

**On the Origins of Arab Monarchy:  
Political Culture, Historiography, and the Emergence of the  
Modern Kingdoms in Morocco and Saudi Arabia**

by

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# Abstract

The authoritarian nature of the state in the Arab world is a subject that seems to lend itself well to cultural explanations. Many academic works raise, to various extents, the concept of political culture as a way of understanding the political reality in the region. The concept is believed to provide insights on alleged political anomalies such as the unusually large number of Arab monarchies. Less frequently used by political historians to probe into the past, political culture, on the whole, remains the prerogative of political scientists. Nonetheless, according to some scholars, the political culture approach should be extensively applied to historical analyses.

This thesis examines the political culture concept from a historical perspective and challenges the idea that using political culture as a tool to investigate the past produces rewarding results and enhances our understanding of history. More specifically, this study questions the extent to which the concept of political culture can help explain the emergence of the modern monarchies in Morocco and Saudi Arabia. By virtue of their common cultural, religious, and historical ties, these two Arab kingdoms, one Maghribi and the other Mashriqi, allow for a valid cultural-cum-political comparison. In this case, the various formulations of political culture identified by scholars—whether Islamic, tribal, segmentary, patriarchal, or simply Moroccan and Saudi—are often flawed. Given their focus on psyche, political values, and their links with political behavior, these cultural approaches entail methodological problems. Although attractive on an intellectual level, political culture remains an elusive concept and is sometimes reminiscent of earlier Orientalist practices.

The conclusions reached in the thesis are based upon a broad range of secondary sources, including studies of history, political science, anthropology, and sociology. The major formulations of political culture are discussed and contrasted with non-cultural interpretations of political history. The emergence of the Moroccan and Saudi kingdoms, it is argued, should be viewed more as a consequence of the vagaries of regional political history than the result of an Arab authoritarian penchant. Political culture may not yet be an accurate analytical device for the study of the monarchical regimes in Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

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*"Like the mythical phoenix that rises from its ashes, political culture rises intermittently from the reductionist ashes to which its antagonists consign it."*

— Gabriel A. Almond<sup>1</sup>

*"It is obviously true that a researcher investigating the past with the tool of political culture is much less constrained than one investigating it with a view to justifying this or that theory of comparative politics."*

— Stephen Welch<sup>2</sup>

The nature of this study is twofold. On the one hand, it is about the emergence of two monarchies in the Arab world during the twentieth century, namely those of Morocco and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the thesis endeavors to contribute to the debate on political culture from a historian's viewpoint. Hence the choice of two kingdoms and the decision to opt for a comparative approach to political history.

The authoritarian nature of the state in Morocco and Saudi Arabia is a subject that seems to lend itself well to cultural explanations. Indeed, a clear relationship is drawn, within secondary sources, between modern Arab monarchies and the concept of political culture. Such is the approach of a large number of scholarly works from all fields of social sciences, but mainly from political science. Most of these works raise, to various extent, the concept of political culture as a way of making sense of the political reality. In Arab studies, the concept remains the prerogative of political scientists interested in the resilience of authoritarianism in the region or the prospects for democracy. Thus, political culture is believed to provide key insights on political "anomalies" that cannot be explained solely by socio-economic means, such as the large number of monarchical regimes in the Arab world. The survival of the kingdoms of Morocco and Saudi Arabia is among those phenomena suspected of being favored by some cultural specificities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel A. Almond, "Foreword" in Richard J. Ellis and Michael Thompson (eds.), *Culture Matters: Essays in Honor of Aaron Wildavsky*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997, p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Welch, *The Concept of Political Culture*, London, MacMillan, 1993, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Manfred W. Wenner, "Saudi Arabia: Survival of Traditional Elites" in Frank Tachau (ed.), *Political Elites and Political Development in the Middle East*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1975, p. 167. Also Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977, p. 25.

Witnessing the popularity of cultural approaches in the literature on Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Arab politics in general, the first thing a historian may want to know is the extent to which similar trends exist in his own discipline. Indeed, what do political historians of the Arab world make of the concept of political culture? So far, save for a few exceptions, they only approached political culture in a timid way.<sup>4</sup> The few who dare to appropriate the concept usually do so in a nominal way and prefer not to dwell too much on it. While political culture is widely used to observe the present and contemplate the future, it is obviously not used to probe into the past. We can speculate as to why the historians of the Middle East are reluctant to embrace the concept or even to discuss it. They may remain passive for reasons of theoretical uneasiness or because they prefer to avoid any methodological problems the concept might raise. In any case, claims made by social scientists should now incite political historians to revise their discreet stance toward political culture.

In 1993 for instance, theorist Stephen Welch discussed the relevance of political culture for the discipline of history. He argued that using the concept as a tool to investigate the past would produce rewarding results and enhance our understanding of history. To the knowledge of this author, no historian replied to Welch's argument despite his flawed assumptions about history and historical research.<sup>5</sup> A more recent statement was made in 1999 by Mamoun Fandy, a political scientist: "I think there is still more room [...] to argue for a sophisticated and interdisciplinary approach to political culture. In fact, culture is at the heart of Arab politics. Not wanting to bother with it is not the equivalent of dismissing it altogether as an analytically useful concept."<sup>6</sup>

Historiographical motives also pressure historians to respond to the political scientists' invitation. For instance, the postmodernist wave in history calls for a renewed self-evaluation and a questioning of our intellectual habits. Without any doubt, the substance of postmodern relativism is not entirely new.

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<sup>4</sup> One recent exception is Sarah Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia: The Struggle Between King Sa'ud and Crown Prince Faysal, 1953-1962*, Tel Aviv, The Moshe Dayan Center, 1997. While her first chapter deals extensively with Ibn Sa'ud's political culture, it also increases the reader's doubts as to the relevance of political culture in historical analyses.

<sup>5</sup> Welch suggested that the discipline of history merely consists in observing and describing the past (an assumption that is highly arguable) and that "fixed" cultures from the past are easier to observe than contemporary cultures. See Welch, *op. cit.*, p. 147-148.

<sup>6</sup> Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 251.

It echoes many grievances of the Annales movement that, for almost four generations, fought the entrenched assumptions of factualism, empiricism, truth, and objectivity rooted in traditional historiography. However, postmodern criticism goes farther than the Annales movement insofar as it disputes the so-called “archival fetishism” of history and calls for a greater theoretical dialogue between history and the other disciplines in social sciences.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, the concept of political culture—a theoretical construction elaborated by political scientists and antithetical to traditional historiography—deserves, at least, to be discussed. Nevertheless, the task of dealing with the idea of political culture is a difficult one; several points of contention are attached to the concept. These can be summarized into two categories: typological and methodological.

The concept of political culture was created by American political scientists and enjoyed some popularity during the heyday of modernization theory in the late 1950s and 1960s. The term was first coined by Gabriel Almond in 1956 and acquired much of its theoretical maturity in the following decade. Key authors referred to political culture as a pattern of orientation to political action; it is a set of attitudes, sentiments, and cognitions that inform and govern political behavior in any society. Therefore, political culture gives meaning, predictability, and form to the political process.<sup>8</sup> The objective of the political culture approach was to bridge the gap between micro- and macro-analyses, that is to say between psychological interpretation of the individual’s political behavior and the nature of the political system on the national level.<sup>9</sup>

Political culture was widely used to further the study of democracy and democratization. In the 1970s, however, the publication of some dubious cul-

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<sup>7</sup> Keith Jenkins, “Introduction: On Being Open About Our Closures” in Keith Jenkins (ed.), *The Post-modern History Reader*, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 2, 10-13. To remove barriers and to facilitate the development of new channels of dialogue between history and the other disciplines is not an easy task. Previously, the removal of barriers was, in many cases, nominal and limited to the topics of research. In the wake of the Annales movement, traditional history began to share the scene with economic history, cultural history, history of religions, history of science, etc. This did not necessarily imply an exchange of substantial ideas or methods between history and its sister disciplines.

<sup>8</sup> Lucian W. Pye, “Introduction: Political Culture and Political Development” in Lucian W. Pye and Sydney Verba (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 7. See also the seminal work of Gabriel A. Almond and Sydney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 13-14.

<sup>9</sup> Pye, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

turally-oriented studies such as Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind*—as well as the impact of Edward Said's *Orientalism*—led to a decline of the political culture approach in Middle Eastern studies and encouraged a return to socioeconomic approaches.<sup>10</sup> Now, since the late 1980s, scholars have witnessed a renaissance of political culture. Names from the past resurfaced in order to celebrate the return of the concept to the forefront of political studies.<sup>11</sup>

The first theorists of political culture had intended the concept to be less diffuse than the term “culture” as understood in its broad, anthropological sense. Unfortunately, political culture ended up being as polysemous as culture itself. Thus, the concept whose alleged advantage was to be well-defined is today a conceptual umbrella covering perceptions, beliefs, and values about anything political. Some argue, with reason, that the concept is now so promiscuously employed that it has become meaningless.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the confusion with political culture stems in part from it being given a series of meanings as different as political traditions, political memory, *habitus* or even sociobiological behavior. This typological problem is also exacerbated in that one finds cases where political culture takes on a whole psychosocial dimension and other cases where the concept is simply stripped of any theoretical implications.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, what each scholar means by political culture is sometimes vague, especially when the authors do not recognize the term's full significance. Yet, the mention of political culture implies a step into a complex conceptual universe.

Attached to the concept of political culture is also a series of methodological problems. In the 1990s, some political scientists who endeavored to

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<sup>10</sup> Michael C. Hudson, “The Political Culture Approach to Arab Democratization: The Case for Bringing It Back In, Carefully,” in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (eds.), *Political Liberalization in the Arab World*, vol.1: *Theoretical Perspectives*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Gabriel A. Almond, “Foreword: The Return to Political Culture” in Larry Diamond (ed.), *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1993, p. ix-xii. See also Almond's foreword in Richard J. Ellis and Michael Thompson (eds.), *Culture Matters: Essays in Honor of Aaron Wildavsky*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997, p. vii-xi.

<sup>12</sup> Ruth Lane, “Political Culture: Residual Category or General Theory?,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 25 (October 1992), p. 362.

<sup>13</sup> See L. Carl Brown's casual use of the term “political culture” in the first section of his *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey, 1837-1855*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1974. Compare with political culture as understood by Emmanuel Sivan in *Mythes politiques arabes*, Paris, Fayard, 1995, p. 15 and Mohamed Tozy in *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*, Paris, Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1999, p. 45-46.

clarify the meaning of political culture underlined the fact that the concept has more than a descriptive function. Its theoretical implications are undeniable: the concept was designed to be an analytical tool. Yet, political scientists also recognize the potential weaknesses of political culture on the methodological level. The concept is subject to a debate which revolves mainly around three issues: how much of political culture is necessary, what is the concept supposed to explain, and how can its weaknesses be corrected.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, political culture poses empirical problems. The most obvious one is the difficulty to pin down cultural traits. Political scientists are still struggling with the psychological dimension of their concept. In the words of Almond and Verba, political culture refers to the political system as *internalized* within the psyche of its population.<sup>15</sup> The most rigorous political scientists have tried, with varied success, to avoid the traps of their concept by relying on massive survey data, especially attitude surveys, micro-level, and often anthropological case studies. Nevertheless, the problem of how to deal empirically with political culture remains: it opens the way for reductionism as well as for what Michael Hudson termed “armchair psychology.”<sup>16</sup>

On the theoretical level, efforts to rehabilitate political culture have not been fully satisfactory. Political scientists endeavored to overcome the spectres of essentialism and reductionism that threaten the concept. In order to avoid political culture becoming the catchbag for all kinds of mysterious psychologi-

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<sup>14</sup> Significant contributions include Lisa Anderson, “Democracy in the Arab World: A Critique of the Political Culture Approach” in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (eds.), *Political Liberalization in the Arab World*, vol.1: *Theoretical Perspectives*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 77-92; Michael C. Hudson’s insightful article, “The Political Culture Approach,” is found in the same volume, p. 61-76. Lisa Anderson touches upon political culture in “Policy-Making and Theory Building: American Political Science and the Islamic Middle East” in Hisham Sharabi (ed.), *Theory, Politics and the Arab World: Critical Responses*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 52-80. Also interesting is Lane, *loc. cit.*, p. 362-387. Other examinations with a positive but sometimes unconvincing outlook on political culture include Larry Diamond, “Cause and Effect” in Larry Diamond (ed.), *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1993, p. 411-435; Jeff Haynes, “Introduction” in Jeff Haynes (ed.), *Religion, Globalization and Political Culture in the Third World*, London, MacMillan, 1999, p. 3-27. Among some earlier critiques are Gabriel Bendor, “Political Culture Approach to Middle East Politics,” *IJMES*, 8 (1977), p. 43-63; David J. Elkins and Richard Simeon, “A Cause in Search of Its Effect, or, What Does Political Culture Explain?,” *Comparative Politics*, 11, 2 (January 1979), p. 127-145.

<sup>15</sup> Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Hudson, “The Political Culture Approach,” p. 70. An unfortunate case of the use of political culture (the work of Prothro, Melikian, and Ammar in the 1950s) is discussed in Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, p. 186.

cal aspects of politics, a number of scholars put forth several solutions. In 1993, Larry Diamond asserted that political culture works as a geological structure with sedimentary deposits: it is a layering of successive historical episodes. Therefore, political culture was presented as having the peculiarity of being both changing and unchanging. Moreover, Diamond contended that political culture shapes and is shaped by history, economic changes, international environment, and other variables. From his point of view, political culture is both an effect and a cause. Finally, Diamond concluded by arguing that the use of political culture as an analytical tool is merely tentative: "We are still a long way in political science from comprehensively modeling the complex (and variant) causal path by which democracy emerges, consolidates, erodes, aborts, dies, reequilibrates, and endures."<sup>17</sup>

Though Diamond may touch upon some truths through his observations, he fails to resolve political culture's theoretical gaps. He rather increases the concept's elasticity. His conclusion even sheds doubts on the very validity of the tool. Nonetheless, the idea of political culture lives on. Many political scientists like Diamond still endeavor to accommodate it despite its frequent circularity of argument. Such a devotion toward the concept might remain as long as psychological realities cannot be denied. As Michael C. Hudson put it, political culture can hardly be discarded altogether: "Without factoring in the complexities of culture, values, beliefs, ideology, and legitimacy, we risk being left with arid economistic reductionism."<sup>18</sup>

Being a subject of dispute among political scientists, political culture does not seem *a priori* fit for the highly methodological universe of the historians. In opposition to Stephen Welch's statement, there is no reason to believe that political culture would be easier to handle for historians. The empirical problem inherent to political culture may even prove to be of greater extent in the context of historical research. Political historians, insofar as they do not explore the contemporary world, cannot rely on the same kind of methodology that allows political scientists to target and draw out certain aspects of an individual's idiosyncrasy. Only through sources can the historian get close enough to his or her object of research to proceed to an interpretation

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<sup>17</sup> Diamond, *loc. cit.*, p. 422. See also p. 412, 423.

<sup>18</sup> Hudson, "The Political Culture Approach," p. 62.

(hermeneutics). Therefore, the political historian who uses political culture as an analytical tool must somehow consider it as a reified “source” of psychological origin, able to account for political change or continuity.<sup>19</sup>

For any political scientist, social scientist, or historian interested in political issues, the idea of political culture has this two-faced quality of being simultaneously obvious and elusive, intellectually attractive and methodologically repulsive. The purpose of this study is to ask, in a historical perspective, to what extent the concept of political culture can help to account for the emergence of the modern monarchies in Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

To mention the emergence of the Moroccan monarchy in this context may seem surprising. Being the oldest ruling dynasty in the world, the ‘Alawis have been in power since 1668 and were preceded by the Sa‘adian sultanate. The monarchy in Morocco did not “emerge” in the twentieth century. Yet it was during that century that a transition from old regime to modern state took place: the fading sultanate of the previous era gave way to a powerful kingship. This thesis is concerned with the emergence of the *modern* Moroccan monarchy. The transition occurred during the reign of Mohamed V (1927-1961). At the time of Morocco’s independence from France in 1956, the country had not inherited a clear political situation.<sup>20</sup> Only the firmness of Hassan II, who ascended the throne at the death of his father in 1961, eventually put an end to the uncertainties regarding the nature of the regime.

Because the present study emphasizes the period of emergence, it will not dwell upon the reign of Hassan. As for Saudi Arabia, the rise of ‘Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa‘ud from the recapture of Riyadh to the creation of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1902-1932) will serve as a time frame. Until Ibn Sa‘ud’s death in 1953, the kingdom was consolidated by the revenues of oil and the nascent *rapprochement* with America during and after the Second World War. The year 1932, however, truly marks the imposition of the Saudi monarchy.

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<sup>19</sup> Different suggestions might be valid: the question of how historians are supposed to use the tool is an open field.

<sup>20</sup> Mohamed V, “The First Anniversary of the King’s Return to Morocco” (speech of November 18, 1956) in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Maghreb*, New York, Praeger, 1973, p. 113-117.

The choice of two Arab monarchies located at the extremities of the Arab world is also an important aspect of this thesis. Historians, in particular, tend to treat the Arab East separately from Arab North Africa, regardless of the common cultural and historical ties binding the two areas. As two historians remarked while commenting upon the state of contemporary Arab studies, historical approaches comparing the Maghrib and the Mashriq are seriously lacking.<sup>21</sup> More particularly, very few studies offer a comparison between the Saudi and the Moroccan polities despite their linguistic, religious, and cultural commonalities. For the purpose of this study, these commonalities will allow us to compare and contrast the major formulations of political culture that are found in the literature. For some commentators, a similar pattern of political behavior exists on the Arab level, that is within a large cultural area of which Morocco and Saudi Arabia are part. But for other authors, a political culture exists either on a larger (Islamic) or a more local (Moroccan or Saudi) level.

Other reasons justify the choice of Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Many relevant interlocking points suggest that the two countries are fit for a cultural-cum-political comparison. While they can both be considered “modified” traditional Islamic states,<sup>22</sup> the kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and Morocco are also portrayed as culturally authentic.<sup>23</sup> Insofar as they are not mere creations of Western imperialism (as is the case with Jordan), it is true that the Moroccan and Saudi monarchies are the products of a fairly endogenous political process. Moreover, both areas were in a peculiar state of political insulation up until the First World War. The western end of the Maghrib and the center of the Arabian peninsula did not go through the Ottoman reforms, the Tanzimat era, and the concomitant expansion of the state. Thus, when the French protectorate was imposed in 1912, Morocco was still characterized by the division between *bled al-makhzen* (land of obedience) and *bled al-siba* (land of dissidence). Similarly, tribalism was still prevalent in Arabia in the early twentieth century. Finally,

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<sup>21</sup> Edmund Burke, III, “Theorizing the Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghrib,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 20, 2 (Spring 1998), p. 5; L. Carl Brown, “Maghrib Historiography: The Unit of Analysis Problem” in Michel Le Gall and Kenneth Perkins (eds.), *The Maghrib in Question: Essays in History and Historiography*, Austin, Texas University Press, 1997, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> The term is used by Ira M. Lapidus in *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 911.

<sup>23</sup> On Morocco’s alleged cultural genuineness, see John P. Entelis, *Culture and Counterculture in Moroccan Politics*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1989, p. 12. For Saudi Arabia, see in particular Fouad al-Farsy, *Modernity and Tradition: The Saudi Equation*, London, Kegan Paul International, 1990, p. xxii.



both regions were outside the orbit of Arab nationalism or, at least, were far from being as influenced by this idea as were the core Arab states.

The emergence of modern monarchies in Morocco and Saudi Arabia also constitute an historical *problématique*, especially in the case of the former. Between 1932, when Ibn Sa‘ud was proclaimed king of Saudi Arabia and 1955, when Mohammed V returned to the throne of Morocco, the monarchies of the Arab world were under strain. King Farouk of Egypt was overthrown by the Free Officers in 1952 and by the 1950s the Bey of Tunisia no longer had a political future. The days of King Idris I of Libya and Faysal II of Iraq were numbered as well. Curiously, the popularity of monarchy was declining within the Arab world while it was gaining an unprecedented prominence in Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Nor was monarchy an inevitable outcome. Jean Lacouture, for instance, wrote that if Morocco had become independent in the 1930s, it might well have turned into a republic.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the republican ideas of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Karim, the hero of the Rif, had been popular and had tarnished the image of the sultan who was seen as the collaborator of the French *résident général*. Why, then, did monarchism triumph in 1956? This is an instance where political culture is expected to explain the historical process.

The present study will thus present a critical discussion of the various formulations of political culture and assess their validity in historical context. My argument is that the triumph of monarchy in modern Morocco and Saudi Arabia cannot be explained by cultural elements. The emergence of the two monarchies is due mainly to reasons of political utility and to a peculiar international environment—including the role of foreign powers.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the concept of political culture put forth by political scientists does not constitute a useful tool for historical analyses. Cultural elements should therefore be subordinated to pragmatic, sociopolitical, and exogenous factors.

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<sup>24</sup> Jean Lacouture, “Mohammed V, un trône et trois républiques” in Jean Lacouture, *Cinq hommes et la France*, Paris, Seuil, 1961, p. 186.

<sup>25</sup> These ideas can be found in Lisa Anderson, “Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 106, 1 (1991), p. 1-15. Anderson, a political scientist, is the scholar who most seriously attempted to dispel the connections between the emergence of modern Arab monarchies and Arab political culture. Most of her short article, however, is devoted to reflexions on the “resilience” of the monarchical polities rather than on their emergence.

The sources used throughout this thesis are all secondary. They include studies from the fields of history, political science, anthropology, and sociology. There exist essays in Arabic which emphasize the question of political culture (*al-thaqafa al-siyasiyya*), in particular the recent publications of Hasan Hanafi (1997) and Tawfiq Madini (1998), but such literature is not yet accessible to this author.

Studying the nature of political systems in historical perspective requires the historian to address aspects of state formation. This is not to say that the state should be considered as an autonomous political actor. At the same time, it is clear that regime and state are not synonymous. However, the monarchical principle, in the Arab world, exists and survives through the state. Consequently, this study is concerned as much with the abstract idea of monarchy as with aspects of state formation. Nonetheless, this study will not emphasize technical issues such as boundaries and territorial delineations.

In the first chapter, I examine the religious formulations of political culture. I intend to demonstrate that the role Islam played in the emergence of modern Morocco and Saudi Arabia was an instrumental one. By distinguishing religious legitimacy from religion, I contend that no Arabo-Islamic political culture determined the emergence of monarchical systems. On the contrary, Islam is truly what the Muslims make of it. The second chapter, which follows the same lines, is a discussion of the types of political culture inspired by social anthropology. The focus will be on tribalism, segmentation and power relations. In this chapter, I endeavor to demonstrate that despite a few valid observations about traditional and preindustrial societies, the various concepts of tribal and patriarchal political culture cannot be used as explanatory schemes by political historians. Finally, in the third chapter, I deal with questions of political utility and the impact of the international environment. My intention is to contrast the political culture approach discussed in the first two chapters and to extend the discussion toward more sociopolitical factors.

# I

## *Din wa mamlaka: Islam as Political Culture?*

*“Of course, European nations, too, subscribed for many centuries to the conception of the ‘divine right of Kings’ which was finally laughed out of court. But in Morocco that conception was rooted in the deepest religious feelings of the people.”*

— Rom Landau<sup>1</sup>

*“Arabs can obtain royal authority only by making use of some religious coloring, such as prophecy, or sainthood, or some great religious event in general.”*

— Ibn Khaldun<sup>2</sup>

Many scholars and commentators alike describe Islam as being more than a religion, or as a “total way of life.” The term is so widely used, even by Muslims themselves, that it has become readily accepted. Nonetheless, presenting Islam as a total way of life implies a totalistic approach to religion that has Orientalist overtones. Thinking in these terms has led some authors to argue that Islam is a *culture*, that is to say an integrated system of meaning, values, and standards of conduct by which the people of a society live and which is transmitted between generations through processes of socialization.<sup>3</sup> In this perspective, Islam becomes a sort of overarching model that informs human beings on what to do and how to think; the Muslim Arabs’ idiosyncrasy becomes that of an *homo islamicus*. And since the Islamic culture is understood as an encoded social style determining every aspect of the Muslims’ life, it also determines politics.

Although many authors—both Muslims and non-Muslims—endeavour to nuance the relationship between Islam and politics, the old essentialist view endures.<sup>4</sup> Bernard Lewis, one of its strongest proponents, sums it up:

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<sup>1</sup> Rom Landau, *Moroccan Drama, 1900-1955*, London, Robert Hale Limited, 1956, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (trans. Franz Rosenthal), vol. 1, New York, Pantheon Books, 1958, p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> Robert F. Murphy, *Cultural and Social Anthropology: An Overture*, 3rd edition, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1989, p. 26. For a denial of Islam as an inclusive culture, see Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islam and Modernities*, 2nd edition, London, Verso, 1996, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ayubi and Esposito are two major authors for whom Islam and politics are not fused. Nazih N. Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, New York, Routledge, 1991 and John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 3rd edition, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1984. For a summary of

We tend to make a natural error and assume that religion means the same for Muslims as it has meant in the Western world, even in medieval times; that is to say, a section or compartment of life reserved for certain matters, and separate, or at least separable, from other compartments of life designed to hold other matters. This is not so in the Islamic world. It was never so in the past, and the attempt to make it so may perhaps be seen, in the longer perspective of history, as an unnatural aberration.<sup>5</sup>

According to this argument, non-political Islam is Islam no longer. Hence the contention that Islam is a political culture that informs political action. In the worst instance, that political culture is understood as being based on texts and frozen in its premodern formulations. Scholars who support this view argue that despotism is implicit in the very nature of Islam and that Islamic doctrine implies submission and fatalism.<sup>6</sup> Thus, references are promptly made to al-Ghazali's famous statement according to which political quietism is better than a *fitna*: "The tyranny of a sultan for a hundred years causes less damage than one year's tyranny exerted by the subjects against each other."<sup>7</sup>

To be sure, all formulations of Islamic political culture are not as scripturalist. The concept is expressed in various ways and traced back to different roots. An example is provided by Moroccan scholar Fatima Mernissi in a book called *La peur-modernité. Conflit Islam démocratie*. Mernissi described Islam as a transhistorical culture of repression.<sup>8</sup> According to her thesis, the defeat of the Mu'tazalite movement—which became the official philosophical-theological school of the Abbasid court from 813 to 833 and which focused on *'aql* (reason)—embodies how Islamic political culture nipped the seed of democracy in the bud. Mernissi contends that, as a result of that defeat, the Muslim community was left with the Kharijite dual tradition of obedience-revolt and nothing else. In her words, democracy in the Arab world is historically linked to death.

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similar positions among Muslim writers from 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq to Muhammad Ahmad Khalafallah, see Fahmi Jadaane, "Notion of the State in Contemporary Arab-Islamic Writings" in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *The Foundations of the Arab State*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 112-148.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> The most quoted example of this Islamic political culture is the textbook by James A. Bill and Robert Springboard, *Politics in the Middle East*, 3rd edition, New York, Harper Collins, 1990, especially p. 156-157. A good discussion of this type of approach is found in Yahya Sadowski, "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate" in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, Washington D.C., Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, 1992, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *La peur-modernité. Conflit Islam démocratie*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1992, p. 38.

Mernissi differs slightly from the scripturalist view insofar as she argues that Islamic political culture stems from an intellectual amputation, that is to say a non-access to democratic ideas. According to her, many modern Arab states are still deprived of these ideas today due to the religious nature of their school systems. Dubious at times, Mernissi's argument is that a non-rationalist paradigm of Islam triumphed in the ninth century and that, consequently, the modern Arab world suffers from a lack of exposure to freedom of thought, tolerance and other humanist ideas.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in opposition to crude Orientalism, Mernissi suggests that Islamic political culture is a product of historical misfortunes and that with much effort it could somehow change. Despite this key detail, her argument remains that Arab political culture is determined by Islam, and the Arab predicament could only be overcome by retrieving the rationalist dimension of Islam.<sup>10</sup>

Couched in such terms, the concept of political culture might seem pivotal in the study of Arab monarchy. Indeed, Islamic political culture provides a ready-made explanation for the primacy of authoritarianism in the Arab world as well as for the quietistic attitude of the bulk of the population (although some authors disagree on this point and consider Islam as fostering illegitimate and unsupported types of authoritarian governments).<sup>11</sup> In sum, the historical processes leading to the emergence of the monarchy in Morocco and Saudi Arabia could be shaped by the essentially authoritarian nature of an Islamic political culture. This chapter will demonstrate that the existing formulations of this Islamic political culture do little to improve our understanding of modern Arab political history. The argument is that Islam was instrumental as a multifaced political tool—and not as a political culture—in the emergence of modern monarchies in Morocco and Saudi Arabia.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54, 60. A similar argument was made by Charles Butterworth a few years earlier. His thesis was that the Arab-Islamic political thought lacked a radical break that would have instituted the principle of popular sovereignty. Thus, without the legacy of a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Arab-Islamic political thought facilitates the acceptance of regimes based on the rule by one or a few. See Charles E. Butterworth, "State and Authority in Arabic Political Thought" in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *The Foundations of the Arab State*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 91-92.

<sup>10</sup> However, Mernissi seems to wish that Islam be confined to the private sphere. On page 68 for instance, she presents Taha Hussain as one of the greatest defenders of rationalism in Islam—a martyr who was unfortunately harrassed and denounced as a *kafir* (infidel) until his death in 1972. The choice of Taha Hussain as a symbol of religious rationalism raises questions about Mernissi's opinion toward Islam: the man is obviously more relevant to a discussion on strict secularism than to a discussion on Islam and politics. Mernissi, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> The notion of religion as a political tool did not lose its relevance over time. See Michael C. Hudson, "Islam and Political Development" in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1980, p. 1-24; Nazih N. Ayubi, "The Politics

## I- From universalism to particularisms

Differences in practice, theology, and beliefs make Islam a reality that can hardly be apprehended as one single entity. The concept of Islamic political culture, however, suggests the existence of a political consciousness and behavior shared by all Muslims—in this case, Arab Muslims. Undoubtedly, and despite the fluidity of the religion's boundaries, common denominators bind the *umma* together. All local interpretations of Islam are ramifications of an initial symbolic base. No evidence, however, supports the idea that a unique political attitude underlies the shared Islamic roots. The concept of Islamic political culture, expressed in general terms, proceeds from an oversimplified approach to religion.

One Orientalist assumption is that foundational texts can shed light on modern politics in the Muslim world. From this scripturalist perspective, the texts become a sort of matrix that explains political and historical processes. An Islamic political culture, however, should not simply be narrowed down to the Qur'an and the hadith, nor even to the *shari'a*. On the one hand, the Qur'an and the Prophet did not provide clear-cut provisions on the subject of state authority. On the other hand, while the *shari'a* embodies an Islamic ideal, it should not be interpreted as an immutable set of codified laws. As its meaning suggests, the *shari'a* is a "direction," a divine guidance for a successful Muslim life. On the political level, it is simplistic to posit that it is an instrument ready for governing. It becomes an instrument only after human reason comes into play, through *fiqh* (understanding).<sup>13</sup>

Yet, the major blind spot of the scripturalist approach is its acceptance at face value of the tenet according to which a credo never grows out of society but the converse. In an opuscle published in 1992, Elie Kedourie contended that the caliphal theory of the jurists (*siyasa shar'iyya*) elaborated by medieval jurists is devoid of any notion of check and balances, division of power, popular sovereignty, or representative assembly. This caliphal theory—which makes the

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of Islam in the Middle East with Special Reference to Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia" in Jeff Haynes (ed.), *Religion, Globalization, and Political Culture in the Third World*, London, MacMillan, 1999, p. 71-92.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 2nd edition, New York, MacMillan, 1994, p. 216-217; Patrick Bannerman, *Islam in Perspective: A Guide to Islamic Society, Politics, and Law*, London, Routledge, 1989, p. 32.

duty of obeying the ruler a religious duty—came to be inculcated to the faithful, generation after generation, so that the idea of democracy is now alien to the Muslims' mindset.<sup>14</sup> Critical in Kedourie's version of Islamic political culture is the idea of inherited political traditions, embedded in the *siyasa shar'iyya*, reproduced over and over, and *ipso facto* assimilated by new generations. Marshall Hodgson, in defining Islamic civilization, also stressed the importance of lettered traditions as a cultural carrier. But as much as foundational texts are important in Islam, Hodgson said, there is a constant dialogue—or hermeneutical process—between Muslims and the formative traditions of Islam.<sup>15</sup> On the subject of traditions, Hodgson added:

A generation is not bound by the attitudes of its ancestors, as such, though it must reckon with their consequences and may indeed find itself severely limited by those consequences in the range of choices among which it can decide. [...] Historical change is continuous and all traditions are open and in motion, by the very necessity of the fact that they are always in internal imbalance. Minds are always probing the edges of what is currently possible. But even apart from this, we are primarily human beings with our personal interests to pursue, and only secondarily participants in this or that tradition.<sup>16</sup>

The Muslim political concepts, indeed, are not static traditions but can be understood in various ways.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, not all Muslims agree on the way their community should be organized. To obey a ruler, for instance, is not necessarily a religious duty. The historian must show analytical sensibility and a *sens de la nuance* as to rigid categories and arguments about what Islam “allows” and “rejects.” Kingship (*mulk*) exists even though many scholars and Muslims view it as an un-Islamic institution, but it is *mulk* tempered by respect for Islam.

In total, religion manifests itself beyond the frame in which Kedourie wanted to consign it. Islam is about people: more than a text, it is incorporated in

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<sup>14</sup> Kedourie, *op. cit.*, p. 1, 7, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1: *The Classical Age of Islam*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974, p. 91-93.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> The *salafiyya* movement of the twentieth century is a good example of a liberal way of interpreting the Islamic political law. On Muhammad Abduh, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, especially p. 144. For a discussion of the compatibility between democratic ideas and Islam, see Gudrun Krämer, “Islamic Notions of Democracy” in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, p. 71-82.

the life of the individuals.<sup>18</sup> Many formulations of Islamic political culture are flawed because they underestimate, or intentionally overlook, the contingent aspects of Islam. Although the Islamic political culture put forth by Mernissi does not restrict Islam to the texts, it shares a similarity with the scripturalist version: both are based upon a monist perception of religion. They affirm the existence of one, single politically-determinant Islam. For an Orientalist scripturalist like Elie Kedourie, this Islam is the legalistic Sunni one—the so-called normative “Islam of the Book.” For Fatima Mernissi, Islam is the self-perpetuated remnant of a religion whose rationalism was severed. Though she suggests that Islam, as a whole, could have been different, she does not account for its many local variations. Her book deals with a single Islam, being imposed on the entirety of the Arab world, from Riyadh to Rabat.

Cultural anthropologists, in particular, have contributed greatly to dispel the Orientalist myth of a unitary, changeless, and ageless Islam. Clifford Geertz, Michael Gilson, Abdul Hamid al-Zein, and Dale Eickelman, among others, all demonstrate the limits of the concept of a predefined Islam with a supreme truth.<sup>19</sup> Instead, they recognize the inherent diversity of the religion. Obvious in these authors’ work is their opposition to the *objectification* of Islam, the turning of Islam into an object: “a ‘thing’ out there with a will of its own.”<sup>20</sup> In reaction to such a definitive interpretation of Islam, some scholars popularized the notion of various “islams,” thus contending that Islam is not a delimited and inviolable pattern but that it varies depending on the contexts and societies in which it occurs.<sup>21</sup> Evidently, this anthropological approach to Islam clashes with the concept of an Islamic political culture as defined by Mernissi or Kedourie. The way Islam is experienced in Saudi Arabia is much different than the way it is experienced in Morocco.

The *fait religieux* in Saudi Arabia owes much to Wahhabism, the revivalist movement founded by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), an *‘alim*

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<sup>18</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Book, p. 305.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968; Michael Gilson, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Arab World*, New York, Pantheon, 1982; Abdul Hamid al-Zein, “Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for an Anthropology of Islam,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 6 (1997), p. 227-254; Dale F. Eickelman, “The Study of Islam in Local Contexts,” *Contributions to Asian Studies*, 17 (1982), p. 1-16.

<sup>20</sup> Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 19. On the objectification of Islam, see also Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> See al-Zein, *loc. cit.*, p. 249 and Eickelman, “The Study of Islam,” p. 1.



from Najd who was trained in the Hanbali school. Concerned by the decadent religious practices in the central Arabian peninsula, 'Abd al-Wahhab preached the return to the practice of the original Islamic community. In this sense, he could be portrayed as the proponent of an early *salafiyya*.<sup>22</sup> Because his convictions offended the Najdi 'ulama, 'Abd al-Wahhab left for the holy cities of Hijaz where he studied and became influenced by the teachings of Ibn Taimiyya.<sup>23</sup> Wahhabi doctrine then developed to become the rigorist Islamic movement known for its focus on *al-tawhid*, the oneness of God. The doctrine emphasized the struggle against idolatry (*shirk*). Any kind of intercession with God, such as saint worship, visitation of graves, or erections of tombs, was prohibited. Sufism was outlawed as well, and struggle against unrepentant Muslims was called for.<sup>24</sup> Finally, in terms of *fiqh*, Wahhabism represented a sterner version of the Hanbali school of law. Despite its rejection of *taqlid*, Wahhabi doctrine was characterized by its strict reliance on the Qur'an and the *hadith*.

'Abd al-Wahhab's movement was an egalitarian-scripturalist interpretation of Islam with a distinctive political dimension: "From Ibn Taimiyya, he ['Abd al-Wahhab] took the notion that religion and state are indissolubly linked. Without the coercive power of the state, religion is in danger, and without the discipline of revealed law, the state becomes a tyrannical organisation."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, according to Taimiyya's political theory, the 'ulama ought to collaborate with a temporal ruler (*amir*) in order to ensure a fulfilling Muslim life for the population. The *amir*, who became imam in the Saudi-Wahhabi terminology, was expected to uphold the *shari'a* and to instill respect for the system of orders and prohibitions which regulates the life of the Muslims.<sup>26</sup> The 'ulama, in turn, were expected to be the guardians of the Word, that is to supervise and guide the imam toward the Islamic

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<sup>22</sup> Ahmad Dallal claims there is no intellectual link between Wahhabism and the modern *salafiyya* because the former has never been a social or intellectual project. According to Dallal's critical view, Wahhabism is simply a narrow plaidoyer for *tawhid* that does not even emphasize *ijtihad*. See Ahmad Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-1850," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 113, 3 (July-September 1993), p. 341, 350, 358.

<sup>23</sup> Ayman al-Yassini, *Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1985, p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> Derek Hopwood, "The Ideological Basis: Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's Muslim Revivalism" in Tim Niblock (ed.), *State, Society, and Economy in Saudi Arabia*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> In this peculiar context, imam means both leader of prayer and political leader: it embodies the fusion of religion and politics. For a good comparison between the concepts of *amir* and imam, see Madawi al-Rasheed, *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidi Tribal Dynasty*, London, I. B. Tauris, 1991, p. 89-90.

path. The cooperation between imam and 'ulama was consecrated in 'Abd al-Wahhab's mutually advantageous alliance with Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud in 1744 which marked the emergence of the first Saudi state.

The Moroccan *fait religieux*, for its part, is quite different. Among its peculiar characteristics are two classical principles of sanctity, namely sharifian descent and *baraka*. The 'Alawite dynasty which has ruled Morocco since 1644, and to which Mohammed V belonged, is from sharifian descent. As *sharifs*, the members of the dynasty claim direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his grandson Hasan.<sup>27</sup> The second principle of sanctity—*baraka*—runs deep into Maghribi Islam and is linked to the person of the marabout. A holy man (sometimes a woman) who shares many similarities with the Christian concept of saint, the marabout is a person bound to God. This privileged relationship is expressed through the marabout's possession of *baraka*, a supernatural power that Geertz labeled "spiritual electricity."<sup>28</sup> By means of his *baraka*, the marabout is a thaumaturge: he can, for instance, curse and heal individuals or endow land with fertility.<sup>29</sup> Up until the French protectorate, maraboutism was a seminal aspect of Islam in Morocco. The existence of intermediaries between ordinary men and God was part of Islam as many Moroccans view it: maraboutism, more than a scripturalist Islam, allowed many individuals to feel closer to God.<sup>30</sup>

Insofar as it is ahistorical to conceptualize Islam as a single entity, it would be equally ahistorical to suggest that the Moroccan and Saudi islams are fixed. On the contrary, these islams are in flux. By the time of Mohammed V and Ibn Sa'ud, the *faits religieux* of both regions were changing. In Morocco, in particular, a new religious orientation was growing. In the early twentieth century, Muhammad Abduh had traveled in Tunisia and Algeria: the ideas of the *salafīyya* entered the Maghrib and eventually reached Morocco. A religious dialectic was

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<sup>27</sup> In turn, descendants of the Prophet through Husayn—the second son of 'Ali and Fatima—are called *sayyids*. See Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

<sup>28</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Center, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power" in Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols (eds.), *Culture and Its Creators: Essays in Honor of Edward Shils*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1977, p. 162.

<sup>29</sup> On the nature of maraboutism, see Geertz, *Islam Observed*, p. 8, 44 and Dale F. Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1976, p. 162-180. A good discussion is also found in Ali Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940*, Paris, Mouton & co., 1967, p. 66-70.

<sup>30</sup> Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam*, p. 11. The links between maraboutism and Sufism are evident. Many marabouts led Sufi brotherhoods and were in charge of the *zawiyas* (Sufi lodges).

spawned by the coexistence of *salafi* and maraboutic ideas, mostly antithetical to one another. The next sections discuss these changes and contradictions. They endeavor to demonstrate that in the emergence of the modern monarchies in Morocco and Saudi Arabia, religion played a role that was subordinated to political pragmatism. Consequently, the concept of Islamic political culture is of no use since it suggests the reverse process.

## II- The Moroccan pitfall: the *amir al-mu'minin* rules

In theory, the ideal Wahhabi system is a balanced alliance between a chief and the 'ulama. In the Moroccan tradition, however, the 'Alawite monarch claims both religious and temporal powers. Though modern Morocco has never been a true Islamic state or a theocracy, many social scientists resort to religio-cultural elements in order to understand the Moroccan polity. In this, they have certainly been pushed by the resilience of the monarchical institution—as if the dynasty's survival was too puzzling not to be explained by cultural factors. But because of the many peculiarities of Islam in Morocco, social scientists found it necessary to recast and relativize the notion of Islamic political culture and to adapt it to the Moroccan specificities. By doing so, social scientists avoided one of the Orientalists' weaknesses. Essentialism, however, was not systematically eradicated. Note Susan Waltz's peremptory statement:

Morocco is a monarchy and all the complexities and contradictions that color relations between its ruled and ruler can be embedded in that simple assertion. Morocco's monarch is not merely king: he rules over one of the world's oldest monarchies as a *sharif*, descendant of the Prophet, and as Prince of the the Faithful, *amir al-mu'minin*.<sup>31</sup>

This view conveys the most common assumptions behind the concept of Moroccan Islamic political culture. Since the monarchy is a centuries-old institution based upon religious elements, it is believed to be deeply anchored in the psyche of the Moroccan people. Waltz claims that a psychological and religious contract binds the population to the monarchy and pushes the Moroccans to submit to the Commander of the Faithful.<sup>32</sup> This idea gained much

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<sup>31</sup> Susan E. Waltz, *Human Rights and Reform: Changing the Face of North African Politics*, Berkeley, University of Berkeley Press, 1995, p. 103.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45, 104, 244.

credence from empirical observations and field works as well. In a study that influenced the thought of many observers of contemporary Morocco—including Waltz—anthropologist M. E. Combs-Schilling described the intricate relationship between monarchy and religion as she perceived it: “In Morocco, the monarchy is intrinsic to the definition of self, including sexual self, the definition of power in the world, and the basic understanding of how one can be released from worldly constraints and conjoined to the truth of the universe.”<sup>33</sup>

Combs-Schilling endows monarchy with such metaphysical meaning that she presents it as an untouchable and deeply-ingrained element of Moroccan society. She defines the monarchy as being inextricably tied to an Islam that is actually an encoded cultural style which determines the political life of the Moroccans.<sup>34</sup> But her translation of Moroccan culture is arguable. For instance, as one critic noted, she offers no evidence whether the Moroccans truly link the blood of the slaughtered rams of the *'id al-kabir* and the blood of the “deflowered” brides with the legitimacy of the blood-linked monarch.<sup>35</sup>

John Entelis' *Culture and Counterculture in Moroccan Politics* is more nuanced. His study is based upon the claim that no single cultural form exists in Morocco. The author presents Morocco's numerous subcultural trends at great length. But while most of his work underscores Moroccan cultural exceptions and variations, Entelis still posits the existence of an overriding cultural core that he names the “Muslim consensus,” that is to say an aggregate of Islam, Arabism, and Moroccanism. According to Entelis, the Moroccan monarchy is the cultural pattern that best embodies the tripartite Muslim consensus.<sup>36</sup> Other cultural patterns such as modernism, messianism, or militarism, could defeat the monarchy but, according to Entelis, such an eventuality would be doomed to failure and would lead to chronic instability, violence, and insecurity.<sup>37</sup>

In each of these formulations of Moroccan Islamic political culture, religion, culture, and monarchy are interrelated and, above all, interdependent. Though

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<sup>33</sup> M. E. Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Munson Jr., *Religion and Power in Morocco*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> He writes: “the monarchy *is* the Muslim consensus” (italics in the text). See John P. Entelis, *Culture and Counterculture in Moroccan Politics*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1989, p. 70.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45, 127.

Entelis's argument is more balanced, it still echoes, to a certain extent, Clifford Geertz's old statement that monarchy is "the key institution in the Moroccan religious system."<sup>38</sup> Yet, historical analysis needs greater substantiation and cannot rely on some *idées reçues*. For instance, to merely posit that large segments of the Moroccan masses see the king as the shadow of God on earth—though it might be true—is insufficient to account for historical processes. Religion certainly played a role in the emergence of the modern monarchy in Morocco, but there is a need to explain how Islam was ideologized.

From the Berber *dahir* onwards, Moroccan nationalism and opposition to the Protectorate took on a decidedly religious flavor. This important *dahir* was proclaimed May 16, 1930. Not only did it confirm that customary Berber law would remain detached from Islamic law, it also incorporated its penal dimension into the French judicial system. The *dahir* stated that all appeals and jail sentences for more than two years could only be pronounced by French courts, thus depriving the Sultan of one of his last judicial prerogatives.<sup>39</sup> This event was only the latest of a series of steps suggesting the principle of "divide-and-rule." A previous attempt to isolate the Berbers from their Islamic heritage was the Franco-Berber school system set up in 1924. Proceeding from the assumption that Berbers had been superficially Islamized by the Arabs, French officials created a series of special schools where education was in French and Berber only, and where Islamic teaching was significantly reduced. Thus, the French hoped to foster a new Berber community that would serve as a counterweight to the Arab population of the urban zones.<sup>40</sup>

The Berber *dahir* of 1930 triggered an unprecedented wave of discontent among the whole Moroccan population, including the Berbers themselves who wanted to demonstrate their attachment to Islam. The context in which the *dahir* was proclaimed was tainted by religious tension as well. That same year, the Eucharistic Congress of the Catholic Church was taking place in Tunisia. The event contributed to stir up religious feelings by being presented, by the French, as a symbolic revenge for the defeat of the ninth crusade during which Louis IX

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<sup>38</sup> Geertz, *Islam Observed*, p. 75.

<sup>39</sup> Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghreb in the Islamic Period*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 372.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Brignon, Abdelazize Amine, *et al.*, *Histoire du Maroc*, Paris, Hatier, 1967, p. 392.

(Saint Louis) died.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the strength of the Catholic Church in Morocco—represented by the *vicariat apostolique* and its publication entitled *Le Maroc catholique*—caused discomfort among the Muslim population.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the high clergy in Rabat was suspected of setting forth a mission of evangelization within Berber areas. In this context, the Berber *dahir* was perceived as a key element in an general policy of Christianization.<sup>43</sup>

In any case, the *dahir* caused a shockwave strong enough to render possible a collaboration between all Moroccan proto-nationalists—the young sons of the urban élite, the orthodox ‘ulama, and the Berbers—regardless of the mutual suspicion that characterized their previous relationships.<sup>44</sup> In sum, mature Moroccan nationalism was born out of a religious issue. The nationalists quickly realized the potential of Islam as a means to stir up the passions of the population. This new strategy was much needed. Following the defeat of ‘Abd al-Krim in 1925 in the Spanish zone of the Rif, the young Moroccan élite had understood that the struggle against French influence could not be conducted on a military level. The salafists, whose political consciousness was awakening, had then opted for an educational way to further the evolving national resistance. By teaching the *sala-fiyya*, or purified Islam, they intended to prevent cultural assimilation. The Free Schools, which they set up, offered a curriculum in the fields that were neglected by the French, such as Qur’anic studies, Arabic, and Islamic history.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, religion, politics, and nationalism had become intertwined for the first time. But the impact of the Berber *dahir* showed all nationalists, whether religious-oriented or secular *gauchistes*, that the Islamic faith and its institutions were the most efficient vehicles to mobilize the masses against French influence. Indeed, the Free Schools could only influence a few students. Similarly, the newspapers such as *Maghreb* (founded in Paris in 1932 under the aegis of Ahmad

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<sup>41</sup> The Eucharistic Congress of Carthage is discussed by Habib Bourguiba in *Ma vie, mes idées, mon combat*, Tunis, Ministère de l’information, 1977, p. 67-68.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Le Tourneau, *Évolution politique de l’Afrique du Nord musulmane, 1920-1961*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1962, p. 183.

<sup>43</sup> Brignon, Amine, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

<sup>44</sup> John P. Halstead, “The Changing Character of Moroccan Reformism, 1921-1934,” *Journal of African History*, 3 (1964), p. 442. On the impact of the *dahir* among Muslims and the role of Shakib Arslan in publicizing and polemicizing the issue, see chapter 5, “Mentor to a Generation: North Africa” in William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1985, p. 90-114.

<sup>45</sup> Halstead, *loc. cit.*, p. 438.

Balafrej and Muhammad al-Wazzani), and *L'Action du peuple* (published in Fez in 1933) could only reach a limited audience in a country where illiteracy was widespread.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, from the 1930s onwards, the Islamic framework and religious beliefs started being manipulated more extensively by the nationalist front in order to gain a greater support. The mosques, for instance, became privileged locations to propagate nationalist ideas. Special prayers began to be organized by the salafists; these ended with a supplication usually reserved for times of great disruption, in which God is referred to as *al-latif*, the Kind One.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, the name of the first nationalist organization showed the emphasis on religion. "Zawiya" was the camouflage name of the National Group (*al-jama'a al-wataniyya*) created in 1930 and renamed National Action Bloc (*kutla al-amal al-watani*) in 1932.<sup>48</sup> While the Nationalists needed to avoid drawing attention to their activities—and despite the fact that the police may not have suspected nationalist activity from a sufi brotherhood—the choice of the name *zawiya* was a convenient one. Even the *salafi* nationalists, though they opposed maraboutism and its institutions, must have appreciated any confusion surrounding the camouflage name. It was an advantage as long as being mistaken for a *zawiya* made the nationalist organization more acceptable or even more popular among the masses.

The use of religion and religious symbols was fruitful. In 1936, when the Zawiya really started to recruit from the masses, it was able to increase several-fold to 6,500 members.<sup>49</sup> 'Allal al-Fassi, the major *salafi* figure among the nationalists, was presented as the leader of a revivalist movement. The nationalist movement duly took advantage of his religious prestige: local cells were created, and membership cards were issued while both peasants and urban workers were asked to pledge their allegiance on the Qur'an or any aspect of Islam.<sup>50</sup> In the process of ideologizing Islam, the nationalists found in the figure of the sultan a symbol worth exploiting.

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<sup>46</sup> The creation of newspapers in Arabic was forbidden in the French zone. Therefore, the nationalist publications *al-salam* and *al-hayat* appeared in the Spanish zone. See Brignon, Amine, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

<sup>47</sup> Abun-Nasr, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>49</sup> Abun-Nasr, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

<sup>50</sup> Dale F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 158; Atalio Gaudio, *Allal el Fassi ou l'histoire de l'Is-tiqlal*, Paris, Alain Moreau, 1972, p. 37.

In 1930, Mohamed V had been on the throne for three years, but had little political experience. As a child, he had been kept away from the palace in Rabat. Instead, he spent most of his time in the palaces of Fez and Meknes until he turned seventeen, in 1927.<sup>51</sup> Then, Mohamed was nominated by the French to succeed his father, Moulay Youssef, as sultan of Morocco. By this time, however, the French Protectorate had already departed from Marshall Lyautey's ideal of indirect rule.<sup>52</sup> The young sultan was a mere figurehead: *dahirs* were successively submitted to him for rubberstamp approval. The true ruler of Morocco was the French *résident-général*. For the young Mohamed V, the early 1930s were a period of relative inaction on the political level until the *résidence-générale* asked for his symbolic endorsement of the Berber *dahir*. At first, the reputation of Mohamed V was affected by his remaining neutral on the controversial issue of the Berber *dahir* which he signed in 1930.<sup>53</sup> Yet, the nationalists understood the potential of the sultanate for the advancement of the nationalist cause. The sultan's religious prestige among the masses allowed him to be turned into a religious-cum-national emblem. Already in August 1930, a first contact was established between a delegation from the Zawiya and the Sultan.<sup>54</sup>

From this moment onwards, the nationalists carried on indirect contacts with the sultan while avoiding French suspicions. In 1933, the Zawiya organized the first *Fête du trône*, a celebration held on November 18th marking the accession of Mohamed V to the throne. While the population was invited to demonstrate its affection for the sultan, the Zawiya took advantage of the gatherings to increase the nationalist fervor. During these occasions, Mohamed V was purposefully associated with hope for a better Morocco. The Zawiya labeled him as the sultan of young people and portrayed him as a victim of the system who was used *malgré lui* by the authorities of the Protectorate.<sup>55</sup>

The strategy of the nationalists proved to be successful. Early on, Mohamed V seemed pleased by the popularity and the new image he was given by the Zawiya. In order to redeem himself from the Berber *dahir* mistake, he

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<sup>51</sup> See Jean Lacouture's chapter entitled "Mohamed V, un trône et trois républiques" in *Cinq hommes et la France*, Paris, Seuil, 1961, p. 182.

<sup>52</sup> See William Hoisington Jr., *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995, especially chapter 3, "A Method for Morocco?," p. 41-53.

<sup>53</sup> Lacouture, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>54</sup> Abun-Nasr, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

<sup>55</sup> Le Tourneau, *op. cit.*, p. 188.



entered a period of political recalcitrance during which he no longer condoned blindly the policies of the residency. By his *grève du sceau*, Mohamed V refused to sign the *dahirs* he considered contrary to the 1912 treaty of Fez—the treaty that established the regulations of the Protectorate.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the years of nationalist struggle, the sultan's involvement grew stronger. During the era of Charles Noguès, who was *résident-général* from 1936 to 1943, Mohamed V was not yet a very active political figure. Noguès and the sultan developed a mutual trust and when the first repression of the nationalists occurred, in 1937, Mohamed V remained neutral.<sup>57</sup> By the late 1940s, however, the sultan was an uncontested partner of the nationalists. The speech he gave at the *Fête du trône* of 1952 was so much along the lines of the nationalists' rhetoric that one observer claimed Mohamed V had become the *de facto* spokesperson of the Istiqlal.<sup>58</sup>

When the sultan's stubbornness led to his downfall and forced exile by the French in 1953, the ideologization of Islam that had operated around the person of Mohamed V twenty years earlier reached an apex. The French exacerbated the religious dimension of the event by ousting Mohamed the day before the *'id al-kabir*, the Islamic feast traditionally presided over, in Morocco, by the sultan who slaughters a ram in the name of his subjects.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the ritual of the Great Sacrifice was used as a framework for protestations. During the exile, Ramadan's usual gatherings, which take place at sunset, also became symbols of national unity by means of which the people called for the return of the sultan.<sup>60</sup> Finally, the *latif* prayers and the friday *khutbas* (in a more indirect way, at least in the French zone) underscored the population's discontent with the Protectorate.

The French authorities, for their part, strove to counter the negative effects of their decision by renewing the sultanate in a spirit of religious tradition.

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<sup>56</sup> Charles-André Julien, *Le Maroc face aux impérialismes, 1415-1956*, Paris, éditions J. A., 1978, p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> Julien suggests that Noguès might have convinced Mohamed V that prominent nationalist leaders like 'Allal al-Fassi were, in truth, enemies of the throne. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>58</sup> Lacouture, *op. cit.*, p. 216. As a result of the French repression of the nationalist movement between 1937 and 1943, the political parties were reorganized several times. Therefore, the National Action Bloc (*kutla al-amal al-watani*), banned by a prime minister's decree in March 1937, gave way to a new party named the National Party for Realizing the Reforms (*al-hizb al-watani li tahqiq al-matalib*). In 1944, this party was reorganized after Ahmed Balafrej came back from exile and was renamed Istiqlal.

<sup>59</sup> Combs-Schilling, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>60</sup> Julien, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

Therefore, the residency picked Mohamed V's cousin, Mohamed ben 'Arafa, to replace the former as sultan of Morocco. Ben 'Arafa was also a *sharif* but, in opposition to Mohamed V, inclined to collaborate with the French. A traditional *bay'a* was wrested from the college of the 'ulama in order to have ben 'Arafa recognized as legitimate Islamic ruler.<sup>61</sup> However, the French endeavors to use religion as a means of legitimization lacked credibility and did not produce beneficial results. For the next two years, the French coped with unrest and terrorism. In 1955, they were forced to end the Moroccan crisis and to bring Mohamed V back from Madagascar. By doing so, they hoped to ensure the safety of the *colons*, or French settlers, and to deal adequately with the new international situation.<sup>62</sup>

The road to Moroccan independence was paved with religious experiences. Yet, the success of the nationalists' strategy was due to religious compromises as well. The differences opposing the Moroccan sultanate and the *salafiyya* trend of Islam were peculiar. On the one hand, the *salafiyya* movement was overtly denouncing saintly Islam. Non-scripturalist aspects of the religion, from the use of amulets to the principle of maraboutism, were considered *bid'a*. However, the Moroccan sultanate rested, in part, on the principle that sultan possessed saintly attributes—the very attributes condemned by the salafists. Indeed, as a *sharif* endowed with *baraka*, the sultan was considered the “supreme marabout” by some segments of Moroccan society.<sup>63</sup> Despite this doctrinal clash, the salafists elevated the sultan to the status of major political actor.

On the other hand, the *salafiyya* à la Muhammad Abduh also had a distinctive political dimension. It assimilated the concepts of consultative government and popular sovereignty which were in turn adopted by Moroccan salafists.<sup>64</sup> Evidently, such a political theory did not *a priori* favor the monarchy. 'Allal al-Fassi condemned sacred kingship and stated several times that true religion would be attained only through the repudiation of tyranny and absolu-

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<sup>61</sup> The “request” for a *bay'a* was carried out by armed French policemen. One 'alim from Marrakesh refused to obey and was arrested and beaten with a stick. Another, the old al-'Arawi, was exiled under surveillance in southern Morocco. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>62</sup> In 1954, France was defeated in Indochina and caused a shockwave by granting Tunisia internal autonomy. On top of that, the Algerian insurrection started on November 1st. Brignon, Amine, *et al.*, p. 403-405.

<sup>63</sup> Entelis, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>64</sup> John P. Halstead, *The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912-1944*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 134. On the political implications of the *salafiyya* in Morocco, see John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1982, p. 213.

tism.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the monarchy was embedded in the Plan of Reform presented by the nationalists to the French authorities in 1934. The same year, the Zawiya had started to publicly address Mohamed V as a *malik* (king) rather than a sultan.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, when independence was achieved in 1956, Morocco turned into a kingdom (*mamlaka*) with Mohamed V at its head.

These paradoxes and the use of religion during the national struggle suggest that the concept of Islamic political culture distorts our comprehension of the historical process leading to the emergence of the Moroccan monarchy. Islam was not an encoded cultural code determining political life. It was a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that could be exploited to further a political project. Muslims can act beyond religious credo or Islamic tradition. For instance, ‘Allal al-Fassi did not lead his anti-maraboutic campaign out of purely doctrinal reasons. He rather aimed to restore Moroccan sovereignty by fighting the collaborators of the colonial administration.<sup>67</sup> This was also the motive that pushed him and the salafists to support the “marabout-sultan.” Mohamed V did not gain prominence because monarchy was part of the Moroccan religion. As Henry Munson noted, the monarchy was rather a *tangential* aspect of their religion.<sup>68</sup>

In August 1953, a group of women claimed they saw the exiled sultan in the moon—thus bringing divine proof that Mohamed V, and not Mohamed ben ‘Arafa, was the true sultan.<sup>69</sup> This event, which spawned the myth of Mohamed V, might not have happened, or would certainly not have had such a political meaning without the role the nationalists attributed to the sultan. Political culture alone cannot explain the rise of Mohamed V. John Waterbury shrewdly remarked: “Had he [Mohamed V] rebuffed their [the nationalists] overtures, Morocco might well be a republic today, and the ‘Alawis no more important to the elite than the Kittanis.”<sup>70</sup> To be sure, religion was not the only political tool used by the nation-

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<sup>65</sup> Munson Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 92. See also ‘Allal al-Fassi, “Mission of the Islamic ‘Ulama” in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib*, New York, Praeger, 1973, p. 155; Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Islam in the Modern National State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 155.

<sup>66</sup> John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite: A Study of Segmented Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 53. This issue will be discussed more extensively in the third chapter.

<sup>67</sup> Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghreb: An Interpretive Essay*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 366.

<sup>68</sup> Munson Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>69</sup> Julien, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>70</sup> Waterbury, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

alist groups. They also made extensive use of scoutism, political theatre, and tract distribution. Bad economic conditions and abuses from the French *colons* also fostered discontent among the population. Yet, the religious dimension of Moroccan nationalism remained key. The important demonstration of 1937 which caused 'Allal al-Fassi to be exiled to Gabon was a Moroccan response to a Catholic pilgrimage to the Church of St. Theresa in Khamissat, a Berber area.<sup>71</sup>

### III- The Saudi pitfall: the *siyasa shar'iyya* rules

Wahhabism originated as a revivalist movement. In relation to the dichotomy "great/little tradition" which often characterizes the study of Islam, religion in Saudi Arabia bends toward the "great tradition" paradigm.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, in opposition to the Moroccan case, Western scholars do not dwell too much on the peculiarities of Saudi Islam. Wahabism is usually considered scripturalist enough to be representative of the nominal Islam of the Book. As a result, no elaborated concepts of Saudi Islamic political culture have been produced. The few who adjoined the adjective "Saudi" to a formulation of Islamic political culture seemed to find little more to add to their concept.

David Long, a specialist of Saudi Arabia, provides an example. According to him, Saudi political culture is strictly Islamic. It entails a sense of inevitability that echoes Fatima Mernissi's depiction of the obedience-revolt paradigm: "Saudis tend to accept situations as inevitable far more quickly than people from Western cultures. Conversely, if they are convinced that a situation is not God's will, they will persevere against it long after Westerners would give up."<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Long argues that for the past 250 years, Saudi politics have been the logical outcome of Wahhabism: "One must use care, however, in looking at Abd al-Wahhab's revival movement as a political ideology. It has no ideology independent of Islam."<sup>74</sup> In Long's discourse, Islam has a transcendent political essence that Wahhabism could obscure but not obliterate: Wahhabism *is* Islam.

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<sup>71</sup> Abun-Nasr, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

<sup>72</sup> Eickelman, "The Study of Islam in Local Contexts," p. 12-13.

<sup>73</sup> David E. Long, "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" in David E. Long and Bernard Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, 3rd edition, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, p. 77.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Indeed, the Wahhabis have historically been keen on introducing themselves as strict upholders of the *shari'a*. In 1948, for instance, Saudi Arabia was the only Muslim country to condemn the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The kingdom's delegates argued that the document reflected Western culture while some of its provisions violated the *shari'a*.<sup>75</sup> But despite the Wahhabis' continual stress on the centrality of Islam—and despite observers who accept the Saudi discourse uncritically—authoritarianism and the political process in modern Saudi Arabia have never resulted from the scriptures. The political attitudes suggested by medieval jurists in the *siyasa shar'iyya* cannot account for the emergence of the modern monarchy in Saudi Arabia.<sup>76</sup> Nor is it historically safe to suggest, as Elie Kedourie did, that the *siyasa shar'iyya* constitutes the keystone of a universal Islamic political culture. Muslims themselves—and not the elusive substance of their faith—shape the historical and political processes of their societies.

Wahhabi political theory, though not very exhaustive, is supposed to induce an Islamic state where the *shari'a* is enforced by an imam who is supervised by the 'ulama. The latter, therefore, are supposed to be the most important political actors. Such was the case, briefly, at the time of the first Saudi state. Yet, while Wahhabism survived the eighteenth century, its political dimension was quickly and tacitly adulterated.<sup>77</sup> Islam, and the 'ulama with it, became subordinate to political pragmatism. As was the case in Morocco, the people's faith was manipulated to achieve political purposes. Ibn Sa'ud exploited the religious feelings of the Najdis as well as the Islamic institutions in order to gain political ascendancy.

In opposition to most rival families in the region, Al Sa'ud had the advantage of being legitimized by religion since the eighteenth century.<sup>78</sup> In 1902, after

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<sup>75</sup> On this issue, see Ann Elizabeth Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*, 3rd edition, Boulder, Westview Press, 1999, p. 10-11.

<sup>76</sup> For details on the *siyasa shar'iyya*, and its important contributors (especially al-Mawardi and Ibn Taimiyya), see Abdelwahab Boudhiba, "Political Thought" in Abdelwahab Boudhiba and Muhammad Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi (eds.), *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture*, vol 2: *The Individual and Society in Islam*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1998, p. 379. See also the compelling insights found in Ayubi, *Political Islam*, p. 25, 26, 120, 121.

<sup>77</sup> Examples are provided in Madawi al-Rasheed, "La couronne et le turban: l'État saoudien à la recherche d'une nouvelle légitimité" in Bassma Kodmani-Darwish and May Chartouni-Dubarry, *Les États arabes face à la contestation islamique*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1998, p. 71-72. See also a discussion on Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab's power at the time of the first Saudi State in al-Yassini, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>78</sup> Al Sa'ud (the Saudi family) must not be confused with the same name preceded by an article (al-Sa'ud).

Ibn Sa‘ud recaptured Riyadh from the al-Rashid family, he inherited the title of imam from his father.<sup>79</sup> In his new capacity to make political as well as religious decisions, Ibn Sa‘ud acquired an alternative tribal leadership to gain the support and the allegiance of the masses. This alternate potential of legitimacy was critical since Al Sa‘ud was neither the most powerful family of Najd nor the most noble in terms of its tribal origin. Yet, from 1902 until 1913 when Ibn Sa‘ud conquered most of Najd and al-Hasa, religion played a minimal role in his rise to power. Limited in his endeavors, he only relied upon his family’s traditional use of Islamic taxes.

Since the eighteenth century, Al Sa‘ud had used the *zakat*—the fixed alms tax raised for Muslims—as a fiscal instrument to expand its rule. Thus, the *zakat* was demanded from newly conquered urban and tribal groups.<sup>80</sup> In the early twentieth century, Ibn Sa‘ud still resorted to this method and used the *zakat* as a political tool. The tax was indeed contractualized: paying the *zakat* was more than an individual act of giving, it was a political act of allegiance toward the family of Ibn Sa‘ud who collected it. In turn, the Saudi family pledged to protect the donators. In this case, the title of imam allowed Ibn Sa‘ud to further take advantage of this tax, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. Indeed, he linked the *zakat* and its political implications with the purity of the Muslims’ faith. Backed by Najdi ‘ulama, Ibn Sa‘ud contended that refusing to pay the tax was tantamount to a rejection of Islam and God’s representatives on earth.<sup>81</sup>

Allegiance through the *zakat*, though, was not sufficient. With growing ambitions, Ibn Sa‘ud soon needed a religious rationale for his military expansion. At the same time, he realized the necessity of exploiting the bedouins’ fighting potential in order to subdue his adversaries—whether the Rashidis, the Ottomans, or *sharif* Husayn of Mecca.<sup>82</sup> Hitherto, the bedouins had been unreliable fighters.

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<sup>79</sup> Fouad al-Farsy, *Modernity and Tradition: The Saudi Equation*, London, Kegan Paul International, 1990, p. 17. Al Sa‘ud had lost the control of Riyadh in 1891.

<sup>80</sup> Christine Moss Helms, *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia: Evolution of Political Identity*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, p. 151.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>82</sup> Ibn Sa‘ud had uncertain and changing relationships with the Ottoman empire until he ensured British support in 1915. The Ottomans supported the Rashidi family in Hail, but wished to avoid unnecessary expenditures in the Arabian peninsula by reaching an agreement with Al Sa‘ud. Diplomatic *rapprochements* took place; a treaty was drafted in 1914, but authors disagree whether it was ignored or never ratified by Ibn Sa‘ud. Frederick F. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 154-159.

There exist many accounts of them fleeing the battlefield at will, or joining the enemy's forces during combat. Consequently, the core of Ibn Sa'ud's military force was composed of townsmen. Bedouins were added as an auxiliary support only.<sup>83</sup> This situation changed after the first Ikhwan (brotherhood) settlement was established near Artawiya, around 1913.<sup>84</sup> The creation of the Ikhwan caused a tremendous improvement in Ibn Sa'ud's military capacities.

John S. Habib defined the Ikhwan as bedouins who accepted Wahhabism and relinquished nomadic life in order to live in settlements called *hujar*.<sup>85</sup> Key to this definition is the renunciation of nomadic life. Ibn Sa'ud understood that nomads could not be subjugated indefinitely by either financial reward or force alone. Consequently, the Ikhwan became a way to sedentarize those nomads and to turn them into stable military units: as a fighting force, the Ikhwan had the mobility of the bedouins and the loyalty, stability, and dedication of the townsmen.<sup>86</sup> Whereas nomads and townsmen were still partaking in battles, the various groups of Ikhwan became Al Sa'ud's primary fighting troops.<sup>87</sup>

It is difficult to separate the creation of the Ikhwan movement from religion. The sedentarization of the bedouins was indeed achieved through religious means of persuasion. Ibn Sa'ud's policy of forced settlement in the *hujar* (sing. *hujra*, cabin)—the Ikhwan's agricultural-military colonies—was justified as a *hijra*. The term *hijra* refers to the Prophet's immigration from Mecca to Medina and the obligation of the Muslim community to follow him. On the doctrinal level, its meaning differs from one school of law to another. It oscillates between physical migration and the Muslims' duty to distance themselves from evil and

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<sup>83</sup> Tim Niblock, "Social Structure and the Development of the Saudi Arabian Political System" in Tim Niblock (ed.), *State, Society and Economy in Saudi Arabia*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 83-84.

<sup>84</sup> The origins of the Ikhwan movement are clouded in mystery. Some authors claim the Ikhwan dated back from the first Saudi state, while others claim it first appeared in the twentieth-century. For an example of the latter opinion, see Harry St. John Philby, *Sa'udi Arabia*, Beirut, Librairie du Liban, 1955, p. 313. Moreover, historians disagree as to Ibn Sa'ud's role in the creation of the movement. Most of them, though, contend that Ibn Sa'ud did not coopt the movement, but rather created it deliberately. See John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Sa'udi Kingdom, 1910-1930*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1978, p. 21.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16-17.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> The Ikhwan reportedly numbered up to 150 000 fighting men. See Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 127. Joseph Kostiner underlines, however, that these never constituted a single force, but were rather a loose, fluid group of warriors. Joseph Kostiner, "On Instruments and Their Designers: The Ikhwan of Najd and the Emergence of the Saudi State," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21, 3 (July 1985), p. 306.

disbelief.<sup>88</sup> Al Sa‘ud and the Wahhabi ‘ulama, for their part, ascribed to the term *hijra* a practical meaning that directed the bedouins toward sedentary life. On the one hand, the bedouins’ life in the desert was depicted as un-Islamic. The bedouin’s customary law and their unreliability toward the imam, in particular, were pointed out by the Wahhabi ‘ulama. On the other hand, the *hijra* was presented as a necessary solution to avoid the evils of bedouin life. In this sense, *hijra* meant more than a migration: it implied a transition from one lifestyle to another. Therefore, sedentary life in the *hujar* was prescribed by the ‘ulama as the only way to live in accordance with the *shari‘a* and God’s will.<sup>89</sup>

Proselytism gave a first *élan* to the Ikhwan movement. Wahhabi missionaries told the bedouin chiefs that agriculture was not contrary to Islam, and that accumulation of wealth was encouraged. In this discourse, the *hijra* was a move from the land of polytheism—the desert—to the land of true Islam. In sum, the missionaries spread the message that Islam was a religion of sedentary followers. Bedouin tribes were expected to sell their camels and sheep, to abandon their previous habits of life which were conducive to raids and defections, and finally to settle in *hujar*.<sup>90</sup> Even the bedouins who pledged to obey Islamic law while remaining in the desert were to be branded rebellious Muslims. As one Wahhabi ‘*alim* stated: “The *hijra* is one of the most pious duties of religion and one of the most virtuous. This is the reason for the well-being of the religion of the worshipper and the retention of his faith.”<sup>91</sup>

Once in the *hujar*, the Ikhwan were intended to act in conformity with Ibn Sa‘ud’s needs. In order to ensure support for Saudi expansionist schemes, the concept of *hijra* became closely associated with that of physical jihad.<sup>92</sup> The ‘ulama asserted that part of the Ikhwan’s religious responsibility was to wage physical jihad—not merely against non-Muslims, but against non-Wahhabis

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<sup>88</sup> Muhammad Khalid Masud, “The Obligation to Migrate: The Doctrine of *Hijra* in Islamic Law” in Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 32.

<sup>89</sup> Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Kostiner, “Transforming Dualities: Tribe and State Formation in Saudi Arabia” in Phillip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 230.

<sup>91</sup> Translated and quoted in Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>92</sup> Hopwood, *loc. cit.*, p. 31-32.



(*mushrikin*) as well.<sup>93</sup> Thus, Ibn Sa‘ud found the ideological mechanism that allowed him to wage war against his Muslim rivals. Moreover, the Ikhwan’s religious zealotry was translated into military battles. They held the belief that killing non-Wahhabis was rendering a service to Islam while bringing them closer to their own salvation. Those who died for the cause of their religion were believed to be admitted directly into heaven. Consequently, the Ikhwan gave a formidable impetus to Ibn Sa‘ud’s conquests.<sup>94</sup> The latter relied so heavily on his new fighting force that he ordered all Najdis, in 1916, to join the movement.<sup>95</sup>

Ibn Sa‘ud’s main challenge, then, was to channel the Ikhwan’s fervor toward the right enemies. For instance, the peculiar religious orientation of the Ikhwan facilitated Ibn Sa‘ud’s fight against the *sharif* of Mecca, al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali. In 1910, the first clashes opposing the two rulers occurred in the ‘Utayba area. The *sharif* endeavored to challenge Ibn Sa‘ud’s rise to power by claiming control over the Najdi section of the ‘Utayba tribe.<sup>96</sup> From this moment until the Wahhabis conquered Hijaz in 1924, the relationship between the two rulers was, for the most part, one of hostility. However, Husayn and Ibn Sa‘ud were similar in at least one regard: the two political rivals had their rule strongly legitimized by Islam. Husayn’s family, the Hashimites, were from sharifian descent and had controlled Mecca since the tenth century.<sup>97</sup> Like Ibn Sa‘ud, Husayn claimed to abide by the *shari‘a* in every situation. He also asserted that the Qur’an was the sole constitution of Hijaz.<sup>98</sup> He was, *a priori*, a serious rival to Ibn Sa‘ud on the religious level—though his credibility declined after World War I.

Nevertheless, the non-Wahhabi *sharif* was considered a *mushrik* by the Ikhwan who saw it necessary to wage a jihad against him. Ironically, the non-Muslim British—with whom Ibn Sa‘ud wished to collaborate in order to carry on his expansion—were held in higher esteem than Hijazi *mushrikin*. Indeed, Ibn Sa‘ud strove to shield the British from the Ikhwan’s fanaticism. For instance,

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<sup>93</sup> Literally, *mushrikin* only means “polytheists.” Nonetheless, it was used by the Ikhwan to designate non-Wahhabis. See Harry St. John Philby, *Arabia of the Wahhabis*, London, Constable, 1928, p. 23.

<sup>94</sup> On the Ikhwan’s fanaticism, see Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 36-39.

<sup>95</sup> Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, London, I.B.Tauris, 1995, p. 129.

<sup>96</sup> The ‘Utayba spread across both Najd and Hijaz. Haifa Alangari, *The Struggle for Power in Arabia: Ibn Saud, Hussein and Great Britain, 1914-1924*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 1998, p. 13.

<sup>97</sup> Voll, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>98</sup> Alangari, *op. cit.*, p. 64-65.

when he began to receive subsidies from His Majesty, Ibn Sa‘ud convinced the Ikhwan that the deal was perfectly legal by arguing it was Islamic *jizya*, the poll tax levied on non-Muslims in a Muslim society.<sup>99</sup> In 1917, Harry St. John Philby witnessed this religious paradox unfolding: “Ibn Sa‘ud was fully convinced of the practical advantages of a British alliance, and it seemed to me in these days that anything like a cordial reaction on our part would result surely and steadily in the establishment of the toleration of Christians as a basic factor of the Wahhabi creed.”<sup>100</sup>

Ibn Sa‘ud resorted to other religious structures in order to establish his political authority. Chief among these were the Committees for Commanding the Good and Forbidding the Evil. Established in 1903 by a prominent ‘*alim* from ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s family, the Committees’ first *raison d’être* was to enforce Wahhabi principles in the city of Riyadh. Ibn Sa‘ud, eager to consolidate his rule, created several new Committees and incorporated them into the state machinery. While these Committees were headed by the ‘*ulama*, the jobs of local enforcers (*mutawi’a*) were often given to the more illiterate Wahhabis.<sup>101</sup> The *mutawi’a*, who were posted in both *hujar* and cities, had rather undefined duties. They enforced public morality in general: their tasks ranged from ensuring the separation of men from women in public spaces, preventing improper entertainment, and enforcing the prohibition against alcohol and tobacco. They also made sure residents attended prayers at the mosque, and that shops were closed during these periods. Finally, they were entitled to arrest, bring to trial, imprison, and sometimes punish the infringers.<sup>102</sup> In total, the enforcement of Wahhabi tenets through the structure of the Committees allowed Ibn Sa‘ud to have control over the masses.

Finally, the future king of Saudi Arabia understood that full political control was only possible by subordinating the ‘*ulama*. The first step was to seal his alliance with Al Shaykh, the family of Muhammad ibn‘Abd al-Wahhab. Shortly after the retaking of Riyadh, Ibn Sa‘ud took the daughter of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Latif, a prominent ‘*alim*, as his third wife.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, he fully revised

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<sup>99</sup> Yves Besson, *Ibn Saud, roi bédouin. La naissance du royaume d’Arabie Saoudite*, Lausanne, Éditions des trois continents, 1980, p. 136.

<sup>100</sup> Philby, *Arabia of the Wahhabis*, p. 23.

<sup>101</sup> Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>102</sup> al-Yassini, *op. cit.*, p. 68-70; Helm, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>103</sup> Leslie McLoughlin, *Ibn Saud: Founder of a Kingdom*, London, MacMillan, 1993, p. 38. In 1904, she gave birth to the future king Faysal.

the original share of power that characterized the first Saudi state, back in the eighteenth century. Under Ibn Sa'ud, the 'ulama were no longer the co-rulers they had been at the time of 'Abd al-Wahhab. They were rather expected to comply to the needs of Ibn Sa'ud.

To be sure, between 1902 and 1932, the 'ulama contested his policies several times. However, Ibn Sa'ud was conciliatory only when the issues in question seemed of secondary importance. In 1927, he abandoned his intention of codifying the *shari'a* when the 'ulama strongly objected to the project.<sup>104</sup> But when the very future of his emerging state was at stake, Ibn Sa'ud ignored the 'ulama's discontent. Such was the case, for instance, when he carried out the creation of the Directorate of Education in 1926, which led to the gradual introduction of non-religious topics such as geography and foreign languages.<sup>105</sup> In sum, the relationship between the Ibn Sa'ud and the Wahhabi 'ulama was not always harmonious. But overall, the latter remained docile vis-à-vis Ibn Sa'ud's supremacy. The 'ulama seemed content with their wide functions in traditional education and the judicial system. It is also worth noting that the 'ulama of Najd could not rely upon the revenues of the *awqaf* (sing. *waqf*) or the *hajj*: they depended on Al Sa'ud for their salaries and positions.<sup>106</sup>

The collaboration of the 'ulama was essential to ensure religious legitimacy. For instance, Ibn Sa'ud requested a plethora of *fatwas* which aimed at securing his rule and his decisions. In 1924, when he intended to attack the Hijaz, Ibn Sa'ud requested a *fatwa* stating that it was valid to wage war in order to guarantee the rights to perform religious duties. Because the Hashemites had prevented the Ikhwan from performing the *hajj*, this *fatwa* amounted to a warrant for the invasion of *sharif* Husayn's domains. In due course, Ibn Sa'ud also obtained a *fatwa* sanctioning his takeover of Mecca and the Holy Shrines.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Sadok Belaid, "The Role of Religious Institutions in Support of the State" in Adeed Dawisha and I. William Zartman (eds.), *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State*, London, Croom Helm, 1988, p. 151.

<sup>105</sup> Lawrence P. Goldrup, *Saudi Arabia, 1902-1932: The Creation of a Wahhabi Society*, PhD dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1971, p. 247.

<sup>106</sup> James P. Piscatori, "Ideological Politics in Sa'udi Arabia" in James P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 60. See also Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 174.

<sup>107</sup> al-Yassini, *op. cit.*, p. 49, 54.

In order to consolidate his rule, Ibn Sa‘ud soon needed to contain the fanaticism of the Ikhwan. The movement had taken such a radical religious stance that it became a double-edged sword in the hands of the future king. Therefore, in 1919, Ibn Sa‘ud requested a *fatwa* with the intention of containing the Ikhwan’s excesses. The *fatwa* in question stated that “Ikhwanist” Islam was not superior to ordinary Wahhabi practice.<sup>108</sup>

Yet, a few years later, the Ikhwan turned downright counterproductive. People in the *hujar* opposed each administrative development and every sign of modernization, such as the use of phones and cars. Following the conquest of Hijaz, at a time when Ibn Sa‘ud endeavored to ensure political stability, some Ikhwan tribes were declaring their own jihad against the Hashimite kingdoms of Transjordan and Iraq. Thus, with the benediction of the ‘ulama, Ibn Sa‘ud crushed his stubborn co-religionists. In 1928-29, the Muslim movement he created was subjugated by force because of a difference of views over the future and the nature of the state. Clearly, Ibn Sa‘ud demonstrated that the establishment of his kingdom was of greater importance than any Wahhabi crusade. As Christine Helms put it, the “*imam* legend” was broken.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, the title of imam was gradually deemphasized and, in September 1932, Ibn Sa‘ud changed his title and became king of Saudi Arabia.<sup>110</sup>

#### IV- Conclusion

There exist several formulations of Islamic political culture, some rather sketchy, others more elaborate. Most of them share, however, an assumption about the political dimension of Islam. They link authoritarianism—including monarchism—to the very nature of an Islamic culture. This political Islamic substance affects the Muslims, their behavior, their expectations. Many authors contend it is transmitted as a *habitus*, that is, as values inculcated in a mnemonic form, thus implying the Muslims are not truly autonomous. In historical perspective, the idea of an Islamic political culture which covers the bulk of the Arab world is doubtful. It is even more doubtful to suggest that this culture, in

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<sup>108</sup> Kostiner, “Transforming Dualities,” p. 232.

<sup>109</sup> Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>110</sup> Ibn Sa‘ud had previously been named “sultan of Najd and its dependencies” in 1921, and then “king of Hijaz, Najd, and its dependencies” in 1926.

itself, induces authoritarianism or monarchism. If Islam had a political dimension *per se*, it might have been translated in a similar fashion in Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Yet, the historical processes which led to the emergence of these two Arab monarchies fully demonstrate the extent of Islam's looseness in relation to political issues. On the one hand, the rise of Mohammed V—the maraboutic and sharifian king—was made possible through the support of a *salafiyya*-inspired nationalist group. On the other hand, the rise of Ibn Sa'ud—the revivalist king—proceeded from his opposition to a *sharif*.

Even the specifically Moroccan types of Islamic political culture do not prove to be insightful in the light of Moroccan political history. As in Saudi Arabia, Islam in Morocco was ideologized in order to carry out a political project. In both countries the result was the emergence of a monarchy—even though the historical processes were not parallel and the political actors ideologized Islam with different intentions in mind. To be sure, the political evolution of both countries cannot be attributed to the population's (religious) psyche. Islam was first and foremost a political tool, meaning that human experience was a driving force in the historical process of both countries. In the former, Islam was used by Ibn Sa'ud to gain political ascendancy, to fuel, and to legitimize his military expansion. In Morocco, Islam was used by nationalists who strove to mobilize the population. The sultan, because of his traditional religious significance, was incorporated into their scheme. Mohamed V became a focal point for the masses and was thereby strengthened in his condition of monarch.

Encouraged by Orientalist scholars and ideologists of political Islam alike, many commentators on the Arab World underline the formula *din wa dawla*, the unity of religion and state. Yet, according to some of those scholars and ideologists, *mulk* is not an Islamic institution. In the Qur'an, it belongs to God alone.<sup>111</sup> The title *malik*, they argue, has a *jahiliyya* connotation unless it is attributed to God (*al-malik*, the King). All the same, *din wa mamlaka* proved to be a successful formula in Morocco and Saudi Arabia, and those who accepted it were no less Muslims. Discussions on religion and politics in the Arab world, whether historical or contemporary, must address these nuances. In order to be a valid concept, Islamic political culture should only refer to political worldview or

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<sup>111</sup> See M. Plessner, "Mulk," *EF*<sup>2</sup>, p. 546-547.

political habits, without referring to the “nature of Islam,” or even to a “Muslim mindset” and its transcendent influence on the political process.

In the case of Morocco and Saudi Arabia, two monarchs were promoted through an Islamic appeal. This does not provide reasonable evidence to conclude that an Islamic political culture entails authoritarianism. Rather, we should recognize that it is possible to find, in the various islams, the necessary legitimacy that allows absolutist rule. Using Islam as a political tool is a time-honored practice: insofar as beliefs and legitimacy are linked, a leader who justifies his rule in terms of the masses’ beliefs is likely to gain greater support.<sup>112</sup> Legitimacy, in turn, leads to authority. In the political process, Islam is only a source of political capital which, depending on its interpreters, can foster any regime from a republic to a monarchy.

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<sup>112</sup> David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power*, London, MacMillan, 1991, p. 10-11.

## II

# From Social Anthropology to Political Culture: Tribalism, Segmentation, and Patriarchy

*“‘Tents’ and not ‘pyramids’ are the ingredients used by the Arab mind to organize social and physical reality. There are no pyramids and therefore no standardized rules of succession to high office. Government belongs to the powerful.”*

— Fuad I. Khuri<sup>1</sup>

*“Anthropologists have developed a wide variety of constructs for culture [...]. Topical, historical, normative, behavioral, functional, mental, structural, and symbolic definitions have been proposed for the concept. Although such constructs make some sense to anthropologists, they may not be particularly useful for others who try to use or apply them.”*

— Larry L. Naylor<sup>2</sup>

In laying down the conceptual framework of his final book, the late Nazih Ayubi expressed his intention to show the specificity—and not the authenticity—of the Arab world.<sup>3</sup> As a careful scholar, Ayubi was reluctant to attribute an essence to this region. Nevertheless, as the title of his book suggests, he was strongly concerned with the aspects that distinguish Arab society from any other society. Like many others, Ayubi was interested in the question of the Arab state. Such curiosity towards an Arab specificity is common among those interested in comparative politics: besides Arabic, what makes the Arab world a world in itself?

On the political level, authoritarianism is quickly singled out as a major distinctive feature. It is evidenced by the unusually large number of Arab monarchies which contribute to reinforce the image of a politically fierce Arab world. In order to find the origins of this authoritarian trend, many observers—scholars and non-scholars alike—resorted to the notion of culture. Although the Islamic political culture is a favorite source of explanatory schemes, some prefer to look for

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<sup>1</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, *Tents and Pyramids: Game and Ideology in Arab Culture from Backgammon to Autocratic Rule*, London, Saqi Books, 1990, p. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Larry L. Naylor, *Culture and Change: An Introduction*, Westport (CT), Bergin and Garvey, 1996, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1995, p. 2.

cultural answers outside the framework of religion. Their inspiration comes mainly from social anthropology, that is, the study of regularities in an observed social organization and the consequences of this organization.<sup>4</sup> This chapter is about the theories of social anthropology that migrated to other social sciences, especially political science, and inspired new formulations of political culture.

These political cultures draw upon two main anthropological themes. The most important one is tribalism, whose imprecision spawned both simplistic and elaborated theories. Its most influential subtrend is, without any doubt, the notion of segmentation. The second theme is patriarchy. Used in a generic sense, it includes patterns of child rearing and deference to paternal authority. One might argue, with reason, that certain aspects of patriarchy are not typical of social anthropology. Indeed, they also lend themselves to sociological and even psychological studies. But because the notion of patriarchy often gets intertwined with kinship affiliation—which, in turn, is a theme of social anthropology—there is reasonable ground to leave it under the present heading.<sup>5</sup> Reasons of convenience also explain this choice.

Theories on the cultural roots of authoritarianism in the Arab world can be found in broad studies. Yet they are abundantly discussed in specialized works on Moroccan and Saudi politics. Besides political scientists, a number of historians and anthropologists have been involved in the elaboration of the concepts of tribal and patriarchal political cultures. Note that the authors who emphasize kinship and social organization do not necessarily suggest that authoritarianism in the Arab world has cultural roots unrelated to Islam. On the contrary, many formulations of tribal and patriarchal political culture are developed in contiguity with Islamic themes. Authors may build upon patterns of social order whose origins are pre-Islamic, but they often argue these patterns are reinforced by religious elements.<sup>6</sup> This chapter, however, will intentionally leave out the discussion on how Islam can exacerbate the effects of tribal and patriarchal political cultures. It

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<sup>4</sup> Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1981, p. 7. Some authors, though, seem to have been inspired by political anthropology which, in turn, studies the forms of power and social control, usually (but not exclusively) in pre-industrial societies. To be sure, the boundary between social and political anthropology is flexible.

<sup>5</sup> See Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> A good example of the association between Islam and patriarchal political culture is Susan E. Waltz, *Human Rights and Reform: Changing the Face of North African Politics*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 44-45.



will focus solely on aspects of social organization and their influence on political “mentalities” and political development.

It might be too ambitious to demonstrate whether the tribal or patriarchal specificities of Arab culture really foster or favor authoritarianism. The purpose of this chapter is rather to determine if tribal and patriarchal political cultures can explain the emergence of the modern monarchies in Morocco and Saudi Arabia. The argument is that despite some valid observations about the characteristics of preindustrial and traditional societies, the various concepts of tribal and patriarchal political culture are not, for the most part, fully satisfying as explanatory schemes. On the one hand, formulations of patriarchal and segmentary political culture lead to circular analyses: political historians cannot postulate that state power is the result of a population’s inclination toward obedience or defensiveness. On the other hand, the formulations of tribal political culture are often too elusive or too linear to improve our understanding of political change and political history.

The first two sections of this chapter will present the various formulations of political culture, their theoretical and empirical basis, and their weaknesses. The patriarchal and segmentary political cultures will then be contrasted with the gradual imposition of Mohamed V’s power following independence, that is, between 1956 and 1961. The last section will confront the concept of tribal political culture with the development of the Saudi polity.

## **I- Tribal political culture: uneven theoretical orientations**

The question of tribalism today is an important theme for the social scientists who investigate the emergence of the state in the Middle East. Tribalism, however, is also one of the most controversial concepts in social anthropology. The term is an attempt to identify a category of human society, but anthropologists have been unable to agree on a definition. Indeed, tribal peoples can vary greatly in terms of their economic activities, their degree of political autonomy, or their socio-political organization—even though scholars have a tendency to pre-

sent tribalism as a model of acephalous society where all individuals are equals.<sup>7</sup> Evidently, the confusion surrounding tribalism was carried over to other fields of social science when historians, political scientists, and observers of all kinds adopted the term that was once the prerogative of anthropologists. The notion of tribe is thus a contested generic concept that can designate different realities, from a politicoterritorial unit to a primitive society bounded by genealogical and linguistic factors. For instance, Arab intellectuals used tribalism (*qabaliyya*) as an antonym for nationalism (*qawmiyya*), while some political scientists have equated "tribe" with the notion of *ethnie*.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, such variations in the meaning of tribalism depend on whether the concept is used as an analytical or state administrative concept.<sup>9</sup>

However, the empirical and typological diversity pertaining to the concept of tribalism did not prevent anthropologists from formulating generalized designs of "tribal culture."<sup>10</sup> Their work mainly concentrated on social and political organization, as well as the patterns of conduct they could observe within various tribal societies. The numerous conclusions that emerged from these anthropological fieldworks were borrowed by other scholars, often without much scrutiny, and used in order to draw out of tribal culture the premises of a tribal *political* culture. The latter concept is unique in its emphasis on the psychological dimension of tribalism. It is concerned with tribalism as a set of values, or "state of mind," and its influence on the political process.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, tribal political culture differs from the purely economic or structural approaches to authoritarianism in the Middle East: it is, for instance, unrelated to the theory of Oriental despotism.

Nonetheless, tribalism—unlike Islam—is hardly interpreted as a set of ideas fostering various types of social organization. On the contrary, tribalism is first

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<sup>7</sup> See Madawi al-Rasheed's summary in *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidi Tribal Dynasty*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1991, p. 17-19.

<sup>8</sup> Bassam Tibi, "The Simultaneity of the Unsimultaneous: Old Tribes and Imposed Nation-States in the Modern Middle East" in Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 137-138.

<sup>9</sup> Colonial authorities, in particular, assumed corporate identities that the tribes did not necessarily have. See Richard Tapper, "Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East" in Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 50-52; Eickelman, *op. cit.*, 88-89.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall D. Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1968, p. 14

<sup>11</sup> Ayubi, *op. cit.*, p. 125. The question of tribalism as a state of mind is suggested by Richard Tapper in the introduction to Richard Tapper (ed.), *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, London, Croom Helm, 1983, p. 66.

and foremost a social reality rather than an abstraction (though it is often ideologized *a posteriori* by tribesmen and scholars alike). Tribalism is a way to adapt to ecological requirements or to distinguish one group's identity; it is not a substance that lies within texts. Therefore, as a topic whose source lies in social anthropology rather than theology, the study of the tribes and their relation to state formation is influenced by structural elements to a much greater extent. For instance, all formulations of tribal political culture are inspired by the tribesmen's patterns of organization. In opposition to Islamic political culture, there cannot be scholarly constructions based solely on ideas or philology.

Yet, structural elements do not necessarily enhance the concept of tribal political culture. In several instances they merely lead to greater reductionism. The structural approach posits that tribes, or some aspects of their organization, are precursors of the state in an evolutionary sequence. One can disagree with this political anthropology by arguing that too many forms of tribalism result in too many possible scenarios in the passage from tribe to state.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, some scholars who adopted the structural approach with caution and nuance succeeded in offering valuable contributions. One example is the concept of transitional chiefdom, or semi-tribal proto-state, and its various degree of "stateness."<sup>13</sup> However, because of its evolutionary dimension, the structural approach can also foster determinism. By mingling structural elements of tribalism and kinship with reflexions on political development, some authors echo the shortcomings of Ibn Khaldun's political sociology.

It is not uncommon to have the tribal political culture approach unfolded in a linear Khaldunian spirit. In his *Muqaddima*, the medieval thinker argued that leadership derives from superiority, and that superiority is achieved only through group feeling ('*asabiyya*').<sup>14</sup> Such a mechanical conception of the political process is often found in the formulations of tribal political culture, especially when authors replace '*asabiyya*' with tribalism. Chief among them is a mechanical conception of the political process in tribal society. One commentator recently

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<sup>12</sup> Ernest Gellner, "Tribalism and the State in the Middle East" in Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 116-119.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Kostiner exemplifies this approach in *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 3, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "'Strong' and 'Weak' States: A Qualified Return to the Muqaddimah" in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *The Foundations of the Arab State*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 208.

raised elements of tribal political culture while arguing that Saudi Arabia is a kingdom governed as one big tribe.<sup>15</sup> This statement suggests that the emergence of a modern Arab monarchy like Saudi Arabia is explainable in terms of tribal factors—an idea that is reminiscent of Ibn Khaldun's argument that "the goal to which group feeling leads is royal authority."<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, contemporary authors who show similarities with Khaldun's rhetoric also tend to have inherited his positivist approach. Political evolution does not follow a set of laws; it would be simplistic to suggest that tribes turn into states, and the *'asabiyya* into a *mulk*.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, the various formulations of tribal political culture present themselves as an amalgam of structural and psychological aspects which, in many cases, are as elusive as the broad notion of tribalism. Two major weaknesses characterize most formulations of tribal political culture: on one hand, they tend to be poorly argued and resort to *ad lib* theorization; they are seldom the object of an in-depth analysis. On the other hand, they show superficial or selective awareness to the anthropological works on tribalism. One might note that these weaknesses do not pertain to tribal political culture only. Nonetheless, they deserve to be underlined insofar as they distinguish plain tribal political culture from its closely-related but more elaborated version: the segmentary political culture.

In his book *The Closed Circle*, David Pryce-Jones' first chapter is devoted to Arab tribal society and its legacy. His argument is based upon a sketchy understanding of tribalism. According to him, tribal society promotes fierce types of leadership. Ironically, the reason is found in the tribal conception of equality among men. In political terms, it means that a potential leader must exert extraordinary efforts in order to single himself out and to ensure his prominence. This superiority is achieved through a continual recruitment of supporters and, especially, by means of sustained violence. Thus, according to Pryce-Jones, a vicious cycle is perpetuated: because challenge leads to power and power invites challenge, tribal leaders tend to be ruthless. He contends that no other form of power relation can

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<sup>15</sup> Saïd K. Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption, and Coming Fall of the House of Saud*, London, Bloomsbury, 1994, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, vol. 1, New York, Pantheon, 1958, p. 284. See also Charles Issawi's translation regarding the concentration of authority in Charles Issawi, *An Arab Philosophy of History: Selections from the Prolegomena of Ibn Khaldun of Tunis (1332-1406)*, Princeton, Darwin Press, 1987, p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> This expression is used by Nazih Ayubi, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

be considered in a tribal *milieu*. Consequently, the tribal conception of leadership determines not only the politics, but the history of the group.<sup>18</sup> Pryce-Jones adds: “Surviving as a tribal legacy down the centuries, the power-challenge dialectic has everywhere perpetuated absolute and despotic rule.”<sup>19</sup>

The structural-cum-psychological factors that Pryce-Jones discusses are considered to be tribal in origin. Yet, the author only provides a minimum of information about tribal society. Nuances are absent; tribalism is presented as a common heritage transmitted through generations to all Arabs, regardless of geography. This kind of generalization may not be as obvious in Khaldoun al-Naqeeb’s book *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula*. Nonetheless, al-Naqeeb’s discourse is no less reductionist. He considers political tribalism—interpreted as a general ethos and organizing principle—to be one of the foundations upon which Arab society depends.<sup>20</sup> Here again, the author’s thought is not developed in too much detail. al-Naqeeb mentions that political tribalism is more than mere kinship or lineage relationship, and that it is “operated through the religious-sectarian institution with its deep, historical roots.”<sup>21</sup> But he provides no further details as to the meaning of tribalism and how the tribal ethos manifests itself. Such evasiveness is also common in studies of dubious quality whose authors simply define tribal political culture as an incapacity to conceive civic life and graded systems of authority: it is a “mentality of the tent” that fosters autocratic rule.<sup>22</sup>

Other authors propose more elaborated explanations. Historian Sarah Yizraeli, for instance, included a formulation of tribal political culture in her recent study of modern Saudi political history. However, she only partially succeeded in making it coherent and useful for her analysis. She presents tribalism as a political culture that promotes the concentration of power.<sup>23</sup> What she intends to say is that there existed, in most regions of Arabia, a series of political institutions and

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<sup>18</sup> David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs*, New York, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 24-25.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Khaldoun al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Khuri, *op. cit.*, p. 15, 132; Aburish, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> Sarah Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia: The Struggle Between King Sa'ud and Crown Prince Faysal, 1953-1962*, Tel Aviv, The Moshe Dayan Center, 1997, p. 22.

norms, shared by several tribal societies, which formed the model of the chieftaincy. Chief among them are the role of the shaykh acting as a *primus inter pares* and the existence of non-written rules of succession and inter-tribal marriage.

Yizraeli's lenient use of political culture suggests that she did not interpret the concept in the way political theorists do. In truth, what Yizraeli calls political culture is a set of social and political standards. This is why, for instance, she sees no need to explain why Ibn Sa'ud, in several occasions, did not even act in conformity with his own political culture. However, the original concept of political culture—the one that has been theoreticized and which this thesis emphasizes—is different. It is concerned with values and learned psychological dispositions. As Almond and Verba asserted, political culture refers to a set of attitudes toward the role of the self in the political system.<sup>24</sup> Yizraeli's loose elaboration of several political subcultures also suggests that she may not have realized the theoretical implications of political culture. In order to describe the regional differences in political standards, she quickly identifies an Hijazi and a Najdi political culture, a political culture of the chieftaincy, and an urban political culture.<sup>25</sup> The psychological substance of these cultures is barely discussed, as though the author did not intend it to be the analytical tool devised by Gabriel Almond. Yizraeli could have easily used the terms "political traditions" or "political norms."<sup>26</sup> On the whole, her analysis would not have been affected, and she would have avoided the misleading and value-laden concept of political culture with its psychological and mnemonic dimensions.

### **The segmentary political culture**

Of all approaches to the notion of tribe, the segmentary lineage theory has been one of the most highly influential. In the wake of British anthropologist Edward Evans-Pritchard, many scholars have defined the tribe as a segmented

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<sup>24</sup> Hence the abstract concepts like subject political culture or participant political culture. See Gabriel A. Almond and Sydney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Yizraeli, *op. cit.*, p. 30, 33, 34-35.

<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that there can be no correlation between political culture and political traditions, though they are not the same. On the contrary, culture is a product of social activity and not an innate feature of the mind.

political group.<sup>27</sup> Segmentation refers to a pyramidal pattern of lineal descent with interlocking segments and levels starting from a top unit, the tribe (*qabila*), down to the clan ('*ashira*), the encampment (*humula*), and finally the extended family ('*a'ila*), which is the smallest sub-unit.<sup>28</sup> It has been demonstrated that this definition of tribalism has more to do with an *imaginaire social* than with real ancestral origins.

Nevertheless, segmentation has been accepted by many anthropologists and tribespeople themselves. What has been highly contested, however, is the segmentary lineage theory. Hence the need to distinguish between the two: while segmentation is understood as a general type of group structure, the segmentary lineage theory refers to a specific theory of political relationships between the segments.<sup>29</sup> In 1940, Evans-Pritchard was the first to offer this systematic theory of complementary opposition. His goal was to explain how tribal society could maintain equilibrium despite constant feuding and the absence of a centralized government.<sup>30</sup> In the segmentary lineage theory, individuals are supposed to act according to the segmented structure, thus assuming the existence of clearly defined political obligations and relationships. In case of a dispute between two persons from different segments, support is expected from the family, the sub-clan, or any higher unit depending on how distanced the opposing segments are from one another on the horizontal level. In any case, political balance exists as long as groups are expected to coalesce at the first common vertical level of the pyramidal structure. This process is illustrated by the tribal saying: "Me against my brother; my brother and I against our cousins; my brother, my cousins and I against the world."

This situation of "ordered anarchy," as Evans-Pritchard described it, rests on the assumption that equal powers and resources exist between segments. The tribe is, in theory, acephalous and does not need leadership. Clearly idealistic, the segmentary lineage theory has been criticized by many, even though tribesmen themselves have proclaimed its veracity. Later anthropologists have underscored

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<sup>27</sup> Tapper, "Anthropologists," p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> The names of the subdivisions differ from one region to another.

<sup>29</sup> See Paul Dresch, "The Significance of the Course Events Take in Segmentary Systems," *American Ethnologist*, 2 (May 1986), p. 309-324.

<sup>30</sup> Ted C. Lewellen, *Political Anthropology: An Introduction*, 2nd edition, Westport (CT), Bergin & Garvey, 1992, p. 97.

that the tribe is rarely acephalous or egalitarian: there are big men who come from prominent families, and the power may not be equally distributed between segments. Furthermore, tribesmen are not automats: conflicts do not always coalesce to the next higher level. Finally, the theory does not account for the ties created across segments through marriages.<sup>31</sup> In sum, social scientists should remain critical vis-à-vis the apparent equivalence between the segmentary theory and the tribesmen's view of their own system.

These criticisms did not inhibit political scientists from borrowing the segmentary theory in order to formulate a segmentary political culture. Nonetheless, the segmentary lineage theory is also puzzling in the perspective of state formation: because of its romantic emphasis on egalitarianism, there is difficulty in seeing any relationship between the structural model of the theory and the kind of authoritarian states that prevail in the Arab world—as though segmentary societies were too democratic to be democratic.<sup>32</sup> The evolutionary approach often used to study tribalism and state formation ceases to be applied when it comes to the specific theory of segmentarity. It has been noted that in his study of the Sanusi of Cyrenaica, Evans-Pritchard himself devoted only two paragraphs to explain how segmentary systems could be transformed from acephalous societies into state organizations.<sup>33</sup> Tribal political culture usually dodges the issue of egalitarianism and affirms that tribalism strictly leads to political authoritarianism. However, the segmentary theory—even when enshrined in a political culture—is too elaborate to allow a sketchy explanation of political development. Therefore, the seemingly insurmountable problem of explaining the passage from one political system to another has simply been ignored in the segmentary political culture. Thus, segmentary political culture is exclusively concerned with the legacy of

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<sup>31</sup> Criticisms are found in Pierre Bonte and Édouard Conte, "Introduction" in Pierre Bonte *et al.*, *Al-ansâb: la quête des origines. Anthropologie historique de la société tribale arabe*, Paris, Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 1991, p. 26; Abdellah Hammoudi, "Segmentarité, stratification sociale, pouvoir politique et sainteté: réflexions sur les thèses de Gellner," *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 15 (1974), p. 157; Steven C. Caton, "Anthropological Theories of Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East: Ideology and the Semiotics of Power" in Phillip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 90-93; Eickelman, *op. cit.*, p. 102-104.

<sup>32</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Democracy in the Arab World: A Critique of the Political Culture Approach" in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (eds.), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, vol. 1: *Theoretical Perspectives*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, p. 81.

<sup>33</sup> Eickelman, *op. cit.*, p. 49, 235. In another study, Evans-Pritchard and his co-author avoid discussing how segmentary societies could turn into primitive states, like kingdoms. See M. Fortes and Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, "Introduction" in M. Fortes and Edward E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems*, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 5-7, 9-12.



segmentary lineage theory on modern Arab political behavior.<sup>34</sup> Like the segmentary theory itself, it does not emphasize political development, but it rather tries to explain political stagnation.

The segmentary political culture has been developed by political scientist John Waterbury in *The Commander of the Faithful*. His argument is that segmentary patterns can be applied to situations of political conflicts far removed from the tribal context. Segmented politics, according to Waterbury, characterize the behavior of the Moroccan elite, that is, the group of people who, for various reasons, have an actual potential influence on decision-making and the distribution of spoils and patronage.<sup>35</sup> This political culture fuels a defensive behavior among the Moroccan elite which has a zero-sum conception of power. Individuals assume that an increase in one's power is only possible at the expense of another's who, necessarily, gets weaker. Therefore, a segmental faction's bid for power is doomed to failure insofar as it automatically creates discontent in another segmental faction. Hence the lack of temerity, the refusal to conduct audacious political endeavors or to challenge the status quo: the Moroccan elite is in a state of balanced opposition.<sup>36</sup> Its behavior is segmentary in nature. It has a situational conception of identity, meaning that one political player's identity depends upon the situation or the group in which he is involved. This, in turn, also fosters a relative conception of friendship, whereby friends can turn into enemies depending on circumstances—like the brother in the tribal saying.<sup>37</sup>

The striking aspect of Waterbury's concept is its restriction to the elite. Precisely, the author argues that segmentary political culture survives because it is preserved in a closed circle. By arguing that demographic changes could break this closely-knit elite group and modify patterns of political behavior, he suggests that the population at large or the new generations might not share the same political culture.<sup>38</sup> Strangely, Waterbury ascribed the concept of segmentarity to

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<sup>34</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod, "Anthropology's Orient: The Boundaries of Theory on the Arab World" in Hisham Sharabi (ed.), *Theory, Politics and the Arab World: Critical Responses*, London Routledge, 1990, p. 95.

<sup>35</sup> John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite: A Study of Segmented Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75-76.

<sup>37</sup> For a good discussion of the alleged segmentary behavior, see Bernard Cubertafond, *Le système politique marocain*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Waterbury, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

those often far removed from the segmented patterns of traditional tribal society by virtue of their origins and education.<sup>39</sup>

Grassroots or not, the segmentary political culture concept is a perplexing tool in the hands of political historians. Obviously, it was designed to explain how the Moroccan political system works or, at least, why it does not change: the monarchy lives on because the defensive elite refuses to challenge it. Could segmentary political culture also explain the kingdom's emergence? A few years ago, the father of segmentary political culture admitted that he abused the segmentary lineage theory in his treatment of contemporary Moroccan politics. He added: "What strikes me in looking back over the last thirty years of Moroccan social and political history is that no form of social organisation or system of identity has predominated at any particular moment."<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, his theoretical legacy survives. The idea of a Moroccan segmentary and defensive mindset is still accepted by some authors, although its political impact has been disputed.<sup>41</sup>

## II- Patriarchal political culture: bowing before the king

The patriarchal political culture has long been an academic favorite. Without any doubt, the concept's simplicity is one reason that explains why it is so frequently invoked. It is the most easily accessible of all formulations of political culture, Islamic and non-Islamic alike. Little theoretical background or specialized knowledge is required to handle it. At the same time, patriarchal political

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<sup>39</sup> Mark A. Tessler, "Morocco: Institutional Pluralism and Monarchical Dominance" in I. William Zartman *et al.*, *Political Elites in Arab North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt*, New York, Longman, 1982, p. 65. It is ironical to note that, in many cases, the elite's ideas and lifestyle were rather influenced by French culture. See the short presentation of some of Morocco's main political figures in Rom Landau, *Morocco Independent Under Mohammed the Fifth*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1961, p. 71-100.

<sup>40</sup> John Waterbury, "Bargaining for Segmentarity" in George Joffé and C. R. Pennell (eds.), *Tribe and State: Essays in Honor of David Montgomery Hart*, Cambridge, MENAS Press, 1991, p. 12. See also page 4.

<sup>41</sup> John Entelis does not reject the basis of Waterbury's segmentary political culture. Instead, he claims that these personality traits do not explain system stalemate. John Entelis, *Culture and Counterculture in Moroccan Politics*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1989, p. 28, 34. Abdellah Hammoudi, for his part, acknowledges that segmentarity might play a role in explaining Arab authoritarianism. See Abdellah Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1997, p. 2. Finally, political scientist Mohamed Tozy resorted to the broad imagery of tribalism and segmentation in order to shed light on the Moroccan political behavior. He is evasive, however, as to the the exact meaning and causality of segmentarity. See Mohamed Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*, Paris, Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1999, p. 26.

culture is difficult to ignore because it rests upon obvious observations: "The conduct of political affairs in the Middle East, as elsewhere, is conditioned not only—perhaps not even primarily—by the leading public issues, ideas, and personalities of the day, but also by the primordial building blocks of human motivation such as childhood experiences."<sup>42</sup>

The concept develops a simple cause to effect relationship stemming from the general but arguable assumption that Arab families are characterized by deference to paternal authority.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, sociologists and psychologists frequently describe Arab families as organic groups headed by the father's authority. Similarly, they have noted that child rearing practices emphasize stern obedience: Arab children must be quiet, obey, and lower their heads. In this sense, the Arab family is believed to inculcate a specific conception of power relations. The patriarchal political culture merely transposes this familial pattern to the political level. The transition is considered valid since the Arabs are allegedly accustomed to deference in their values and behavior. Political leaders, for their part, have a natural inclination toward autocratic rule insofar as they find themselves in the role of the father. Such reasoning provides a readymade explanation for the origin and resilience of authoritarianism—or even kingship—in the Arab world.

The patriarchal political culture usually presents itself as the link between Weber's ideal types of patriarchal and patrimonial systems. Patriarchal rule is typical of household kinship groups. Weber defined it as a basic form of authority whereby the head of the group, the father, commands and is obeyed as long as all believe this uneven distribution of rights and duties is sanctified by tradition. Patrimonialism, in turn, introduces a more complex system of rule and control, like an administrative structure or a network of bureaucrats. Yet patrimonial rule is simply "an extension of the ruler's household in which the relation between the ruler and his officials remains on the basis of paternal authority and filial dependence."<sup>44</sup> Knowing that Ibn Sa'ud and Mohamed V both addressed their sub-

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<sup>42</sup> Malcom H. Kerr, "Foreword" in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Political Behavior in the Arab States*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1983, p. xi.

<sup>43</sup> This claim is disputed by Lisa Anderson, *loc. cit.*, p. 85. See also Halim Barakat, "Beyond the Always and the Never: A Critique of Social Psychological Interpretations of Arab Society and Culture" in Hisham Sharabi (ed.), *Theory, Politics, and the Arab World: Critical Responses*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, New York, Anchor Books, 1962, p. 330-331.

jects as their “children,” it is indeed tempting to think of the Moroccan and Saudi kingdoms as two states managed like households.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, a lot of authors raise the patriarchal aspect of modern Arab politics. Despite variations in the formulation of patriarchal political culture, core ideas are usually standard. Susan Waltz, for instance, puts patriarchy among the cultural elements that, she believes, undergird personal and arbitrary governance in the Maghrib. The notion of anti-individualism is embedded in her definition. In her opinion, patriarchy is not simply male dominance: it is a whole system of authority relations in which the individual must submit his identity to that of the group, that is, the family. The empirical basis of this claim can be found, according to Waltz, in the Arabs’ pattern of naming: “Identity is a function of parentage; one is known, not by a name, but by a relationship—son, daughter, cousin of someone.”<sup>46</sup> Added to the usual paternal authority, this organic pattern of social relations maps the political landscape and prevents civil society from blossoming. The patriarchal political culture then explains the Maghribis’ predisposition towards patronage and authoritarian politics.

This view runs in accordance with the original theoretical basis of political culture. Since the late 1950s, the latter was intended to provide a link between micro- and macro-politics. When the early theorists devised political culture, they also had in mind the processes of socialization, namely the impact of education, of the familial *milieu* and, as expected, the role of the father.<sup>47</sup> Waltz’s patriarchal argument is by no means a new framework of interpretation. It is interesting to note, however, that Waltz is fully aware of her drawing a connection between microscopic and macroscopic phenomena. She even underlines the very weakness behind this: “How is the enormous gap between the patriarchy of micro-society and centralized political authority bridged? In other words, what is the link between patriarchy and patrimonialism?”<sup>48</sup> Waltz hardly provides a convincing answer to that question. She argues that the equally foggy Islamic political cul-

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<sup>45</sup> For Mohamed V, see Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 131, 134. For Ibn Sa‘ud, see Leslie McLoughlin, *Ibn Saud: Founder of a Kingdom*, London, MacMillan, 1993, p. 119.

<sup>46</sup> Susan E. Waltz, *Human Rights And Reform: Changing the Face of North African Politics*, Berkeley, California University Press, 1995, p. 41-42.

<sup>47</sup> Compare Waltz’s discussion with Sydney Verba, “Comparative Political Culture” in Lucian W. Pye and Sydney Verba (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 550-553. In the same volume, see also Leonard Binder, “Egypt: The Integrative Revolution,” especially page 407-411.

<sup>48</sup> Waltz, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

ture is one element that bridges the gap in question. Inspired by Elaine Combs-Schilling's work, she unconvincingly resorts to the political nature of Islam and the symbols of power found in Islamic rituals as a means to fill in the gap that patriarchal political culture leaves unexplained. Although Waltz is aware of the pitfalls pertaining to the concept of political culture, she refuses—like many others—to show greater caution. At the same time, she contributes to the perpetuation of the concept's imprecision.

Like some other scholars, Waltz genuinely aims at accomodating cultural elements without falling into reductionism or determinism, although this goal is not always achieved. Hisham Sharabi, for instance, opens his book *Neopatriarchy* with a series of warnings and clarifications. He writes:

I will try not to lose sight of the sociohistorical ground of all [psychological] categories. "Culture," "mind," "personality," "national character," viewed as stable or permanent traits or characteristics by Orientalists and modernization theorists, are excluded from this perspective, which tends more to Marxian and Hegelian conceptions of society and history.<sup>49</sup>

It is true that Sharabi's treatment of Arab culture is not static in that he believes that cultural change occurs through a transformation of society and its class structure. Yet when it comes to the relationship between political culture and political process, Sharabi struggles to abide by his own credo and to depart from the approach of modernization theorists. For him, neopatriarchal culture is characterized by a persistent and seemingly everlasting impotence: an incapacity to escape vertical conceptions of power. Deference to paternal authority pervades both familial and political life. Relations between father and child, or ruler and ruled, show the same pattern of absolute will and coercion.<sup>50</sup> Sharabi claims neopatriarchy does not have a fixed nature; it is rather a historically dynamic structure. Nonetheless, when he analyses the inner structure of neopatriarchy, he finds a cultural specificity deeply rooted in a psychological—even psychoanalytical—reality. For instance, his treatment of the origins of neopatriarchal authority patterns display obvious Freudian influence.<sup>51</sup> Sharabi's thesis is highly

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<sup>49</sup> Sharabi, *op. cit.*, p. ix. One should note that Sharabi's reliance upon Marx and Hegel—whose philosophies of history were among the most linear and historicist—does not *a priori* dispel the spectre of determinism.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7, 41-47, 104. Pages 41 to 47 discuss paternal authority and child rearing practices.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161-162.

stimulating, especially because it rests on various and refreshing intellectual influences. Yet some sections of his book bear unfortunate similarities with the traditional formulation of patriarchal political culture. Neopatriarchy, too, is concerned with the impact of internalized values on the political process. Like political culture, it is a psychosocial feature. Therefore, in the end, the intellectually stimulating approach to neopatriarchy is equally questionable. There is reasonable ground to justify one's reluctance to favor a psychoanalytical take on history: "Psychohistory derives its 'facts' not from history but from psychoanalysis. [...] It denies the basic criterion of historical evidence: that the evidence be publicly accessible to, and therefore assessable by, all historians."<sup>52</sup>

One last study deserves mention. It is Abdellah Hammoudi's *Master and Disciple*, whose contribution is the most recent effort to escape the conventional ways of assessing patriarchal political culture. Hammoudi endeavors to find the cultural roots of authoritarianism in the Arab world. He, too, puts forth a model intentionally separated from classical Orientalist discourse. The cultural schemata he studies are not understood as stable, transhistorical mental features transferred from generation to generation. Rather, they are cultural models whose roots lie deeply—maybe too deeply—in Arab society, and account for the taken-for-granted nature of social and political power relations: "The master-disciple schema is neither a frame of interpretation nor an ideal type but the condition of production of both."<sup>53</sup>

Hammoudi's develops his model by referring to the relationship between a sufi master and his disciple—although his paradigm is considered valid for other "masters and disciples" like a father and his son, a boss and his employee, or even king and his subject. Hammoudi's argument is that positions of dominance in

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<sup>52</sup> Gertrude Himmerfalb, *The New History and the Old*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 35-36. Psychohistory emerged in the late 1950s following Erik H. Erickson's biographies of Luther, and later Ghandi. The trend lost much of its momentum in the 1970s when it became associated with sketchy explanations of historical causality. However, while traditional psychohistory has usually been reserved to the biographic genre, the patriarchal explanations of Arab politics appear even more dubious since they endeavor to assess the psyche of the whole population. Hence the publication of several works on the Arab mind, most of which have been under attack for the past twenty years. Beyond Orientalism, methodological questions are also responsible for the historians' dissatisfaction with Arab psychohistory. One can doubt that L. Carl Brown would today refer to Raphael Patai's well-known study as a "careful and thoughtful survey." See L. Carl Brown, "Bibliographical Essay" in L. Carl Brown and Norman Itzkowitz (eds.), *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies*, Princeton, Darwin Press, 1973, p. 371.

<sup>53</sup> Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple*, p. 7. See also p. xix, 1-3.

Morocco are defined through a model of inversion. In other words, while the sufi master imposes an attitude of strict obedience to his disciple, the latter, in turn, expects the same when in a position of power. Hence the two selves of the disciple: the first self is humiliated, denied his masculinity, and must submit. But the second self, once attained, is dominant over those considered inferior. This inversion model—the ethos of the *zawiya*—is reproduced into the political sphere as well. It connects political domination to gift exchange, *rites de passages*, and initiations in that such actions bring the individual closer to his “second self.”<sup>54</sup>

Like Sharabi’s concept of neopatriarchy, Hammoudi’s master and disciple paradigm is very challenging but does not totally avoid the political culture format. The paradigm tends to be self-referential, even self-sufficient: the cultural origins of political authoritarianism are isolated from processes of state formation and the practical implications of politics. Indeed, Hammoudi mainly uses ethnographic observations, hagiography, and cultural history to identify his cultural schemata. He only rationalizes political power *a posteriori*. Like political culture, Hammoudi’s cultural schemata take precedence over the political process. Therefore, a political historian is as puzzled with Hammoudi’s concepts as with Susan Waltz’s patriarchal political culture. Hammoudi claims his paradigm, unlike political culture, is not independent from praxis. Nevertheless, he does not clearly explain how the master-disciple model is reproduced. The author argues that it was reinvented and relaborated in Morocco under colonial rule. Yet the model is assumed valid for the entire Arab world: how, then, was it reproduced in Najd where neither sufism nor Western colonialism were key factors? Did patriarchal or tribal patterns of authority sustain political obedience and domination? In this case, is Hammoudi’s paradigm that remote from the regular political culture approach?<sup>55</sup>

This section did not intend to thoroughly survey all formulations of patriarchal political culture, but rather to underline their main characteristics and potential weaknesses from a historian’s viewpoint. The objective of this critical review is to establish that patriarchal political culture cannot easily explain the emergence of the kingdoms of Morocco and Saudi Arabia. In its basic form, patriarchal political culture is equally debatable by both political scientists and

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5, 140.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4, 136.

historians insofar as it hardly explains how familial patterns of authority are transferred to a political level. More sophisticated theories about the prominence of authoritarianism in the Arab world also leave a gap between micro- and macro-political patterns. Although some scholars argue that their works lie outside the political culture approach, they actually resort to similar conceptions of internalized political values. Similarly, they are evasive as to how political authoritarianism takes shape in practice.

Hammoudi argues that power does not supersede culture.<sup>56</sup> On the contrary, the next section will show that the emergence of the Moroccan kingdom cannot be explained with such an approach. Beyond any psychological effect of patriarchal or segmentary nature, the monarchy became rooted in Moroccan society because Mohamed V succeeded—intentionally or not—in ensuring his prominence over the population and his political rivals.

### **III- Securing the Moroccan monarchy, 1956-1961**

When discussing nineteenth-century Morocco, anthropologists and political scientists alike acknowledge that religion was by no means the only source of the sultan's power. On the contrary, they interpret the *makhzen* as a dominion established by the sword and contend that the *amir al mu'minin's* prominence was a result of him being both a holy man and a strong man.<sup>57</sup> In some sense, this statement is also valid in the contemporary context. For instance, there is no doubt that the late king Hassan II embodied the model of the strong man, especially from the mid-1960s onwards. However, when the French left Morocco in 1956, the monarchy was still an uncertain outcome. Until that moment, the sultan, the urban bourgeoisie and the urban workers had united in a common objective of wresting independence from France. The situation changed after 1956 when they became rivals for political power.

Mohamed V enjoyed a great deal of popularity among the masses, but the Istiqlal was also a strong force; it was a large and well organized party that had to

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>57</sup> See Henry Munson Jr., *Religion and Power in Morocco*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 115; Iliya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab State System" in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *The Foundations of the Arab State*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 28.



be reckoned with. Consequently, the definition and the role of the monarchy was debated. Several members of the Istiqlal wished to prevent the sultan from gaining political ascendancy while others intended to abolish his office altogether.<sup>58</sup> Through a series of successful political moves, Mohamed V managed to overcome his opponents and ensure the monarchy's survival. At the time of his death in 1961, his son Hassan inherited a throne that was much more stable and powerful than in 1956. Nevertheless, the segmentary and patriarchal political cultures tend to overlook the centrality of this period and the contingency of Mohamed V's victory. From a historical perspective, these formulations of political culture offer an *a priori* rationalization for the monarch's rise to power. On one hand, the segmentary political culture suggests that the elite lacked initiative by letting the monarch grow in strength or accepting his rule *faute de mieux*. On the other hand, the patriarchal political culture suggests that the Moroccans' political values favored their submission to the king. In sum, their acceptance and obedience toward the king reflected their deeply-ingrained conception of father-son (or master-disciple) relationships.

Although Abdellah Hammoudi may be right when he says that power does not supersede culture, I contend that the political historian must favor the former over the latter in order to explain the emergence of the Moroccan monarchy. In opposition to other social scientists, the historians' primary tools are sources, not paradigms. The various segmentary and patriarchal political cultures—even if they are relevant variables—should not precede empirical analysis if the result tends to be ahistorical. This section will present some of the documented political strategies by which Mohamed V secured his position as king of Morocco.<sup>59</sup>

It is ironic to examine the figure of Mohamed V through the prism of patriarchal political culture. Raised in an artificial environment, living in the secondary palaces of Meknes and Fez, rarely in contact with his own father Moulay Youssef, Mohamed was in 1927 a timid young man more ready for compromise than prepared for absolute authority.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, between this date and 1956, he learned enough about Moroccan politics to place himself in an

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<sup>58</sup> The Istiqlal had a small republican wing. See Mohamed al-Alami, *Allal al-Fassi: patriarche du nationalisme marocain*, Rabat, Arrissala, 1975, p. 91.

<sup>59</sup> Mohamed V officially confirmed his title of king (*malik*) on August 15, 1957.

<sup>60</sup> Roger Le Tourneau, *Histoire du Maroc moderne*, Aix-en-Provence, Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1992, p. 267-268.

advantageous position. To be sure, he was not the sole architect of his political ascendancy. Because the sultan was the focal point of the nationalist struggle, the Istiqlal had never overtly opted for a republican rhetoric. Consequently, in 1956, Mohamed V was able to reclaim control over the political system. Returning from exile the previous year, he promised a constitutional monarchy. As king, he intended to supervise the democratic institutions. Indeed, he had become the key political actor. He negotiated with President Edgard Faure in late 1955 and obtained the declaration of La Celle-Saint-Cloud by which France abolished the Protectorate and reestablished Morocco's independence. In March 1956, it was Mohamed V that Franco invited to Madrid—and not a representative from the Istiqlal—in order to sign the declaration by which Spain recognized Morocco's sovereignty over the northern part of its territory.<sup>61</sup>

In 1956, Mohamed V was responsible for forming the first government of independent Morocco. At that time, divergent ideas and incompatibilities between men had already shaken the unity of the Istiqlal. The rivalry between al-Wazzani and al-Fassi had pushed the former, in 1937, to break away from the main nationalist organization—then the National Action Bloc (*kutla al-amal al-watani*)—in order to form his own Popular Party (*al-hizb al-qawmi*).<sup>62</sup> This small splinter group was active during the first years of independence under the name *Parti démocratique de l'indépendance* (PDI). The second political party formed prior to independence was the Moroccan Communist Party (*Parti communiste marocain*, or PCM). Although the Istiqlal was the most dominating group in 1956, the existence of rival parties created a competition among the nationalists which gave the king some political leverage.

Mohamed V chose M'barek Bekkai, a close friend who was not a member of the Istiqlal, as Premier of the first government. The Istiqlal quickly claimed that the government did not demonstrate its real power. Mohamed V accepted the formation of a second Bekkai government in November 1956, in which most of the major posts went to the Istiqlal. Nevertheless, the party was discontent with the nomination of a few non-Istiqlalis and claimed that its force was still too diluted to

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<sup>61</sup> Bernard Lugan, *Histoire du Maroc*, Paris, Critérian, 1992, p. 273-274. This situation was very different from the Tunisian one where ex-prisoner Bourguiba, and not the ruling bey, was the visiting statesman to Paris.

<sup>62</sup> Waterbury, *The Commander*, p. 48.

allow an implementation of its political programme.<sup>63</sup> Thus, in 1958, the third Moroccan government was headed by Ahmad Balafrej, an urban bourgeois and one of the original founders of the Istiqlal. This government was homogenous and dominated solely by the party. Unwilling to take drastic measures against rural rebellions in the Rif, however, Balafrej resigned six months after his investiture.

The king found himself in a position where he could hardly satisfy every political group. While the Istiqlal craved more power, the smaller parties disputed this hegemony and demanded more representation. This state of *hizbiyya* (“factionalism,” or “partyism”) favored the king and increased his power as political arbiter. The *hizbiyya* gradually grew stronger as more parties appeared between 1956 and 1961: the small *Parti des libéraux indépendants* (PLI) in 1956, which was friendly to the Palace; the *Parti démocratique constitutionnel* (PDC) created in 1959 by the original leaders of the PLI after a split in that party; the *Mouvement populaire* (MP), a rural-based party appealing to the Berbers, also created in 1959; the *Union nationale des forces populaires* (UNFP), an offshoot of the Istiqlal which became the principal leftist party from 1959 onwards.<sup>64</sup> In December 1958, Mohamed V opted for a new strategy which aimed at granting greater representation to smaller parties. The fourth government, which lasted until May 1960, was headed by a socialist *francisé*, Abdallah Ibrahim. Consequently, most key posts went to leftist supporters rather than to Istiqlalis.

Since independence, the Istiqlal had found itself “the victim of its own success during the period before 1956,” as John Waterbury asserted.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the king that the Istiqlal had intentionally raised to the status of national emblem later positioned himself above the political parties. At the same time, the end of anticolonial struggle meant the nationalists lost a common ground for unity. Political factions opposed one another. It is true that the situation between 1956 and 1960 is reminiscent of the ordered anarchy of the segmented tribe. This analogy is even more apparent with the figure of the *sharif*-marabout acting as an arbiter. But the segmentary political culture, which today is disputed by its very creator and other social scientists, may not be analytically useful.<sup>66</sup> The concept

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<sup>63</sup> Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 35-36.

<sup>64</sup> Waltz, *op. cit.*, p. 111-113.

<sup>65</sup> Waterbury, *The Commander*, p. 47.

<sup>66</sup> Abdallah Saaf wrote: “Il n'existe certainement pas un modèle de comportement politique marocain unique, voire même il n'en existe pas de dominant.” See Abdallah Saaf, “Tendances actuelles de la culture

favors psychological and behavioral patterns over clashes of personal ambitions or discrepancies in political convictions. Yet these two last variables are seminal. Although there may have been similarities between the political agendas of, say, a socialist like Mahdi Ben Barka, a secularist like Ahmad Balafrej, and a salafist like 'Allal al-Fassi, such men had difficulties reconciling their differences. Ben Barka, for instance, publicly denounced his two former mentors, Balafrej and al-Fassi. He condemned their indecisiveness and questioned their very legitimacy since they were not among those who fought in the streets to wrest independence.<sup>67</sup> The nationalists no longer formed a united front.

In July 1958, when Faysal II of Iraq was toppled, rumors circulated that Mohamed V would follow.<sup>68</sup> However, his position as monarch was securing itself. During the Balafrej and Ibrahim governments, the king took control of the police and the army and placed them outside the strife of politics. Both groups were mainly composed of the remnants of the Maghrib Liberation Army (*Armée de libération du Maghreb*, or ALM) created spontaneously during the last two years of the Protectorate. Born in the Spanish zone, the ALM was not controlled by the Istiqlal.<sup>69</sup> From 1956 onwards, Mohamed V recruited the ALM's members—mostly Berbers—and formed the royal army corps. In this, the king was helped by two loyal partners: the Rifian 'Abd al-Krim Khatib and the Berber captain Mahjubi Ahardan.<sup>70</sup> Thus, Mohamed V improved his ties with several segments of the Berber community. Their support was an important source of political leverage for the king, especially since the opposition between Berberophones and Arabophones added to the Moroccan *hizbiyya*. The nomination of Crown Prince Hassan as minister of defense completed the monarchy's monopoly over violence.<sup>71</sup>

The king also took advantage of his capacity to guide and influence the Moroccan judicial apparatus.<sup>72</sup> The *dahir* of November 15, 1958, stated that the

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politique des élites marocaines" in Jean-Claude Santucci (ed.), *Le Maroc actuel: une modernisation au miroir de la tradition?*, Paris, CNRS, 1992, p. 234.

<sup>67</sup> Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>69</sup> Charles-André Julien, *Le Maroc face aux impérialismes, 1415-1956*, Paris, Éditions J.A., 1978, p. 461.

<sup>70</sup> Le Tourneau, *op. cit.*, p. 270-273.

<sup>71</sup> Hammoudi, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>72</sup> Waterbury, *The Commander*, p. 291. The short-lived constitution of 1962 reaffirmed the monarch's traditional right to be a dispenser of justice.

royal person was sacred and could not be the object of any criticism or derogatory depiction such as caricature.<sup>73</sup> The public liberty law was issued the same year, allowing the formation of political parties. This law aided in securing Mohamed V's office insofar as it prevented the domination of a single party structure that might have crushed the monarchy—as it did in Tunisia where the all-encompassing Neo-Destour managed to oust the bey.<sup>74</sup> It is important to note that the 1958 law contained a preventive clause. The right of association was granted as long as new political groups did not aim at undermining the monarchy. The PCM was dissolved in 1959 because the ministry of justice suspected it of having anti-governmental and anti-monarchical objectives. While the PCM disputed the decision in the Court of Appeals, Mohamed V condemned “materialist doctrines” in a formal speech. The state prosecutor claimed the king's words had the force of law and rejected the communist party's appeal.<sup>75</sup> In 1960, the Supreme Court recognized that the king's decisions were nonjusticiable.<sup>76</sup>

The power of the Moroccan king is an issue that French political scientist Rémy Leveau began to examine in the mid-1970s. In his major book, *Le fellah marocain défenseur du trône*, Leveau emphasizes the centrality of the 1956-1961 period. He argues that one reason for the king's power was the alliance between the palace and rural areas. In 1956, the Protectorate no longer existed, but the new government was yet to be organized. In the process of transferring the powers, the Istiqlal obtained the control of the *makhzen*, that is, the bureaucracy and state apparatus. However, the national system of administration was not clearly established yet. The Istiqlal—especially Ben Barka and the party's left wing—wished to break the old system of the *qa'ids* and create a new structure of local government. Under the Protectorate, the *qa'ids* collaborated with the French authorities and were not highly regarded by the nationalists.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, the new *makhzen*'s lack of organization made it less effective than the former French system. Struggling with administrative constraints, the new

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<sup>73</sup> Mohamed Tozy, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> Rémy Leveau, “Reflections on the State in the Maghreb” in Georges Joffé (ed.), *North Africa: Nation, State, and Region*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 252.

<sup>75</sup> Waterbury, *The Commander*, p. 292. In this case, the dissolution of the PCM was wished by the king, but also by other political parties.

<sup>76</sup> Mohamed Tozy, “Islam and the State” in I. William Zartman and William Mark Habeeb (eds.), *Polity and Society in Contemporary North Africa*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1993, p. 108.

<sup>77</sup> Rémy Leveau, *Le fellah marocain défenseur du trône*, 2nd edition, Paris, Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1985, p. 27, 44.

*makhzen* was unable to please the rurals who expected concrete benefits from independence, such as new roads, hospitals, or schools.

The tension between rural and urban areas was still obvious in the early years of independence. According to Leveau, it continued to play a role in the mutual distrust between rural notables and officials from the *makhzen*. Generally speaking, the new Moroccan bureaucrats were far remote from the rural population in terms of background and education. This gap added to the general feeling of discontent in the countryside:

Lorsqu'un notable rural, poussé par ses pairs, vient présenter une requête dans un bureau de chef-lieu de province ou à Rabat, il se trouve plus déconcerté qu'autrefois. Le fonctionnaire marocain qui l'accueille est généralement jeune, parle français et se meut avec aisance dans les symboles du pouvoir. Son interlocuteur rural en arrive vite à se sentir mal à l'aise, à prendre conscience de son turban, de sa jellaba, de son arabe dialectal à l'accent rauque, devant un interlocuteur dont la cravate et les boutons de manchette témoignent des bienfaits de l'indépendance. On lui explique qu'il faut attendre, au nom de progrès, du Plan, de l'industrialisation, et se conformer à toute une réglementation qu'il ignore. Curieusement, l'administration nouvelle est souvent plus juridique, plus paperassière et plus francisante que celle du protectorat.<sup>78</sup>

Mohamed V, in turn, was a more familiar symbol in the eyes of the rural population. He gave them a sense of continuity during the years of transition. The king, like them, wanted progress without resorting to hasty measures or modifying the whole countryside's government system. For instance, Mohamed V opposed the nomination of some "modern" *qa'ids*. Therefore, many rural notables preferred to create ties with the king and his few political allies than with the Istiqlal.<sup>79</sup>

The inhabitants of many rural areas aimed their displeasure at the new *qa'ids* and *makhzen* bureaucrats. In many cases, the new state officials were unknown and unrelated to the area. Disillusioned with the system, the rural population revolted—in the name of the king—against an administration to which they could not relate and that did not fulfil their expectations.<sup>80</sup> The Arab-Berber tension was also a significant factor: in 1956 and 1957, Berber leaders started to

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> On the rural rebellions, see Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 194-206.

attack the Istiqlal which they branded “racist.” The governor of the Tafilalt, an area south of the High Atlas, publicly stated his antipathy toward “le parti qui nous empêche de vivre comme nous le voulons.”<sup>81</sup> The only way the government could reestablish order in the face of these rural rebellions was by requesting support from the king. This necessary cooperation meant that from 1957 onwards, the *makhzen* had to accept that rural leaders, and not urban bureaucrats, would be appointed as local representatives. The Istiqlal was incapable of creating an administration that would have been the instrument of a single political party.

In sum, the post-independence political confusion strengthened the role of Mohamed V as an arbiter. Leveau contends that the king reinstated the power of the rural notables in order to get support of the countryside while avoiding being reduced to a symbolic role. Mohamed also made sure that there would be no land reform intending to break the power of the rural notables, as Nasser did in Egypt for instance.<sup>82</sup> The rural notables, for their part, limited the power of the urban bourgeoisie—the king’s rivals. In the light of these events, however, John Entelis’ idea of a monarchical culture of the fellah is misleading.<sup>83</sup> The rural population may have been very attached to the person of the king. Yet the ties that were established between the palace and the countryside after 1956 were part of a larger political dynamic which is not explainable in terms of political culture. Similarly, the Istiqlal’s decisions cannot be understood through a segmentary political culture. Leveau himself discarded Waterbury’s approach.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, if the Istiqlal has been defensive, it is because Mohamed V won a political confrontation against the very party that had elevated him to the status of a national-cum-religious emblem:

Qu’il s’agisse de la mise en place de l’appareil gouvernemental ou de l’élaboration des institutions constitutionnelles, Mohammed V parvient à faire prévaloir ses vues contraignant ainsi l’Istiqlal à une attitude défensive. Il ne lui est pas possible en effet d’entrer en lutte ouverte contre le roi; l’opinion ne comprendrait sans doute pas un tel conflit, mettant en cause un souverain entouré d’un véritable culte populaire.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Le Tourneau, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

<sup>82</sup> Mohamed V was himself one of the most important landowners in Morocco. Leveau, *Le fellah*, p. 237-238. Leveau also suggests that the king may not have planned all these beneficial events. Some of them happened *ad hoc* and the king only realized their political advantages afterwards.

<sup>83</sup> Entelis, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>84</sup> Leveau, *Le fellah*, p. 239, 242.

<sup>85</sup> Michel Rousset, *Le royaume du Maroc*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1978, p. 61.

In 1960, Mohamed V affirmed that the ongoing state of *hizbiyya* forced him to assume the leadership of the government with Crown Prince Hassan as Premier.<sup>86</sup> To be sure, Mohamed V was still moderate—especially in comparison to the reign of his son from 1961 to 1999. Mohamed’s repeated calls for a democratic system were most likely sincere, but this was true only to a certain extent. After the French departed, the king created the National Consultative Assembly, a proto-democratic body without legislative powers. Among other duties, it had the responsibility of voting on the budget. However, the body was dismantled in 1959 after its seventy-six members began criticizing the ministers and the king, while trying to impose their control over the Palace. As Roger Le Tourneau wrote: “Il est probable qu’en réalité ce souverain [Mohamed V] qui se disait et se voulait démocrate, mais qui avait aussi conscience de la place qu’il tenait dans son pays, éprouvait quelque contrariété à renoncer au pouvoir absolu de ses ancêtres.”<sup>87</sup>

The 1956-1961 period provides significant insights about the emergence of the monarchy in Morocco. However, it is not possible for this author to demonstrate beyond any doubt that the historical process was not influenced by a patriarchal political culture. Maybe, indeed, a patriarchal orientation toward political action did play a role in the construction of the monarchical regime in Morocco. Yet political scientists themselves cannot substantiate this psychocultural claim. The problem is not easier for a political historian. In historical perspective, the only way to dispute the elusive patriarchal or segmentary political culture approaches is by suggesting other explanatory schemes, more structural, more empirical, and hopefully more verifiable. The next section will contrast the remaining political culture, the tribal one, with the political process in Arabia.<sup>88</sup>

#### **IV- The Saudi kingdom: tribal politics or political tribalism?**

Desert imagery is frequently used to illustrate the history and politics of Saudi Arabia. In the words of Robert Lacey, “the modern history of the Kingdom begins somewhere in these sands on the fringe of Arabia’s dead southern

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<sup>86</sup> I. William Zartman, *Government and Politics in Northern Africa*, New York, Praeger, 1963, p. 24.

<sup>87</sup> Le Tourneau, *op. cit.*, p. 280. On the National Consultative Assembly, see I. William Zartman, *Destiny of a Dynasty: The Search for Institutions in Morocco's Developing Society*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1964, p. 43-45.

<sup>88</sup> Due perhaps to a lack of anthropological work in the region, the segmentary political culture has never been applied to Saudi Arabia to the same extent it has been to Morocco.



waste.”<sup>89</sup> Indeed, the Saudi state was carved out of the desert. Most of its territory consists of desert lands, including the large *rub al-khali*. Ibn Sa‘ud himself was well acquainted with the life of the bedouins; the kingdom’s early history is filled with raids, long camel rides, and sheepskin camps. Although no detailed figures exist, some suggest that by the 1950s, roughly 40% of Saudi Arabia’s population remained nomadic.<sup>90</sup> Viewed from this angle, it is hard to believe that the lifestyle of the desert never affected the Saudi political process.

Clearly, the emergence of the Saudi kingdom bears the mark of its bedouin origin. Unfortunately, this observation is regularly overstated and distorted. Many describe Saudi Arabia as a bedouin or even a tribal state and, in several cases, the terms “tribal” and “primitive” are almost interchangeable.<sup>91</sup> Though these hasty connections may seem accurate *a priori*, they are, in truth, misleading. On one hand, despite the assertiveness of some authors, tribalism in Saudi Arabia is not a sharply outlined reality. By no means can tribalism, primitiveness, and bedouin lifestyle be presented as equal in terminology. Tribalism, understood as a political and social unit of identification, encompasses groups of pastoral nomads, settled cultivators, as well as urban merchants.<sup>92</sup> The term is not specific to tent-dwelling bedouins or camel-herders of the desert. In reality, few purely nomadic tribes existed in early twentieth-century Saudi Arabia: “Nomads might herd sheep, goats, camels, or any combination thereof and may additionally have owned land in settled areas or tended isolated stands of date palms.”<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, one must be careful when contending that Saudi Arabia is a tribal monarchy because of its bedouin origin. As this section will illustrate, tribal political culture not only generalizes a reality containing many subtleties, it also makes an arguable connection between tribalism and the authoritarian Saudi regime. The major weakness of the tribal political culture is its assumption that tribalism is teleological on the political level, that is, that it is directed toward a

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom*, London, Hutchinson, 1981, p. 24.

<sup>90</sup> Eickelman, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>91</sup> See Geoff Simons, *Saudi Arabia: The Shape of Client Feudalism*, London MacMillan, 1998. Note that the author used the adjective “feudal” in order to sum up what he sees as the tribal and archaic nature of the kingdom—despite the complete irrelevance of the term in the Saudi context. The same mistake had been made, before the publication of Simons’ book, by Aburish, *op. cit.*, p. 1, 42.

<sup>92</sup> Tapper, “Anthropologists,” p. 54.

<sup>93</sup> Christine Moss Helms, *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia: Evolution of Political Identity*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, p. 44.

specific end. Yet tribalism is too multiform to have a single finality: in some aspects it is even antithetical to the concentration of power. There is little evidence that a tribal cultural substance played a role in the process of state formation. My objective is to demonstrate that whereas tribal institutions served Ibn Sa'ud's rise to power, the king also needed to adopt a political strategy that ran counter to the so-called bedouin norms in order to ensure his position as monarch. Therefore, tribal structures—more than tribal political culture—can shed light on the creation of a state like Saudi Arabia.

According to the traditional custom of the Arabian peninsula, the prestige of families and tribes was among the most important factors in marriage practices. Hafiz Wahba, one of Ibn Sa'ud's close advisors, asserted that bedouin and settled populations "take enormous care to preserve their family records and the purity of their blood, marrying only into families equal to their own in birth. No member of the leading tribes or families will marry anyone whose lineage is in the slightest doubt."<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, as Sarah Yizraeli remarked, this alleged "tribal culture" did not regulate Ibn Sa'ud's conjugal life. Much remains unknown of the king's family life, but it has been established that he fathered between forty-three and forty-five sons and an even greater number of daughters.<sup>95</sup> This unusually large family was the result of several marriages: more than twenty-two over a period of roughly fifty-five years. Many of these unions were equally unusual in regard to the normative practice.<sup>96</sup>

Indeed, the principle of tribal purity was not Ibn Sa'ud's first concern, rather he used marriage as a means to ensure the loyalty of certain tribes or sections of tribes—the same way he did with the family of 'Abd al-Wahhab in order to ensure the support of the religious establishment. Ibn Sa'ud regularly divorced his wives in order to allow himself to marry again into different tribes without exceeding the Qur'anic limit of four wives. Even if these wives were eventually divorced, the families remained honored and tied by the marriages, especially if the women had borne children to Ibn Sa'ud.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, the royal family became

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<sup>94</sup> Hafiz Wahba, *Arabian Days*, London, Arthur Baker Limited, 1964, p. 21.

<sup>95</sup> Authors disagree on the number of sons. Compare McLoughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 206 with David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1981, p. 552.

<sup>96</sup> About half of Ibn Sa'ud's wives met the criteria of tribal custom. See Yizraeli, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>97</sup> Mohammed al-Mana, *Arabia Unified: A Portrait of Ibn Saud*, London, Hutchinson Benham, 1980, p. 247.

a cluster of tribal segments. Ibn Sa‘ud’s marriage politics were based upon exogamic unions which more or less followed the geography of his military conquests. For instance, his second wife, Wadhba bint Muhammad, was from the Bani Khalid—an eastern Arabian tribe into which Al Sa‘ud was not accustomed to marry. Jawhara bint Musaid, whom he married around 1907, was from the important Sudairi family of Riyadh. This strategy reflects Ibn Sa‘ud’s main objective following the year 1902: he endeavored to consolidate his position in the capital and to gain access to the Persian Gulf through al-Hasa, the land of the Bani Khalid.<sup>98</sup>

When in 1921 Ibn Sa‘ud defeated the Rashidis, the main rival family from which he had taken back Riyadh in 1902, he proceeded to take three wives from their tribe to ensure the Rashidis’ compliance toward the Saudis. Ibn Sa‘ud first put pressure on their captive leader, Muhammad Ibn Talal, to divorce Nura bint Sibhan so that he could, in turn, marry her. Soon after, Ibn Sa‘ud divorced Nura and married Jawaher, the daughter of Ibn Talal. He finally took Fahda bint Asi Shuraim as his third wife. She was the widow of Saud Ibn Rashid, a rival cousin of Ibn Talal.<sup>99</sup> Thus, Ibn Sa‘ud ensured tribal connections with the main factions of the Rashidi family. These marriages had great political significance. Fahda, in particular became the mother of the actual Crown Prince Abdullah.

Nevertheless, the most effective way by which Ibn Sa‘ud could keep the tribes’ allegiance was to grant subsidies, keep taxation to a minimum, and provide the tribesmen with the usual booty of military expeditions. On the level of taxation, Al Sa‘ud was more successful than the Hashimites whose exactions on the Hijazi tribesmen were harsh enough to made them unpopular.<sup>100</sup> Yet, with limited revenues, Ibn Sa‘ud could not always susidize the tribes.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the imam’s expansion scheme sometimes required him not to lauch any raids. Without booty,

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<sup>98</sup> Yves Besson, *Ibn Saud, roi bédouin. La naissance du royaume d'Arabie Saoudite*, Lausanne, Éditions des trois continents, 1980, p. 83.

<sup>99</sup> See al-Rasheed, *op. cit.*, p. 64, 250. Internecine quarrels opposed members of the Rashidi family.

<sup>100</sup> Haifa Alangari, *The Struggle for Power in Arabia: Ibn Saud, Hussein, and Great Britain, 1914-1924*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 1998, p. 45; Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett, "The Precarious Monarchy: Britain, Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud and the Establishment of the Kingdom of Hijaz, Najd and its Dependencies, 1925-1932" in Tim Niblock (ed.), *State, Society and Economy in Saudi Arabia*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 39; McLoughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>101</sup> The various forms of subsidies are discussed in Tim Niblock, "Social Structure and the Development of the Saudi Arabian Political System" in Tim Niblock (ed.), *State, Society and Economy in Saudi Arabia*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 91.

the loyalty of the tribes was likely to shift. Therefore, Ibn Sa'ud departed once again from his bedouin "culture" in an effort to create a moral obligation between himself and the leaders of either the newly conquered tribes or the insubordinate ones. When local rebellions occurred, Ibn Sa'ud crushed them but displayed unusual magnanimity and mercy toward the treacherous leaders. Instead of executing them, as the tradition required, Ibn Sa'ud pardoned them and restored them in their position of authority. Thus, he earned their loyalty and respect, while avoiding further political instability:

If the Prince [Ibn Sa'ud] had executed each tribal chief who rebelled, he would have had to replace him with a man of his own choosing. It is unlikely that any man would have come forward for such a task, for the resentment of the tribesmen at the presence of an interloper would be likely to take such a murderous turn that he would not have expected to live long.<sup>102</sup>

In his evaluation of tribal political culture, David Pryce-Jones emphasized the perpetual pattern of challenge and repression among potential leaders—a cycle which is supposed to promote absolutism. However, this pattern did not correspond to Ibn Sa'ud's political strategy. The latter deliberately prevented most of the intertribal bloodfeud which would have resulted from the execution of disloyal shaykhs. To be sure, his clemency did not systematically bind all tribal leaders to him. There had been notable exceptions, such as Faysal al-Dawish whose disobedience had once been forgiven by Ibn Sa'ud but who nevertheless rebelled with a group of Ikhwan in 1929.<sup>103</sup> But in most cases, Ibn Sa'ud's politics of magnanimity was successful.

Furthermore, Pryce-Jones' power-challenge dialectic should not be considered valid merely on the basis of observation. Obviously, his formulation of tribal political culture is broad enough to match many political events in the Arab world. In this case, similarity between theory and practice is not irrefutable evidence that Pryce-Jones' allegations are well-founded. While challenge and repression have frequently existed in the region's modern history, it would be simplistic to claim that any struggle for political supremacy, anywhere in the Arab world—like that of Bourguiba versus Salah ben Youssef in Tunisia—has its origin in a tribal legacy of political behavior. Should Pryce-Jones' ideas, then, be consi-

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<sup>102</sup> al-Mana, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>103</sup> Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

dered more appropriate in the context of a predominantly tribal region like Arabia? There is no reason to believe so, especially because his formulation of political culture is too entrenched in psychological features to be debated *in toto*. The tribal origin of political values is as hard to identify in Saudi Arabia as it is in Arab countries that are more urbanized. It is interesting to note that in some instances, Ibn Sa'ud's rise to power was even achieved at the expense of tribal customs.

Ibn Sa'ud significantly altered the status of the tribes in order to establish his authority. One of his policies was to level the power of the tribal shaykhs. This objective was attained by undermining the patron-client protection schemes typical of bedouin custom. The power of several shaykhs was enhanced by the collection of the *khuwa*—the protection tax that made them the formal protectors of the less powerful or despised tribes which paid it.<sup>104</sup> Ibn Sa'ud freed the less prominent tribes from their inferior status by releasing them from payment of the *khuwa*. Moreover, the tax created partnerships between otherwise antagonistic tribal groups. Eager to monopolize political power, Ibn Sa'ud found it equally advantageous to break the *khuwa* relationships and to prevent the formation of potential groups of opposition. In sum, Al Sa'ud gained the loyalty of the freed tribes while weakening the great tribal confederacies.<sup>105</sup> There is a puzzling lack of cultural contiguity between Pryce-Jones' conception of tribal political behavior, Ibn Sa'ud's decisions, and the norms of tribal society in Arabia—as though the three were opposed. Can tribal political culture run counter to tribal norms? The only way to justify the validity of this concept would be to argue that the tribal-absolutist political behavior was transcendent enough to devour the very tribal customs from which it originates. A historian, however, cannot substantiate this theory with empirical evidence.

An analysis of the period from 1924 to 1932, during which Ibn Sa'ud proceeded to integrate Najd and Hijaz into one single kingdom, also raises doubts as to the analytical validity of tribal political culture. The fact that a large political, social, and economic gap existed between Najd and Hijaz modifies the usual conception of a bedouin Saudi Arabia. While Najd had been subjected to few ex-

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<sup>104</sup> Helms discusses a few cases where powerful tribes were still considered inferior because of their lack of nobility based on the purity of descent. See Helms, *op. cit.*, 54.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60, 158. Ibn Sa'ud used the remaining tribal cleavages to fight the Ikhwan in the late 1920s. See Salamé, *loc. cit.*, p. 220.

ternal influences until the twentieth century, Hijaz had its own important urban centers long before the Saudi conquest. The *haramayn* (the two sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina), in particular, were cosmopolitan locations where Muslims from all over the world met and got acquainted with each other.<sup>106</sup> In addition to Jedda, these cities were commercial hubs with strong international links. The administrative structures of Najd and Hijaz were also quite different from each other. The Najdi structure was based upon basic vertical relationships: the *umara* (sing. *amir*), with whom the 'ulama collaborated, were accountable to the governors who, in turn, were accountable to the king. The Hijazi system, however, was more elaborate. Up to 1924, several departments existed—mainly health, municipal affairs, and the judiciary—which were coordinated by a City Council under the control of the *sharif*.<sup>107</sup>

Ibn Sa'ud resorted to traditional strategies of Hijazi local politics in order to integrate that province. Soon after the fall of Mecca in 1924, he reassured Hijazi notables that they would be consulted under the new administration. He then set forth proto-democratic institutions in order to gain their support. Ibn Sa'ud reintroduced the *majlis al-ahli* (Council of the People) in 1925, later renamed *majlis al-shura* (Consultative Council), which was mainly composed of merchants and 'ulama elected by collectivities from various quarters of Mecca.<sup>108</sup> At the same time, he pledged the promulgation of a constitution—a promise that was, however, never fulfilled.<sup>109</sup> In 1931, he established a second major Hijazi institution, the *majlis al-wukala* (Council of Deputies), which later evolved into the Council of Ministers.<sup>110</sup> As most authors underscore, these institutions did not play a major role in shaping the policy of the emerging Saudi state. The councils were not fully democratic in the Western sense; they were rather advisory bodies at the disposal of Ibn Sa'ud's son, Faysal, who was governor of Hijaz. Nevertheless, they do

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<sup>106</sup> John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1982, p. 56.

<sup>107</sup> Ayman al-Yassini, *Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1985, p. 60. Traditionally, Medina was more autonomous than Mecca since it was mainly in the latter city that the *sharifs'* influence could be felt. Overall, Medina was more open and less conservative than Mecca. Its inhabitants were more willing to incorporate newcomers into the local structure of power. See Voll, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>108</sup> Kostiner, *The Making*, p. 101; Holden and Johns, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>109</sup> Instead of a constitution, Ibn Sa'ud issued a Basic Instruction (*al-ta'alima al-asasiyya*) which specified that the existing Hijazi institutions would remain. See Summer Scott Huyette, *Political Adaptation in Sa'udi Arabia: A Study of the Council of Ministers*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1985, p. 54.

<sup>110</sup> Fouad al-Farsy, *Modernity and Tradition: The Saudi Equation*. London, Kegan Paul International, 1990, p. 42. This Council had begun operating informally in 1927. See Huyette, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

greatly contrast with the despotism and incapacity to conceive civic life emphasized by some formulations of tribal political culture.

The idea of a consultative assembly was not foreign to the bedouins. In Najd, Ibn Sa‘ud too had his own casual *majlis* sessions which tribal leaders, ‘ulama, or any individual with a valid complaint or interest could attend.<sup>111</sup> The *majalis* of Hijaz were distinct simply by their higher degree of institutionalization. Yet the tribal political cultures show some uneasiness with this characteristic ambivalence of tribalism, oscillating between the prominence of the shaykh and the tradition of consultation. Joseph Kostiner argued that after 1917, Ibn Sa‘ud ceased to be a regular tribal *primus inter pares*.<sup>112</sup> Some also argue that his passage from tribal shaykh to king seemed natural to the bedouins who considered Ibn Sa‘ud the head of all nomadic tribes (*shaykh al-mashaikh*).<sup>113</sup> However, tribal political culture does not explain why the concentration of power gained precedence over the consultative tradition. Nor does it explain why Ibn Sa‘ud prevented the *majalis* of Hijaz to grow or why he limited them to the *haramayn* region. The emergence of the Saudi kingdom cannot be explained without mentioning not only Ibn Sa‘ud’s “genius,” as many noted, but also his clear design to regain the territory of his ancestors in order to establish the third Saudi state.

The institutions of Hijaz suggest that the concept of tribalism is too vast and encompasses too many political dimensions to be reduced to an absolutist form of power. In light of the *majlis* tradition, the tribal origins of Saudi Arabia cannot clearly account for the nature of its political system, yet several authors argue the contrary. Sarah Yizraeli, for instance, speaks of Ibn Sa‘ud’s tribal political culture as being authoritarian. Nonetheless, authoritarianism is not a tribal or bedouin trait *per se* and one does not need to share Ibn Sa‘ud’s political culture in order to have monarchical ambitions. *Sharif* Husayn’s tendency toward authoritarianism was no less important than that of Ibn Sa‘ud. Obviously, both men were ambitious dynasts. Yet, educated in the entourage of the Ottoman sultan, *sharif* Husayn was neither an essentially tribal person nor a man of the desert. All the same, Yisraeli finds the missing explanation in another political

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<sup>111</sup> The royal *majlis* is described by al-Mana, *op. cit.*, p. 178 and Niblock, *loc. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>112</sup> Kostiner, “Transforming Dualities,” p. 233.

<sup>113</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, London, Saqi Books, 1998, p. 289.

culture: the urban political culture of centralization that prevailed in Hijaz.<sup>114</sup> This kind of subformulation questions the very relevance of the tribal approach. Tribal or urban, all political cultures in Yizraeli's discourse lean toward the concentration of power.

Acknowledging the tension between tribal consultation and tribal concentration of power, one scholar saw fit to contend that both the tradition of the *shura* (consultation) and the *majlis* form the basis of Saudi political culture. Nonetheless, this claim prevented her from drawing a connection between tribalism and the authoritarian nature of the Saudi monarchy. Her understanding of the regime is thus hardly satisfying: "Of all peoples, the Arabs require strong leaders who can control the natural tendency of the people to dissolve into kinship groups and political factions, and the Sa'udi Arabs, even more than the others, demand strong leadership to prevent the natural centrifugal forces."<sup>115</sup> Although weak, this argument underlines yet another shortcoming of the tribal political culture concept: how can decentralized tribal societies only foster a political culture of centralization? In the case of Saudi Arabia, the tribes were important in shaping the dynamics of expansion. But Ibn Sa'ud soon reached a point where he needed to break tribal patterns of organization in order to allow himself to centralize and create a monarchical state. At this point, his political behavior ran counter, once again, to that of the tribes. This is particularly visible in Ibn Sa'ud's politics of encapsulation. In 1925, he enacted a law which aimed at restricting the tribes' political autonomy. It abolished the nomads' exclusive rights in their own *diras* (grazing territories) and asserted the king's privilege to intervene at will—and in an unprecedented manner—in tribal politics.<sup>116</sup> These events also suggest that the tribal political culture was an impediment to Saudi absolutism.

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<sup>114</sup> Yizraeli, *op. cit.*, p. 35. As noted in the first section of this chapter, Yizraeli tends to use political culture as a synonym for political institutions. Hijazi institutions may have been centralized, but not necessarily authoritarian—at least at the assembly level. For instance, an organization known as *hizb al-tahrir al-hijazi* (Hijazi Liberation Party) was active during the mid-1920s. Its leader was Husayn Tahir al-Dabbagh, the head of a Hijazi house of business. The party was not necessarily opposed to centralizing policies, but opposed the rule of any monarchy in the Hijaz, be it Saudi or Hashimite. See Kostiner, *The Making*, p. 159.

<sup>115</sup> Huyette, *op. cit.*, p. 42. For her definition of political culture, see page 5-6.

<sup>116</sup> Ugo Fabietti, "Sedentarisation as a Means of Detribalisation: Some Policies of the Saudi Arabian Government Towards the Nomads" in Tim Niblock (ed.), *State, Society and Economy in Saudi Arabia*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 192-193.



Ironically, the classical interpretations of tribalism in Morocco, where more ethnographic and anthropological work have been conducted, give a more balanced appreciation of the inherent ambivalence of tribal politics. In opposition to the works on Saudi Arabia which keenly emphasize the potentially despotic features of tribalism, few connections are drawn between tribalism and the nature of the Moroccan regime. Furthermore, scholars interested in twentieth-century Moroccan politics usually interpret the *makhzen* and the *bled al-siba* as two competing entities and relegate the so-called tribal anarchy to the latter. This scholarly tradition may have prevented simplistic theories of tribal political culture from becoming dominant.

Moreover, anthropological literature on Moroccan tribalism shows greater acknowledgment of the ideas of fission and fusion, that is to say, centralization and decentralization. At the same time, anthropologists have noted the tendency of tribal societies to oscillate between a republican and a tyrannical system.<sup>117</sup> The tribal duality was represented by great chiefs like the Glawi on one hand, and the tribal assemblies (*jema'as*) on the other. The Berber *jema'a* existed prior to the French Protectorate. The assembly of each tribe elected an *amghar* as its executive agent responsible for ensuring the group's decision was carried out. As a proto-democratic institution, the *jema'a* have been compared to a Western parish council.<sup>118</sup> As for the the great tribal chiefs, the influential French scholar Robert Montagne interpreted their rise with an analogy to classical Greek politics:

Montagne prefers to compare the great chiefs, such as those who dominated much of the western High Atlas during the early part of this century, to the tyrants of ancient Greek cities, tyrants in the original sense of usurpers who succeeded in emerging from the complex political struggles of an oligarchic republic and who precariously and brutally hung on to their power—though not for very long.<sup>119</sup>

Tribalism in Morocco is not *a priori* associated with absolutism. Scholars can hardly underline the inherent authoritarianism of tribal political culture in a region where, in 1922, 'Abd al-Krim created the "République confédérée des

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<sup>117</sup> See Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 186; Elbaki Hermassi, *Leadership and National Development in North Africa: A Comparative Study*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972, p. 16.

<sup>118</sup> Robin Bidwell, *Morocco Under Colonial Rule: French Administration of Tribal Areas, 1912-1956*, London, Frank Cass, 1973, p. 283-284.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Montagne, quoted and translated from the French by Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 188. Montagne believed that the *jema'a* represented the genuine "culture" of the *bled al-siba*.

tribus du Rif.” The Arab tribes of Saudi Arabia had a proto-democratic dimension, too, although it may not have been as important as in the Berber areas of Morocco.<sup>120</sup> Yet, this dimension is overshadowed by many. In any case, it seems inappropriate to contend that tribal societies fostered an authoritarian political culture and favored the emergence of monarchies. The theories of tribal political culture are too general and lack nuance. After all, Maghribi tribes were not exact replicates of the Arabian tribes.

However, it is true that some tribal structures of Arabia can shed light on the emergence of the monarchy. The tradition of the Arabian chieftaincy in which a shaykh and his family share the power (like the Al Rashid of Ha’il) as well as the Saudi tradition of leadership (as exemplified in the first and second Saudi states) both constitute structural elements that may favor a monarchical regime if the chieftaincy evolves into a state.<sup>121</sup> Yet, the transition from Saudi chieftaincy to monarchy was far from being smooth. The 1932 kingdom of Saudi Arabia was by no means a direct extension of the chieftaincy: Ibn Sa‘ud altered too many tribal customs in order to ensure his position. His rise to power can be better explained in structural terms rather than through political culture. Even Najdi beliefs, values, and orientation toward political action were not accustomed to the extent of power Ibn Sa‘ud monopolized in the 1920s. The king was by far more powerful than the previous *primus inter pares*.

What must we understand, then, when Joseph Kostiner talks about tribal values? The term is repeated in the majority of his publications. In some instances, it refers to political decentralization and kin-related political behavior.<sup>122</sup> In another article, it means narrow primordial ambitions and lack of state interest.<sup>123</sup> Even in this case, “tribal values” are not authoritarian or monarchical. They simply refer to the absence of an abstract conception of political community—like nationalism for instance. This definition, in turn, can help clarify the emergence of

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<sup>120</sup> One could also argue that the Republic of the Rif was only possible because of ‘Abd al-Krim’s Spanish political culture. Nevertheless, the republican idea did not seem too foreign to the tribes and was readily accepted.

<sup>121</sup> Phillip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, “Introduction: Tribes and the Complexities of State Formation in the Middle East” in Phillip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>122</sup> Kostiner, “Transforming Dualities,” p. 237.

<sup>123</sup> Joseph Kostiner, “The Hashemite ‘Tribal Confederacy’ of the Arab Revolt, 1916-1917” in Edward Ingram (ed.), *National and International Politics in the Middle East: Essays in Honour of Elie Kedourie*, London, Frank Cass, 1986, p. 139; Kostiner, *The Making*, p. 6.

the monarchy in Arabia. Maybe, after all, monarchy was the only type of regime available in a region that had no broad connection to the ideas of nationalism, popular sovereignty, or republicanism that were all born in eighteenth-century Western Europe. However, the absence of such political ideas was not due to the despotic nature of a tribal political culture. Although relevant, the lack of national and liberal ideas has more to do with intellectual history than with a behavioral and psychological approach. There is no need to resort to political culture in order to demonstrate the scarcity of abstract political theories in early twentieth-century Arabia.

## V- Conclusion

The political culture approach is an elusive one. From a historical point of view, it is not an easy concept to analyse. Although the influence of a political culture might be a significant factor in the emergence of the kingdoms of Morocco and Saudi Arabia, social scientists—including political historians—do not know exactly how or to what extent. Only assumptions can be made. This chapter suggests that the tribal, segmentary, and patriarchal political cultures are not able to explain the historical processes that led to the creation of the two modern Arab monarchies of Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Due to inherent methodological problems, there are only a few ways by which a political historian can demonstrate the inadequacy of the political culture approach. The first one is to propose alternative and more substantial ways of explaining historical processes. The second one is to underline the conceptual weaknesses of the political cultures.

In the case of Morocco, the political historian must take into account the reordering of power from 1956 onwards. A state of *hizbiyya* allowed the king to secure his office and to ensure the strength of the monarchy. Thus, there is no reason to believe that the emergence of the monarchy resulted from a widespread patriarchal political culture which constrained both the ruler and the population to think in terms of blind obedience and absolute authority. There is no reason either to believe in the relevance of a segmentary political culture—a political atavism that pushed the Moroccan elite to behave defensively. The Moroccan context suggests that paradigms should not precede historical analysis.

Similarly, the Saudi kingdom may not be the direct result of a tribal political culture. This chapter suggests that there is no political finality in tribalism. The latter concept is very flexible and on the political level, tribal societies oscillate between a tradition of consultation (*shura*) and a tradition of personal power (embodied in the shaykh). In sum, the various concepts of tribal political culture are based upon premises that are doubtful. They stem from a selective comprehension of tribal societies. Therefore, a tribal orientation toward political action may not necessarily be absolutist. Furthermore, the Saudi case shows that tribalism was a framework for political development. Ibn Sa'ud's own ambition as the Saudi heir may also explain why authoritarianism prevailed and a kingdom was created. Thus, it may be more useful to talk about tribal politics rather than political tribalism. While the first term refers to a practice, the second one refers to an ethos. Precisely, there is no evidence that tribalism, as imprecise as the term is, fosters a specifically authoritarian ethos or political culture.

Formulations of political culture inspired by social anthropology are different from the Islamic political cultures in that they have a strong structural dimension. This peculiarity leads to typological confusion. As Sarah Yizraeli's definition showed, political culture is sometimes interpreted as a set of political norms and structures. From that perspective, political culture is no longer elusive. Indeed, an ambitious ruler can build on some existing tribal structure in order to create a monarchy.<sup>124</sup> However, a set of structures and norms is not synonymous with Gabriel Almond's definition of political culture. The latter refers to an internalized set of values and predispositions toward politics. While it is easy to demonstrate that a tribal *primus inter pares* can turn into a chieftain and then into a king, it is harder to demonstrate that this process is a result of a political "mentality."

One might argue that processes of state formation cannot overshadow political culture. In the wake of Abdellah Hammoudi, some scholars may wonder why the people of Morocco and Saudi Arabia subscribed to the authoritarianism of the new regimes. Here again, the historian faces a methodological hurdle insofar as he or she must rely on sources. While the processes of state formation are

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<sup>124</sup> It has been argued by many that tribal states do not exist. In turn, a state can contain tribal societies. Therefore tribes and state can coexist, but it is incorrect to claim that Saudi Arabia is a bedouin state. See Khoury and Kostiner, *loc. cit.*, p. 18.

documented, the consciousness of a population remains largely unattainable. It is one thing to embark upon the study of mind, consciousness, and political culture. It is another to use these constructs as sources for historical analyses. Therefore, the debate is not whether political culture exists or not, or whether political culture can have an influence on the historical process. The problem is: how can we agree on the substance of a political culture, how can we assess the number of people sharing it, and how can we demonstrate its impact on the historical process? In the case of the Moroccan and Saudi monarchies, these questions cannot as yet be answered with conviction. Political culture might be a legitimate field of study for historians, but the actual formulations of Islamic, tribal, segmentary, and patriarchal political culture are unsatisfactory. Thus, other types of historical explanations should prevail.

### III

## Beyond Political Culture: Political Utility and International Factors

*“Le monisme de la cause ne serait pour l’explication historique qu’un embarras.”*

— Marc Bloch<sup>1</sup>

*“In studying politics, we need to know about institutional structures, sources of government revenue, population growth rates, class relations, regime constituencies, government policy biases, and a host of other things before we can assess the appropriate context and real significance of political attitudes.”*

— Lisa Anderson<sup>2</sup>

The preceding chapters have underlined the difficulties of dealing empirically with the concept of political culture. This is as true for history as it is for political science, although the two disciplines have different methodologies and objects of study. To be sure, Lisa Anderson speaks from a political scientist’s point of view when she enumerates the variables that she believes need to be addressed before political culture.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, her core argument is also valid for a political historian. Without arguing that political attitudes play no role in Arab politics, the historian who studies the emergence of states and regimes must first analyse the variables that are empirically assessable.

So far, this thesis has suggested that the triumph of the monarchy in Morocco and Saudi Arabia is better understood through the vagaries of political history rather than through any formulation of political culture. This chapter will survey some additional elements of historical causality that are unrelated to the Arab political culture approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l’histoire ou métier d’historien*, 6th edition, Paris, Armand Colin, 1967, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Democracy in the Arab World: A Critique of the Political Culture Approach” in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (eds.), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, Vol I: *Theoretical Perspectives*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> In a similar fashion, Halim Barakat stated that our academic point of departure should be society in history—not psychological interpretations. See Halim Barakat, “Beyond the Always and the Never: A Critique of Social Psychological Interpretations of Arab Society and Culture” in Hisham Sharabi (ed.), *Theory, Politics and the Arab World: Critical Responses*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 133.

The title of this chapter directly refers to another article of Lisa Anderson. In a short 1991 essay about the prominence of absolutism in the Arab world, Anderson denies that the phenomenon is the attribute of a regional political culture. Although her article has more to do with the resilience of monarchy, she proposes two general explanations for the emergence of the modern Arab kingdoms. On the one hand, she argues that these regimes were initially instruments of European imperial policy—especially British policy. On the other hand, she contends that the kingdoms were the result of the political utility of absolutism in meeting the demands of post-Ottoman state formation.<sup>4</sup>

However, Anderson's analysis is not exhaustive enough to address the peculiarities of the Saudi and Moroccan historical contexts. The two countries are mentioned *au passage*, but do not properly suit the article's argument. By underscoring the influence of imperial policies, Anderson seems to refer to the kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq, which were both creations of the 1920s British Empire. Yet neither the Moroccan nor the Saudi Arabian kingdoms were established by a foreign power. Moreover, Najd and Hijaz were the only Arab regions to escape a period of European rule. Anderson's statement about post-Ottoman state formation is also arguable, especially when the reader has the Moroccan and Saudi kingdoms in mind. Both countries had never been part of the Ottoman Empire, except for the superficial control of the coastal regions of Arabia (Hijaz and al-Hasa). Therefore, Anderson's argument is not valid for the whole Arab world: when it comes to Morocco and Saudi Arabia, there is no relevance in presenting state formation as a necessity brought about by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>5</sup>

This is not to say that the imperatives of state formation were not significant. State-building was certainly the greatest challenge of early twentieth-century Arabia. In modern Morocco, however, such a factor was not as significant. Even though its borders have changed over the years and are still disputed today, Morocco has long been a distinct political entity. After several confrontations

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<sup>4</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly*, 106 (1991), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is not possible either to argue that Morocco and Saudi Arabia shared the tradition of strong and centralized state embedded in an "Ottoman political culture," as Ergun Özbudun put it. See Ergun Özbudun, "The Continuing Ottoman Legacy and the State Tradition in the Middle East" in L. Carl Brown (ed.), *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 133. This volume contains a series of stimulating articles on the Ottoman political legacy. Also relevant is Carter Vaughn Findley, "The Ottoman Administrative Legacy and the Modern Middle East," p. 158-173.

with the Ottomans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Moroccan *makhzen* resigned itself to a boundary west of the city of Tlemcen. An almost similar border was defined in the 1845 convention of Lalla Maghnia following a military defeat at the hands of French Algeria.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, if political utility can explain the emergence of the Moroccan monarchy, it must be linked to reasons of nation-building rather than state-building.

Thus, this chapter will build upon Anderson's explanations for the emergence of the monarchies in the Arab world but will expand on their impact in the somewhat peculiar contexts of Morocco and Saudi Arabia. The first section will address the role of the foreign powers—namely Britain in Saudi Arabia and France in Morocco. Then, a shorter second section will discuss how the idea of political utility sheds light on the creation of the two kingdoms.

## **I- Exogenous factors: support, tutelage, and state exportation**

There exist few similarities between Morocco and Saudi Arabia in terms of their relationships with foreign powers. From the fifteenth century onwards, Morocco faced military interference and economic penetration from several European states. The Portuguese, Spanish, French, and British, among others, quarrelled over the piece of land which linked Europe to Africa.<sup>7</sup> In the end, Morocco was colonized by France, but for a relatively short period of forty-four years. At the other extremity of the Arab world, Arabia's geopolitical position was the opposite. Inhospitable and hardly accessible, the center of the Peninsula had never appealed to the European empires. As a naval power, Britain had no special interest in dealing with the tribal rulers of the hinterland. Historically, only the Ottomans and Muhammad 'Ali's armies had interfered in the affairs of Najd. When the first Saudi state gained momentum, conquered the *haramayn*, and managed to send its armies as far as Karbala and the outskirts of Damascus, the Ottomans requested military support from Egypt.<sup>8</sup> Yet the troops led by Ibrahim

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<sup>6</sup> André Raymond, "The Ottoman Legacy in Arab Political Boundaries" in L. Carl Brown (ed.), *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lugan, *Histoire du Maroc des origines à nos jours*, Paris, Critérium, 1992, p. 131-136, 210-211.

<sup>8</sup> Yves Besson, *Ibn Saud, roi bédouin. La naissance du royaume d'Arabie Saoudite*, Lausanne, Éditions des Trois Continents, 1980, p. 27.



Pasha never proceeded to a systematic “pacification” of Najd. Similarly, the Ottomans never intended to contain the Wahhabis by implementing a direct control of Najd. They rather negotiated partnerships with local rival families, like the Al Rashid, which were meant to ensure a balance of power in the region.

Nevertheless, the emergence of both the Moroccan and Saudi kingdoms was facilitated by exogenous factors, particularly the role of European powers. France and Britain, however, never determined the type of regime. In Saudi Arabia, the rise of Ibn Sa‘ud cannot be fully understood without taking into account British support. In Morocco, as some authors have argued, monarchy and absolutism were two principles respectively revived and created by the French under the protectorate. Therefore, Lisa Anderson is right when she stresses the impact of imperial policies; but these exogenous factors did not affect Morocco and Saudi Arabia in the same manner. They are only similar in that they both allowed the emergence of monarchical regimes.

In 1912, following successful diplomatic negotiations with Germany, France imposed its Protectorate over Morocco. Yet the French suspected that an increasing foreign presence would be opposed by several segments of the Moroccan population. The Act of Algeiras, which was signed in 1906 and placed Morocco under a form of international tutelage with a French prominence, had previously caused discontent among the Moroccan population. Ben Sliman, the *makhzen*’s minister of foreign affairs, had warned the French consul in Fez: “Les désordres iront en augmentant et le Maroc sombrera dans une anarchie qui sera le prélude à la domination étrangère.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the foreign presence and the concomitant economic disruption had triggered waves of discontent and a number of protest movements.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the 1912 Treaty of Fez was greeted with dismay. Interpreted as a “bill of sale,” it generated additional hostility toward the French and disappointment toward sultan Moulay ‘Abd al-Hafiz—the expected sultan of *jihād*—who had pledged to expel the French.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, in order to justify and to facili-

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Jean Brignon, Abdelazize Amine, *et al.*, *Histoire du Maroc*, Paris, Hatier, 1967, p. 330.

<sup>10</sup> Several examples are analysed in Edmund Burke, III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Precolonial Protest and Resistance, 1860-1912*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182. For an account of the popular hostility toward the Treaty of Fez, see F. Weisgerber, *Au seuil du Maroc moderne*, Rabat, La Porte, 1947, p. 272-279.

tate the takeover of Morocco, France pretended to act on behalf of the sultan. The fifth article of the Treaty of Fez stated: "He [*the résident-général*] should have the power to approve and promulgate, in the name of the French Government, all the decrees issued by His Shereefian Majesty."<sup>12</sup> Although Marshall Lyautey might have wished the establishment of a genuine system of collaboration, the indigenous institutions became a screen that masked French rule. The sultan himself was key to this dual state insofar as he provided the legitimacy through which the *résident-général* could operate.

It has been argued that the first result of the Protectorate was to preserve a weak sultanate. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the rapid collapse of the Moroccan economy had pushed a number of European authors to predict the breakdown of the traditional institutions of "the sick man of the Muslim West."<sup>13</sup> To be sure, the power of the early twentieth-century sultans was waning. On top of the military defeats and the extravagant tax demands of the *makhzen*, sultans like Moulay 'Abd al-'Aziz (1894-1908) and Moulay Hafiz (1908-1912) no longer enjoyed the monopoly system similar in kind, for instance, to the one Muhammad 'Ali had imposed on the Egyptian economy.<sup>14</sup> Yet, as one contemporary French diplomat remarked, France needed to preserve the sultanate: "Si le Makhzen disparaissait nous ne le remplacerions que par la force."<sup>15</sup> For reasons of political utility, the French republic ensured the preservation of what Abdellah Ben Mlih called the agonizing sultanate (*l'État sultanien agonisant*).<sup>16</sup>

In an influential book, Mohamed Lahbabi even argued that the notion of absolute monarchy was a creation of the Protectorate.<sup>17</sup> According to his thesis, France wrongly assumed that the Moroccan sultan was an absolute monarch,

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<sup>12</sup> Stéphane Bernard, *The Franco-Moroccan Conflict, 1943-1956*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 655.

<sup>13</sup> See Mohamed Kenkib, "Changing Aspects of State and Society in 19th Century Morocco" in Abdelali Doumou (ed.), *The Moroccan State in Historical Perspective, 1850-1985*, Dakar, Codesria, 1990, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13-14; Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1995, p. 119.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Abdellah Ben Mlih, *Structures politiques du Maroc colonial*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1990, p. 142.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129. The preservation of these institutions for colonial purposes resulted in a *de facto* loss of their power, at least until the degeneration of the Protectorate following World War II. See Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 439; Abdeslam Baita, "'Reversion to Tradition' in State Structures in Colonial Morocco" in Abdelali Doumou (ed.), *The Moroccan State in Historical Perspective, 1850-1985*, Dakar, Codesria, 1990, p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> See Mohamed Lahbabi, *Le gouvernement marocain à l'aube du XXe siècle*, 2nd edition, Casablanca, Les éditions maghrébines, 1975.

fully entitled to delegate his powers. Lahbabi contends that the sultan was neither a legislator nor a constituent, but merely a governor with limited powers whose responsibility was to execute the judgments of the *qadis* and to supervise the conduct of temporal affairs.<sup>18</sup> However, the French misconception constituted the rationale behind the Protectorate. Logically, the sultan may, for instance, “choose to request the French Republic to take over a few of his tasks that he happens to find irksome or beyond his powers, such as, for instance, the running of his country.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the French promoted an absolutist conception of the sultanate. A different interpretation would have amounted to the recognition that the Protectorate had no *raison d’être*.

Not only did the French preserve the office of the sultan and endow it with an absolutist aura, they also provided the Moroccan state with unprecedented capacities. As Roger Le Tourneau put it, the French took over a boneless (*désossé*) country in 1912 and left behind a centralized state forty-four years later.<sup>20</sup> In the nineteenth century, the *makhzen* did not yet control the remote or mountainous regions, such as the Rif and the areas surrounding the High and Middle Atlas. Although the religious legitimacy of the sultan may have been generally accepted, his temporal authority was often disputed in the *bled al-siba*. Even in the *bled al-makhzen*, the sultan regularly travelled in order to demonstrate his capacity. According to Clifford Geertz, mobility was a central element in both the sultan’s power and the concept of royal authority in Morocco.<sup>21</sup> Through several stages, from 1922 to 1934, the French “pacified” all of Morocco and brought the so-called dissident regions under their authority.

For political and economic reasons, colonial France exported its strong state system to Morocco—a state that was characterized by institutional penetration and a monopoly over legitimate violence.<sup>22</sup> At the head of this newly

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30, 39. Abdallah Laroui also accepts the idea that no true absolute monarchy existed in Morocco. See Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghreb: An Interpretive Essay*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 385-386.

<sup>19</sup> Ernest Gellner, “The Struggle for Morocco’s Past” in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Maghreb*, New York, Praeger, 1973, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Roger Le Tourneau, *Histoire du Maroc moderne*, Aix-en-Provence, Publications de l’Université de Provence, 1992, p. 259.

<sup>21</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power” in Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols Clark (eds.), *Culture and its Creators: Essays in Honor of Edward Shils*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1977, p. 163. See also Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1981, p. 296.

<sup>22</sup> Ben Mlih discusses the question of *l’État exporté* in *op. cit.*, p. 159-160.

strengthened Moroccan state was the *résident-général* who acted in the name of the sultan. This office was powerful enough to remain relatively autonomous from the French government. The most significant example is to be found at the time of the sultan's exile. On August 20, 1953, when *résident-général* Augustin Guillaume (1951-1954) took the decision to destitute and expel Mohamed V, he did not seek the approval of the Quai d'Orsay. Nevertheless, the order was carried out and the sultan was brutally treated and forced on a plane to Corsica. The French ministers in Paris only learned of the news through a dispatch from AFP (*Agence France-Presse*) several hours later. They reluctantly accepted the event as a *fait accompli*.<sup>23</sup>

The power of the Protectorate is a political legacy that France left to independent Morocco. Mohamed V appropriated many of the *résident-général's* capacities. In this sense, the new king bore no resemblance with the old sultan. After 1956, some Moroccan nationalists complained that the fierce system of the colonial era did not disappear with the departure of its creators. Mahdi Ben Barka shrewdly noted: "Il ne s'agit pas de détruire le Protectorat, mais de le dépasser."<sup>24</sup> The absolutist monarchy of the postcolonial era must be recognized as a partial product of France—at least in its practical dimension. Lyautey himself proudly claimed that he succeeded in Morocco because he was a monarchist and that he found himself in a monarchical country.<sup>25</sup>

In Saudi Arabia, the impact of England was less direct. In Najd and Hijaz, the British never created any institution *per se*. Their role in the emergence of the Saudi kingdom has more to do with diplomacy and the game of alliances. One of Ibn Sa'ud's major concerns was to secure an access to economic resources and military assistance. His expansionist scheme could not be carried out without an association with one of the two forces in the region: the weak Ottomans or the *kafir* British.<sup>26</sup> Before 1913, however, religion was not yet the driving force

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<sup>23</sup> Charles-André Julien, *Le Maroc face aux impérialismes, 1415-1956*, Paris, Éditions J.A., 1978, p. 311.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Jean Lacouture, "Mohammed V, un trône et trois républiques" in Jean Lacouture, *Cinq hommes et la France*, Paris, Seuil, 1961, p. 260.

<sup>25</sup> "J'ai réussi au Maroc parce que je suis monarchiste et que je m'y suis trouvé en pays monarchiste." See Julien, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>26</sup> In the early 1900s, an alliance with Germany would have been more difficult to conclude. Britain, however, was dominant in the region through its several consuls in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States. It has been reported that Russia offered assistance to Ibn Sa'ud through one of its consuls in Iran, but that this offer came to nothing. See Gary Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa'ud*, London, Frank Cass, 1976, p. 22.

behind Ibn Sa‘ud’s rise. Furthermore, having spent part of his childhood in exile at the Al Sabah’s court in Kuwait, Ibn Sa‘ud knew about Britain’s financial and technical superiority. He had realized *in situ* the advantages—political and military—that Kuwait gained by being under the protection of the British Empire. Finally, the Ottomans were still considered by Al Sa‘ud as the historical opponents to Saudi and wahhabi expansion.<sup>27</sup>

Between 1902 and 1911, Ibn Sa‘ud made no less than ten overtures to the British, but none of them led to a formal agreement.<sup>28</sup> At first, Ibn Sa‘ud had no tangible gain to offer to the British agents in return for their help. His persistence and continual military successes, however, convinced Britain that there existed excellent reasons for maintaining cordial relationships with him. Nevertheless, Britain was reluctant to support Ibn Sa‘ud. Prior to the First World War, London was careful not to estrange the Ottoman Empire. For diplomatic reasons, Britain preferred to abstain from connections with the affairs of Najd. This situation was particularly uncomfortable for Ibn Sa‘ud whose objective was to secure an Anglo-Saudi alliance. During the first decade following the taking of Riyadh, he halfheartedly negotiated with the Ottomans, trying not to raise their suspicions while continuing to gain regional prominence in order to capture the attention of Britain.<sup>29</sup>

Ibn Sa‘ud’s target was the eastern region of al-Hasa. By reaching the coast of the Persian Gulf, he hoped the British would reconsider their policy toward him. The Ottomans were the nominal rulers of al-Hasa and a few of their garrisons were posted in the area. As Frederick Anscombe noted, the Ottoman influence in the Gulf had already declined by 1908. The distractions caused by the Young Turks’ revolution, the deposition of Abdulhamid II, the war in the Balkans, and the Libyan conflict drew the Ottomans’ attention away from their southeastern territories.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, Ibn Sa‘ud was able to defeat the Ottoman troops in al-

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<sup>27</sup> Christine Moss Helms suggests that Ibn Sa‘ud did not prefer Great Britain to the Sublime Porte, but viewed the former as a more convenient ally. See Christine Moss Helms, *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia: Evolution of Political Identity*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, p. 117.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia: The Formative Years, 1902-1918*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 50-80.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, Ibn Sa‘ud wrote a few times to the sultan in Istanbul and depicted the Saudi achievements as directed against the Al Rashids and not the Ottomans. He claimed he had no intention of revolting against the Porte. *Ibid.*, p. 61, 86.

<sup>30</sup> Frederick F. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 159.

Hasa in 1913. But on the eve of the First World War, Britain was still unsure whether Istanbul would favor the Entente or the Alliance. Consequently, she refused to fully support Ibn Sa'ud. At that point, the latter was forced to open a dialogue with the Ottomans. A treaty was drafted in which Ibn Sa'ud was given partial autonomy under Istanbul's authority. Yet the document also included major restrictions on foreign policy, military power, and financial rights.<sup>31</sup>

Historians disagree whether the treaty was ever ratified.<sup>32</sup> In any case, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 marked a change in Britain's foreign policy. In this new international situation, London was ready to support Saudi expansion. In December 1915, Britain reached an agreement with Ibn Sa'ud known as the Darin Pact. The document ensured Ibn Sa'ud's independence under British protection. Moreover, the principle of hereditary rule was enshrined in the treaty.<sup>33</sup> In the summer of 1915, Ibn Sa'ud received a first grant of twenty thousand pounds, a thousand rifles, and obtained the authorization to purchase ammunitions through the Bahreini market.<sup>34</sup> In return, he managed to keep his part of the bargain to a minimum without alienating the British. He verbally supported the Arab Revolt, but refused to join it alleging that *sharif* Husayn's autoproclamation as king of the Arabs was unacceptable. He also avoided large-scale military operations beyond Najd which might have endangered his flanks.<sup>35</sup>

Eager to deny any other European power the opportunity of gaining a predominant position in the Arabian Peninsula, Britain continued to subsidize many tribal shaykhs after the war—including Ibn Sa'ud and *sharif* Husayn.<sup>36</sup> The amount of money granted to the former increased as he showed more ability than the *sharif* to secure his position. These subsidies were a key factor in the rise and survival of the two figures. Husayn, for instance, was only capable of ensuring the cohesion of his regime by spoiling the tribes of the Hijaz-Najd border with British money.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Ibn Sa'ud needed the subsidies in order to facilitate his

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<sup>31</sup> Troeller, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> In opposition to Christine Moss Helms, Gary Troeller claims that the Sa'udi-Ottoman treaty was ratified in May 1914. Compare Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 117 and Troeller, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>33</sup> Troeller, *op. cit.*, p. 86; Besson, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> Besson, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>35</sup> For a full description, see Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 149-162.

<sup>36</sup> Troeller, *op. cit.*, p. 160-161.

<sup>37</sup> Haifa Alangari, *The Struggle for Power in Arabia: Ibn Saud, Hussein and Great Britain, 1914-1924*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 1998, p. 120-121.

expansion beyond Najd and to rival the *sharif* and the Al Rashid. Until the mid-1920s, Ibn Sa'ud had no other substantial source of revenue. Thus, a significant part of his political leverage and military capability was obtained through British support.

To be sure, tactical, administrative, and personal factors such as the political ability of Ibn Sa'ud contributed to the establishment of a Saudi hegemony instead of a Hashimite one.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, British subsidies cannot account for the monarchical nature of the Saudi regime. Nevertheless, Britain allowed Ibn Sa'ud to ensure some of the tribes' loyalty and to obtain military equipment. After the First World War, the development of the Saudi polity was strongly influenced by the flow of British support. In 1919, for instance, Ibn Sa'ud refrained from taking over Mecca because the British government threatened to stop his funding.<sup>39</sup> He waited until 1924 to capture the *haramayn*. The Hijaz campaign only took place after financial restrictions forced Britain to terminate its policy of subsidization. Because *sharif* Husayn—unlike Ibn Sa'ud—had not been successful in developing alternative means of tribal control, the sudden end of British support on March 31, 1924, resulted in an immediate weakening of his political power. Inter-tribal raiding increased and several tribes defected to other political authorities, including the Al Sa'ud.<sup>40</sup> No longer subject to any restrictions on the part of Britain, Ibn Sa'ud proceeded to invade Hijaz. The imposition of his personal rule over much of the Arabian peninsula had been made possible because Britain had provided him with the means to achieve it.

## II- Political utility: the convenience of *al-malik*

According to political typologies, authoritarianism and monarchism are two regimes characterized by a concentration of power. The peculiarity of monarchism is that it only refers to the power of a single individual, whereas authoritarianism may refer to the rule of an oligarchy. From a strictly etymological perspective, a

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<sup>38</sup> From the mid-1920s onwards, Britain realized that Ibn Sa'ud was its natural successor in the Gulf region. Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "King Abd al-Aziz's Changing Relationship with the Gulf States During the 1930s" in Tim Niblock (ed.), *State, Society and Economy in Saudi Arabia*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> At that time, Britain still wished to protect the *sharif* and to avoid a confrontation between the Saudis and the Hashimites. See Besson, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

monarch is not necessarily a king. The term could designate any individual ruler from a medieval sultan to a modern socialist dictator. For instance, Lisa Anderson has noted that most presidential regimes of the Arab world are monarchical in nature.<sup>41</sup> She suggests that most Arab kingdoms are not fundamentally different from their republican counterparts and, therefore, are not endowed with greater legitimacy or historical roots. If individual rule is indeed the true common denominator of most Arab states, is there any relevance in studying the kingdoms as a unique category, separate from what Anderson calls the “presidential monarchies”?

Although typologies may establish differences based upon nominal rather than substantial aspects, it appears necessary to discuss kingship as a distinct type of regime—if only to challenge the negative assumptions about Arab monarchies. Indeed, these monarchies are frequently treated as a singular phenomenon by some scholars. The latter do not merely present Arab kings as powerful rulers, but as a type of ruler indicating that Arab society has not yet reached a stage of full political modernity. Kings, in opposition to presidential monarchs, are associated with archaic governance.<sup>42</sup> Hence the particular emphasis on monarchism that can be found in some studies on Arab political culture.<sup>43</sup>

When Lisa Anderson raised the argument of political utility in her article on absolutism, she did not imply that archaic regimes were politically useful. Her point was rather that concentration of power—and not the lack of political modernity—facilitated the process of state-building in several Arab countries.<sup>44</sup> To be sure, the monarchical regimes in Morocco and Saudi Arabia had a political utility, although not necessarily in the way Anderson outlined in her article. In Morocco, the nature of the regime was useless in terms of state-building. As described in the first chapter, the sultanate was useful in that it was the symbolic focal point which served to unite not only all factions of nationalists, but also the Moroccan nation in general. The notion of political utility could also describe

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<sup>41</sup> Anderson, “Absolutism,” p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance Manfred W. Wenner, “Saudi Arabia: Survival of Traditional Elites” in Frank Tachau (ed.), *Political Elites and Political Development in the Middle East*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1975, p. 167, 180-181.

<sup>43</sup> The political culture approach often takes for granted that monarchy is a sign of cultural retardation. The most obvious and recent example is Mohamed Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*, Paris, Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1999, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup> Anderson, “Absolutism,” p. 3.



France's use of the indigenous institutions as a cover for colonialism. In Saudi Arabia, the concentration of power in the hands of Ibn Sa'ud was an equally important factor. In this case, however, Anderson's thesis is accurate: individual rule facilitated and accelerated the creation *ex nihilo* of the Saudi state. Until the late 1920s, 'Abd al-Aziz's power allowed him to pursue his expansionist and dynastic schemes without having to deal with serious impediments or political opposition from within.

Nevertheless, Anderson's article is unclear as to how monarchism, in the usual sense of kingship, is supposed to have been more politically useful than any other type of individual rule. Here, the nominal dimension of monarchism becomes a relevant aspect that must be justified. Since Anderson argues that the concentration of power was the key element, what are the reasons Morocco and Saudi Arabia turned into kingdoms and not, say, presidential monarchies? Regarding this question, I believe significant insights can be provided by means of the same notion of political utility. To some extent, both Ibn Sa'ud and Mohamed V opted for the title of king (*malik*) for instrumental reasons that are linked to international factors.

In Saudi Arabia, Ibn Sa'ud first chose to call himself king in 1926 after having previously borne the titles of imam and sultan.<sup>45</sup> Mohamed V, for his part, made official the passage from sultan to *malik* in 1957. Yet the latter title was used by the nationalists from 1934 onwards. Already at that time, Mohamed V was presented as a *de facto* king. The idea of modern kingship did not originate from him.<sup>46</sup> In both Morocco and Saudi Arabia, though, the term *malik* had no strong resonance in terms of local customs. It was nevertheless favored because it was intended to have a particular impact in the foreign diplomatic *milieux*. As Roger Owen suggested, the title was probably not intended to impress the people as much as Britain or France.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibn Sa'ud named himself king of the Hijaz in 1926, ten years after *sharif* Husayn first used the title. See Leslie McLoughlin, *Ibn Saud: Founder of a Kingdom*, London, MacMillan, 1993, p. 198-199.

<sup>46</sup> For an example of how the idea of monarchy was recuperated by Mohamed V, see his speech "The First Anniversary of the King's Return to Morocco" in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Maghreb*, New York, Praeger, 1973, p. 116.

<sup>47</sup> Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 57.

For instance, Ibn Sa‘ud gradually deemphasized his more religious titles as he became able to rule new territories. The transition occurred in part because of his strategy of legitimization towards Britain. In order to claim territories ruled by *sharif* Husayn, Ibn Sa‘ud repeatedly underlined his family’s historical rights and claimed as legitimate his reconquest of the lands of the first Saudi state.<sup>48</sup> But since his opponent was a Hashimite, Ibn Sa‘ud rarely formulated this claim in religious terms. Furthermore, Ibn Sa‘ud’s Islamic prestige on the international level has never been a significant advantage. As far as Britain was concerned, *sharif* Husayn outranked Ibn Sa‘ud on this issue. Having the intention of securing international recognition, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz thus decided to emphasize secular motives such as familial rights. Therefore, *malik* became more convenient than his previous titles. On one hand, it was not religious *per se*. On the other hand, according to historian Christine Helms, Ibn Sa‘ud probably believed that such a title as king would increase his credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of British agents.<sup>49</sup>

Whereas a constitutional monarchy like Britain may have viewed the Saudi kingship with a favorable eye, the term king did not take on the same positive meaning in the minds of many politicians and diplomats of the Third Republic. In opposition to Britain, France remained faithful to the principles of the French Revolution and never endeavored to create monarchies in the Arab world. Therefore, the idea of a Moroccan kingship was somewhat audacious. This was precisely the impression the nationalists tried to convey to the French authorities. By referring to Mohamed V as king in 1934, the nationalists made a statement and took an oppositional step towards France and its Protectorate. Indeed, the French considered the use of *malik* to be evidence of an illegal nationalist agitation.<sup>50</sup>

In any case, the assumption that kingship stems from a pre-modern political culture is misleading. The idea does not correspond to the political actors’ *dé-marche*. On the contrary, in Morocco and Saudi Arabia alike, the title of king was chosen with the intention of showing a higher stage of political modernity.<sup>51</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup> Besson, *op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>49</sup> Helms also suggests that Ibn Sa‘ud deemphasized his more religious titles after 1924 in order to reassure foreign Muslim leaders and organizations that his takeover of the Hijaz would not result in a “Wahhabization” of the holy sites. See Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 109-110.

<sup>50</sup> Dale F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 148.

<sup>51</sup> John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite: A Study of Segmented Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 53; Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

decision was a deliberate step that aimed at entering a more European set of political norms. Yet the options were limited. Kingship was one of the few secular and allegedly more modern terms by which the individual rule of Ibn Sa‘ud and Mohamed V could be defined. Both Ibn Sa‘ud and the Moroccan nationalists preferred “king” to “sultan” insofar as they believed the former title would provide an additional amount of credibility—even minimal—to the ruling institution.

### **III- Conclusion**

Like the political scientists, the political historians may privilege objects of study that are more easily accessible and assessable than the concept of political culture. In 1991, Lisa Anderson made some general observations about the role of international factors and the notion of political utility in relation to the creation of Arab kingdoms. In regard to the emergence of the monarchical regimes in modern Morocco and Saudi Arabia, these factors are relevant but must be nuanced and adapted to regional contexts. On one hand, France and Britain set the scene for the emergence of the monarchies in these countries. The French Protectorate preserved the monarchical institutions of Morocco while endowing the state apparatus with unprecedented powers. Britain, for her part, gave Ibn Sa‘ud the capacity to impose his individual rule in Arabia through subsidies and military assistance. On the other hand, although kingship may seem anachronistic, this type of regime was privileged for reasons of political utility. It aimed at providing the rulers with greater legitimacy and credibility vis-à-vis the foreign powers. Kingship was not an evidence of cultural retardation or a general propensity toward authoritarian regimes.

This is not to say that cultural factors are irrelevant or that they do not play a role. All the same, as the first two chapters have noted, the available formulations of political culture are not fully convincing. Their premises and conclusions remain highly speculative and sometimes doubtful—more so than the usual empirical analyses. From a historical point of view, the political culture approach is obviously heterodox. I believe it could remain a valid option insofar as it endeavors to explore new grounds and to bring scholarly research to another level. But in terms of praxis, the political culture approach is not yet an accurate analytical device for the historical study of monarchical regimes in the Arab world. Non-cul-

tural explanations still offer a greater potential for understanding. The international factors and political utility are only two examples. Other variables could be studied. For instance, Joseph Kostiner argues that the political changes which occurred during Ibn Sa'ud's reign in Arabia can be partly attributed to economic considerations. According to the author, the need for a new, postwar order to decide control over trade routes and centers motivated the tribal shaykhs to strengthen their chieftaincies.<sup>52</sup> In future studies, such an argument could be developed more extensively and, perhaps, be tested in a Moroccan context.

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<sup>52</sup> See Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 6, 10, 14-15.

## Conclusion

Comparing the modern kingdoms of Morocco and Saudi Arabia challenges the notion that Arab monarchy is a singular phenomenon—an argument often implied in the political culture approach. This thesis demonstrates how the creation of the two polities, each located at the extremities of the Arab world, resulted from circumstantial factors whose origins are found in regional political contexts, rather than in a common cultural framework. In addition, the major formulations of political culture and subculture reviewed in this study, whether Islamic, tribal, segmentary, or patriarchal, prove to be inadequate tools for analysing the emergence of the regimes in Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

Among other reasons, the concept of political culture has a tendency to provide ahistorical explanations. As the first chapter underlines, the diversity in Islamic experiences and beliefs makes it difficult to sustain the idea that a unique Islamic behavior or system of thought fuelled the emergence of monarchical regimes in Morocco and Saudi Arabia. In both regions religion played a role in the political process, but mostly as a political tool manipulated by the elite. Tribal, segmentary, and patriarchal political cultures, for their part, are at best disputable factors. They are based upon selective premises and lead to extrapolations rather than solid conclusions. While tribal norms served as a framework for political development in Arabia, tribalism in general is too multifaced to be teleological and is not necessarily as authoritarian as the formulations of tribal political culture suggest. As for Morocco, the link between familial patriarchy and political patriarchy remains unfounded. The rise of Mohamed V can be better understood through the post-Protectorate divisions of Moroccan politics and society. In sum, non-cultural explanations shed more light on the emergence of the Saudi and Moroccan monarchies. Chapter three, for instance, discusses the role of Britain and France in making the formation of powerful regimes in each region possible. Also, for reasons pertaining to the political context of both Morocco and Arabia, kingship rule was more expedient. While Ibn Sa‘ud believed the title *malik* would provide him with greater international credibility, the Moroccan elite thought that turning the sultan into a king would create an image of political modernity and shake the French Protectorate.

Given the shortcomings of the political culture approach and the existence of alternative, more convincing frameworks of interpretation, I believe that cultural elements should come secondary to regional and sociopolitical factors when explaining the process of state formation in the Arab world. This is not to say that the idea of political culture is an irrelevant theme of research that should be dismissed altogether. Nor is the thesis' objective to revise and refine the very concept of Arab political culture. My *problématique* is simply that of a political historian trying to make sense of political culture. Though I contend that political culture as an analytical tool hardly improves our understanding of the history of monarchical regimes in Morocco and Saudi Arabia, such a conclusion is by no means tantamount to a refutation of the concept of culture in its ontological dimension. Culture, and more specifically political culture, may likely shape the historical process of human societies. However, scholars do not precisely know how or to what extent. As the second chapter illustrates, the confusion among those who use the term "political culture" to name different realities should not be interpreted as proof of the concept's expedience. Political culture seems clear and indisputable when understood as a set of political norms, but rather hazy and difficult to grasp when corresponding to the original, mostly psychological definition of Gabriel Almond. This definition—the genuine and truly challenging one—is also the most hazardous. Already disputed in the field of political science, it is not systematically capable of serving historians well. The concept raises several uncertainties and has so far been used in dubious ways.

Nonetheless, one could argue that political culture has already been sanctioned and even promoted by fellow historians. Indeed, for a scholar familiar with the Annales movement, the political culture approach is not entirely alien. In many ways, it is similar to *l'histoire des mentalités*, which was the pinnacle of the Annales' new historiography. Like the proponents of political culture, the historians of mentalities investigated the profound and persistent sets of values internalized in the psyche of collectivities.<sup>1</sup> Mentalities are as appealing as political culture since they, too, constitute an alternative field of research expected to counterbalance quantitative approaches and lead to new perspectives. As an advocate of the Annales, Jacques Le Goff claimed: "Il fallait trouver à

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Le Goff, "Les mentalités. Une histoire ambiguë" in Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (eds.), *Faire de l'histoire*, vol. 3: *Nouveaux objets*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974, p. 82.

l'histoire un ailleurs. Cette autre chose, cet ailleurs, ce furent les mentalités.”<sup>2</sup> The history of mentalities, however, displays the same shortcomings that undermine the political culture approach. Mentalities are nebulous, very difficult to identify, and methodologically disconcerting. For a historian studying them, everything becomes a source: from rites, coins, and phrasings, to preambles of documents, literature, and art.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, like political culture, this historiographical genre suffers from being simultaneously enticing and elusive.

According to Jacques Le Goff, the history of mentalities produced some of the most refreshing historical studies since the mid-twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> In many instances, the *Annales*' openness to new methods has been praised. How can the success of the highly-regarded history of mentalities, then, not be a warrant for the relevance of political culture? As a product of the *Annales*, it must be noted that the history of mentalities differs greatly from the political culture approach since it has rarely been associated with political *problématiques*. The history of “political mentalities” has never been encouraged by the first three generations of the *Annales*.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the popularity of a non-political history of mentalities does not *ipso facto* permit and legitimize a historical use of the political culture approach. Attempting to define one or many political cultures in the Arab world is certainly a hard task. Defining political cultures from the past is even more challenging. Though such an endeavor might not be impossible or futile, historians must acknowledge that they are still at the stage of defining political cultures rather than using them to understand the origins of authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. Precisely, the second major difference between the history of mentalities and the political culture approach is that the historians of the *Annales* never went to the extent of using the mentalities as an analytical device. They were only concerned with identifying the deeply-ingrained values and feelings.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79-80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Le Goff, “L'histoire nouvelle” in Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, and Jacques Revel (eds.), *La nouvelle histoire*, Paris, CEPL, 1978, p. 210-241.

<sup>5</sup> In 1974, Jacques Julliard called for a combination of the history of mentalities and political history as a way of rehabilitating the latter which had been belittled by the *Annales* movement. See Jacques Julliard, “La politique” in Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (eds.), *Faire de l'histoire*, vol. 2: *Nouvelles approches*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974, p. 232. In 1994, the title of the journal *Annales: économie, société, civilisation* changed for *Annales: histoire, sciences sociales* since the former still reflected the movement's bias against political history. See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Hanover, Wesleyan University Press, 1997, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Michel Vovelle, *Mourir autrefois: attitudes collectives devant la mort XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Paris, Gallimard-Julliard, 1974.

Intentional or not, their approach was careful: so far, psychological elements have proved to be more valuable as objects of historical study than as analytical tools.

There may be cases where valid formulations of political culture exist and where the approach is truly insightful. There are too many “histories” to make a peremptory statement or to develop a general theory on the use of political culture. However, when it comes to a macroscopic issue of political history such as the emergence of Arab monarchies, the political culture approach seems inappropriate. On one hand, political culture was first and foremost designed to explain the survival or failure of political systems; it turns even more evasive when explaining the passage from one type of state to another.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, part of the problem may be caused by a wrong assumption about the Arab world as a cultural area. A mere comparison between the Maghrib and the Mashriq shows several regional peculiarities. If formulations of local subcultures are not even convincing, the quest for an Arab culture may be desultory.<sup>8</sup>

In 1995, when Michael Hudson called for the “careful” return of political culture, he provided a few epistemological advice such as avoiding essentialism, looking at both elite and masse cultures, and being methodologically multifaced.<sup>9</sup> As historians, we need to be even more cautious. Since our concerns are different from those of political scientists, we must customize Hudson’s list of recommendations. Having to recollect the past and explain how societies changed, we should remain rigorous in our approach. There could be ways of using political culture other than the one proposed in this thesis, but a professional and methodological way of interpreting history remains crucial. Historians should keep in mind the importance of other historical sources and causal explanations in order to avoid using political culture as an unfortunate shortcut. The temptation of ahistorical methodology, found in some studies of political science, should also be avoided.

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<sup>7</sup> Sydney Verba, “Comparative Political Culture” in Lucian W. Pye and Sydney Verba (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 513-514, 544.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Burke suggests that, even if commonalities can exist, four subdivisions of the Arab world should be distinguished: the Maghrib, Egypt, the Arabian peninsula, and the Mashriq. See Edmund Burke, III, “Theorizing the Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghrib,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 20, 2 (Spring 1998), p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Michael C. Hudson, “The Political Culture Approach to Arab Democratization: The Case for Bringing It Back In, Carefully” in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (eds.), *Political Liberalization in the Arab World*, vol. 1: *Theoretical Perspectives*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 73.



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