PREFACE

This is an historical study of the Ikhwan movement which arose in Najd around 1910, reached its peak in the 1920’s, and declined in the early 1930’s, a movement which molded members of various nomadic tribes, ignorant of the fundamentals of Islam, and unaccustomed to the control of central authority, into a fanatically religious, para-military force that played a decisive role in the creation of the present kingdom-state known as Sa‘udi Arabia, and left an indelible mark on the character of that nation. Simply stated, this study is directed to the questions: Who are the Ikhwan? How did they come into existence? Why? What role did they play in the political unification of the greater part of the Arabian peninsula under the suzerainty of ’Abd-al-‘Aziz ibn ’Abd-al-Rahman Al Sa‘ud (Ibn Sa‘ud), the founder of modern Sa‘udi Arabia.

The religious and social implications of the Ikhwan movement, the economic-social disruptions which may have resulted from the settlement of these bedouin on the land, the challenges to the orthodoxy of their religious beliefs and practices, are all problems which are peripheral to this study, and therefore considered only within the context of the movement’s origin and development as a military-political instrument of Ibn Sa‘ud. Similarly, while a complete study can be dedicated to the many battles which the Ikhwan fought for and against Ibn Sa‘ud, only two battles, those at Turaba and Sabila, will be considered in this work because of their particular relevance to the rise and fall of the movement.

Residence in Sa‘udi Arabia afforded me the unique opportunity to study the Ikhwan in their native land, more particularly Najd. This included visits to the two original Ikhwan settlements of Al-Artawiyah and to Al-Ghat Ghat, and other settlements such as Al-Hayathim. During my stay in Arabia, I had the good fortune to meet with several Ikhwan and Wahhabi leaders who personally participated in the Ikhwan drama, namely Muhammad ibn ’Abd-al-‘Aziz al-Sahabi, former governor of Ta‘if after its fall to the Ikhwan, and a direct descendant of the reformer, Muhammad ibn ’Abd-al-Wahhab, and with Majid ibn Khathila, present governor of Al-Ghat Ghat, the hijrah of the ’Utaybah, and formerly the senior lieutenant for his relative, Sultan ibn Bijad, the prominent Ikhwan leader and rebel. Other Ikhwan personalities included ’Abd-al-Rahman al-Dawish, former governor of Al-Artawiyah,
the *hijrah* of the Mutayr tribe. His mother, Walha, was the sister of the indomitable Ikhwan leader Faysal al-Dawish, and it was she who pleaded with Ibn Sa'ud for her brother’s life; and Sultan ibn 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Dawish, the son of 'Abd-al-Rahman, and present governor of Al-Artawiyah. All of the above took much of their time to answer questions about the Ikhwan, and to escort the writer around Al-Artawiyah and Al-Ghat Ghat. It was in Sultan al-Dawish's *majlis* (sitting room) that this writer had the opportunity to meet rank and file Ikhwan who participated in different battles and who obliged him by bringing out old weapons, rifles, knives, and various types of shoes which the Ikhwan used on their raids. Among these old timers were Mutlaq Abu Ras who gave his age as 83, and Marzuk ibn Miflah who said that he was 70.

H.R.H. 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd-al-Rahman, Ibn Sa'ud's brother, graciously provided me with an interview in his home, during which he provided forthright and unequivocal answers to many sensitive issues surrounding the origin and later demise of the Ikhwan; his son, Prince 'Abd-al-Rahman was also very helpful.

Much of the information contained herein was acquired through research in the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London, during the course of three separate visits to England in the spring and summer of 1968, and the summer of 1969. A short, but interesting interview with Sir John Bagot Glubb in London in the summer of 1968 offered the pleasant experience of meeting and discussing the Ikhwan movement with the man who, more than any other non-Arab, was responsible for the creation of the military-political conditions which resulted in the collapse of the movement. In several personal letters to this writer, he offered significant insights on the attitude and character of the Ikhwan.

In extending thanks to those Sa'udi Arabians who assisted me, special mention is due to Mr. Fu'ad Anqawi of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Information for his direct help in arranging the first indigenous contacts when it appeared that the obstacles to serious historical research in the Kingdom were insurmountable, and to his colleague, Mr. Ghalib Abu Farraj. Through them, I was introduced to 'Abdullah ibn Khamis, the Director of the Water Department. A scholar in his own right, 'Abdullah invited me to his home several times to discuss poetry, Arab History and Islamic civilization. After several visits, he took special interest in the project, and then the doors to research began to open slowly but continuously. 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Khuwaytir, the vice-rector
of Riyadh University, at the time, offered me the use of the library facilities and access to its valuable collection of Umm al-Qura newspapers.

Sheikh Ibrahim al-'Anqari, deputy director of the Ministry of Interior, at the time, arranged for me to visit the hijrah of Al-Ghat Ghat and to be received by the governor, Sheikh Majid ibn Khathila; and also to visit the hijrah of Al-'Artawiyah, where I was received by the governor who escorted me personally to the battlefield at Sabila, where the final drama of the Ikhwan played itself out. Sheikh Ibrahim provided a four wheel drive vehicle, plus provisions, a driver, and an escort to ensure that the trip was comfortable and without complications.

I wish to thank here Mr. William Mulligan of the Arabian Affairs Department of ARAMCO, Miss Annette Matthews, the librarian there, at the time, Mr. Mike Ameen, ARAMCO company representative in Riyadh, while I was there, and Mr. Malcolm Quint, also of ARAMCO. All of them assisted me in acquiring and using the resources of ARAMCO's technical library in Dhahran. Special thanks is also owed to three persons without whose continuous help over the past years, this work could not have been started: William Schorger, and Richard P. Mitchell, my professors at the University of Michigan and my mother for her constant but quiet encouragement. Dr. George Rentz of Stanford University read the manuscript, and I am indebted to him for his comments and valuable suggestions.

Finally, I must mention the late King Faysal, without whose tacit permission this work could not have been carried out in Sau'di Arabia. After completing the manuscript in the United States, I sent the King a bound copy, and he kindly responded with a letter of thanks.

Any shortcomings in this work which may have occurred in spite of the above mentioned assistance are, of course, my own responsibility.

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