The Past and Future of the Al Saud Dynasty Part 1

"That which has been is what will be, and that which has been done is what will be done, as there is nothing new under the sun. Nothing happens to which it can be said, “Look, that is new”. It has already been in the centuries that preceded us."

So it is written in the book of Ecclesiastes, and in order to value this Old Testament wisdom, one needs to refer to the history of the Al Saud clan, rulers of Saudi Arabia (although with century long breaks) from the 18th century.

The precise origin of this famous dynasty is not known and one is forced to open and look through the old chronicles, including the highly acclaimed “Brilliant Meteor,” Arab chronicles of the eighteenth century whose author is unknown. It is known more or less, that the rise of the Saud clan began in the second decade of the eighteenth century, when the oasis of Al-Diriya, located near modern Riyadh in the midst of the historic desert region of Najd, was taken over by Saud ibn Muhammad ibn Mikrin, who founded the modern dynasty Al Saud. His reign didn’t last long, he died in 1725 and power passed to his cousin, Zayd. To further retell details of this story makes no sense, as it is replete with numerous transitions of power from one relative to another, but the struggle for power in the oasis and then in Najd will occur even within the same clan, the clan of Al Saud.

But what existed before that and from whom did this clan emerge? Members of the Saudi clan themselves believe that they descended from the powerful clan of Banu Hanifa, while others trace their genealogy to the most numerous and powerful tribe in Central and Eastern Arabia, the Anazi or, as it is called, Anza bin Wail, as the French researcher, Alain Gresh, wrote.

However, it is known precisely that the rise of Saud (whoever they were in origin) was owed mostly to the puritan movement in Islam known as Wahhabism. In 1744, the Emir Nejdi Mohammed bin Saud, replacing Zayd, signed a religious a contract with a practitioner of Wahhabism, Muhammad ibn al-Wahhab, to achieve “victory of God’s word by force.” This covenant with disciples of Wahhabi remains in force to this day.

But why did the Saud clan link, and for centuries, its fate to Wahhabis, which in general is still to this day, a minority trend in Islam? There are different interpretations of this event by different authors, but most scholars agree that in the eighteenth century there was a decline of the Ottoman Empire and the onset of Shia movement in the Persian Gulf (isn’t the same thing happening now with the decline of another empire, the United States?).

These processes needed to oppose a certain doctrine, plan of action, which was done by local leaders who were dreaming of their own country and through alliances with Sunni theologians advocating for the “purification” of Islam on the basis of the orthodox ideas of the famous theologian of the 13th century, ibn Taymiyyah.

We believe another theory has equal validity, in that the alliance was maintained because the Wahhabis were spiritually close to Saud. Official Saudi historians or those recognized as such, like Mohammed Al-Tamimi, draw, and perhaps not by coincidence, a case whereby the Saud clan and the Wahhabi clan are related and can trace their history back to the Prophet Muhammad.
Getting back on the subject as to the origins of the Saud dynasty, we note that supporters of the version claiming its origin from the Anazi tribe, consists, as the author writes, “Brilliant Meteor” from three large inter-connected clans frequently reproduce ambiguous sources such as the secret Iraqi intelligence report from September 2002, The Emergence of Wahhabism and its Historical Roots.” In it, in particular, it stated that Saudi clan is descended from some Jewish merchant, Mordakhaib bin Ibrahim bin Moshe from Basra, who in the ninth century joined one of the branches of the tribe Anazi, Al Masaleekh and moved with a caravan of merchants in Saudi Arabia, before changing his name to Markhan bin Ibrahim bin Musa. The report ascribes to him particular deceit and a number of crimes with the help of those with whom he allegedly possessed property of those who had sheltered him. However, it is known that Markah was a successful preacher and supposedly married his son to the daughter of one of the prominent representatives of the tribe Anazi. As a result of this marriage, the Saud clan was supposedly founded.

The authors of the secret Iraqi report claim that the researcher of the published version, Mohammad Sakher, was allegedly killed on orders from Saudi authorities. Going even further with his conspiracy theories, the drafters of this “incriminating” text develop their idea and argue that not only do the roots of the Saudis go to a Jewish past, but the roots of Wahhabism are closely intertwined with it. Allegedly the founder of Wahhabism, according to Dr. Mustafa Turan, was also the grandson of a Jew from Basra (according to other sources, he was from an area that is now modern-day Turkey) a certain Tjen Shulman, who moved to the village of al–Ayniyah in the present Saudi province of Hejaz, where later his grandson, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab founded the Wahhabi movement, which so suited the Saud clan. This Iraqi Intelligence learned from the memoirs of a certain British intelligence officer of the eighteenth century, Mr. Hempher, which in turn was quoted in book published in 1888, “The Beginnings and Spreading of Wahhabism,” Turkish admiral Ayyub Sabri Pasha.

The report by Iraqi intelligence, which was by the way made public by the Americans in 2008, a separate question as to what kind of signal they wished to send to their Saudi allies, accentuated in some manner that the Saudis, due to their “Jewish roots,” always supported plans for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Moreover, it proclaims that the founder of the modern Saudi state (the third in the history of Saud) and future great King, Abdelaziz, who unified Arabia, in the course of meeting with the British, as one would now say, the special envoy to the Persian Gulf, Bracey Cocos in 1915 was persuaded that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine meets Saudi interests...

Of course, these arguments on its own are curious, though you need to understand the context in which they were born, and for whom the report was written. It was drafted for Saddam Hussein on the eve of the second Gulf War, during which the dictator was overthrown. The authors clearly wanted to please their patron, to convince him of a “Zionist conspiracy.” In addition, the report came amid the so-called Arab Peace Initiative, launched in 2002 at the Arab summit in Beirut on behest of Saudi Arabia and its current King Abdullah. It is implicitly assumed, and not unreasonably, that Israel's relations with the Arab countries can be normalized if it withdraws from the territories it has occupied since the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967. For the authors of the report, the recognition of Israel was a clear taboo, the more that Saddam Hussein presented himself protector of the Palestinians and a fighter with the “Zionists.” Consequently, the Saudi initiative was seen as undermining his position. That is the thesis and it was necessary to prove something...

Of course all kinds of speculation have foundation. There is a theory on the closeness of Saud and Israel. But it is likely to seek not in the blood, but in something completely different. Islam and Judaism (and Christianity) are close to the Abrahamic religions; Wahhabism as Hasidic Judaism are its most radical offshoots, preaching austerity and purity of monotheism. And in this they are very similar, even in different color clothes, the black of Hasidic Jews and the white of the Wahhabis. But in order to justify the relationship of Wahhabism and say, the movement of Chabad Hasidism, do not look for “blood kinship.” It is spiritual enough.

Likewise, Arabs and Jews, according to the Bible, (The Book of Genesis) are related as Semitic people (from Sim, one of the sons of Noah, although Arabic Semitic people call it “samiyya,” or “heavenly” people and according to some versions of ethnologists, they clearly originate from the Arabian Peninsula. The Prophet Muhammad, as you know, was friendly towards Jews and did not endure such persecution as they did in Europe. Jews occupied a worthy place in society and were subsequently advisors at the first Arab caliphs. The closeness is repeated in the Old Testament texts and in the Koran and speaking nothing of Judeo-Christian, but of Judeo-Muslim civilization. There is much more in common with the two, beginning with circumcision.

(Read the second part)

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