest level of segmentation, forms the minimal lineages (al-Balathuri 1959; al-Baladi 1982; Aloshban 1987: 122). Figure 3 below illustrates this segmentary model.

These segmentary units (al-amara, al-batan, al-fakhid, and al-faisla) are, however, divisions within an abstract model, useful for demonstrating the nature of genealogical divisions, but not necessarily corresponding to actually existing social groups (see Evans-Pritchard 1949; Geertz 1979; Eickelman 1998).
**Figure 3.** Segmentary Lineage Folk Model (Adapted from Kelley 1985: 169)
In rural settings, these segments have significance in terms of political alliances and fighting units in warfare. In the urban environment, however, among the qaba’il interviewed for this study, they have little relevance other than the highest segment, the qabila, the fakhid, and the bottom level, bayt which was not mentioned in the traditional segmentary model.

At the highest level, the qabila segment now serves as a source of group identification for urban dwellers. Among the qaba’il groups interviewed for this study, very few individuals could identify the segments for the folk model above. However, all members could identify their tribal membership. When asked about the relevance of the qabila, tribal elders stated that there was more relevance in the past when it had political significance as a unit whereby members made alliances and maintained the security of qaba’il territory. Today, the qaba’il does not exist in terms of territory. Therefore, all qaba’il members agreed presently its more important function is as a means for genealogically defining groups. Traditionally, the fakhid segment defined a fighting unit of qaba’il members which both raided others and defended qaba’il territory. This segment is rarely mentioned in contemporary urban life. When I queried qaba’il members concerning the fakhid segment, they mentioned the only time it has relevance in modern society is in relation to the national identification card which has an area marked showing whether the I. D. holder belongs to a fakhid. The lowest levels of segmentation tend to take on the character of kinship aggregates (Evans-Pritchard 1949: 55). The bottom-most segment, the bayt, refers to the household. This segment does have relevance in urban environment where it designates a household and home. It may refer
to the dwelling in which the family lives, as well as to the social unit itself. Every qaba'îl member interviewed could readily identify the bayt to which he or she belonged. The bayt is discussed at length in Chapter Eight

**Descent Group**

Within the qabila are descent groups in which all qaba'îl members can trace a patrilineal line of descent back to a known ancestor. Many of these descent groups are diagrammed on family trees as part of the family genealogy. Almost every qaba'îl household I visited had such a family tree. If the tree was not publicly displayed, then it was readily accessible. The family members would proudly show their genealogy and explain their relationship to others on the tree. Typically, these family trees are representations of family genealogy that extends back to the founder of tribe. The name of the tribal founder is placed near the trunk of the tree, and sometimes commentary concerning traditional tribal territories and accomplishments is written to the left or right of the tree.

Usually these qaba'îl family genealogies are drawn as tall multi-branched trees filled with branches that each lead to a patrilineal ancestor. The names of living and deceased male members of the descent group are written upon leaves that are attached to the branches. Individuals that I interviewed could quickly point to their leaf or their father's leaf and show where they were in relation to the rest of the descent group. One interviewee mentioned that the branch should go back to the seventh grandfather. In the trees I examined, many times the branches did extend beyond the seventh generation.
which allows the qaba' il member to recall the names of more distant patrilineal kin. In about half the households with such family trees, a second copy of the tree was made in which the female members of the family were added. It is noteworthy, however, since this is a recent innovation, that the additions of the female kin do not extend back as far as seven generations. If asked, qaba' il members could not remember the female kin beyond three generations, mother’s grandmother.

Endogamy

Qaba’il marriages have always been endogamous in Arabia. Traditionally, however, qaba’ il have made distinctions among themselves, forming a social hierarchy among the tribes. At the top, there exists a group of aristocratic or noble qaba’ il known as asil bedu, or genuine or true bedu, who hold the highest ranking (Cole 1975: 161; DIM 1979: 6; al-Rasheed 1991: 120). The asil bedu were camel pastoralists with considerable military prowess. They often raided others and were quite capable of defending themselves against attack. Inferior, non-asil bedu were militarily weaker groups, who engaged in sheep and goat herding, and could not protect themselves. Often, these weaker qaba’ il placed themselves as clients of the stronger group, or of an individual member of such a group, who was then honor-bound to protect them (DIAM 1979: 6). Therefore, the asil bedu treat only those individuals from noble qaba’ il as equals. They are endogamous and do not intermarry with non-asil bedu. Rather, the nobility stay together, maintaining solidarity through intermarriage (Cole 1975: 103; DIM 1979: 6; al-Rasheed 1991: 121).²

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Today, urban *qaba il* marriage preference does not seem to be based upon how noble the tribe may be. Among the individuals I interviewed, the majority stated the key issue is whether the individual belongs to a *qabila*. Individuals tended to assume that their marriage partner would be *qaba il* since marriages are endogamous with a stated preference for parallel cousins. However, in practice, marriage partners are found among a group of related kin who are "*qareebna,*" close to us with the most important quality being that the potential partner is of *qaba il* descent (see Chapter Eight for a discussion on marriage preferences).

The exception to the preference for *qaba il* endogamy is found among families whose male members have married foreign, non-Arab women. Although it was not the norm for *qaba il* men to marry non-Arab women, there were some cases in which it occurred. I found two families in which three and four generations back there were *qaba il* male members who had married slave women from Russia and Armenia. Yet, their children's children are considered to have a *qaba il* pedigree. Today, although it is still not common, there are a number of *qaba il* members who have married foreign wives from America and Great Britain. When asked how these women affect the tribal integrity, or the purity of the lineage of the family, the interviewees responded that these women have a different status than non-*qaba il* women. The assumption with a non-*qaba il* woman is that she is an Arab whose descent is not known. The foreign wife, however, is different because she is not an Arab who is a non-*qaba il*. That places her in a third category for which there is no name and, it seems, no ban to marriage.
Qaba’il Markers

Qaba’il markers are an important part of qabili identification. Among the symbols most prevalent in the homes of the qaba’il members I interviewed are those for Nejdi qaba’il dress and foodways, and nostalgic symbols such as the coffeepot, incense burner, and possibly a tent in the garden. As one interviewee expressed to me, these tribal symbols represent those things which are the best choices for a qaba’il member to wear or eat. In addition, these symbols authenticate the qaba’il member who favors them.

Dress is one marker which distinguishes the qaba’il member. For qaba’il men, the traditional dress is a headdress held in place with a black cord, a long white tobe (kaftan), and a cloak (either black or gold) thrown over the shoulders for formal occasions. Almost all qaba’il members I interviewed typically dressed in a tobe. The only exception to this was young children and teenage boys who would dress western for sports or relaxation and adult men when traveling or possibly meeting a western business associate. The tobe contrasts with the non-qaba’il Hejazi traditional dress which requires a turban, a long robe with a jacket rather than cloak. However, over past decades, the Nejdi style traditional dress has become the preferred dress and is especially supported in schools where it is the required uniform for young boys. But subtle differences can still be distinguished between the Nejdi qaba’il style tobes and Hejazi style dress. As has been pointed out to me on a number of occasions by interviewees, the Nejdi qaba’il style collar should be high and Neru-like, the buttons which should not be knotted, and the sleeves made with cuffs. Additionally, the sandals worn by qaba’il are always from a Nejdi cobbler who uses qaba’il style of stitching and form.
Qaba’il food is also a marker of authenticity. There is an Arabic expression that the best food is from a daughter in the house. Qaba’il members who were interviewed for this study often expressed the importance of traditional food cooked at home by women of the family. Among the dishes described by interviewees as traditional food are stews made with lamb and fresh vegetables which are eaten for lunch. There are also specialty dishes for dinner such as margoog (wheat dumplings with vegetables and meat) saleeg (rice cooked with milk and pieces of meat) and lamb pieces served on a platter of rice. Additionally, qaba’il families take special care to have on hand fresh and dried dates from Nejdi date farms.

Qaba’il ways can be identified even by the style of eating. When qaba’il families eat saleeg or lamb with rice, it is not uncommon serve it on large platters on top of a cloth laid out on the floor. Qaba’il members then sit in a large circle around the food and eat the dishes using their right hand. The person eating may take from the platter and eat from an individual dish in front them. If guests are present, the host passes preferred pieces of meat to the guests so that at no time is their plate empty.

There are certain nostalgic symbols which are retained and used by qaba’il families. One strong symbol of qaba’il life is the Arabian coffeepot, the dallah, which is brought out to serve thin green Arabic coffee which is flavored with cardamom. Among the qaba’il interviewed for this study, it was the norm for families to offer Arabic coffee as a form of hospitality to guests and to use an Arabian coffee pot to serve the coffee. Although the pot may be plastic for everyday use, for formal occasions, each family keeps a pot very similar to those crafted in Nejd, with the body of the pot shaped like a
hourglass ending in a long graceful spout. Non-qaba’il Saudis do not always abide by this custom since they may have their own traditional coffee to serve (i.e. Turkish, African, or European). Another nostalgic symbol is that of the incense burner which is traditionally burned at the end of a visit. Among the families I interviewed, it was common for the host to keep an incense burner and for special occasions to pass the burner to the guests who in turn fan the scented smoke into their headdress or hair. The last symbol is the bedouin tent. Among the Ateibah that were part of this study, I found that families erected tents in their garden which the children play in and adults use to enjoy the evening breeze. There were two Ateibah families who built a semi-permanent tent where family members come together on weekends, recite poetry, and perform qaba’il dances.

QABA’IL AND NON-QABA’IL CATEGORIES

In this section, I discuss the division of the qaba’il social universe into categories of qabila and non-qabila. Within the traditional folk model of Arabian society, the bifurcation was based upon modes of subsistence, bedouin and hadar (nomadic and sedentary). This bifurcation has been replaced with categories based upon descent (qabila and non-qabila), with ascribed membership to a patriclan. Within the urban context, this model no longer holds up, since most qaba’il members are now sedentary. According to Barth (1969: 14), “continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity and investigate the changing cultural form and content.”
Traditional Arabian Society Folk Model: Bedu and Hadar

The customary way of looking at social categories in Arabian society was according to the traditional folk model of the desert Arab, also referred to as bedu. Within this folk model of the bedu world, there are two categories of people. First there are those who belong to a bedu qabila. The qabila, is more strictly a patriclan, whose members claim descent from a named ancestor believed to have lived in the distant past, though the precise links cannot be remembered. Second, there are those known as hadar, who cannot claim membership to one of the Arab qaba'il, because they are either the descendants of 'abd, freed slaves, or the descendants of groups who migrated to the Arabian peninsula from elsewhere at different periods of history.

The term bedu is a cultural category that includes both nomadic pastoralists and certain sedentary groups who carry the identity and values of the bedu. According to al-Rasheed (1991: 119), bedu shared common values, attributes, and qualities which not only set them apart from townsmen but lend them their group identification:

The bedu often had elaborate genealogies...to justify their high status arising from their links with ancient Arab tribes. They emphasized their asil (nobility) and the purity of their origin uncontaminated by contacts and marriages with outsiders...which guaranteed superiority vis-à-vis other groups, especially the hadar who were considered to have lost the purity of descent...They despised occupational specialization and regarded activities other than animal herding and raids as humiliating and dishonorable. They regarded farmers and artisans as humble, subservient, and weak. These activities, claimed the bedu, inflicted on those who engaged in them disgrace, humiliation, and vulnerability.
The *bedu* refer to sedentary populations who live in the towns, villages, and oases of Arabia as the *hadar*. The *hadar* comprise farmers, artisans, merchants, and former slaves. The *bedu* hold most *hadar* in low esteem, citing the lack of *qabila* affiliation as their principal attribute. As al-Rasheed (1991: 125) writes, “the *hadar* often had mixed tribal origins or no [tribal] origin at all. The *hadar* were considered to have lost the purity of descent as a result of intermarriages with foreign groups.” Other factors she contributes to their low status include the *hadar*’s occupations (ibid.).

*Bedu* who settle in a village do not have this stigma and those who retain their *qabila* origins are not considered *hadar*. For instance, the Beni Tamim are such a sedentary *bedu* group. They are one of the largest sedentary *qaba’il* who have long been associated with oasis life and date farming. Yet, because they retain their tribal origins and genealogies, they are not considered *hadar*.

However, as *bedu* move to the city and change occupations these distinctions begin to blur. Today urban dwellers who have *qaba’il* membership no longer use this folk model as a basis for categorizing society.

**Modern Arabian Society Model: Qabila non-Qabila**

The traditional *bedu* and *hadar* folk model has given way due to rapidly changing lifestyles of the *bedu* who are now becoming sedentary. *Qaba’il* members have replaced this bifurcation with categories based upon descent (*qabila* and non-*qabila* membership). The fact that there is a continuing dichotomization between *qaba’il* and non-*qaba’il* members “allows us to specify the nature of continuity and investigate the changing
cultural form and content” (Barth 1969: 14). According to the above analysis, we have seen that in an urban context, the qaba 'il concept translates to a mental construct based upon descent, maintained through endogamy and exhibited through tribal markers and behavior. The ideas concerning tribes have political, social, and symbolic significance.

**Occupations of the Qabila**

Traditionally, the only occupation befitting a member of the noble qabila was camel herding and raiding. The inferior qaba 'il did not participate in raids since they were considered weak and were individuals to be “protected.” In modern times, these distinctions have begun to blur. Service in the armed forces is considered a prestigious occupation, and even noble qaba 'il members sign on with the oil industry, or take up jobs driving cabs in the city (DIAM 1979: 6). However, many of the noble qaba 'il have been recruited into the Royal Saudi Arabian National Guard, an elite military unit that reports directly to the King. This force is composed mostly of qaba 'il that originated in the Nejd. Among these are the Ateibah, Mutayr, ‘Ujman, Shammar, Qahtan, and Al Murrah (DIM 1979: 41). Non-bedu Saudis are not admitted into the National Guard.

Other than the armed forces, educated qaba 'il members are working in increasing numbers in office jobs, governmental positions, and in private business. There is a strong bias against taking jobs which require working with ones hands, such as mechanics, artisans, or bakers.
Occasions of non-Qabila

Traditionally, the non-qaba’il have been organized into several major occupational categories. Within these categories there are specialists. Though some of these occupations may have been inherited, it is not uncommon for an individual to change his or her occupation during the course of a lifetime (Altorki and Cole 1989: 23). The major categories are fellahiin, or farmers; senna, craftsmen or artisans; tujjar, or merchants; and ‘ulama, or learned ones in religion. These categories, however, are not without overlap from qaba’il members. As we have seen above the Beni Tamim have worked as farmers and the ‘ulama are commonly from qaba’il descent having membership through the Quraysh.

Today the non-qaba’il have opportunities to fill many of the occupations available in a highly modernized cosmopolitan city. The only areas which are closed to them are the National Guard which are exclusively filled by qaba’il and the highest level of Saudi government which is exclusively for the Al-Saud family.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

In this section, I examine political leadership within the Saudi State. First, I discuss the traditional means of selecting leadership; next I describe the structure of the Saudi government, which is a tribal state, run and operated at the highest levels by the Al-Saud family of the Anazah tribe. Appointments at the ministerial level have been usually for qaba’il members, which shows the degree to which group identification and qaba’il membership play a significant role in politics.
Traditional Political Leadership

Within the traditional structure of Arabian society, both the nomadic *bedun* and the sedentary *hadar* have their own political leaders: the *bedu* are represented by *shayukh* (sing. *sheikh*), and the *hadar* are represented by *umar* who act in the capacity of a headman. These lines of authority are still operative on the local level. Local leaders interact on behalf of *bedu* and *hadar* with state authorities through the government hierarchy that runs the country.

The *bedu* and the *hadar* each have had their own political leaders. As we have seen earlier, two types of leaders exist among the *bedu*: the *shayukh*, who are heads of patriclan sections; and the *umar*, who are the paramount *shayukh* of certain *qabila*. *Shayukh* are representatives of *qabila* sub-sections, their primary role being to meet with other *shayukh* in order to mediate disputes and discuss common *qaba’il* concerns such as the organization of pasturage (al-Rasheed 1991: 75). They represent one group and have no authority beyond their clan section. Furthermore, even with their own people they have little coercive force; *qaba’il* members respect the advice of a *sheikh*, but are not compelled to follow it. Therefore, *shayukh* rely primarily upon their personal powers of persuasion to influence others.

*Shayukh* are chosen by *qabila* members based upon two criteria: they must be from a lineage with a good reputation and show certain desirable qualities, such as having good judgement and the ability to speak with eloquence. Knowing the history of the *qabila* is also beneficial. Once a *shaykh* dies, the group chooses a successor who may or
may not be from the same lineage. There is no inherited line of succession, and a *shaykh* who attempts to start a dynasty would be abandoned by the others (al-Rasheed 1991: 76).

Among certain *qabila*, an *amir* or paramount *shaykh* represents the *qabila* as a whole. In this situation, the position is hereditary. The *amir* may be succeeded by any male member of the family, provided he can prove himself competent (Lancaster 1981: 89). The duties of such an *amir* are to represent the *qabila* as a spokesperson before other authorities, whether that traditionally is regional powers such as the Ottomans, or local powers such as the *umara* of nearby cities.

The *hadar* have hereditary leaders also known as *umara*, who traditionally govern over the towns and cities of Arabia. The *umara* must be of *qaba’il* descent (Altorki and Cole 1989: 22; al-Rasheed 1991: 121). According to al-Rasheed (1991: 122), the *umara* belong to a sedentarized *bedu* elite descended from noble *qaba’il*. Despite living a sedentary life, they maintain a strong cultural identification with the desert nomad by wearing *bedu* clothes, marrying from *bedu* *qaba’il*, and exhibiting *bedu* ideals such as bravery, hospitality, and eloquence.

The influence of the *umara* is wide, and includes not only the population of the town, but neighboring nomadic *qaba’il* as well. Moreover, the *umara* are active at the national and international level. From the time of the Ottomans, they negotiated directly with foreign powers and often received subsidies from them (al-Rasheed 1991: 80).

Village headmen occupy the leadership role for small villages and hamlets. Like the *amir*, the headman position is governed by consideration of descent and only individuals from certain families can fill this position. The headman is however,
appointed by consensus. He keeps a majlis, which is open to all adult males, and he takes advice from the leaders of important groups. The headman may also represent the village to the central government (Nyrop et al. 1982: 140).

The central government interacts with the bedu through shayukh chosen by their own qabila. Before Abdul Aziz united the provinces under one government, these qaba 'il governed themselves through a qaba 'il council meeting (majlis), where disputes were resolved through qabila law (Nyrop et al. 1982: 183). After the government was centralized in the 1930s, King Abdul Aziz gained the loyalty of the qaba 'il by regularly visiting the desert and holding a royal majlis, a council meeting which was open to shayukh and bedu alike, who addressed their concerns directly to the King. Abdul Aziz also negotiated a number of marriages within the major clans and subsidized important families (Nyrop et al. 1982: 183-184). Later kings reduced this role by eliminating subsidies and holding majlis once a week. Local leaders are increasingly required to interact with authorities through the government hierarchy which governs the country.

Structure of the Modern Saudi State

The present state of Saudi Arabia is a tribal government ruled by the family of Al-Saud of the Anazah tribe (Khuri 1980). The state’s organization is based upon the foundation laid by Ibn Saud. Dale Eickleman (1998: 127) described meeting a Saudi who commented on the role of tribal values in Saudi government: “a minister of foreign affairs...discussing political issues with me in a suite at the remarkably untribal Waldorf
Towers in late 1985, casually commented with pride that the success of his country in facing modern political challenges was derived in part from its tribal identity."

The house of Saud is comprised of the patrilineal descendants of Ibn Saud and his brothers. Ibn Saud is said to have married over 400 wives, who bore him 43 sons. One political result of his marriages is that clansmen from important tribes have relatives among the Saudis (Davis 1987: 264-265). A second result is that the royal house is quite large: Lackner estimates there were between 2000 and 7000 princes in 1970 (Lackner 1979: 90). Princes can become part of important sub-groups, which gain ministerial office, while other ministries are allocated to members of the Shaiykh family (Davis 1987: 265). According to the historian Kostiner (1991: 227), the importance of the tribes also lies in being a “source of the Saudi value system...political decentralization, minimal administration, kin-related political behavior, social solidarity, and economic cooperation.”

Royal Family

At the top of the social and state hierarchy of Saudi Arabia are the Al Saud, a dynastic family (figure) which has ruled since the establishment of the Kingdom of Arabia in 1932. The Al Saud presently consists of over 5,000 family members and is divided into different spheres of political influence. Among the most important are (1) the living sons and brothers of Abdul Aziz; (2) three collateral branches of the family, the Saud al Kabir, the ibn Jaluwi, and the Thunayan; and (3) the grandsons of Abdul Aziz (DIAM 1979: 43).
Three brothers of Abdul Aziz—Abdullah, Ahmad, and Musnad—usually speak out for tradition in governmental matters. Abdul Aziz had many sons, a consequence of the numerous political marriages he contracted in his lifetime. Sons with the same mother often form political factions against other sons. One example is the Sudairi brothers. King Fahd is the oldest son of this group, which consists of seven sons of a woman named Hussah bint as-Sudayri; they are popularly called the “Sudayri seven.” These sons have held prominent government positions in the Saudi government. Among these are Prince Sultan, as the Minister of Defense, and Prince Nayif, as the Minister of the Interior. (DIAM 1979: 43).

The collateral branches of the Al Saud comprises the next sphere of influence. One of these is the Saud al-Kabir, the descendant of King Abdul Aziz’s f.b., and considered senior to the present royal family in matters of protocol. Another branch, the Ibn Jaluwi, is descended of f.f.b. of Abdul Aziz. Jaluwi’s son was with Abdul al-Aziz in 1902 when he captured Riyadh. Ibn Saud later appointed him as the Prince of the Eastern Province. He was succeeded by two sons, one of whom later administered the province. King Khalid was related to the Ibn Jaluwi as well as the mother of King Faysal’s sons, Khalid and Saad (DIAM 1979: 43-44).

The Thunayan constitute the third collateral branch. They are descendants of the older brother of the original founder of the Saud dynasty, Muhammad ibn Saud. The Thunayan ruled for a short period but later descendants left for Turkey. When Ibn Saud began his campaign to unite Arabia under his rule, Ahmad al-Thunayan returned from Turkey to join him. One of the most important Thunayans was a woman, Iffat, who
became King Faisal’s wife. She wielded great influence in the Kingdom and initiated a number of important programs under Faisal’s rule. In acknowledgment of her special position, she was the only wife of a Saudi king to ever be known as the “Queen” (DIAM 1979: 44).

The grandsons of Ibn Saud constitute yet another sphere of political power within the royal family. This group is young and well educated, with University degrees either from the United States or Great Britain (DIAM 1979: 45).

**Governmental Hierarchy**

The King is the supreme secular and religious authority in Arabia. He is the head of state, the top religious authority, and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The King may also take on the functions of the working executive chief. Only a male member of the family may assume the monarch position, and succession to this office is determined through consensus by dominant socio-political units in the Kingdom: the royal family, the leaders of major *qaba‘il*, the Council of Ministers, the *Ulama*, the religious elite, and the armed forces (Nyrop *et al.* 1982: 157).

**Council of Ministers**

There are five primary ministries: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense and Aviation, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Justice. King Abdul Aziz set up the primary ministries, but as the country grew and the government became more complicated, other ministries were created to deal
with new administrative problems, often by splintering from pre-existing ones. For example, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs was separated from the Ministry of Interior in an attempt to expedite government at the provincial and local levels. Similarly, the Ministry of Industry and Electricity was created from the Ministry of Commerce.

Traditionally, these and the less important ministries are usually headed by members of the royal family. But, by the late 1970s the educated elite had begun to displace certain members of the Royal family in high office (Nyrop et al. 1982: 182-183). Most, however, are qaba'il members (see Figure 2).

**Local Governments**

King Faisal standardized the structure of the provincial government by establishing six major and twelve minor provinces with each one divided into districts and subdistricts. A prominent person, who resides in the principal provincial town, is appointed as governor to be accessible to those in the province (Nyrop et al. 1982: 184).

The provincial governor constitutes a link between the central and the provincial government. He is appointed by royal decree and must swear allegiance to Islam, the country, and the King. He is required to administer the province according to the law of the state which requires him to carry out the following (Nyrop et al. 1982: 184-5):

- to implement the decisions of the courts, to preserve public order and security, to protect the rights and liberties of individuals within the limits of the sharia, to oversee and inspect the administration of the districts and subdistricts, to assist the national government in the collection of revenues, to supervise the affairs of the municipalities, and to oversee the work of all government employees in the province.
A provincial council advises the governor on issues. Such a council is located in the premier city of the province and council membership is open to a maximum of 30 local people, whose terms last for two years (Nyrop et al. 1982: 185). Although detailed information on the working of local urban government is limited, we know that besides the provincial councils, major cities also have a municipal council, whose duties are similar to those of the provincial council, but whose jurisdiction is limited only to one city (Nyrop et al. 1982: 185). Each city has a mayor and departments, which oversee the functions of various services.

CONCLUSION

This chapter defined qabila within urban Saudi Arabia. Within the modern setting of Saudi Arabia, the qaba’il concept is a mental construct based upon descent, maintained through endogamy, with political, social, and symbolic significance. In the modern context, the categories based upon descent (qabila and non-qabila) have replaced the traditional bifurcation of Arab society into nomadic (bedouin) and sedentary (hadar). The chapter discussed what is qaba’il through describing traditional folk models and discussing their relevance for contemporary qaba’il members. This chapter also discussed how the Saudi government is a tribal state, run and operated at the highest levels by the Al-Saud family. Since the Al-Sauds are tribal themselves, appointments at the ministerial level have been overwhelmingly in favor of those from qaba’il descent. Such findings show that group identification and qaba’il membership have been a means for promoting group dominance in the political sphere.
Endnotes

1 Some of the sources describe the segments as maximal, major, minor, and minimal lineages. However, the ethnography does not clarify whether such segments qualify as lineages, if members are able to trace precise links to a common ancestor. If this is not the case, lineage (maximal, major, minor, and minimal) is not an appropriate translation.

2 Of all the non-asil, the Salubba are ranked the lowest. These “ignoble” bedu are often mentioned in the literature in association with the extreme distaste other bedu felt for them. Traditionally, they were despised because of their work as tinkers and their uncertain genealogy. Other bedu claimed that Salubba women were prostitutes and these people engaged in non-Islamic dietary habits, such as eating dogs and not draining blood from the carcass of animals that they intended to eat (Dickson 1951: 102). Dickson (ibid.) speculated that because the Salubba have fair skin and the clan tattoo on their wrists resembles a cross, they might be descendants of Christian Crusaders. Others (Jabbur 1995: 457-68), however, refute this idea. There is little in the ethnographic literature concerning the Salubba in present-day Arabia.

3 Much has been written about the social organization of the qabila (Smith 1885; Cole 1975; Lancaster 1981; Aloshban 1987; al-Rasheed 1991), but with the exception of Hurgronje’s (1931) classic study of the Javanese community in Mecca at the turn of the century, there is little documentation on the immigrant population.

4 Fellahiin, the farmers, comprise the majority of the settled population group. In oases and adjoining small towns across Arabia, fellahiin provide important agricultural services which support the community. Among the farmers there is a sexual division of labor with males preparing the fields, distributing water and threshing wheat. Women are responsible for weeding, harvesting, and winnowing. Both can do the work of the other if necessary (Altorki and Cole 1989: 46). This does not mean that some qabila are not also farmers. For instance, the Beni Tamim are a primary example of this, because they have been known as sedentary farmers through the course of history.

Senna, another specialized group among sedentary communities, are the artisans and craftsmen. Their traditional duties include making copperware, spearheads, horseshoes, and camel saddles (Lorimer 1909: 602). In the Nejd, these activities were performed by certain families. Among them were the al-Amamah, al-Abid, al-Jabara, al-Khazim, and al-Jazay (al-Rasheed 1991: 126). According to al-Rasheed’s account, they held a low position in the status hierarchy, where “only individuals of humble origin would engage in the manufacture of artifacts... and the low position of the senna both in the oases and among the bedu was reflected by the fact that they were denied marriage rights among their hosts” (al-Rasheed 1991: 127). In the Asir, there are several occupations which are considered very low prestige activities. Among these are the hajjam, or cuppers who specialize in scarification and the fayudh, who make goat-hair tents (Aloshban 1987: 168).

The lujjar, or merchants, on the other hand, are an important social group with considerable status. Traditionally, they were outsiders who formed an important link in the caravan trade with the outside world. In Nejd oases merchants were often foreigners who settled in the local communities. Since they were outsiders, they were regarded as external to the Bedu and oasis populations (al-Rasheed 1991: 127-128).

The ‘ulama, or religious elite, claim descent from the Quraysh tribe of the Prophet Muhammad (Aloshban 1987: 166). The most important of the ‘ulama are (1) The Ashraf, who trace their origin to Hassan, a grandson of the Prophet Mohammed through his daughter Fatima; (2) the al-Sada, who trace their origin to Hussain, a brother of Hassan.

Members of the religious elite perform any number of ordinary tasks. They own and cultivate lands and raise animals and herd them. They are also traders and fishermen. But members of the religious elite also perform specialized tasks, such as serving as Qur’anic teachers, mediators of inter-group conflicts, and healers believed to possess supernatural powers (Aloshban 1988: 166).
Umara have considerable wealth and military might. Their wealth is a result of a large economic base; land, the collection of taxes and in the past, tribute (al-Rasheed 1991: 80). The shayukh are often subsidized by local umara. At the time of Ibn Saud, the King often made visits to his desert warriors, where he passed out money from the royal purse (Nyrop et al. 1983).
CHAPTER 8

THE QABA‘IL FAMILY

In the preceding chapters, I reviewed two of the elements that contribute to forming the foundation for qaba‘il identification: the importance of Islam in Chapter Six and the qaba‘il concept in Chapter Seven. In this chapter, I will examine the family as the third element. Since qaba‘il status is ascribed at birth, one is considered qabili, or a tribal member, when one is born into a qaba‘il family. However, birthright is not enough. Members are also expected to live according to distinct traditional conventions and to maintain certain values that are inculcated in the family. In this chapter, I examine the qaba‘il family and its structure and roles in the maintenance of qaba‘il values in order to more immediately address how the group has maintained its coherence in the face of outside influences.

This chapter first discusses kinship, family structure, and roles. Members of a qabila identify themselves in terms of their family group and in terms of their structural roles. Corporate identity at the family level is strong, to the degree that the identity of the individual merges with that of the group, unlike the West (Rugh 1984: 32). Family roles reinforce family cohesion and solidarity: husband-wife roles are traditional and
complementary, children are expected and desired early in marriage, parental relationships with children are warm and supportive, and as children grow older they assume the care of their parents.

The next section analyzes the family cycle and how the qaba 'il family is perpetuated. Marriages are arranged at a young age, and parents choose marriage partners for their children from within the extended family, all of whom are qaba 'il. The selection of such marriage partners solidifies the group and allows members to demonstrate their support for each other (Rugh 1984: 149). According to the findings of this study, for a qaba 'il member, it would be unimaginable to choose a partner from a non-qaba 'il Hejazi family; to do so would cast doubt on the family’s tribalness and invite ostracism. Therefore, the process of prohibiting intermarriage with a non-qaba 'il family emerges as a means of maintaining qaba 'il family exclusiveness.

Another important area of discussion is family dispersal. Even after the death of the patriarch or in the situation of divorce, the qaba 'il family shows resilience in maintaining coherence. Upon the death of the patriarch, the family reorganizes with dependent female members moving into the elder son’s residence. Additionally, upon divorce, a woman moves back to her father’s residence. In both instances, the family reforms along familial lines and maintains continuity.

The last section in this chapter, family growth, examines the inculcation of qaba 'il traits and values within the family, which is not without its challenges. It is within the context of the family that the child begins to learn about family roles and is taught the fundamental values of the group. In her role as the primary socializer of
children, the qabila woman inculcates the qabila concept through the transmission and maintenance of qaba'il custom and tradition to her children. This section suggests how, as the new generation of qaba'il children being raised in the Hejaz seeks to become a part of modern society, some traditional gender roles are shifting.

DESCRIPTION OF THE QABA'IL FAMILY

In this section, I discuss kinship, family residence, family structure, and each member's roles. Qabila individuals identify themselves as members of their family, which is at the core of their self-definition. Group identity, unlike the West, is strongly valued and upheld, and one's role within the family is traditionally defined. Among the qaba'il family members interviewed for this study, the majority of families had a strong preference for maintaining residence within close proximity to each other. The most common pattern found showed that the qaba'il family is patrilineal, with the primary kinship unit being the ahl, or extended family, in which a senior male, his wife, or wives, unmarried children, and married sons with their wives and children live together. Within this pattern, the family structure and residence revolve around the patriarch at their center. In almost all cases, there was a family hierarchy in which the husband and wife have complementary roles: he is the leading authority figure, while she oversees the domestic needs of the family. All of these factors contribute to reinforcing a strong sense of family cohesion and solidarity.
Among the qaba'il interviewed, it was apparent that qaba'il perceive themselves as members of a corporate group from which one draws one's identity and sense of unity based upon membership within the group. According to Rugh (1984: 33), within such a corporation, individuality is secondary to the needs of the group. In a corporation, the group comes first, and the individuals are expected to sacrifice:

...their own needs for the greater good of the group. The personal status of individual members is defined by the group and not...by individual achievement. Individual behaviors are evaluated primarily by how they reflect on the group, [with] the group taking the blame or the rewards for these behaviors. (Rugh 1989: 33)

The qaba'il members of this study belonged to a series of corporate groups which begin at the qaba'il level (the largest) and gradually narrow to the nuclear family level (see Figure 4 below). Membership in each grouping entails certain responsibilities and obligations. Qaba'il members' participation at the larger levels of corporate groupings occurs most often during social occasions, religious holidays, and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The most common grouping, however, is the extended family with whom qaba'il members interact each day. An examination below of qaba'il corporate groupings alludes to the importance of patrilineal kin and their relations within a wider groupings of relatives. To compare qaba'il kinship terms with similar Middle Eastern and Asian kinship systems, see Aloshban (1987), Al-Tamimi (1991), Barth (1976), and Cole (1975) and Lancaster (1981).
A patriclan, or *qabila*, the largest of all kinship groupings, consists of a number of lineages that share a common distant ancestor. The *qabila* is too large and unwieldy a group for all its members to assemble together or interact in person. However, the ideology of *qabila* performs certain important functions as discussed in Chapter Seven.

The next smaller kin unit is that of the *fakhid*, or lineage. A lineage constitutes a group of kinsmen who claim their descent from a common ancestor. This is the largest unit in which people are able to come together. Among the *qaba’il* family members interviewed for this study, few members knew of the purpose of the *fakhid* for contemporary life and stated that it has little relevance today. Traditionally, however, when the *qaba’il* were still living on tribal territory, the *fakhid* elders served as political leaders and were consulted on important issues such as arranging alliances, as well as acting as mediators to resolve disputes and offer counsel. The *fakhid* also enabled *qaba’il* to organize into groups for the purposes of engaging in feuds and coordinating agro-pastoral activities. Today, it appears its function among the urban *qaba’il* members is ambiguous. For example, one of the few occasions in which membership arises is in reference to the national identification card which indicates whether an individual belongs to a *fakhid* or not.

The *ahl*, (consanguineous relatives within the extended family) together with the *arham* (affinal relatives who are married into ego’s *ahl*), form a smaller kin grouping than the *fakhid*. This grouping was readily identifiable by the *qaba’il* members in this study and, in fact, was referred to in everyday greetings such as, “*Keef al-ahl*?” meaning “How is the family?” The *ahl* and *arham* members come together for important ritual
functions such as mourning condolences and religious holidays, such as Eid Kbiir, as well as other activities. This group often includes a number of patrilineal cousins of ego, making it an endogamous unit.

Arham, those related to ego through marriage, constitute an important class of kin. The arham of the father are the maternal kin of his children, known as khawwal. The relations between individuals and his khawwal are far more relaxed than those between an individual and his ahl. Generally, observations suggested that qaba’il members view their relations with their mothers’ relatives with more affection because they do not feel duty-bound toward them.

One of the smallest groupings is the al. The data gathered supported the notion that a qaba’il member interacts almost on a daily basis with these relatives from his immediate natal group who are of the same patrilineal descent. Among its members are brothers who live with ego in his father’s household or nearby, his sisters, his patrilineal cousins, and his brothers’ sons. Female relatives belonging to this group, although they may not share the same patrilineal descent, include the mother, sisters, aunts, and female cousins. Members of this group often share the same household, and as such, usually see each other daily and may or may not share meals.

Qaba’il Family Residence

The research revealed several qaba’il patterns of residence. It is not uncommon for qaba’il family members to live together in a large house or near each other as an extended family unit. The patriarch and his wife may live in their own villa along with
Figure 4. Corporate kinship groups to which qaba'il members belong
their married and unmarried children. Or, they may reside in a family compound, with the patriarch, his spouse and unmarried children in one villa while their married sons and respective families may live in adjoining villas. Another scenario might include family members living in apartments with the parents retaining one apartment while their married sons rent nearby. Such innovations in residence patterns, from the Nejdi (oasis/desert-dwelling) qabila to urban qabila, imply there is a strong tendency of qaba'il members to maintain family cohesiveness in an urban environment.

The Beni Tamim, Ateibah and Anazah all use the word bayt to designate a household and home. It may refer to the dwelling in which the family lives as well as to the social unit itself. In the latter case, the house is known by the last name of the patriarch. For example, a villa inhabited by Mohammad al-Tamimi would be known as bayt al-Tamimi, the house of the Tamimis. The patriarch's family will be referred to as bayt al-Tamimi as well.

The physical layout of the bayt, both its interior and exterior reflect certain qaba'il value and traits. Maintaining the privacy of the family and the hareem, the female members of the family, is of utmost importance. Therefore, the outside of the villa is constructed in such a way to ensure complete privacy from prying eyes. The bayt encompasses a lot, encircled by a high wall, with a main gate and a small guard house near the entrance. Typically, inside the premises, one would find a villa or cluster of villas with a small garden area in the center. Poured cement walls may exceed 10 feet in high with additional embellishment on top. Also, any windows of the bayt, which can be seen from the street, are usually well shuddered so that outsiders may not see inside.
The qaba'il bayt is divided into public and private domains. The outside public area includes the garden and in some cases a majlis, a special room where men meet and socialize. The interior public area includes the formal reception and dining areas, located at the front of the house near the main entrance. Here guests are received and shown hospitality. Custom mandates that men and women entertain guests separately. For this reason, the rooms typically have sliding doors, which ensure the privacy of guests, as well as the privacy of family members. The guest rooms are for entertaining non-family members, while the private area is used more often by kin. The furnishing is deliberately and carefully chosen and always meticulously arranged so as to present the image they wish to convey. Many times, a genealogical family tree is framed and displayed in a prominent area. If the family members are not conservative Wahhabis, the room will also be decorated with pictures of the adult male family members, their diplomas and awards. The guest room is intended to display the family’s public face, its prestige, achievements, wealth, strength and number of sons with which the patriarch has been blessed. In contrast, the family’s private domain holds the images and achievements of the women and children in the family.

The private areas of the bayt include the ghurfat arabi (the Arabic sitting room), bedrooms, baths, kitchen, and servant quarters. The family sitting room is furnished with oriental rugs and low cushions. Traditionally, domestic life centers around this room. Family members gather here to eat, relax and share the news of the day. The area serves as a playroom when not occupied by adults.
Family bedrooms are usually located away from the guest area. If the house is a multi-storied villa the bedrooms are usually upstairs. Assuming it is a non-polygamous household, husbands and wives share the same bedroom, while small children sleep together in an adjoining area. Customarily, boys and girls sleep in separate rooms. The ideal is for each bedroom to have its own bathroom so family members do not have to share. In polygamous households (which is increasingly uncommon among contemporary qaba’il), each wife has her own separate sleeping quarters. The children sleep with their mothers while the husband divides his attention among his wives.

Food is prepared in the kitchen and served in either the dining room or the Arabic sitting room. The latter is ideally suited for comfortable informal dining where a large mat is laid out and platters are placed in the center. Qaba’il family members sit cross-legged around the mat. Formal meals are served in the dining room.

Many families have live-in domestic help which is affordable in the Kingdom. Usually foreign women serve as maids, nannies, and cooks. They are given rooms within the villa, which are usually located near the kitchen, sometimes with their own entrance. Men work as drivers, gardeners, and guards. They are housed in detached quarters located in the garden away from the main villa.

The kitchen serves as the center of activity for the household staff. It is from here that maids get the food to serve the family. The female household staff eats their food here, while male servants pick up their food and eat it in their rooms. Staff visiting from other houses also congregates in the kitchen to exchange gossip and help with any communal activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room #</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Al-Salon</td>
<td>Salon/Living Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Al-Sufra</td>
<td>Dining Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Al-Matbakh</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Salon Al-Hareem</td>
<td>Ladies Salon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ghorfat Al-Jalsah</td>
<td>Family/Sitting Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ghorfal Al-Arabi</td>
<td>Arab Sitting Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ghorfat Al-Khadimah</td>
<td>Maid/Servant Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Al-Madkhal</td>
<td>Entry Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hamam Al-Dioof</td>
<td>Guests’ Bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hammam</td>
<td>Bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Salah</td>
<td>Hallway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Salalem</td>
<td>Stairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Bab</td>
<td>Door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nafithah</td>
<td>Window</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5. 1st Floor Plan**

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### 2nd Floor Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room #</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ghorfat Al-Noom Al-Raisiah</td>
<td>Master Bedroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ghorfat Noom</td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ghorfat Noom</td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ghorfat Al-Jalsah</td>
<td>Family/Sitting Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hammam</td>
<td>Bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Matbakh Saghir</td>
<td>Kitchenette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Salah</td>
<td>Hallway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Salalem</td>
<td>Stairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Bab</td>
<td>Door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Nafithah</td>
<td>Window</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6. 2nd Floor Plan**
### Compound

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area #</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bayt #1</td>
<td>House #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bayt #2</td>
<td>House #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bayt #3</td>
<td>House #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bayt #4</td>
<td>House #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bayt #5</td>
<td>House #5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Masbah</td>
<td>Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>AlHadiqnah</td>
<td>Yard/Garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Garag Sayarah</td>
<td>Car Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ghorfat Al-Sawag</td>
<td>Driver’s Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Bab</td>
<td>Door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Bawabah</td>
<td>Gate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7.** A family compound composed of five villas
Qaba’il Family Structure

The data suggest that, ideally, qaba’il members prefer to live in patrilineally extended patrilocal families. In this arrangement, sons (ibn sing.) continue to live in their father’s (abu) house after they marry. They reside there with their wives (jowzah sing.) and any children they have and are expected to remain there until their father’s death at which time they may leave and start their own household.¹ Daughters (bint sing.), upon their marriage, leave their patrilineal house and join that of their husband’s (jowz sing.).

Qaba’il members of this research prefer living together as a patrilineally extended family. This not only promotes cohesion among the members but it also shows family solidarity. A family which has all its sons living with the patriarch suggests harmonious relationships in the family. In one instance, when a Beni Ateibah son started building a villa in another part of Jeddah, friends in the community began gossiping about rifts in the family. Rumor suggested that his wife was a troublemaker who had forced him to leave his father’s house. Eventually, the son talked to his father, and ultimately agreed not to move. He put the unfinished house on the market. My interviewee assured me that such a move by the son would reflect poorly on his family members.

Patrilineal living arrangements also confer economic advantages. Newly-married sons or those just joining the workforce, and thus unable to support themselves, can count on the patriarch’s assistance. Sons, may of course, contribute to the family’s budget as they are able, by purchasing items for the house, or holiday sweets for the kitchen. Only later, when they are established and financially stable, do they begin to contribute significantly to the domestic budget. If one of the sons, through some independent
venture, should become wealthier than his father he may assume greater financial responsibility for the household. However this is not automatically expected. Wealthy qaba'il sons may assume greater financial responsibility, but among the members of this research, they usually leave the patriarch to remain the symbolic financial head of the household as long as he is capable. More typically, the sons, who are in government service, or running small businesses, are left to consolidate their own positions.

The qaba'il household functions as a cohesive group and remains together until the patriarch dies. When this occurs the family re-organizes with the sons moving out and establishing their own households. The sons may also set up their own independent households, usually in separate villas or apartments, within the same neighborhood if the family outgrows its living space. However, this is an exception, and families prefer to stay together in spite of crowded living conditions. Typically, the most common reason observed for a son to move was due to a job transfer to a different city.

Matrilocality is rare, and among the Beni Tamim, Ateibah and Anazah groups I studied in Jeddah, there are no cases currently known. However, there are several cases where a woman who is divorced or widowed lives alone in her own residence. But in these situations, her villa or apartment is located in close proximity to the house of a male relative, either that of her father if he is still alive or her brother. To illustrate this point, there was a qaba'il woman living in a family compound with her husband and only son who was married with children. The mother was divorced without warning and moved to
a villa near her brother. However, when I asked whether her son, who was upset with his father over the divorce, would move out of the compound with her, she was utterly surprised and answered that his place was with his father.

However, in practice, not all the sons stay close: some may move to other locations for work, while others may move because of quarrels between family members. Still, it is rare for the parents to be left without any sons living nearby, and usually, it is the eldest son who assumes this responsibility.

**FAMILY ROLES**

As we have seen in the previous two sections, the family structure and residence revolve around the patriarch at their center. Interviews and observations of the *qaba‘il* groups of this study uncovered much about the role of the patriarch. The patriarch is morally obligated to provide for his family. As the head of the household he makes all the important decisions regarding the families finances, moral education of the children, and marriage of his sons and daughters. He is expected to be considerate of his wife’s needs and feelings and to treat her relatives with courtesy. In return, his wife and children are to be respectful and obedient.

When examining the hierarchy of family roles among the *qaba‘il* studied, however, one sees that even though the senior male assumes primary authority over all of the other family members, his wife, the matriarch, possesses subtle, and yet, very significant influence over her family.
It is the duty of the wife to tend to her family's physical and emotional needs. She is expected to be warm and caring and seeks to gratify the needs of her husband and children. She also maintains the harmony of the house by mediating disputes among members of her family. Additionally, the qaba'il wife oversaw the daily routine of preparing and serving meals, keeping the house in good order, and managing the laundry. Finally, she accepted responsibility for the training and supervision of household servants, if there were any.

Traditionally, the qaba'il wife was expected to obey her husband's demands. In the past this meant total compliance to the wishes of her spouse. However, in Jeddah women have access to higher education and can enter the job market to attain a degree of financial independence. As such, they are less inclined to submit so absolutely to unreasonable demands of their husbands.  

However, work opportunities outside of the home have been available only to the most recent generation of qaba'il women. Among the young college educated qaba'il women I interviewed, those who were working professionally were still a marked minority with most women employed in either education and medicine. Despite these new circumstances, the working wife must still strike a balance between her responsibilities to her husband and children and the requirements of her career.

While the roles of husband and wife are complementary, the study indicated they are also quite exclusive. It is rare for a man to assume responsibilities of or perform tasks traditionally assigned to women. Similarly, it is unusual for a qaba'il woman to take on the role of financial provider for the family. Thus, the cohesion of the family is
facilitated by the mutual interdependence of the husband and wife. It is unthinkable for a
qaba ’il man or woman to live alone. Women cannot live without a husband or male
kinsmen for financial support and protection, and men cannot exist without a wife or
close female relative to run the households.

From the research of the Benī Tamim, Ateibah, and Anazah, the idea of family
hinges upon children. The father and mother derive their identity and status within their
community from their offspring. A man or woman who cannot have children are
considered unfortunate and are to be pitied while married couples without offspring are
perceived as incomplete families. The Western notion of family, therefore, is very
different from that of the qaba ’il where family is predicated upon offspring.

Upon the birth of a child, the parent’s are referred to as the “mother” or “father”
of that child rather than being referred to by their own personal name. In the patrilineal
qaba ’il family, the parents are known in reference to their first-born son. For example,
the father of Ahmad would be addressed as Abu Ahmad, or Ahmad’s father. Likewise,
the mother would be addressed as Umm Ahmad or Ahmad’s mother. If there is no son,
then the parents would be known in reference to the eldest daughter. For instance, the
father of Leila would be known as Abu Leila and the mother of Leila as Umm Leila.
However among the qaba ’il groups interviewed, this reference for daughters is most
commonly used among close friends and family members. While being known by the
daughter’s name signifies that a family exists, it also indicates that a son is absent. Once
a son is born the parents are no longer known by their daughter’s name. This illustrates
the importance of male offspring upon which the perpetuation of the family line depends.
The children observed in this research appeared close to their mothers. From an early age, girls spent more time in the company of their mother and kinswomen than their father. It is from such interaction that bonds of gender cohesion develop. The daughter is often her mother’s companion and goes with her when she visits relatives or goes to the marketplace. Furthermore, a daughter will help her mother manage the household, supervise young children, and serve as a source of comfort to her mother. To a certain degree, mothers are their daughters’ confidantes. For example, daughters usually broach a request they may have of their father to their mother who then will convey the message on her behalf. The mother daughter relationship of mutual dependence continues even after the daughter is married and no longer living with her parents. The daughter will return to the comfort of her mother’s home before childbirth. Here the mother ensures that the daughter is pampered, well cared for, and offered emotional support. The daughter, for her part, comes to her mother’s aid in time of illness or other difficulties. This close emotional bond between a daughter and mother continues throughout their lives.

In one touching case among the Anazah, two sisters, Muna and Hussah were summoned to Jeddah when their mother became ill. Without question, both daughters left their husbands and young children in Riyadh and journeyed to their mother’s side. When they arrived at the hospital, Muna and Hussah found their mother frail and unable to attend even the simplest tasks. Despite the painful realization that their mother may never leave the hospital, each daughter undertook to gingerly nurse their mother and ease her pain. Each day, Hussah would arrive early and hand feed her mother. As she fed her, Muna recounted the latest news events in an effort to divert attention from the fact that her mother was unable to feed herself. Then Muna would arrive and take her mother on a short walk through the hospital garden again focusing on positive topics of conversation. Later in the day, the daughters would alternate bathing their mother and sitting with her until she fell asleep.
Although both daughters were completely unprepared for the duration and severity of their mother’s illness, at no time did they openly worry about their own home situations or complain about their long hours as caregivers. Both daughters believed that their mother had shown them the same loving, unselfish care when they were young and wanted to do anything they could to help. They remained devoted to caring for their mother for almost a year when their mother finally succumbed to her illness.

This example of the intimacy which characterizes mother daughter interactions is also found in other countries of the Middle East (see Maher (1974) for her discussion of Morocco, Glick and Gulick (1978: 512) for Iran, Dorsky (1986: 77) for Yemen and Rugh (1984: 82) for Egypt).

The data imply a different relationship exists between a qaba 'il mother and her sons. She indulges and spoils them. She treats the young son to toys from time to time, and when he is a teenager she makes certain he has pocket money to spend. The mother acts as buffer between her sons and their father. She takes their side if they get into trouble and ameliorates the father’s tendency to be strict. The closeness between son and mother permits an informality in their relationship not possible with the father. For example, a son is usually comfortable enough to vent his frustrations and disclose his feelings to his mother, but seldom to his father.

In return, a good qaba 'il son is both attentive and sympathetic to his mother’s needs. As an adult, he will speak on her behalf, mediate between her and his father, as well as provide her money for her personal use. It is to her son, not her daughter, the mother turns if she is widowed or divorced, as he will most likely provide for her the rest of her life. In these ways, a devoted son reciprocates in later life what his mother did for him when he was young.

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To the father, the son is all important since the perpetuation of the family line depends upon him. In a patriarchal, patrilineal society, the importance of the son cannot be overstated. For this reason, upon the birth of his first-son, the father will be referred to by his son’s name. Although, for a qaba’il father, every son is important, and a man with many sons is fortunate indeed, it is usually the first-born son who has a special relationship with his father. He tends to be the father’s favorite, held to highest expectations, and deemed a role model to whom younger siblings should defer.

The father-son relationship is characterized as formal, and the son is required to be at all times respectful and obedient to his father. Sons are more attentive and reserved when in the company of their father than that of their mother. When their father enters the room they will display their respect by rising and greeting him politely. As the sons grow older and move into their villas, they visit their father each day and spend some time conversing with him as a sign of respect.10

Similarly, the importance of the father to the son also cannot be overstated. The boy derives his identity from his father’s descent group. A qaba’il child is named after his father and grandfather. For example Feisal Abdullah Nasir al-Tamimi is Feisal, the son of Abdullah, the son of Nasir al-Tamimi. The son is obliged to comply with his father’s wishes and relies upon his father for support well until adulthood. In turn, the son will support his father for as long as he lives.

Observations and interviews suggest fathers and daughters tend to have a different relationship than fathers and sons. Sometimes, fathers and daughters are close. This is especially true of the first-born daughter, who may be her father’s favorite child. As
toddler, fathers are very gentle with their daughters, they will overindulge and spoil them. This relationship, however, changes and becomes somewhat more formal and distant when the daughter is no longer considered to be a child. It is difficult to say at exactly what point this occurs. From the qaba 'il studied, it appeared to be a subjective matter determined by each family, but one usually finds that by the age of 12, girls are treated differently from younger sisters and have different expectations placed upon them. For example, it is expected that they wear modest dress and behave with more formality. Nevertheless, in most cases, there is still an undertone of affection between father and daughter.

A daughter also derives her identity from her father’s descent group. Moreover, like qaba 'il sons, a daughter also takes her father and grandfather’s names (for example, Hussah daughter of Ahmad and granddaughter of Abdulrahman from the al-Tamimi family will be known as Hussah Ahmad Abdulrahman al-Tamimi), as well as remains a life long member of her father’s descent group. It may also be noted that the qaba 'il woman retains her father’s name even after marriage. As a member of his patrilineage, she depends upon his financial support until she marries and joins the household of her husband. A daughter may return to her father’s house if she is divorced, or she may seek refuge there in case of mistreatment at the hands of her husband’s family. Indeed, it may be said that her father and her patrilineal kinsmen defend and protect her throughout her life. When she dies, only her father, or another patrilineal kinsman, may touch her and place her body into the grave. The woman herself has certain obligations and

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responsibilities to her father and his kinsmen, and the data collected suggest that her moral conduct reflects upon them as well, and it is they who will correct infractions on her part.

The first-born daughter, if she is old enough, usually fulfills an important role in her father’s household. It is she who takes her mother’s place should the latter die. Under such circumstances, she assumes responsibility for managing the house and looking after her father and her younger siblings. In some cases, interviewees stated that she even finds a second wife for her father since it is she who has access to the women’s domain. It is desirable that the father remarries, because upon her own marriage, she will leave her father’s household and join that of her husband’s.

According to the qaba’ il in this study, the relationship between siblings is predicated upon age. Usually the oldest girl is responsible for ensuring the safety of her younger siblings and cousins. Older boys are also expected to act in a similar fashion. Older children are accountable for the safety and proper behavior of their younger siblings. The responsibility associated with being an older child is accompanied with considerable favoritism and rewards bestowed upon them by their parents. Moreover, younger siblings are expected to defer to the wishes of older children, a pattern which continues into adulthood. Such assignment of responsibility, ranking, and deference, not only establish patterns of authority but also contribute to the cohesion and solidarity of the family as a whole.
In patrilineally extended-family compounds, it is common for siblings to play together with cousins who often live in one of the compound villas. These children, both males and females, play together throughout the day until they reach school age. By the age of nine or ten, the play relationship between the children changes. The children begin to segregate according to gender with boys spending more time in each other’s company. Girls, then will often be in the company of their mother, aunts, sisters and female cousins. At this time, boys begin to invite over male school friends who are not family members. According to the qaba’il interviewed, this marks the period when the boys begin to move out of the women’s domain, the sphere of domestic life associated with females and children, and begin to act more independently. By their teenage years, a definite pattern emerges. The older boys begin to assert the authority associated with young men in a patriarchal household. Older girls, on the other hand, are now acting like adult women should. The relationship between the young men and young women of the family now takes on new directions as well. The behavior between the oldest brother and sister becomes more formal, in a similar fashion to that between the father and the eldest daughter.

As the next male in charge to the father, the older brother may choose to exercise his newly found prerogatives upon his younger siblings, particularly if he adopts fundamental religious precepts. He may begin to demand rigorous compliance to Islamic obligations, such as a stricter modest dress code for his sisters and prayer five times a day.
for his brothers. Such behavior tends to have disruptive effects on the family as a whole. However, such cases appear uncommon, and sons generally assume their authority in a more mitigated fashion remaining fairly sympathetic to the needs of sisters and brothers.

Daughters, too, exercise their prerogatives as female authority figures. In their interactions with their siblings, they can be sharp-witted, highly expressive, and assertive. However, they are also sensitive to the needs of their younger siblings and may be sought out for advice. Among the qaba' il interviewed, unmarried girls tended not to adopt stricter fundamentalist perspectives; however, if they do so, the effect on the family is not the same as that of a religiously devout older brother. This is best understood in the context of the patrilineal household where the propagation of the faith ultimately lies with the men.

Older siblings continue to act as authority figures for their younger brothers and sisters long after they have all left their father's household. It is not uncommon for an older brother to continue to express his opinions about how his younger siblings should behave throughout their lifetime. In fact, interviews with qaba' il members hint that the inherent ranking generates considerable resentment in the younger children which is often carried well into later life. Nevertheless, because such relationships between siblings are an inherent part of traditional qabila family dynamics, it is perpetuated even by those younger siblings who may be resentful their own treatment. The younger siblings, will themselves favor their own elder children according to the customary qaba' il ways.
PERPETUATION OF THE QABA’IL FAMILY

This section analyzes the family cycle, perpetuation, and dispersal. For a qaba’il member, it is obligatory to choose a partner from within the extended family; to do otherwise would cast doubt on the family’s standing as qaba’il members. The selection of marriage partners who are qaba’il is a form of group solidarity and allows members to demonstrate their support for each other while excluding other groups. At a later stage, the family may disperse as a result of divorce or death, in which case, families will reorganize. When a patriarch dies, his wife and other dependents will live with the eldest son; when a marriage breaks up, the woman will move back to her father’s residence. According to the observations and interviews, in all instances, the qaba’il family shows resilience in maintaining coherence as a family unit.

The Qaba’il Family Cycle

The qaba’il family cycle is characterized by successive and overlapping stages of development. The family is established when the couple has its first child and later augmented by the in-marrying of daughters-in-law and the birth of their subsequent offspring. It is not uncommon for the patriarch’s wife to still be of reproductive age and having children when her daughters-in-law begin to bear children of their own.

The family loses members as each daughter marries and moves out, or daughters-in-law are divorced and return to their own parental household. The divorced woman moves back to her own parental household. Children of divorced parents, if they are still
young, may stay with the mother or father. The tendency which I observed, however, was for the children to stay in the father’s house where his mother or sister cared for them.

It is through the addition of a bride that a patrilineal patriarchal family may grow. *Qaba’il* family members pay great attention to the matter and may consider possible marriage partners for the children even before they reach adolescence. The selection process is implied shortly after birth. For instance, in one case, a Beni Tamim man had a close *qaba’il* friend visit to congratulate him on the birth of his child which was a daughter. Upon seeing the infant, the friend said “*Mashallah*, she is beautiful. Remember me when she is grown, for she will make a fine wife.” Although the comment was made in a joking manner, the suggestion of a possibility of an alliance between the two families was sincere.

Parents begin to identify possible marriage partners for children as soon as they come of age. In the past, women married between 14 and 17 years of age while men married at 20 to 25. More recently, this pattern has changed. Today, among the *qaba’il* of this study, young women marry between 17 and their early twenties while men still marry from 20 to 25. The reason for the change seems to be the growing importance that urban *qaba’il* place upon the education of their daughters. Many interviewees believe it is important for girls to finish high school before marrying. Mothers believe that educated girls are more effective at managing households and raising children. Therefore education, in their opinion, is in the best interest of both the husband and the wife. A number of women even continue their education and receive university degrees before
marrying. Mothers generally view higher education as being beneficial for their daughters, particularly in professional areas of study. One Beni Tamim girl delayed marrying until she completed medical training to become a family doctor. Then once she finished her training, she quit medicine, married and began to have children. When I asked her mother why her daughter completed her degree but did not work, she responded that as a career choice it was preferable for her daughter to be a housewife and mother, however, the medical degree was insurance in case the marriage did not work out.

Some qaba’il fathers, however, are ambivalent about the benefits of education for their daughters believing that too much schooling may make their daughters overqualified for marriage. Perspective grooms, particularly if they are conservative, feel that educated women are often too opinionated and not accommodating enough to be dependent, obedient spouses. Additionally, some young men will not marry a woman who has more education than they do. Mothers and some women argue to the contrary, asserting that an educated girl makes a better wife who can not only manage affairs well, but is also qualified to work should the family need a second income. Due to new economic circumstances and changing job markets that often require young professionals to move and set up neolocal residence, the attributes sought by young qaba’il men in their potential spouses seems to be changing as well. Generally, among those interviewed, more men viewed educated wives as desirable. A corollary of this, however, is that educated working wives, with incomes of their own, also seem to be gaining more influence within their family.
Despite these changing circumstances, many aspects of qaba'il marriage arrangements still conform to traditional patterns. For example, it is still customary, regardless of the groom’s education, for his parents to arrange his marriage. In this respect, marriages are still regarded as alliances between whole families, and bride selection is a serious matter to be negotiated by parents and not by the young people themselves. However, this usually applies to a man’s first wife—should he divorce and marry again he has greater freedom in choosing his second wife. Parents, however, are obliged to follow Islamic law which prohibits marriage not only between members of the immediate family but also between a man and the divorced wife of his son, his son’s widow, his wife’s mother, his brother’s daughter, his sister’s daughter, and his milk sister, a girl who has been nursed by the same woman as himself.

Normally, the boy’s family initiates the search for a suitable bride, the most important factor being kinship relations between the son and future wife. The preferred choice is a patrilateral parallel cousin marriage. Such a union is seen as being particularly advantageous because a marriage between brothers’ children prevents the fragmentation of property through inheritance, and allows the family to stay within the same social rank. Moreover, this type of marriage has the additional benefit that both sides are already well acquainted with the perspective bride and groom both of whom may have been living in the same household all their lives. It also fosters an easier transition for the bride, because her new in-laws are family members with whom she has had a close relationship since childhood.
Qaba’il members emphasize that a man should always take a wife from qareebna, (those close to us), i.e., those who are from the same lineage. The stated preference is parallel cousin marriage. In practice, however, most qaba’il members choose a marriage partner from among a number of families beyond the children of father’s brother. Among the older generation of qaba’il observed, for example, both cross-cousin and parallel-cousin marriages exist, as well as a third, and less frequent marriage pattern involving more distant relatives. In the present generation of qaba’il studied, however, marriages involving immediate cross or parallel cousins are uncommon. Cousin marriages, since they involve the children of brothers, could easily cause rifts between the families of the couples’ parents should their union fail. It is for this reason that people believe such marriages are “too close” and will bring unnecessary conflict. Aside from this, a man is still expected to choose a wife from his own patrilineage. If a potential mate is not available from this category, he may select a wife from another qabila. However, he may not take a wife from non-qabila, for to do so would be to invite ostracism. Even though qaba’il members do not adhere to the rule of patrilateral parallel cousin marriage, etiquette demands that when a man’s daughter is about to be wed, he must still obtain his brother’s blessing before proceeding to negotiate a marriage with a young man other than his brother’s son.

Once the family decides it is time for the boy to marry, his mother, aunts and older sisters begin to identify eligible girls from suitable families. The kinswomen may already have one or more girls in mind. Initially, the women inquire to determine whether or not the girl is available, whether she is free to marry or whether she has been
engaged to another. The final decision rests upon two primary considerations: 1) as already noted, that she is from a family who is "close" kin and 2) that her family has a good reputation. Only then are her personal qualities considered; she should have a good temperament, be clever and possess a certain amount of beauty and charm.

Among the qaba 'il of this research, although men play an important role as the official marriage negotiators, the role of the women in the selection process cannot be underestimated. It is they who have access to women in other families, and it is they who make the initial inquiries. Since the inquiries are made indirectly by the womenfolk, any rejections they may receive will not reflect negatively upon the family. This informal network shared by women facilitates the successful exchange of information. It enables the identification of suitable marriage partners whose families are willing to accept a marriage offer without causing embarrassment to the parties concerned.15

Before turning over the matter to the patriarchs for official negotiations, the women may arrange for a "accidental" meeting between the perspective couple. The boy's mother, for example, may invite the girl and her mother for tea during which the boy may "just happen to walk" into the room where the women are sitting. The two will be briefly introduced and have a moment to speak. Such an "accidental" introduction, which appears to be a recent innovation, prevents embarrassment should either of them object to the match.

The first offer of marriage is called khitbah. It is made by the groom's father since the prospective bride and groom are almost never directly involved in the negotiations. It is the father who delivers the offer personally. During the visit, he may
be accompanied by his kinsmen such as his brother and sons. If the father of the prospective groom is deceased, then the offer will be delivered by another senior kinsmen such as the boy’s uncle. When the delegation, arrives they will be served tea; they then make the offer. According to proper etiquette, the girl’s father will inform them of his decision at a later date. During this period, members of the girl’s family consult one another, and the mother asks her daughter for her opinion of the suitor. Traditionally, the girl was not consulted in the matter, but more recently this situation has changed. While it is still unbecoming for the girl to be directly involved in the negotiations, she has the right to refuse the match. Moreover, once the couple has been officially engaged, it is common for the family to arrange formal visitation between the girl and boy to become better acquainted with one another. This would have been unthinkable in the past.

Next, the respective fathers of the bride and groom enter into the mahr, or bride price, negotiation. It is to everyone’s best interest to conclude this phase of the negotiation quickly, although occasionally it can last for several years. The amount agreed upon between the two parties may vary greatly from case to case. If the families are wealthy, a generous mahr is always expected. The mahr can be as high as 100,000 SR (33,000 US Dollars), or as low as a token sum, or under some circumstances dispensed with altogether. The latter usually occurs if the marriage is between cousins or the families are well acquainted or if there is a reciprocal marriage exchange in which, for example, men from two families marry sisters.
According to Islamic law, the *mahr* may be paid in two installments. The *muqaddam*, or first part, is paid by the groom's family at the time of the engagement. The *muakhkhar*, or second part of the bride price, is an agreed upon sum set aside as an insurance policy for the woman, in case of divorce or her husband's death.

Aside from the *mahr*, the bride customarily receives a number of gifts. In the past, this consisted of new furnishings: *farash* (long mattresses used for sleeping and sitting), *mahadda* (cushions for reclining), new dresses, gold bracelets, and most importantly, a *sunduq* (an ornate wooden chest with metal studs) for storing the bride's possessions. Today, the bride receives expensive gifts, which are primarily jewelry made of gold, as well as diamonds and other precious gems.

Finally, a date is set for drawing up and signing the marriage contract. The fathers, along with kinsmen who will act as witnesses, meet with the local religious leader, or *sheikh*, for the signing of the contract, referred to as *milka*. This document bears the names of the couple to be married and specifies the amount for the *mahr*; a copy is given to the bride and groom. The *milka* signifies that the couple is legally married and may live together. This is followed by a wedding ceremony.

Most weddings take place in late summer and early fall when school is not in session and families take vacations. This allows kinfolk who work or live outside of Jeddah the opportunity to join in the festivities. Sometimes there may be a short delay before the wedding ceremony while preparations are made for the celebration. However, in most cases, the preferred method is to follow the contract signing with the wedding celebration. *Qaba'il* women explain that from the time the contract is signed until the
wedding ceremony, the bride's marital status is ambiguous and risky. If the groom changes his mind and decides he does not want the bride for a wife, she will find herself divorced woman even before the marriage is consummated.

QABA'IL FAMILY DISPERSAL

This research suggests that qaba'il family members may disperse for several reasons. Daughters do so upon their marriage, and sons do so on the death of the patriarch. Those women who married into the family will leave when their husbands do or if they are divorced. The end result, however, is that the family shows much resilience by either reforming or absorbing members back into the family unit.

Divorce is not uncommon among qaba'il members since marriage is not perceived as a sacramental union but rather as a union between families. It is established by means of a contractual agreement between the two respective families, and as such, can be broken. Therefore, divorce is not uncommon, nor does it carry much stigma among most groups, because it signifies little more than the cancellation of a contract. The Beni Tamim usually don't attribute divorce to the incompatibility of husband and wife. The breakup of a marriage is usually attributed to the problems associated with living in a joint household. Conflicts arising between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and altercations between the wife's family and the husband's family, are commonly cited explanations. In one case, two qaba'il business partners married each other's
sisters. After a long and prosperous business relationship, a business deal went sour. One of the partners accused the other of unethical practices. This created such ire in the second partner, he immediately divorced his wife and sent her home to her father and brother whereupon the first partner divorced his wife as well. None of the family members were surprised at such actions and expressed relief that the women were back in their natal homes rather than being caught in the crossfire of the dispute. The least common reason for a man to divorce his wife is to marry a younger woman, and if this happens, it is considered unfortunate.

Divorces among the younger generation occur less frequently when compared to the number of divorces among the older generation. The women interviewed attribute this to the fact that they have more say in the decision to marry, in contrast to their mothers, who married young and with less choice in the matter. Although, this could be a consequence of urban living since the literature shows that the frequency of divorce is low among urban dwellers when compared to that of the bedouin and villagers (see Cole 1975: 75; Katakura 1977: 95; Altorki 1986: 81–82).

In case of a divorce, Islamic law allows children to remain in the mother’s custody until the boys are between the ages of 7 to 9 years old and until the girls reach adolescence. A mother who has custody of the children will take them to her father’s house where she will oversee their upbringing. If the woman remarries, she forgoes custody and returns the children to their father. If a man has custody of the children, they will be supervised by a stepmother or paternal grandmother. Among the qaba’il, in the majority of cases, the father usually assumes custody of the children upon divorce. This
is in part due to the belief that children belong to the father and that a divorced woman should continue with her life and remarry. In fact, parents will usually counsel their daughters who have been divorced to allow the children to join their father’s household. In some cases, however, if the divorce is especially bitter the father may deprive the wife of this choice by keeping the children out of spite. Whatever the case, few divorced women keep custody of their children. In those exceptional cases where the children remain with their mother, relations between the ex-husband and wife are usually good and both families cooperate in raising the children.

Aside from divorce, the extended qaba’il family dismantles with the death of the senior male. If this should happen, the deceased’s brother or another close agnatic kinsman assumes the care for the children and the widow. If the sons are older, then they assume responsibility for the household, their mother, unmarried sisters, and young unmarried brothers. If the oldest son is married and is financially able, he will merge his deceased father’s household with that of his own. Alternatively, if funds are available, the son might maintain two separate households, one for himself and one for his mother and dependents. The death of the mother does not lead to the same restructuring of roles as does that of the father. When the wife dies, the father remains the head of the household and is expected to take a new spouse to run its domestic affairs. This is also shown by Altorki (1986: 90) to be the case among the Hejazi elite.

Typically, a woman who has been widowed and has living male relatives usually does not live alone. This is in part due to a general qaba’il belief that one must always live with kin and never be left la-wahida, alone. A qaba’il woman can live honorably,
protected from gossip and abuse, when she is surrounded by her kin. This ensures her welfare and security. Additionally, females are legally required to have a sponsor, preferably a male guardian, who assumes responsibility for her conduct and public activities. A woman must have her sponsor’s approval if she wishes to travel abroad, if she wants to buy or sell land, apply for a visa for domestic staff, and engage in any other public transactions. A woman must also have her sponsor’s signature if she wishes to start a business, apply for necessary permits, lease space, and establish a commercial bank account. Young girls must also have such a sponsor who serves as their legal guardian. He will sign the admission forms when she enrolls in school or university, and he signs the documents when she wishes to travel to another city or abroad. When she is ready to marry, the young girl’s guardian grants final approval for her spouse as well as officiates during the signing of the marriage contract. Although these requirements appear to ensure the dependency of women upon male kin, the research suggests that they serve the dual purpose of guaranteeing that a kinsman is always present in public situations to protect the qaba’il woman’s interests and by extension, those of the family.

**INCULCATION OF QABA’IL VALUES**

This section examines qaba’il child rearing practices and the inculcation of qaba’il traits and values within the family, which has been challenged by the move out of the traditional Nejdi setting for qabilas. Typically, both parents share equally in instilling qaba’il identity. However, while the patriarch has the authority, both observation and interviews point to the mother as the one who exercises it is the mother who exercises
control over the children and the day to day affairs of her family. In the traditional qaba’il society of Arabia, it is the male who is expected to leave his mark on the world and bring honor to the family, and girls are not expected to achieve to the degree that their brothers are. However, in the new setting, when qaba’il girls do achieve high standards of excellence, they are admired for bringing pride to the family.

**Qaba’il Child Rearing Practices**

Among the Beni Tamim, Ateibah, and Anazah, it is common for a young couple to try to have a child within the first year of marriage. The birth of a child signifies that the man has established his own family and demonstrates the fertility of the woman. The child thus born to the couple will be enculturated in the fundamental qabila values within the context of the larger patrilineally extended family. It is within the context of the family that the child begins to learn about family roles and is taught the fundamental values of the group.

Qaba’il men prefer sons over daughters because it is through their sons that the patrilineage is perpetuated. As I learned from one of the qaba’il women whom I interviewed, when she expressed her unusual wish to have a girl as her first born, her father-in-law was upset and adamant about the importance of having a boy. When I asked why this was so, she explained that a girl child could not carry on the family name, nor could she be relied upon to support the family. Therefore, it would be a luxury to have a girl only after one had sons. When I asked why she was persistent in wanting a
daughter, she responded she had grown up with all brothers and wanted a daughter who would stay next to her side, go with her on women's activities, and care about her in a way that sons could not."

In the traditional male dominated qaba'il society, it is the son who achieves in the public sphere and brings honor to the family. Traditionally, sons brought honor through acts of bravery in raids and battles; today, they attain status and prestige and bring honor to their families, not in the fields of battle, but in the business arena of the modern world.

Qaba'il women, although they acknowledge the importance of a male child, will usually maintain that having a healthy child is more important than the gender of the newborn. If pressed on the matter they will acknowledge that sons and daughters are equally important. Moreover, most mothers feel that because of the availability of education, daughters can perform just as well as their sons, if given the opportunity. The following incident exemplifies this point very well:

I had accompanied a group of Beni Tamim women, who were visiting a relative who had just given birth to a baby girl. They congratulated her and discussed the mother's health; tea and sweets were served. At this point there was a sudden lull in the conversation. The new mother, noticing the silence, looked up and laughed, saying "miin jaabet bint?" meaning "who gave birth to a girl?" This is an expression commonly used whenever there is a pause in a conversation. It implies that giving birth to a girl is such bad news no one can think of anything to say. Here, the mother recognized the irony of the situation since she had just given birth to a daughter. Her female relatives quickly rallied to her side and tried to reassure her. They pointed out that what she had said did not apply to her case, noting that in the past sons were necessary to go to war or protect the house. Now, however, times had changed, and daughters and sons were equally valuable. In fact, some of the women stressed that daughters are even better. They mentioned how their daughters outperformed their brothers at school and that some had been accepted in more prestigious academic programs than their brothers.
This anecdote illustrates how qaba'il girls are not automatically expected to achieve to the degree that their brothers are, however, when they do achieve high standards of excellence, they are admired since they bring pride to the family.

Although qaba'il prefer sons, (especially the men) once a child is born, it is welcomed regardless of its sex. If you are to ask a qabili whether children are troublesome, men and women alike will quote a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad saying, “Children are the ornaments of life.” Children bring joy and purpose to the family.

Infants are cared for by their mothers and female relatives. Most qaba'il mothers breast-feed their children anywhere from 6 months to a year. It is said that the Prophet Mohammad advised that daughters are to breast feed for a year and sons for at least two years. While this may be the cultural ideal, most women feel that breast feeding a child longer than a year is impractical given their busy schedules and many responsibilities. In regard to the above hadith, no qaba'il woman I met stated a preference for nursing their boys longer than their girls. A child is always fed upon demand. If the mother is absent, then the child will be bottle-fed.

Traditionally, if the mother could not produce enough milk a radaa', or wet nurse would be hired. The radaa' assumed a fictive kin role, thereafter being referred to as the child’s “milk mother.” The radaa’s own children became known as the infant’s “milk brothers” or “milk sisters” and were categorized as kin. This relationship applied only to
the child fed by the *radaa* not to the infant’s siblings unless they were also fed by the *radaa*. It was because milk siblings are viewed as kin that the Qur’an prohibited marriage between them.

However, today, with the increasing availability of bottled milk, *qaba’il* women I interviewed and observed rarely relied upon the *radaa*. Yet, women who are friends sometimes nurse each other’s children in order to affirm their friendship and establish closer bonds with one another. Nursing another’s infant only three times suffices for a woman to become the “milk mother” to that child. In this way, the concept of milk kinship can lead to strategies for future marriage arrangements. Women who hope for a possible marriage union between their children are careful to not breastfeed them. On the other hand, a woman may deliberately nurse the child of a relative she dislikes in order to curtail any possibility of marriage between their children. A number of strategies have been noted in the literature to manipulate fictive kinship based upon milk relations (Altorki 1977).

When the child is deemed ready to be weaned, the mother places hot sauce on her nipples in order to encourage the child to drink bottled milk when he or she cries. During this time, the mother may assign another female to feed the infant from a bottle. Thereafter the child will only be bottle-fed. Once the mother begins weaning her child, she will not nurse the infant again. *Qaba’il* mothers believe that re-introducing the child to the breast would bring bad luck. As such, children first learn of discomfort and denial during the process of weaning from the breast.
Qaba'il Discipline

*Qaba'il* children are acknowledged, indulged, and shown great affection by family members within their kin group. Parents and family members, young and old, frequently hug, kiss, and play with them. It is also expected for visiting kin to affectionately greet the children, acknowledge them by name and kiss them. Among the *qaba'il* of this study, children are treated in this fashion even until teenage years by which time they assume this behavior toward younger children. Such affection and importance placed upon children gives them a strong sense of security and well being in addition to building close ties to other members within the kin group.

*Qaba'il* parents rarely strike their children in anger or as punishment. Most feel hitting a child is unwarranted under any circumstances. According to my interviews and observations, young children were believed to lack the maturity necessary to reason well, to be logical in their actions, or to “understand” how to behave in certain situations. Such understanding only comes later, with time. Therefore, someone who strikes a child is acting to satisfy their own anger rather than correcting the youth. For this reason, the *qaba'il* mothers I met criticize societies where parents spank children.

A *qaba'il* mother uses a variety of strategies to correct young children who misbehave. First, she discusses the problem with the child explaining why such behavior is inappropriate. If the child remains recalcitrant, the mother may use a different approach. She may contrast the child’s action with the perfect behavior of an older sibling or cousin held as a role model. Or depending upon the age of the child and the nature of the problem, she may recruit an older sibling to talk to the child. Finally,
she may get the desired affect by shaming the child. In all instances, the child is given a
clear idea of family expectations. No type of misbehavior is left ambiguous, and if the
child chooses to defy *qaba’il* family norms, then he or she will be corrected by the
mother or another family member.

*Qaba’il Traits*

Both parents are responsible for socializing the children, but through observations
and interviews, it became apparent that mothers are the primary caregivers for children
under the age of five. The socialization of daughters is mostly within the sphere of the
womenfolk: her grandmother, mother, sisters, and aunts. It is they who instruct the
young girl concerning family standards for how to dress and behave, as well as
emphasize the preferred religious and *qabila* values. The women also play an important
role in the socialization of the boy, teaching him the importance of appropriate dress and
behavior as well as imbuing *qabila* values.

From an early age, mothers try to instill in their children certain *qabila* values
such as solidarity to one’s kin, initiative, strength of character, responsibility for ones
actions, and *kareema* or generosity.

Such values are usually imparted indirectly. This is because parents feel a child’s
caracter must be allowed to develop on its own. Hence, children under the age of 12, or
until they reach adolescence, are given considerable latitude. A child is allowed to freely
explore his environment and learn from his own actions and consequences. It is
important that he feels he has made his own decision even though such a decision may be
unreasonable. For example, if a three-year-old child insists on wearing his tobe inside out, the mother will acquiesce. Or if a mischievous youngster is intent on breaking a toy, the mother may warn him the toy will break but will not tell him to stop. In this way the child quickly learns that he must face the consequences of his own actions and must develop the strength of character to endure it if others ridicule him or make unfavorable comments.

Mothers also use persuasion to encourage their children to conform to appropriate standards of family and qaba 'il behavior. They will continue to cajole the child until he acquiesces. If the child will not listen, the mother will recruit siblings or cousins to talk to the youngster. If a child is particularly stubborn, the mother will embarrass him by comparing his poor behavior to that of one of the well-behaved children, such as a brother or cousin. A mother would never consider striking a child when she can accomplish the same thing by other means. For example, qaba 'il mothers have told me that striking a child is non-qabila behavior, not our way.

Kareema, or generosity, is a core qabila trait which qaba 'il mothers inculcate in their children. Kareema brings honor to the family, while its opposite, stinginess or having a reputation for being selfish, brings shame. Certain family members who are known to be generous will be acknowledged as having a good heart. Those who are stingy will also be mentioned, but in a negative way. They are said to have turned out that way, because of a stingy mother. Mothers teach generosity by example. For instance, young girls and boys who accompany their mother to the market will see her give coins to beggars. Children also see their mothers generously tip service workers.
such as waiters, porters and tailors. As her children get older, they may be allowed to hand the coins to the beggars or service workers. Thus, children soon realize that being generous with money is a desirable quality. At home, children learn other aspects of kareema. For example, they will see the generosity and hospitality their parents will show to their guests as well as the large bonuses paid to household servants during religious holidays.

In addition to the above, the idea of generosity as a valued trait is imparted in other ways. Qaba'il members may do this through deliberate teasing. This may seem malicious, but it is a patterned cultural trait which reflects the great importance the qaba'il family places upon generosity. For example, relatives may ask a child to give up his favorite toy. If the child does not surrender it immediately, they will snatch the toy away and tease the child to tears. This lesson is reinforced when this child sees a younger sibling subjected to similar treatment. Mothers further reinforce the idea by openly praising a child who is generous and shaming one who is not. A possible manifestation of this practice is that, as adults, if anyone compliments or admires a personal possession, the owner feels compelled to offer it as a gift. This may be one reason that prized objects or items of great beauty are never shown in public. As a corollary, qaba'il members of this study refrain from giving compliments which would induce such actions.

The Beni Tamim, Anazah and Ateibah child also learns at an early age to have a pride in his ancestry and solidarity with his qabila. Many homes have copies of family trees hanging on display or kept for reference. Children are shown the family tree and told about family members past and present. According to the qaba'il in this research, a
child is encouraged to memorize his or her own genealogy which is many generations deep. Children may compete to see how many generations they have memorized. Many know at least six generations, a few 10-12 generations.

On the family tree, a boy can see for himself the precise way in which he is related to his patrilineal kin and he can see the ancestors after whom he has been named: his great grandfather, his grandfather and his father. Women are not depicted on the tree. However, a girl can easily determine her genealogical connections because, aside from her first name, she is known by the same name as her brother. Some families, however, may list female members on a separate chart, which is usually kept private. The family tree contributes to group cohesion and gives the children a genealogical roadmap, that first and foremost tangibly legitimizes that their family constitutes qabila; it marks who they are, the groups to which they belong, and the families from which they might possibly take a wife or wives. Families regard their family tree with great respect and honor it as an affirmation of who they are.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined the family as one of the elements that contributes to forming the foundation for qaba’il identification. By looking at the many dimensions of a qaba’il family, I have sought to address the question of how the qaba’il group has maintained its coherence at the family level in the face of outside influences since moving from Nejd. Corporate identity at the family level is strong, to the degree that the identity of the individual merges with that of the group. It is unimaginable for a qaba’il
member to choose a partner from a non-\textit{qaba 'il} Hejazi family, as it would cast doubt on the family’s tribalness and invite ostracism. In addition, the inculcation of \textit{qaba 'il} traits through child rearing practices is essential to maintaining the group's identity as is clearly teaching the appropriate ways to act like a \textit{qaba 'il} member. Finally, within the modern context of the Hejaz, it is important to note a new generation of \textit{qaba 'il} children is seeking to become a part of modern society which has required some shifting in traditional gender roles.
Endnotes

1 According to Islamic tradition, a man may have up to four wives at the same time, but only on condition that he is able to treat them equally and can provide each with a separate place of residence. Polygyny is most commonly found among the wealthy or the elite in Arabia. But among the qaba 'il of my study, it seems to be in decline among the younger generation as more and more young women refuse to marry into a family as the second wife.

2 A family’s dwelling reflects its public face. Owning a large house, like owning a compound with many villas, is prestigious and reflects not only the family’s monetary wealth, but its wealth in terms of numbers of sons. It is a source of pride and prestige for the family. Large houses are preferred for several reasons. From a practical point of view, interior living space is more desirable than exterior space, which, given the high temperatures throughout most of the year, is impractical. In Jeddah, where residential lots are at a premium, people attempt to make the most out of limited space available. As a result, large gardens are absent and houses occupy most of the yard space. While the interior of the houses are built with high ceilings and spacious rooms, modern houses tend to be European in architectural design, with some incorporating Islamic motifs such as arches and domes.

3 Altorki (1984: 82-83) discusses a similar cycle among the Hejazi urban elite. This contrasts with Cole’s (1975: 66) finding among the Al-Murrah where sons may reside with their divorced mother rather than live in a tent where their mother is not the senior wife.

4 According to Altorki (1984: 91), Hejazi elite families would expect the son to help out in such a case.

5 Altorki (1986: 54-55) has made similar observations among elite families in Jeddah.

6 Traditionally, qaba 'il women living in the Nejd may have specialized in handicrafts, such as embroidering or weaving, in order to supplement the household income.

7 This is supported by the Qur’an which states that men should be the head of the household and are required to support his wife and family. Women, on the other hand are not required to contribute to the household finances. Working women have opted to spend their money on their wardrobe and jewelry. However, in a neolocal residence, she may contribute more and help pay the servants’ salaries as well as incidentals.

8 Altorki (1986: 74) noted a similar pattern among the Hejazi families where boys and girls were less reserved with their mothers. Altorki suggests this behavior is due to mothers requiring less respect from their children as well as encouraging a more egalitarian relationship.

9 She could not expect her daughter’s husband to act in a similar way for the degree of kinship closeness is not there.

10 Qaba 'il children show different degrees of respect toward their parents. Around the father, both sons and daughters are more attentive and reserved than around the mother. This is similar to Altorki’s (1986: 74) findings in her study of Hejazi families where children demonstrated respect by standing when their father entered the room. He refrained from smoking, laughing loudly, and talking in a raised voice while in their presence. However, it should be noted that qaba 'il children would show this behavior as a means of respect in a formal situation with any respected elder.

11 See Altorki (1977) for an interesting discussion concerning the strategies used by a nursing mother to establish a milk bond between her own infant and others.
According to Dickson (1949: 140) and Cole (1975: 72), the principle of marrying according to one's rank is extremely important among the bedou of northeastern Arabia and the al Murrah, and one who does not comply with this risks social sanctions. For instance, bedous in the northeast prohibit inter-marrying with any qabila that they consider socially inferior. The young man who breaks with this rule is ostracized and his family tainted. Among the al-Murrah, men may marry women of lower status but their offspring are not recognized as members of the al-Murrah. Therefore, intermarriage with the children would be forbidden to any of the al-Murrah women. To avoid such complications, it is better to find a marriage partner among one's kin group (Cole 1975: 72).

Nomadic peoples have differing opinions as to the kin category that makes the best spouse. Among the Rwala bedti, patrilateral first cousins seldom marry, but patrilateral second cousins are the preferred partners, that being f.f.b.s.s. and f.f.b.s.d. (Lancaster 1981: 49). These Rwala believe that marriage with f.b.d. is too close. Lancaster gives no reason for this; however, there are several explanations possible for it: e.g., marriage with a lateral extended cousin would provide an alliance outside of the unit of two brothers living together. Another reason could be that marital conflict between their respective children would cause conflict between two brothers who live together. Immediate first cousin marriage is prohibited but a bride is always chosen from the same patrilineage. Parallel cousin marriage is also rare among the al-Murrah, since the tendency is to marry not their immediate first cousins but others who are members of the same lineage (Cole 1975: 72).

In times past, it was the case among the bedu that if the ibn 'amm did not give his release to the marriage, he could seek out the newly married couple without any recriminations (Dickson 1949: 31).

Dorsky (1986: 99) observed a similar situation in Yemen where women engage in preliminary inquiries, sparing men the social embarrassment of being rebuffed.

For the Rwala, it is important that a young woman is not forced to marry against her wishes. In some cases where a woman was either coerced into marriage or else forced to stay in an unhappy marriage, she resorted to murdering her husband (Lancaster 1981: 50).

Divorce among certain groups, particularly the bedu, clearly shows this. According to Cole (1975: 66), sons never live in a tent in which the senior woman is not their mother. When a man divorces his wife, he moves out of her tent, but cannot take his sons with him. If a divorced woman subsequently remarries, her sons will leave her tent. In this case they establish their own families or move into the tent of their father. A daughter, on the other hand, always remains with her mother until she is married.

See the following for discussions concerning other bedou groups in the Kingdom: cf. Dickson 1949: 144; Cole 1975: 76; Katakura 1977: 94.

According to Altorki, when the son assumes the financial obligation of supporting his mother and sisters, he also assumes the role of household head. All the female dependents of his father become his dependents, and although they may have inherited substantial wealth, he is responsible for their upkeep. He is responsible for overseeing the marriage arrangements for his unmarried sisters and will act in the capacity of his father by providing gifts for her wedding and paying for the wedding ceremony. Additionally, the women receive from him permission to travel outside of the city and any documentation required for papers at government offices. In return, the women must respect his wishes concerning their attire and behavior (Altorki 1986: 84).
According to Altorki’s (1986: 90) study, new relationships are formed between the children and father and between the children and the father’s new wife. The children have to establish new relationships with the oldest daughter having to make the most adjustment. She assumes many of her mother’s responsibilities along with the socialization of her younger siblings. Her father may consult her rather than his second wife on the choices of schools, careers, and marriage for her brothers (Altorki 1986: 90).

Women who are destitute and without family may find shelter in a rabat, or hostel. These rabats are maintained through a special religious endowment known as a waqf.

Young boys also move into the household of one of the older brothers. For them, there is not as much change as for the women. Their older brothers make the decisions concerning education and discipline them according to family norms. An adult male will receive advice from his eldest brother and is left to move into a residence of his own (Altorki 1986: 88).

See Altorki’s (1977) discussion on breastfeeding.

In a similar fashion to the Rwala (Lancaster 1981: 67) and villagers in Yemen (Dorsky 1986: 84).

Parents will also use diversions and other tactics to placate their children. They will make promises that they do not intend to keep, resort to prevarications, or deceive the child in a number of ways. A man may tell his son, for example, that he will be right back knowing full well he will not return until that evening. Or a grandmother, will tell her grandchild she’s leaving to get a present when in fact she does not intend to. This customary way of dealing with children teaches them early to mistrust adult promises.

This is done in a similar fashion to Lancaster’s (1981: 67) findings among the Rwala bedou where an aunt might ask a two-year-old for its toy and snatch it away if it is not immediately given up.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This dissertation seeks to answer two primary questions: "How are we to define the qaba' il (tribal) concept within the Saudi Arabian context?" and "How is group identification maintained within the qaba' il context?" The response to these questions would answer the larger anthropological questions which were raised concerning the efficacy of the tribal concept to anthropologists, and how present theory on group identification can explain the persistence of tribalism. I have shown that qaba' il group identification, maintained through the enforcement of the ideology of the dominant society, Wahhabism, re-enforces qaba' il religious ideology (Chapter Six). I have also shown within this dissertation that the qaba' il concept in Saudi Arabia is best defined using an indigenous definition that refers to a cultural category that is defined contextually and situationally (Chapter Seven). Finally, I have shown how, through ascribed membership within qaba' il families, qaba' il values are maintained and inculcated (Chapter Eight).
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the material in the previous chapters, this study concluded that lines of separation are formed between qabila and non-qabila populations. This study further concluded that the Saudi state-imposed Wahhabism dominates the society. The lines of separation result because the Beni Tamim, Ateibah, and Anazah follow Wahhabism, a very fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, while some non-qabila members in the community do not subscribe to the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam.

This study examined the beliefs and practices of qaba’il members, and how qaba’il apply their religious tradition to every facet of life. My interviews and observations have confirmed that, indeed, in order for group identification to persist, there must be shared moral values. While qaba’il have much in common with Muslims everywhere, this dissertation has described their particular form of Muslim beliefs and practices that establish the basis for their group identification. As my data analysis revealed, the motivation to maintain group identity is directly connected to symbols meaningful to those who identified with a particular historical experience. Wahhabism presents such shared moral values which form the core of qaba’il identification.

One of the goals of this study was to define the qaba’il concept within urban Saudi Arabia. The qaba’il concept in Saudi Arabia is best conceptualized using an indigenous definition that refers to a cultural category identified contextually and situationally. Within the modern setting of Saudi Arabia, I defined the qaba’il concept as a mental construct based upon descent, maintained through endogamy, with political, social, and symbolic significance. This definition of the qabila concept still needs more
elaboration. Since access to the public male domain in Saudi daily life was restricted to me as a female researcher, I could not attend many male events such as interactions at the workplace, men’s weekly meetings, or more casual interactions between friends. Data obtained from such male interactions could add to the findings of this study.

In the modern context, the findings of this study showed that the categories based upon descent (qabila and non-qabila) have replaced the traditional bifurcation of Arab society into nomadic (bedouin) and sedentary (hadar) populations. This study asked what is qaba’il in terms of segmentary lineage and discussed its relevance for contemporary qaba’il members. The study found that intermediate segments have been erased, leaving the highest segment, the qabila, and the lowest segment, the bayt or household. The findings of this study suggest that group identification and qaba’il membership have been a means for promoting group dominance in the political sphere, especially since the Saudi government is a tribal state, run and operated at the highest levels by the Al-Saud family. As a result, government appointments at the ministerial level have been overwhelmingly in favor of those from qaba’il descent.

One of the elements that contributes to forming the foundation for qaba’il identification is the qaba’il family. The data showed a strong tendency for qabila members to only marry amongst themselves. In fact, for a qaba’il member, it is unimaginable to choose a partner from a non-qaba’il Hejazi family, as it would cast doubt on the family’s tribalness and invite ostracism. The findings of this
study also showed the inculcation of qaba'il traits through child rearing practices and the continuing importance of acting like a qaba'il member. It is through ascribed membership within qaba'il families that qaba'il values are maintained.

Through looking at the many dimensions of a qaba'il family, this study sought to address the question of how the qaba'il group has maintained its coherence at the family level in the face of outside influences since their move out of the Nejd. Members of a qabila identify themselves in terms of their family group and in terms of their structural roles. My findings showed that corporate identity at the family level is strong, to the degree that the identity of the individual merges with that of the group. Family roles reinforce family cohesion and solidarity. Among the families I interviewed, symbols of qabila identity were exhibited through tribal markers and behavior.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this dissertation, I have shown that the qaba'il concept is an important aspect of group identification among Nejdi groups in the Hejaz. It is an identity which qaba'il members have purposefully chosen to maintain within the Hejazi context. I have focused upon this concept to answer the larger anthropological question of how group identification theory can explain the persistence of tribalism.

My findings have shown that group identification has been a means for promoting group dominance in the political and religious spheres, which, as an issue, has not been thoroughly explored in the literature. Gluckman (1958) hinted at the role of dominance
by analyzing the contexts in which British colonists interacted with the Zulus and studied the situations in which they distanced themselves. For Gluckman, dominance was important in terms of context: it was situational. My findings in this research have shown that dominance of the qabila in Saudi Arabia over the non-qabila is situational in terms of the political and religious context and each group’s boundary maintenance. This is closer to Barth’s description where distinctions do not exist in a void, but are a product of social interaction and acceptance or non-acceptance. Both religious and political domination of qaba’il in Saudi society take place at the state level. The religious domination of qaba’il in terms of the prevailing Wahhabism is exclusionary to non-qaba’il, due to the intolerance of Wahhabis toward non-Islamic and non-Wahhab ideology. Political domination is exclusionary, since the Saudi royal family that rules the state is a tribal family.

My findings also indicate that group identity and boundary maintenance are most strongly supported between the categories of qabila and non-qabila. As indicated in the literature by Barth, Wallman and Okely, individuals have concepts of identity categories, both of themselves and of others. This implies the possibility of exchanging one identity with another. In fact, studies have revealed situations where identities are fluid (Leach) because a group may need to define itself variably and flexibly (Barth). However, within my study, boundary maintenance is strongly maintained in terms of qaba’il membership, even to consider the mixing of qaba’il membership with a non-qaba’il member (i.e., through marriage) is to cast doubt upon an entire family’s tribalness. This is strongly
evidenced in the selection of marriage partners where the boundary is patrolled by the 
quaba'il members who maintain the separation of qaba'il and non-qaba'il as a dominant 
value.

The theoretical implications in regards to the tribal concept as used by 
anthropologists is perhaps a more significant finding of this study. The qaba'il concept is 
a mental construct, a psychological definition of self, which qaba'il members employ in 
their daily interactions with others. I have focused upon this concept to answer the larger 
anthropological question, which was raised concerning the efficacy of the tribal concept 
to anthropologists.

There is a need to reconceptualize the use of the term “tribe.” Anthropologists 
have complained that the term is equated with primitive society and pre-colonial 
communities. In my study, I have applied tribe to a modern urban population which does 
not have a history of being colonized. Another complaint is that the term “tribe,” at least 
in the African context, has a pejorative meaning. Among the qaba'il of Arabia, there is 
pride and honor associated with qaba'il membership. Finally, there is the idea that tribes 
are generally nomadic pastoralists. The qaba'il being examined in my study were once 
pastoralists, but now live in an urban setting. In light of this reality of tribes in Saudi 
Arabia, such antiquated notions—that tribes are primitive, that they are nomadic, and that 
the term “tribe” is pejorative—need to be re-examined and reconceptualized to meet the 
changing contexts of tribal people throughout the world as they experience the processes 
of human mobility, forced relocation and/or nationalism.

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In my study I used a definition for tribe that related to group identity. Because *qaba’il* boundaries in the urban setting are symbolic—in that they distinguish and identify the group, rather than physically demarcating a tribal territory—a psychological definition is preferred. Within an urban setting of the Hejaz in Saudi Arabia, I defined the *qaba’il* concept as a mental construct based upon descent, maintained through endogamy, with political, social, and symbolic significance. Additionally, because membership is ascribed, “a tribe is best understood as a cultural category that tribal people and others apply in a variety of situations and contexts and define situationally and contextually.

Since tribal people are becoming more and more disassociated from their territories, a psychological definition with an examination of symbolic boundaries presents one means for re-examining the concept of “tribe.”

**LIMITATIONS**

As is true with most research projects, there were a number of limitations encountered in the course of this study. Most of the problems I encountered were a matter of access. This was a direct result of my being a western Christian female researcher in Saudi Arabia. Because Saudi Arabia is a strictly fundamentalist Muslim country which divides its activities along gender lines, there were difficulties which a single researcher, rather than a team of two or three, would have problems in overcoming. They will be discussed briefly below.
There were a few occasions in which the fact that I was a foreigner resulted in exclusion. Even though I would try in all ways to be part of the community, and was generally accepted, I could not totally eradicate the fact that I was an American living in an Arab country. Consequently, there were assumptions made about me, which I could not completely overcome—partly because they were true, and partly because stereotypes are by definition impossible to eradicate.¹

As a female living in a patriarchal society, my sphere of movement was limited to the *hareem*, the women’s domain. Since women were my primary resources as friends and informants, I had to respect the boundaries maintained by segregation. The men’s activities were something I wanted to research more, but simply could not, given my gender. When I interviewed men, it was in the company of their wives or with my own husband present. In fact, *qaba’il* group visitations are gender-specific, so that even when we received male guests in our home, it was impossible for me to sit with the company. In the public sphere, it was even more difficult. Public events were segregated by gender; women were not allowed to attend male functions.

As a Christian, I could not attend some religious rituals, could not travel to the holy cities, Mekka and Medina, nor accompany the women when they visited the mosque on special occasions. The first question everyone invariably asked me was whether I was Muslim, their assumption being that if I was exposed to Islam, I would surely want to convert. The most strict Wahhab *qaba’il* women could never overcome the fact that I was not Muslim. Those women would never drop their face veil in my presence and
would simply refuse to interact with me. It was a difficult situation, which restricted any interview data I might have collected pertaining to the special worldview that these women held.

To remedy such research problems, the ideal would be to have a male/female research team with one or both researchers being Muslim(s). To add a further dimension, it would enrich the study if one of the researchers were a native Saudi in addition to the western researcher. In this way, the two researchers would compliment each other with their differing perspectives and access to different sources of information.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This dissertation is one of the first to describe the qaba 'il of Beni Tamim, Anazah, and Ateibah in a modern urban setting. It has only been within the past twenty-five years that professional anthropologists have been doing fieldwork within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; therefore, the ethnographic literature that is available is still limited in scope. Despite the above-stated limitations to my data collection, this dissertation makes significant contributions to the field of anthropology and the ethnography of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, which is a developing area of study.

This study also contributes to the area of tribal studies in anthropology. In the past, tribal ethnographies have looked at tribes in a conventional setting, working and interacting within their traditional environment. More recent studies have investigated these peoples as they have migrated to cities. Most of these studies, whether they investigate the lifeways of American Indians, Australian Aborigines, or Gypsies, focus...
upon tribal people who are minorities within a dominant society fighting the forces of assimilation. My study of qaba'il stands in direct opposition to these studies, since the qaba'il in Saudi Arabia are not at all in the minority, but are part of the dominant group in society. In fact, they are placing pressure upon the minority groups to accept their symbols of qaba'il identity.²

This study also makes a contribution as an example of one form of tribalism within the larger global village. Wherever social scientists look, the basis for group identification, a sense of peoplehood, is at the core of self-identification. This is true whether the group under discussion is a minority group or a nation. Whether the outcome is positive and results in constructive nation building, or negative and results in the fragmentation of a country, depends upon effective decision making. Erik Erikson (1968) describes the problems associated with tribal self-identification: “Only gradually emerging as one mankind conscious of itself..., man has been divided into pseudospecies (tribes and nations, castes and classes) each with its own over-defined identity and each reinforced by mortal prejudice against its images of other pseudospecies...” (p. 65). Erikson concluded that “functioning societies can reconfirm their principles and true leaders can create significant new solidarities only by supporting the development of more inclusive identities” (p. 65).

There are practical sociopolitical considerations to be gained from my study, as well. There is an important relationship between Wahhabi religious ideology and the qaba'il concept, which shapes Saudi thinking in their relationship with non-qaba'il and western populations. An understanding and appreciation of these differences should be
taken into consideration when doing business with Saudi Arabia. In particular, large oil companies and international corporations that do business in Saudi Arabia on a long-term basis would benefit from an understanding of these differences in worldview between the West and the Arab world.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation started with an investigation of why and how the qaba’il concept is maintained in urban Saudi Arabia. I sought to address this question within the context of three Nejdi qaba’il living within a multi-ethnic non-qaba’il population in Jeddah. The interaction between these two populations highlighted areas of differences. However, more research is required in order to fully understand the dynamics of group interactions.

This study has paved the way for several future research topics. What remains unclear is the degree to which maintaining qaba’il identity is tied to economic needs. That is, “How is tribal group identification used to further economic gains for the group?” and “How much is the male qaba’il society’s networking for employment position and professional advancement dependent on their qaba’il connection?” The area of male public interactions needs to be explored in terms of associations between qaba’il and non-qaba’il groups. In order to address this question, surveys need to be done to discover in the modern context whether specific occupations are dominated by certain groups, and to what degree there is inter-group promotion. This could best be done by researching male networks, among friends and at work. An important aspect of such a study would be to explore the concept of wasṭa, the personal influence that certain
individuals have, which allows them to gain access to jobs and promotions.

Another topic which has not been explored is *qaba'il* identification and the search for a national sense of Saudi identification. Can the use of national Saudi symbols create a common national identity that supersedes tribalism and non-tribalism? These and other questions need to be answered by researchers in order to more fully understand the issue of tribalism and group identification in modern Arabia.
Endnotes

In one instance, I visited some friends without warning to find them feasting on lamb’s heads. When I sat at their table, they were clearly uncomfortable. Trying to set them at ease, I cracked a joke, after which one woman blurted out, “We’re sorry we didn’t invite you to lunch with us, but we know that Americans don’t eat lamb, and we thought that you would find the idea of eating lamb heads appalling.” Upon this, I spent the afternoon sharing with them various parts of the savory dish, while giving the best appearance of totally enjoying myself, though it is indeed difficult to acquire a taste for some “delicacies” if not exposed to them from childhood.

Symbols include coffeepot, Nejdi dress, or tent, symbolizing hospitality.

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