

John Philby and his political roles in the Arabian Peninsula, 1917-1953

by

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DEDICATION

To the soul of my father

ABSTRACT

This thesis departs from the traditional historiographical views that portray Philby as having no political influence either while he was serving his country or after his resignation from government service when he was settled in Saudi Arabia. It also departs from picturing him as a man who tended to undermine British policy, arguing that he was loyal to his country, as was plain during his years of service. The thesis examines his background, from his early years to the work he did for his country in India, Iraq and Transjordan and takes an analytical and historical approach. It seeks to present a more comprehensive understanding of Philby's mission to Arabia, its objectives and outcomes, focusing on his political work in Arabia and his efforts to solve problems which otherwise might have threatened British interests. In the second part of his mission to Arabia, three considerable issues are addressed: first, that of the Ajman tribe which revolted against Ibn Sa'ūd and Philby's efforts to resolve their dispute and not let the tribe be diverted from the common cause; second, the blockade, directed successfully by Philby, which greatly influenced the war against the Ottoman empire; and third, the invasion of Ḥail – why Philby regarded this objective as crucial for making peace between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain and saw how far it would contribute to British interests in the region. This thesis deals with Philby's efforts in the conflict between Najd and Hejaz and his actions in the border dispute between Ibn Sa'ūd and his rival, Hussain, and assesses whether Philby played a major part in the collapse of the Hejazi kingdom. It considers Philby's contribution to the American

recognition of Saudi Arabia and the methods that he used to secure it. It examines Philby's method of settling political conditions in Arabia after the Idrisi revolt against Ibn Sa'ud. It asks why Philby visited Yemen and if it would somehow have enhanced Ibn Sa'ud's position. It also focuses on Philby's role in the Buraimi crisis between Britain and Saudi Arabia and illustrates the persuasive arguments by which Philby upheld the Saudi opposition to Britain's demands over Buraimi.

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TRANSLITERATION NOTE

The author has used the modified version of the Library of Congress Arabic transliteration system shown in the two columns of the table below:

Table 1. Transliteration note: consonants

Arabic letters	Romanization	Arabic letters	Romanization
ا	ā	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	‘
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	هـ	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Table 2. Transliteration note: vowels

Long		Short	
ا	ā	َ	a
ي	ī	ِ	i
و	ū	ُ	u

However, in this thesis, the names of prominent individuals and places are spelled as they appear in the English primary sources rather than in the Library of Congress Arabic transliteration system; for instance, Mecca rather than Makkah, Madina rather than Medina, Shaikh rather than Sheikh, and Hussain rather than Hussein.

The 'al' preceding family names, such as al-Sa'ud and al-Rashid, which refers to prominent family and tribal groups, and the names of Arabic books, such as *Tārīkh al-Māmlākah al- arabiahal- Sū'diah* (The History of Saudi Arabia), are written with a small initial. Furthermore, the author has used the name of the founder of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdulrahman, as it commonly appears in English sources, i.e. 'Ibn Saud'. In addition, the Library of Congress Arabic transliteration system is not used for the name 'Ibn Sa'ud' when it is cited. It is written as 'Ibn Saud' when it appears in the titles of books and articles.

Regarding the titles of Arabian sources and references, they are all written in their Arabic source (but in Romanized letters) followed by their English translation between brackets as shown in the example below:

Hafiz Wāhbāh, *Jazīrat al-'Arab fī al-qarnal-'ishriñ* [The Arabian Peninsula in the 20th century] (Cairo: Dar al Afaq Publications, 1956).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Table 3. Abbreviations used in this thesis

Abbreviation	Full Name
CAB	Cabinet Office Records
CO	Colonial Office
DULASC	Durham University Library: Archives and Special Collections
F	File
FO	Foreign Office
GI	The Government of India
HO	Home Office
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IO	India Office
IOR	India Office Records
IPC	Iraq Petroleum Company
L/P&S	Political and Secret Files
MECA	Middle East Centre Archives
No	Number
PRO	Public Record Office
R	Records of the British Residency
Re	Reference
SOCAL	Standard Oil of California
TNA	The National Archives
US	The United States
Vol	Volume
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the thesis

Writing biographies of political officials may be regarded as one of the difficulties that historians face; they require scientific methodology in particular when their outcomes depend on the fulfilment of impartiality and objectivity. Furthermore, in dealing with such biographical history, historians may need to trace all the historical accounts of their subject's life from original sources, starting with their upbringing and going on to their education and career. Such an examination enables historians to figure out what the main factors were that shaped the temperament of political officials and what led to their distinction and special gift. It is plain that some English political figures have played a vital role in political events and have formed British policy in Arabia as well as the Middle East in general; figures such as Sir Percy Cox,¹ Captain William Shakespear²

¹ Sir Percy Zachariah Cox (1864–1937) may be considered one of the great British political leaders who guided British policy in the Persian Gulf. The relationship between him and the Persian Gulf began when he was appointed political agent at Muscat in 1899. The course of his vocation improved rapidly until he became the High Commissioner in Iraq in 1920. He retired from government service in 1923. See his biography in his article, *Some Gulf Memories* (London: [S.I: s.n.], 1928); Philip Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1950); John Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire* (New York: I. B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2010); Robert Charles, 'Major-General Sir Percy Zachariah Cox', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 90, no. 1 (July, 1937), pp. 1-5; R.C.T, 'Sir Percy Cox', *British Institute for the Study of Iraq*, vol.4.no.1 (Spring, 1937), pp.1-2; *The Geographical Journal*; 'Obituary: Sir Percy Zachariah Cox, G. C. M. G, G. C. I. E, K. C. S. I.', vol.89,no.3 (March,1937),pp.295-296.

² William Henry Irvine Shakespear (1878–1915) was a British officer and prominent explorer. He graduated from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst in 1896. After a while, he was appointed to the political department of the GI. Shakespear proved himself proficient in Oriental languages such as Pshto, Urdu, Persian and Arabic. In 1909 he was assigned the post of Political Agent in Kuwait and remained there until 1915 when he was killed in the battle of Jarrab in central Arabia. For further accounts, see Cox to the GI, 16 February 1915, IOR, L/P&S/10/387; H.S.B. John Philby, *Saudi Arabia* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1955), pp.270-272; Douglas Carruthers, ' Captain Shakespear's Last Journey', *The Geographical*

and T.E. Lawrence.³ John Philby was one of them; he made a significant contribution to the implementation of British policy not only during his tours of duty with the British Empire in India but also in Iraq and Transjordan. After his resignation from British service, when he settled in Saudi Arabia. Philby continued to make immense political contributions to Saudi foreign policy and had a fundamental role in strengthening the position of Ibn Sa'ūd, the founder of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it can be said that this thesis mainly deals with Philby's political roles in the Arabian Peninsula and explores the influence of psychological, emotional and family history factors on his personality.

Definition and aim of the topic

This thesis examines Philby's background, from his early years to the work he did for his country in India, Iraq⁴ and Transjordan. It investigates Philby's mission to Arabia, its objectives and outcomes, focusing on his political work in Arabia and his efforts to solve problems which otherwise might have threatened British interests. For instance, during World War One(WWI), British allies in Arabia, such as Hussain in Hejaz and Ibn Sa'ūd in Najd had a serious dispute, which might have had serious consequences for

Journal, vol.59, no. 5 (May, 1922), pp. 321-334; Jacob Goldberg, 'Shakespear and Ibn Saud: A Balanced Reappraisal', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 22, no.1 (Jan. 1986), pp. 74-88.

³ Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935) was one of the most significant intelligence officers in the history of the British Empire. His legend emerged when he led the Arab revolt against the Ottomans in Arabia and this was the reason why he was later called 'Lawrence of Arabia'. For further information see his book, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926); David Garnett (ed.), *The Letters of T.E. Lawrence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938); Richard Aldington, *Lawrence of Arabia: A biographical enquiry* (London: Collins, 1955); Scott Anderson, *Lawrance in Arabia: War, Direct, imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (London: Atlantic Books,2013).

⁴ Until August 1921, Iraq was known as Mesopotamia. See Warren Dockter, *Churchill and the Islamic World: Orientalism, Empire and Diplomacy in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p.164. The author will use the name 'Iraq' throughout the thesis unless it is necessary to use the name 'Mesopotamia'.

Britain in its war with the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Philby was sent out to advocate cooperation to Britain's allies in Arabia against the Ottoman Empire. Three considerable issues are also addressed as part of his mission: first, the issue of the Ajman tribe which revolted against Ibn Sa'ūd and Philby's efforts to resolve the situation and not to let the tribe be diverted from the common cause; second, the blockade, which Philby successfully directed, which greatly influenced the war against the Ottomans; and third, the invasion of Ḥail – why Philby regarded this objective as crucial for setting the pace between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain and how far it would contribute to British interests in the region. This thesis deals with Philby's efforts in the conflict between Najd and Hejaz and his actions in the border dispute between Ibn Sa'ūd and his rival, Hussain, and asks whether Philby played a major part in the collapse of the Hejazi kingdom. It considers Philby's contribution to the American recognition of Saudi Arabia and the methods that he used to secure this. It examines Philby's method of settling the political conditions in Arabia after the Idrisi revolt against Ibn Sa'ud. It asks why Philby visited Yemen and if it would somehow have enhanced Ibn Sa'ūd's position. It also focuses on Philby's role in the Buraimi crisis between Britain and Saudi Arabia and illustrates the persuasive arguments by which Philby upheld the Saudi opposition to Britain's demands over Buraimi.

The research questions

In order to fulfil the central aims of the thesis, there are seven major research questions that require an answer:

- 1- What were the main factors that formed Philby's character and the outcomes of his outstanding proficiency in Oriental languages?
- 2- When he was working in India, Iraq and Transjordan, did Philby implement his tasks effectively and was he loyal to his country?
- 3- Was Philby successful in fulfilling the objectives of his mission to Najd? How did his success continue to serve Britain during WWI?
- 4- What were the major methods that Philby used to bring American recognition to Saudi Arabia? Did he betray his country by procuring the oil concession for the US instead of Britain?
- 5- Was Philby regarded as important in ending the Idrisi revolt against the Saudi Government?
- 6- Was Philby's mission to the south of Yemen related to his desire to explore Arabia or was it an attempt to increase the extent of the Saudi expansion in Yemen?
- 7- By what methods did Philby seek to include the oasis of Buraimi under Saudi sovereignty and was his campaign successful in showing the world that Britain had no legitimate right to claim possession of that oasis?

Research methods

To answer the research questions stated above required an analysis of primary data such as archival materials, documents and reports, in order to interpret and form a notion of Philby's life and his work in the Middle East. Deductive, inductive and descriptive approaches were the main ones taken in this thesis. The author also conducted many research interviews in particular with members of Philby's family, in Britain and Saudi Arabia, such as Mr. Michael Engelbach, the son of Helena, Philby's youngest daughter, and Faris, the son of Philby, who is still living in Riyadh.

Archival sources

The most important primary sources consulted for this thesis are stored in Britain's official archives. The author examined a great number of documents in different departments of the National Archives at Kew, such as the Foreign Office (FO) and Colonial Office (CO) records and the records of Cabinet Files (CAB). Another important source for this thesis was the British Library, where many documents in and related to the records of the Government of India (GI) can be found, in particular the Political and Secret Department Subject Files (L/P&S) and those of the British Residency and Agencies in the Gulf(R). The thesis also depends on the private papers relating to

Philby, Cox, Herbert Samuel⁵ and Sir Reader Bullard⁶ held at The Middle East Centre Archives (MECA), St. Antony's College, Oxford University and the collected papers of Sir Gilbert Clayton⁷ at Durham University. Beside the official published documents, the author also examined the memoirs written by the British officials who had a connection with Arabia and Philby as well as a wide range of primary and secondary Arabic sources.

Efforts were made to trace all the secondary sources dealing with Philby from his early life and work for the British Government to the time of his resignation, after which he settled in Saudi Arabia until his death in Beirut in 1960. Before dealing with the historiography on Philby, it may be useful to provide some examples of the

⁵ Herbert Louis Samuel (1870-1963) was an eminent British politician. He had engaged in politics since his time at Oxford University. In 1905 he was Under-Secretary for the HO and from this was promoted as far as High Commissioner for Palestine between 1920 and 1925. Before WWI, he had not been a believing Jew but afterwards became an important advocate for the Zionist Organization and for the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish People in Palestine. For further accounts, see his *Memoirs* (London: The Cresset Press, 1945); Bernard Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel, A Political Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶ Sir Reader William Bullard (1885-1976) was a British diplomatist who spent most of his life in the Middle East, working as consul, minister and an ambassador. At the end of WWII, he decided to retire and devoted himself to write many historical works. See additional accounts in his books: *The Camels Must Go: an autobiography* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1961); *Letter from Tehran: A British Ambassador in World War Two Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991); E.C. Hodgkin (ed.), *Two Kings in Arabia: Sir Reader Bullard's Letter from Jeddah 1923-5 and 1936-9* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993); *Sir Reader Bullard collection*, The Middle East Centre Archive (MECA), St. Antony's College, Oxford University, Re. GB165-0042; E. C. Hodgkin, 'Bullard, Sir Reader William (1885-1976)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 3 Jan 2016.

⁷ Sir Gilbert Clayton (1875-1929) was a British army officer. He worked in Sudan and Egypt until 1909 when he retired from the army. Afterwards, he worked as a colonial intelligence officer and became in 1913 the Director of Intelligence in Egypt. Between 1922 and 1925 he was the Chief Secretary to Samuel, the High Commissioner in Palestine. From 1928 to 1929 he was the High Commissioner in Iraq. For further information see his biography in Robert Collin (ed.), *An Arabian Diary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Clayton's papers, Durham University Library: Archives and Special Collections (DULASC), Re.GB-0033-SAD; Timothy Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule 1920-1925, The Sherifian Solution* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.38, et seq; M. W. Daly, 'Clayton, Sir Gilbert Falkingham (1875-1929)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 29 October 2014.

historiography on the British engagement with the Middle East during WWI as well as Britain's post-war policy in the region.

Historiography on the British involvement in the Middle East

One of the most significant recent books that touches on the British Empire in the Middle East is *Churchill and the Islamic World* by Warren Dockter. In Dockter's view, Winston Churchill⁸ was a central figure with considerable impact on the history of the British Empire from its golden era to its disintegration after World War II (WWII). What distinguishes this book is that, of the many books that have been written about Churchill and his political career, Dockter's book may be considered the most important academic study to tackle Churchill's relations with the Islamic world. Dockter states that Churchill's perception of Islam developed throughout his political career. He describes Churchill's first contact with Muslims in 1897 when he served as a young officer on the North West Frontier of India (now called Afghanistan and Pakistan).⁹ Specifically, Churchill had his first encounters with the Arabs in the Middle East when he became Colonial Secretary in the early 1920s and established the Middle East Department in order to run the affairs of the Arabs with a coherent policy and to avoid

⁸ Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874-1965) was one of the most important British politicians of the 20th century. He spent the early years of his career in the British army. In 1900, he engaged in politics and afterwards held several political posts, finally becoming Prime Minister in 1940. His party was unsuccessful in the general election of 1945, but he returned to Downing Street on 26 October 1951 and led his party until 1955 when he decided to resign. For further information see Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974); V. G. Trukhanovskii, *Winston Churchill* [translated by Kenneth Russel] (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978); Paul Addison, *Winston Churchill* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007).

⁹ Dockter, *Churchill and the Islamic World*, p.2.

the conflicting policies of the War Office, the Foreign Office and the India Office. Dockter illustrates the change in Britain's policy from direct to indirect control after WWI and the considerable efforts made by Churchill to set up a new Arab government in Iraq and Transjordan, as the Cairo Conference suggested in March 1921. Dockter presents this change in the British policy and the shaping of a new map in the Middle East, together with the reasons behind the new British policy. He states that Churchill wanted to instil major pro-British sentiment among the Arabs to preserve and advance British interests, at the same time as the British Government wanted to reduce its financial expenditure in Iraq and Transjordan.¹⁰

In John Townsend's *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the end of Empire*, it is clearly implied that while Cox spent most of his career and sacrificed much of his personal life to serve the British Empire in the Persian Gulf, the British Government ignored him once he left the service in 1923. The book outlines Cox's biography from his early life to his first connection with the Persian Gulf, when he was appointed as Political Agent at Muscat in 1899. Townsend believes that Cox was anxious regarding the Hussain-McMahon correspondence, in which Hussain was promised prominent leadership among the Arabs; Cox wondered how this would affect British interests in the Gulf. In addition, Townsend believes that Cox was a typical imperial figure who was

¹⁰ Dockter, *Churchill and the Islamic World*, pp.156-157.

influential in implementing the British policy in the Middle East, especially when he proclaimed the succession of Faiṣal,¹¹ the third son of Hussain, as king of Iraq.¹²

The creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914-1927 by Askar al-Enazy is related to the birth of Saudi Arabia, revealing how this country was connected to the policy of Britain from the eve of WWI to the Jeddah treaty signed between Saudi Arabia and Britain in 1927. Al-Enazy asserts that the Saudi expansion was motivated by the political aspirations of Ibn Sa'ūd, who deployed the Wahhabi ideology as an essential factor in establishing his regime. The most important finding in this book is that the establishment of Saudi Arabia was a fulfilment of British imperial policy, in which Ibn Sa'ūd's charisma and his religious ideology were considered the most effective political instruments.¹³

John Darwin can be considered one of the significant historians of the British empire who views his subject in the light of world history. In addition to several important books – *Britain and Decolonization* (1988); *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (1991); and *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (2008) – he has recently written his magnum opus *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the*

¹¹ Faiṣal Ibn Hussain (1883-1933), with T.E. Lawrence, had remarkable success in fighting the Turks during the WWI. During his reign as King of Iraq he succeeded in establishing a constitutional government and generally maintained friendly relations with neighbouring countries. He died in Switzerland from a heart attack and his body was transferred to Iraq and buried there. For more detail, see, al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.5, p.165-166; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving king and country* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

¹² Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire*, pp.1-2,123-189.

¹³ Askar H. Al-Enazy, *The Creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914-1927* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp.24-25.

British World-System 1830-1970. This enormous book consists of two parts, each of seven chapters. He examines the history of the British empire from the early decades of the Nineteenth century to the end of Empire in the 1970s, focusing on its salience and fall and its relations to the evolutionary trajectory of the current world-system. The book explores both formal and informal roles and spheres of influence of Britain in its imperial geopolitical expansion, in Australia, New Zealand, India, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The first section of the book examines the rise of the empire to WWI, arguing that this rise was undoubtedly a conscious project. His argument is based on the fact that the evolution of British imperialism was among the consequences of the political, economic, and social changes that were happening in Britain and of a variety of external incidents, to which Britain was obliged to respond. The second section deals magnificently with the collapse of the Empire from the beginning of WWI to the end of the 1960s. In Darwin's view, hostilities and imperial rivalry were a major threat to British interests.¹⁴ Furthermore, the war against the Turks resulted in the frustration of Indian Muslims with British policy and the financial cost of the war put the colonial economies under pressure.¹⁵ In his conclusion Darwin states that some of the reasons behind the decline of the British empire in the interwar period were the economic

¹⁴ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.305.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.325, 352, 651.

decline, political appeasement in India, the rise of the US as a world power and antagonism to any form of imperialism.¹⁶

Priya Satia wrote *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East*. This book is divided into two parts: the first is called "War and Hope" while the other is entitled "Peace and Terror". Generally, the book presents a cultural history of British intelligence in the Middle East during WWI and afterwards. In Satia's view, culture played a crucial part in British intelligence since most of the British agents were orientalist and scholars, such as D.G. Hogarth,¹⁷ who had great knowledge of the Arabs and their customs as well as the geographical nature of their lands. In addition, British intelligence benefited from agents such as Lawrence and Bell, who admired the romance of Arabic culture and who had ventured into the region before the outbreak of WWI and visited many places in the Middle East¹⁸ and

¹⁶ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p.653.

¹⁷ David George Hogarth (1862–1927), was a British scholar, traveller, and archaeologist. He had some experience of excavation in many places such as Cyprus, Crete, Egypt and Syria. Owing to his remarkable knowledge of Arabia and the Ottoman Empire, he was selected to join the Geographical Department of naval intelligence before being appointed as the Acting Head of the Arab bureau. In addition to Lawrence, Cornwallis and Clayton, he made a decisive effort to organize the Arab revolt against the Ottoman. Between 1925 and 1927 he was head of the Geographical Society. He left distinguished articles and books. See James H. Breasted, 'Obituary: David George Hogarth', *Geographical Review*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan, 1928), pp. 159-161; C. R. L. Fletcher, 'David George Hogarth, President R. G. S. 1925-27', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 71, no. 4 (Apr, 1928), pp. 321-344; David Gill, 'Hogarth, David George (1862–1927)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 20 March 2016.

¹⁸ Gertrude Margaret Bell (1868–1926) was famous as an explorer and for her knowledge as an archaeologist and linguist. Her relationship with the British Government began in November 1915 when she was sent to Egypt to join the Arab Bureau in order to exploit Arab antipathy against the Turks. She spent the last decade of her life in Iraq and became Oriental Secretary for Sir Percy Cox. For further information, see Lady Bell, D.B.E. (ed.), *The letters of Gertrude Bell* (London: Ernst Benn Ltd., 1927); Gertrude Bell, 'A Journey in Northern Arabia', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 44, no.1 (Jan, 1914), pp.76-77; Newcastle University, Gertrude Bell Archive, <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/>, accessed 2 May 2014; Janet Wallach, *Desert Queen, The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell: Adventure, Adviser to Kings, Ally of Lawrence of Arabia* (London: Phoenix, 1997).

were then recruited as intelligence agents to serve the British Empire. As a result, Satia argues that such an intelligence service justifies the view that these agents made the cardinal contribution not only to the British triumphs against the Ottomans but also during the British mandatory administration, after establishing a new form of imperial rule, which Satia calls the “covert empire” in the Middle East.¹⁹

Another significant study of British policy in the first quarter of the 20th century is *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule 1920-1925, The Sherifian Solution* by Timothy Paris. In great depth, Paris explores the relations between Hussain and Britain from those in wartime to the time of Hussain’s removal to Hejaz by Ibn Sa’ūd, focusing on the reasons that led Hussain to head the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans. Paris sheds light on the most controversial case between the Arab nationalists and Britain regarding the Hussain-McMahon correspondence, arguing that the correspondence between the two men was “an informal exchange of ideas” leaving Britain “free to make any post-war arrangements it wished”.²⁰ Paris focuses also on the British Mandates in Iraq and Transjordan and treats in great detail the considerable efforts made by Lawrence to advocate the Sharifian solution of proposing Faiṣal as the king of Iraq and his brother Abdullah²¹ as ruler of Transjordan. He illustrates how Lawrence

¹⁹ Priya Satia *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008), p.7 et seq.

²⁰ Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule 1920-1925*, p.32.

²¹ Abdullah Ibn al-Hussain Ibn Ali (1882-1951) was the Amir of Transjordan between 1921 and 1946 and then became the King of what is now known as the Hashemite Kingdom from 1946 until his assassination in 1951. See his autobiography, Philip Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah of Transjordan* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950); Khair al-Din al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary] (Beirut: Dar E-ilm publication, 1997), vol.4, p.82.

was able to implement this policy against his rivals, A. T. Wilson²² and the India Office, who wanted the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire to be under the direct control of Britain.²³

In his chapter '*Britain's informal Empire in the Middle East*', Glen Balfour-Paul, moreover, argues that British policy in the Nineteenth century was to protect the Ottoman sovereignty in western Asia, for the underlying reason of securing both British India and the eastern Mediterranean against the plans of other European powers, such as Tsarist Russia and France. Balfour-Paul interprets the great expansion of Britain between the Mediterranean and India, as a crucial point from which it set up its informal empire in the Middle East, especially after the collapse of the Ottomans who had entered the Great War against Britain.²⁴ Balfour-Paul asserts that Britain ceased to operate by formal annexation, for two main purposes: to avoid adverse world reactions and to escape "the financial and manpower implications for an Empire already overstretched".²⁵ Balfour-Paul sheds light on the relations between Britain and the

²² Sir Arnold Wilson (1884–1940) was a British civil commissioner in Baghdad. His relationship with the ICS started in 1909. In 1915 he was the deputy chief political officer in Iraq. In March 1918, he became Acting Civil Commissioner after Cox's departure to Persia. In 1920 a rebellion against his policies led the British Government to appoint Cox as High Commissioner. It seems that this appointment brought an end to Wilson's career with the British Government. See Arnold Wilson's books: *A Periplus of the Persian Gulf* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1927); *Loyalties: Mesopotamia: A Personal and Historical Record 1914-1917 and 1917-1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), two volumes; *S.W. Persia: Letters and Diary of a Young Political Officer 1907-1914* (London: Readers Union Ltd., 1942). See also his biography in J. Marlowe, *Late Victorian: the life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset Press, 1967).

²³ Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule 1920-1925*, pp.49-63,88-103,161-167

²⁴ Glen Balfour-Paul, 'Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East', *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p.490.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.491.

Arabs, especially Hussain, who requested an independent Arab state as the price of his assistance with Britain's war against the Ottomans. However, Balfour-Paul maintains that there was a misunderstanding between Britain and Hussain, especially with regard to the subject of the Hussain-McMahon correspondence. This persuaded the Arabs to believe that Britain had not fulfilled its promise of independence.²⁶ Balfour-Paul explores the great effort by the British authorities in Cairo after the Arab revolt broke out, to assist this revolt; after the defeat of the Ottomans, the British officials in Cairo sought to put the region under the control of the Hashemite family. He goes on to examine the conflict of opinion between Whitehall and Delhi regarding the form of the British regime in the Middle East. While Whitehall preferred indirect control, Delhi insisted otherwise: "direct British control of Mesopotamia was judged essential".²⁷ In his conclusion, Balfour-Paul states that the nature of British control over the Middle East had not at the outset been driven by empire-building but rather as a matter of securing communications with India.²⁸

'The British Empire and the Muslim World' is the title of a chapter by Francis Robinson. The chapter covers the relations between the British empire and the Muslims from 1765, when the East India Company received from the Mughal Emperor the right to increase revenue and administer justice in Bengal, to the end of British empire in the 1970s. In this chapter, Robinson reveals that by the 1920s Britain ruled more than half

²⁶ Balfour-Paul, 'Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East', pp.494-495.

²⁷ Ibid, p.496.

²⁸ Ibid, p.515.

the Muslim peoples of the world. In his view, the considerable dominance of Britain had in effect a crucial influence on the lives of Muslims and their development. Robinson claims that this can be seen from the fact that imperial techniques formed the developing politics, economies and knowledge of Muslim nations and finally transformed them into modern Muslim states; it can be said that the “British Empire was the context in which many Muslims experienced the transition to modernity”.²⁹ Regarding the Arabian Peninsula, Robinson suggests that Britain's interests were significantly strategic; Britain had control over its coastline and the routes to India. In the Aden Protectorates, the British ruled the region from Aden to Oman, its officials assisted by advisers. In the Gulf, the sheikhs of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Trucial Coast had all signed treaties “with the British in the nineteenth century and existed underneath the umbrella of British power”.³⁰ The British Government let these regions rule themselves and would not intervene except when necessary and the situation required it. In Central Arabia, the British had at one stage thought of adopting Sharif Husain Hussain as their agent, but later abandoned Hussain and “wisely allowed the local leaders to fight for supremacy”.³¹

²⁹ Francis Robinson, ‘British Empire and the Muslim World’, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Judith Brown, and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p.398.

³⁰ Ibid, p.402.

³¹ Ibid, pp.402-403.

Historiography on Philby

The first biography of Philby, as far as is known, was written by Khairī Hammād; it is *Abdullah Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History].³² The book is divided into two very long chapters, the first in seven sections and the second in eight. This book concerns Philby's life from childhood to his work in India, Iraq, Transjordan and Saudi Arabia. It is evident in this book that the most trustworthy materials that Khairī used were Philby's own books; he translates the accounts of all the historic events that Philby supplied and interprets them with a strongly antipathetic bias. Although Philby himself had ceased to work for the British Empire and had begun to support revolutions and freedom fighters in all of Britain's colonies, and despite the many years that he spent in Saudi Arabia, Hammād still believed that Philby was seeking to implement British imperial policy not only in Saudi Arabia but also in other Middle Eastern countries.³³ However, Hammād did not generally touch on Philby's political efforts in the Middle East and his book may be called a kind of biography extracted from Philby's original autobiography and his other books.

³² Khairī Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History] (Beirut: Commercial Office Publication, 1961).

³³ *Ibid*, p.153 et seq.

The Desert King: A Life of Ibn Saud is written by David Howarth.³⁴ As the title suggests, the book is about Ibn Sa'ūd, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, focusing on his significant efforts to unify most of the territories of the Arabian Peninsula. In the second chapter, Howarth allocated a section to Philby and his mission to Riyadh. Unlike Khairī, Howarth did not believe that Philby was a spy for his country but he criticised Philby for being a strange and eccentric Englishman who began almost to worship Ibn Sa'ūd and made every effort to serve him. Howarth strongly believed that Philby failed to implement the mission's objectives most signally in his failure to reduce the tension between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain. More importantly, he claimed that Philby damaged the mission by his sudden visit to Hejaz and that Philby's absence let a golden opportunity be missed to let Ibn Sa'ūd invade the territory of Ibn Rashid, the ally of the Ottomans.³⁵ On this evidence, Howarth seems to have been convinced that Philby did not play any leading role in Arabia, a conclusion with which this thesis entirely differs. The author believes that Philby's mission served British interests in the war against the Ottomans and enhanced Ibn Sa'ūd's position in central Arabia.

Britain, India, and the Arabs 1914-1921, is by Briton Cooper Busch.³⁶ Busch speaks first about Philby's personality and suggests that one reason for Philby's resignation from Britain's foreign service was his constant clashes with his superiors. On the subject of Philby's mission, Busch claims that Arnold Wilson's difficulties with Philby led to his

³⁴ David Howarth, *The Desert King* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1964).

³⁵ Howarth, *The Desert King*, pp.100-104.

³⁶ Briton Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs 1914-1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

being put in charge of the mission.³⁷ It is obvious that Busch did not examine the motivation behind Philby's resignation and also did not understand the relations between Philby and Wilson; the present thesis, it is hoped, will show that the political factor was perhaps the main reason behind Philby's leadership and not Philby's personality. Generally, Busch focused, in great depth, on one aspect of the mission's objectives, which was the Hejazi-Najdi conflict, and did not deal fully with other aims of the mission, such as the issues of the blockade and the Ajman revolt, which were resolved by the great efforts of Philby during WWI.

Another book on Philby is Elizabeth Monroe's *Philby of Arabia*.³⁸ This book may be considered a major biography of its subject by a recognised pioneering authority in the field. She met him in 1938 and learned a great deal about him. She also travelled to every country where Philby had worked and lived – Pakistan, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia – before covering in chronological order all the events of Philby's life. The fundamental factor that distinguishes her book from the others is that it quotes and cites some original sources by Philby, such as his books, political correspondence, articles, reports and personal letters. However, Monroe did not discuss Philby's political work in much depth; for instance, his mission to Najd, the part he played in the conflict between the rulers of Hejaz and Najd, his communicating with American politicians in order to reorganize the affairs of Saudi Arabia or even Philby's efforts in the Buraimi crisis between Britain and Saudi Arabia.

³⁷ Ibid, p.249.

³⁸ Elizabeth Monroe, *Philby of Arabia* (Reading: Garnet Publishing Ltd., 1973).

Another book referring to Philby is *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Saud* by Gary Troeller.³⁹ The book covers all the historic events of Ibn Sa'ūd's life from his capture of Riyadh in 1902 to the elimination of the Hejazi kingdom in 1925. The considerable space devoted to Philby relates to his mission. Like Busch, Troeller describes Philby as a man who tended to clash with others; he draws attention to the dispute in Riyadh over the leadership of the mission between Philby and Robert Hamilton.⁴⁰ Although Troeller lists the mission's objectives, he focuses on two of them, namely intervening in the Hejazi- Najdi conflict and in the Hail invasion.⁴¹ Thus, Troeller does not examine any other aspects of the Najdi mission and, more important, he ignores Philby's remarkable achievements in Arabia.

A further book touching on Philby is *The House of Saud* by David Holden and Richard Johns.⁴² Although the book covers the whole history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 1902 to 1979, it does not include Philby's efforts either in the case of the oil concession between Saudi Arabia and the US or those related to the Saudi expansion in Buraimi and Yemen. The whole account of Philby that Holden and Johns give in their book is concerned with his personal character as seen in his mission to Najd. These authors claim that if Philby had had the chance and towed the line, he could have

³⁹ Gary Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Saud* (London: Frank Cass, 1979).

⁴⁰ Robert Edward Hamilton (1871-1950), was a British officer who worked for the British Empire in Africa and Asia. He became First Assistant to the Gulf Resident between 1915 and 1916 and then was appointed as Political Agent in Kuwait from 1916 to 1918 before returning to India. Hamilton became the 11th Lord Belhaven. See his biography in his son's book: Lord Belhaven, *The Uneven Road* (London: John Murry, 1955), pp.22 et seq.; Bullard, *Two Kings in Arabia*, pp.188-189.

⁴¹ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, pp.107-151.

⁴² David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1981).

reached high political rank in the British Government or administration. However, he failed to accomplish this, due to a combination of his lack of diplomacy and his behaviour, which tended always to react fiercely to events.⁴³ Such beliefs lead them to condemn him and his failures, but writers who do so may be misinformed or over-subjective and may not realize the primary factors and circumstances that influenced Philby's relationship with his country. These were what inclined him to oppose Britain's policy in the Middle East and finally to stop working for the Empire and pursue business interests of his own in Saudi Arabia.

Joseph Kostiner's book, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State*,⁴⁴ is a further secondary source that contains an account of Philby. Like the above historians, Kostiner bases his entire narrative on Philby's mission to Najd, concentrating on the relations between Hejaz and Najd and the invasion of Ḥail. It is plain that Kostiner gathered fundamental documents regarding Philby and his mission but he does not show the positive impact of Philby's visit to Hejaz nor Philby's profound efforts to serve the British interests in central Arabia. In addition, Kostiner stresses that Philby was captivated by Ibn Sa'ūd's personality, as evidenced by his taking the responsibility of furnishing Ibn Sa'ūd with £20,000.⁴⁵ The author argues that Philby's admiration was not the only reason but, as will be seen, the conflict between British officials in Cairo and Baghdad was probably the main factor behind Philby's

⁴³ David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud*, p.65.

⁴⁴ Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.20.

financial grant to Ibn Sa'ūd. Furthermore, Kostiner does not include the important matter of the documents in the National Archives, which show the several meetings of the Inter-Departmental Conference,⁴⁶ illustrating Philby's opposition to the British policy in Cairo; this strengthened Ibn Sa'ūd's position against Hussain, the prominent leader in Arabia.

Another book containing an account of Philby is *Travellers in Arabia* by Robin Bidwell.⁴⁷ Bidwell writes about a number of Western explorers in the Arabian Peninsula. His chapter on Philby states that no Western traveller "saw as much of the Peninsula, nor visited it, as he did, practically every corner of it nor traversed it so many times in so many different ways. None of them spent more than 20 months in Arabia: Philby was there for most of forty years".⁴⁸ He summarises Philby's activities and life and includes several photographs taken by Philby. He concludes that the era of exploration ended with Philby and no one has provided such knowledge of the Arabia Peninsula since his attempt to map all the areas of Arabia that had not yet been explored by Europeans. However, he suggests that Philby was an opponent of British policy, who always assumed that his own way of seeing issues was right.⁴⁹ This portrays Philby as implacable; it seems unfair for Bidwell to pass over Philby's true motivation and the reasons behind his views, in particular because Bidwell is known to have relied simply

⁴⁶ These meetings were held between 24 February 1919 and 17 June 1919, and are discussed in Chapter Five.

⁴⁷ Robin Bidwell, *Travellers in Arabia* (Reading: Garnet Publishing Ltd., 1994).

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.96.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.101.

on the account of Philby given by the British officials who were at odds with him.⁵⁰ In any case, the title of Bidwell's book makes it clear that it focuses only on travellers to Arabia and says nothing about the rest of Philby's life nor his political activities in Saudi Arabia.

Tawḥid al- Māmlākahal- arabiah al- Sū'diah [Arabia Unified], written by Mohammed al-Man'a, the head translator for Ibn Sa'ūd, who met Philby for the first time in 1926.⁵¹ Unlike Khairī Hammād, al-Man'a believed that Philby was honest in his relations with Ibn Sa'ūd and found it hard to accept the allegation that he was a spy for his country.⁵² However, although al-Man'a devoted one chapter to Philby; he did not present historical accounts of Philby's early life or indicate that Philby had much political influence on the history of Saudi Arabia.

Another book that deals with Philby is *Treason in the Blood: H. St John Philby, Kim Philby and the Spy Case of the Century*, by Anthony Brown.⁵³ As the title indicates, Brown takes a strongly condemnatory view not only of Philby but also of his family. He is convinced that Philby was a traitor to his country, who destroyed the plans and projects of Britain in the Middle East, in particular in his vital contribution to the negotiations over oil in Saudi Arabia. In his view, Philby was the one who suggested

⁵⁰ Regarding the British officials who portrayed Philby in a negative light, see, for example, Wilson, *Loyalties*, vol.1, pp.281-282; Andrew Ryan, *The Last of the Dragomans* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1951), p.266; Bullard's Circular letters, 26 October 1936, MECA, *Bullard collection*, F.2/1.

⁵¹ Mohammed al-Man'a, *Tawḥid al- Māmlākahal- arabiah al- Sū'diah* [Arabia Unified] (Damam: al-Mutaw Publishing, 1995).

⁵² *Ibid*, pp.277-278.

⁵³ Anthony Brown, *Treason in the Blood: H. St John Philby, Kim Philby and the Spy Case of the Century* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1995).

that Ibn Sa'ūd should award the concession to the American company Standard Oil of California (SOCAL), rather than to Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). Brown also criticised him in forceful language, portraying him as a spy for Ibn Sa'ūd and the US.⁵⁴ This book seems to be wholly subjective, for Brown cannot substantiate his allegation with documentary evidence. Nevertheless, the thesis examines Brown's view of Philby at greater length below and counters Brown's claim by evidence that Philby was in fact loyal to his country and not a spy for Saudi Arabia or the US. In addition, like the previous writers, Brown does not tackle Philby's precise political role in Saudi Arabia nor indicate that Philby worked hard to serve his country during WWI.

Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East is a book by Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac. The authors focus on the history of the Middle East, especially in the first half of the 20th century. The book consists of a series of biographical vignettes, of Mark Sykes,⁵⁵ for example, Lawrence, Arnold Wilson, Gertrude Bell and John Philby. In the view of the authors, these prominent British individuals were "instrumental in

⁵⁴ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, pp.2-3,148-157.

⁵⁵ Sir Mark Sykes (1879–1919) was a traveller, politician and diplomatic adviser. At an early age, he was fond of excursions, travelling with his father to Turkish provinces and the Middle East. Sykes started to exercise his political apprenticeship in 1904 when he was acting as private secretary to George Wyndham, the Irish Secretary and he was soon appointed honorary attaché at the Constantinople embassy between 1905 and 1906. In 1911 he was elected to Parliament as the Unionist member for Hull. During WWI, he was asked to travel to Egypt, Aden and Mesopotamia to gather information due to his special knowledge of political and ethnological conditions in the Ottoman Empire. His remarkable reputation came when he was chosen to lead the negotiations in the partition of Ottoman Asia with France, the famous negotiations that led to the Sykes-Picot agreement. For more details, see Shane Leslie, *Mark Sykes: His Life and Letters* (London: Cassell,1923); Roger Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur* (London: Jonathan Cape,1975); Lawrence James, 'Sykes, Sir Mark, sixth baronet (1879–1919)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, May 2011, accessed 6 April 2017.

building nations, defining borders and selecting or helping to select local rulers”.⁵⁶ Chapter Seven is devoted to Philby. It traces the remarkable events of Philby’s life from his birth in Ceylon in 1885 to his education in London and Cambridge. Then it focuses on Philby’s career from joining the ICS in India, to Iraq and then to the end of Philby’s service with Britain in Transjordan, where he resigned from his post as Chief British Representative.⁵⁷ The book also sheds light on Philby’s relations with Saudi Arabia, illustrating how he became an important advocate for Ibn Sa’ūd and worked to further Saudi Arabia’s interests, with especial attention to his role in the oil concession between the US and Saudi Arabia in 1933. The authors suggest that Philby “emerged as the Western kingmaker who left the deepest strategic imprint on the Middle East”.⁵⁸ Indeed, Philby played a profound role while he was working as a British official but his opposition to the imperial policy of Britain contradicts the claim that he ‘left the deepest strategic imprint of any on the region’; his efforts cannot be compared with those of Sykes or Lawrence, who helped to shape the map of the new Middle East.

A further book is *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia fi ‘hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa’ūd* [John Philby and Saudi Arabia in the Era of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa’ūd] by Sabri al- Hamdi.⁵⁹ The book is composed of a preface and five chapters and, as its title suggests, focuses on Philby’s life in Arabia. Hamdi examines Philby’s varied role there, focusing on the

⁵⁶ Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac, *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), p.18.

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp.230-247.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.230.

⁵⁹ Sabri al- Hamdi, *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia fi ‘hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa’ūd* [John Philby and Saudi Arabia in the Era of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa’ūd] (Beirut: Arabic Scientific Publisher, 2013).

conflict between Ibn Sa'ūd, the ruler in Najd at the time, and Hussain, the ruler of Hejaz. He also sheds light on Philby's role in the Saudi-British relations with Ibn Rashid, the ally of the Ottoman Empire, in Ḥail. In addition, he provides information on Philby's expeditions in the Arabian Peninsula as well as examining Philby's character and his views on the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, it should be noted that Sabri's book contains several mistakes, not only regarding Philby's mission but also in the historical events of the first quarter of the 20th century. For example, he states that Philby's mission began in November 1915,⁶⁰ but in fact it commenced in November 1917.⁶¹ The reason for such mistakes is probably that Hamdi depended on Khairī Hammād for his source, although the latter's translation of Philby's autobiography is not completely accurate.⁶² What is notable in Sabri's book is that he uses no primary sources, not even the Philby collection in the MECA, St. Antony's College at Oxford nor the original documents in the National Archives and British Library, to say nothing of the great number of Philby's articles and books written to justify his views.

⁶⁰ Al- Hamdi, *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia fi 'hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ūd* [John Philby and Saudi Arabia in the Era of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ūd] , p.38.

⁶¹ Regarding the year of Philby's mission see Cox to Loch, 2 November 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33; Philby, 'Report on Najd mission ', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁶² To compare Khairī Hammād's book with the account of Sabri Hamdi, see Khairī Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.53. Sabri Hamdi also indicates erroneously that Shakespear was the Political Agent in Jeddah; his post was in fact in Kuwait. See Sabri Hamdi, *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia*, [John Philby and Saudi Arabia], p.39.

Kesāt Abdullah Philby min khelāl al-wathaeq al-Britaniyah [The Story of Abdullah Philby through British Documents] by Ḥasan Sati.⁶³ A short account can be found in this book of the early life of Philby and his career with the British Government. However, as the title indicates, the book concerns the translation into Arabic of files KV 2/1118 and 1119 held by the National Archives and released on 25-26 November 2002. The two files deal with Philby's activities in Arabia and his criticism of British policy in the Middle East. The book also discusses Philby's detention order signed by the Home Secretary in 1940, under Defence Regulation 18B. However, this book has nothing to say about Philby's influence in Iraq, Transjordan and Saudi Arabia.

'Saudi-British diplomatic relations, 1918-1920: The Khurmah dispute' by Hussain al-Zaydey⁶⁴ is a doctoral that includes an account of Philby and precisely examines the military and political aspects of the Hejazi-Najdi competition over the oasis of Khurmah. It is obvious, however, that al-Zaydey does not bring out the main factors in Philby's decision to assist Ibn Sa'ūd and to control the Khurmah oasis under Saudi sovereignty. In addition, al-Zaydey does not focus on Philby's success in safeguarding Ibn Sa'ūd from the British officials in Cairo and London who wanted Hussain to be the dominant figure in Arabia. Furthermore, al-Zaydey does not examine the reasons why Philby's prediction before the battle of Turabah regarding the decisive triumph of Ibn Sa'ūd against Hussain came true.

⁶³ Ḥasan Sati, *Kesāt Abdullah Philby min khelāl al-wathaeq al-Britaniyah* [The Story of Abdullah Philby through British Documents] (Beirut: Jadawel Publication, 2014).

⁶⁴ Hussain al-Zaydey, 'Saudi-British diplomatic relations, 1918-1920: The Khurmah dispute' (Ohio: PhD thesis, Miami University, 1989).

In Saudi Arabia, the King Faiṣal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies contains a Master's thesis under the title 'John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan 1921-1924' [John Philby and his political role in Transjordan], by Brijet Abu al- Rab.⁶⁵ This clearly focuses on the political activities of Philby when he was Chief British Representative in Transjordan. Abu al- Rab also explores the political conflict between Philby and Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner of Palestine, which was obviously one of the main reasons that Philby chose to resign and work instead with Ibn Sa'ūd in Arabia. Other causes are discussed below.

Mohammed al-Naqbi wrote 'Oil Concession Agreement: An exploration of the effect of asymmetric negotiations on conflict creation in three Middle Eastern countries between the years of 1900-1975'.⁶⁶ This thesis illustrates the impact of these negotiations over the oil agreements in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq. Regarding Saudi Arabia, al- Naqbi stresses that Philby was the essential player in the negotiations with Saudi representatives for oil concessions, a legendary figure who acted on behalf of SOCAL.⁶⁷ Although al- Naqbi's claim is well supported, he does not ask why Philby was so anxious for Saudi Arabia to give the oil concession to an American company. As shown below, one of the most important purposes behind Philby's efforts was to have

⁶⁵ Brijet Abu al- Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan 1921-1924' [John Philby and his political role in Transjordan] (Jordan: Master thesis, Yarmouk University, 2000).

⁶⁶ Mohammed al-Naqbi, 'Oil Concession Agreement: An exploration of the effect of asymmetric negotiations on conflict creation in three Middle Eastern countries between the years of 1900-1975' (Virginia: PhD thesis, George Mason University, 2002).

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp.8, 227-230.

Saudi Arabia recognized by the US, as suggested by hitherto unrevealed private letters between Philby and American officials.

On a similar theme to al- Naqbi, Harit Intakanok wrote 'The Emergence of Private Authority in the Oil Industry: The Case of Oil Concession Agreement'.⁶⁸ This thesis examines the emanation of private authority in the oil industry, focusing on the negotiation and the application of oil concession agreements in four countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Iran. Intakanok believes that Philby was one of the principal advisers to Ibn Sa'ūd and describes him as the one who suggested improving the conditions in Saudi Arabia by investing in the country's mineral resources. Intakanok agrees with al- Naqbi that Philby played a major role in the negotiations between the Saudi Government and SOCAL.⁶⁹ However, again like al- Naqbi, Intakanok does not focus on the essential steps that Philby took in his contacts with the US, which ended in that country's recognition of Saudi Arabia.

As far as is known, the first academic article to deal with Philby was 'The Philby Mission to Ibn Sa'ūd' by Daniel Silverfarb.⁷⁰ Silverfarb states that he consulted the following for an account of Philby's mission to Ibn Sa'ūd: Briton C. Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs: 1914-1921*, Elizabeth Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, and Gary Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*. However, he argues that Busch is less than fair to the remarkable role

⁶⁸ Harit Intakanok, 'The Emergence of Private Authority in the Oil Industry: The Case of Oil Concession Agreement' (Durham, PhD thesis, Durham University, 2010).

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp.102, 109-111.

⁷⁰ Daniel Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission to Ibn Sa'ūd', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 14, no. 2 (Apr, 1979), pp. 269-286.

played by the British officials in Cairo in authorizing the Philby mission to Ibn Sa'ūd in 1917. Regarding Monroe, Silverfarb asserts that she was mostly concerned with outlining Philby's life rather than debating the implementation of British policy in Arabia. Of Troeller, he says that he did not use an important account of the minutes of the War Cabinet's Middle Eastern Committee that reflected the formulation of British policy in Arabia.⁷¹ In fairness, since Silverfarb's central topic purports to be Philby's mission, it is surprising to find that he does not examine the mission itself at any great length; for instance, Philby's role in dealing with the blockade and the question of the Ajman revolt are not treated in much depth. More importantly, he does not use the substantial collection of Philby's documents at present in the MECA at St. Antony's College, Oxford. Silverfarb concludes that Philby's mission strained relations between Britain and Ibn Sa'ūd and concludes that Philby, isolated as he was in central Arabia, failed to fulfil the purposes of the mission.⁷²

Silverfarb wrote another article that contains historical narrative about Philby. Its title is 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919'.⁷³ This article is certainly based on primary sources such as documents from TNA and IOR. He covers the political conflict between the British officials in Cairo and Baghdad regarding the Hejazi-Najdi contention over the oasis of Khurmah. Although Silverfarb refers to Philby's views in the conflict between Hejaz and Najd, he does not examine Philby's

⁷¹ Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission to Ibn Sa'ūd', pp.282-283, n.2.

⁷² Ibid, p.382.

⁷³ Daniel Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', *Arabian Studies*, vol.5 (1979), pp.37-60.

effort to strengthen Ibn Sa'ūd and does not precisely investigate the reasons that led Philby to predict that the victory would be on the side of Ibn Sa'ūd and not Hussain.

'Philby as a Historian of Saudi Arabia' is written by George Rentz.⁷⁴ It highlights the importance of Philby's writings on the history of Saudi Arabia. Rentz describes Philby as the most productive Western writer as far as the history of Saudi Arabia is concerned. Despite some praise for Philby and his historical writings, he claims that Philby's accounts need to be revised and criticised objectively, pointing out errors over the dates of Ibn Sa'ūd's battles against his rivals. Rentz compares the treatment of some historical events in Philby's writings with that in other sources. He concludes that Philby's historical accounts sometimes contain inaccuracies and ambiguity.⁷⁵ Although this paper with its comparisons is a distinguished assessment and is very useful for a critique of Philby's writings, it does not cover any aspect of Philby's political role in Arabia.

Jacob Goldberg has a similar article to Rentz's, called 'Philby as a Source for Early Twentieth Century -Saudi History: A Critical Examination'.⁷⁶ Goldberg surveys Philby's close association with the Arabian Peninsula in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. He describes Philby's interest in Arabia as truly impressive and comprehensive, covering multiple fields. He also analyses Philby's writings on the history of Saudi

⁷⁴ George Rentz, 'Philby as a Historian of Saudi Arabia' *Studies in the history of Arabia* (Riyadh: Riyadh University, 1979), vol.1, part.2, pp.25-35.

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp.26 et seq.

⁷⁶ Jacob Goldberg, 'Philby as a Source for Early Twentieth Century -Saudi History: A Critical Examination', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Apr, 1985), pp. 223-243.

Arabia, showing the influences on these writings and criticising them when he sees fit. He focuses on the accuracy of Philby's writings on three main topics: King Ibn Sa'ūd's policy regarding Britain from 1902 to 1914, the King's policy regarding the Ottoman Empire and his role and potential for advancing British interests during WWI. However, Goldberg assumes that Philby's accounts were influenced by Ibn Sa'ūd's character, which turned him into an official apologist for Saudi international policy in the Western world.⁷⁷ On the whole, Goldberg's attitude to Philby seems generally to highlight negative rather than positive aspects. Furthermore, the article considers no political aspects of Philby's role from the Najdi mission to the Buraimi crisis.

Mohammed al- Zulfah also contributes an article about Philby, entitled 'Kitābāt Philby: al-mṣdar al-mansi fi Tārīkhānā al-wātānī' [Philby's writings: the forgotten source in our national history].⁷⁸ In his article, al- Zulfah alleges that, while Philby deserves academic study in recognition of what he did for Saudi Arabia, no one from that country has written about him. He also suggests that John Philby may be considered one of the greatest historians and explorers of the Arabian Peninsula in the 20th century. His works include not only fundamental historical accounts, but also key writings on Islam, entomology, zoology, archaeology, politics, economics and geography, together with hundreds of photographs of people and images of cities that reflect the geographical features of the time. In addition, al- Zulfah asserts that, during Philby's settlement in

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp.223-225.

⁷⁸ Mohammed al- Zulfah, ' Kitābāt Philby: al-mṣdar al-mansi fi Tārīkhānā al-wātānī' [Philby's writings: the forgotten source in our national history], *al- Jazirah Newspaper*, 10 December 1999, no.9934.

Saudi Arabia, he wrote several books and hundreds of reports, which cover the whole history of Saudi Arabia.⁷⁹ However, al- Zulfah does not mention that, after Philby's resignation from the British foreign service, he worked for political ends in Saudi Arabia; consequently, his article, as the present paper seeks to show, conveys nothing of what Philby did for Saudi's international standing.

Another article is 'Abdullah Philby: ḥayātūh wa- a'malūh'[Abdullah Philby: His Life and Works] by 'Umar al-'Umary.⁸⁰ This article may be considered a descriptive and analytical study of Philby, not only as a writer of historical accounts but also as an individual. Al-'Umary stresses that Philby was a most remarkable figure, he encourages everyone to write about and explore the diversity of his scientific works. He sees Philby as a representative of British diplomacy and politics during the period of British colonialism. Al-'Umary then outlines Philby's life, from childhood to his studies and his work for the British Empire in India, Iraq, Transjordan and Saudi Arabia. Finally, Al-'Umary summarizes his views and concludes that Philby may be considered a Western explorer who dominated all the writers on the Arabian Peninsula of his time.⁸¹ However, al-'Umary is merely compiling a short biography of Philby with no special attention to his political role in the Middle East.

⁷⁹ Al- Zulfah, ' Kitābāt Philby: al-mṣdar al-mansi fi Tārīkhānā al-wātāni' [Philby's writings: the forgotten source in our national history], *al- Jazirah Newspaper*, 10 December 1999, no.9934.

⁸⁰ 'Umar al- 'Umary, 'Abdullah Philby: ḥayātūh wa- atharoh' [Abdullah Philby: His Life and Works], *al- Darah*, no.3 (2000), pp, 131-196.

⁸¹ Al- 'Umary, 'Abdullah Philby: ḥayātūh wa- atharoh' [Abdullah Philby: His Life and Works], pp.133 et seq.

Sabri al- Hamdi has written two articles about Philby. The first is ‘Nashat John Philby wa- al-wazāyf alti tawaldah fi ḥūkūmāt al-hind’ [The Background of John Philby and his posts in the India Government]⁸²and the second is ‘Philby wa- al-siāsih al-Britaniyah bishn al-‘elaqāt al-Najdiah-Kuwaitiah wa al-‘elaqāh ma’aḤail’ [Philby and the British policy toward the Najdi-Kuwaiti and the relations with Ḥail].⁸³ Both of these articles are evidently extracted from Sabri’s book (2013), as discussed above, and there is therefore no need to review their content.

It is notable that the missing element in the literature is any study of Philby’s political role in Arabia that is based on archival sources. This thesis, as far as is known, is thus the first to tackle Philby’s actions in Arabia based on primary evidence and, it is hoped, to demonstrate comprehensively some findings about his profound involvement there.

Organization

The thesis will consist of an introduction, six chapters and a conclusion. The introduction addresses the importance of the thesis, definition and aims of the topic, the research questions, the research methods, archival sources, the historiography on Philby and overall organization. Chapter One focuses on the making of Philby: seminal Influences on the formation of his character, under five headings: his family; its roots;

⁸² Sabri al- Hamdi, ‘Nashat John Philby wa- al-wazāyf alti tawaldah fi ḥūkūmāt al-hind’ [The Background of John Philby and his posts in the India Government], *Journal of Faculty of Education*, no.73, 2012, pp.261-270.

⁸³ Sabri al- Hamdi, ‘*Philby* wa- al-siāsih al-Britaniyah bishn al-‘elaqāt al-Najdiah-Kuwaitiah wa al-‘elaqāh ma’a Ḥail’ [Philby and the British policy toward the Najdi-Kuwaiti and the relations with Ḥail], *Journal of Faculty of Art*, no.99, 2012,pp.66-81

his birth and childhood; his education at Westminster; and his days at Trinity College, Cambridge until the start of his work for the British Empire in India. Chapter Two introduces the beginnings of Philby's activities and influence in the Middle East. This chapter has two sections: on his work in Iraq as a political administrator and his work as Chief British Representative in Transjordan. Chapter Three deals with Philby and the British contact with Arabia during WWI: the first part of his mission to central Arabia. It describes this mission, focusing on its objectives and findings. Chapter Four illustrates Philby's efforts in the common cause: the second part of the Najdi mission. It has three main sections: on the Ajman revolt, the blockade question and the invasion of Hail. Chapter Five explores Philby's role in the Khurmah crisis between Najd and Hejaz and tries to determine whether he had any influence on Ibn Sa'ūd's elimination of the Hejazi Kingdom. Chapter Six is about Philby's contribution to Saudi Arabia's foreign policy. It contains a number of sections: on Philby and the American recognition of Saudi Arabia, the Idrisi revolt, his visit to the south of Yemen and his remarkable role in the British-Saudi conflict over the Buraimi crisis. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the principal finding reached in the course of writing this thesis as well as the recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAKING OF PHILBY:

SEMINAL INFLUENCES ON THE FORMATION OF HIS CHARACTER

1885-1915

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on Philby's background, from his early years up until his work for the British Empire in India. It is an attempt to understand the environment and the circumstances in which Philby developed. It aims to examine the main factors that shaped his knowledge. Although he was poor and studied under some hardship, Philby was an outstanding student, showing all the evidence of his intelligence. Therefore, it is worth asking how he was able to overcome the obstacles and achieve outstanding academic results. In addition, his personality was influenced by teachers and scholars and by his environment at Westminster School and Cambridge and it is therefore important to identify the characteristics, tendencies and attributes that he owed to them, which remained all his life and influenced his approach to the Middle East. The chapter deals with the main factors that made Philby change his outlook, at first Conservative, to a more liberal one. It also seeks to discover the reasons behind Philby's desire to join the ICS, what kinds of training courses he was trained in and what posts he occupied. It examines how and why Philby became qualified in Oriental languages. It also traces the acts of Philby as he served his country with total loyalty, before leaving India and being sent to join the war in Iraq.

The Philby family and its roots

In his autobiography, Philby asserted that England was not the original home of his family. His ancestors emigrated from Finland to Britain at an uncertain date and established their estate in Filby, in the middle of Norfolk, near the east coast of

England.¹ Brown asserts that Philby's ancestors moved to the town of Chigwell, in southern Essex, in the seventeenth century.² However, Philby's account differs from Brown's, which states that his ancestors moved at the beginning of the nineteenth century.³ It seems wiser to trust Philby's view than Brown's, for two reasons. First, after examining the material on the Philby family at St. Antony's College, Oxford and the Records of the India Office in the British Library or the archives of Westminster School, there seems to be nothing to confirm the date when Philby's ancestors emigrated to England; this being the case, one may believe that Philby was probably better able than others to provide an account of his own family's history. Second, although Michael Engelbach, the son of Helena, Philby's youngest daughter, has no definite information regarding the history of his family, he tends to believe that his maternal grandfather was not likely to have often been factually wrong about his ancestry.⁴ Furthermore, the Chigwell parish registers, which contains some names of Philby's forebears and the date of their baptism and marriage as well as the dates of their birth, do not go back further than 1837, which seems to be consistent with Philby's claim that they moved to Chigwell in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁵

¹ H. St.B. John Philby, *Arabian Days* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1948), p.7.

² Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.2. Also, John Halperin suggested that the Philbys were from Essex. See his book: *Eminent Georgians, The Life of King George V, Elizabeth Bowen, St. John Philby, & Nancy Astor* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), p.132. Though his claim is quite true, it is more accurate to say that they were originally from Norfolk and thereafter moved to Essex.

³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.7.

⁴ Author's interview with Michael Engelbach, London, 20 November 2014.

⁵ Author's visit to the parish registers, Chigwell, Essex, 14 March 2017.

Philby recorded that his ancestors were ordinary people with no eminence or celebrity in the annals of virtue or criminality and if they had any share of fame it would have been small.⁶ This may explain why he was so ambitious; he sought fame as well as distinctiveness from others. He confessed that his ambition was “fame, whatever that may mean and for what it is worth. I have fought for it ... If my ambition had been to make money; it would have been easier to understand”.⁷

Although Philby claimed that he did not search for the tombstones of his forebears, this may indicate that they had been moved elsewhere. He simply assumed that the parish registers in Filby or Chigwell might record their marriages or dates of birth.⁸ Moreover, Monroe suggested that the parish registers in Chigwell showed some details of two branches of the Philby family, one which related to the Taylors and another, bigger, one, known as the Belmont branch, which had been affiliated since 1824 with the Bridgers, a family which was respected in trade in the mid-nineteenth century. George Bridger, Philby’s great-great-grandfather, sold poultry and rabbits in Leadenhall Street.⁹ Philby remarked that George Bridger owned the greater part of Leadenhall Street and would have been rich if he had continued in his business, instead of trying to rise in the

⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.7.

⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.2.

⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.7.

⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.3.

world.¹⁰ It was evident that Philby's desire to be rich seems to date from the difficult conditions that he experienced throughout his childhood which are discovered later.

Harry Montagu Philby was the father of the Philby in the present study. The parish registers state that he was born in Epping, Essex in March 1857.¹¹ There seems little information about the early life of Montagu or even his education in youth. At this stage, in the 1870s, Monroe suggests that Montagu was sent to Ceylon to seek his fortune in the coffee trade.¹² Philby's opinion regarding the departure of his father contradicts Monroe's opinion. He believed that his father had not been sent out there by his family but had made his own decision to leave. He explained that, as in any big family at the time, people had to depend on themselves, especially the youngest sons.¹³ The second view seems the more likely, for several reasons. First, the historical event of the departure was perhaps known only to Philby's family and Philby was the only member to have revealed it. Second, a reason which deserves to be mentioned: in her book, Monroe does not give the source of her information that Harry Montagu had been sent away, which may be seen as impairing the reliability and accuracy of her contention.

In any case, Harry Montagu sailed to Ceylon and once there decided to purchase a share in a hill farm called Badulla, before he realised that the golden era of coffee

¹⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.8-9.

¹¹ *Parish Record collection*, Chigwell, Essex, vol.4A, p.49.

¹² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.4.

¹³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.8.

growing had come to an end.¹⁴ Philby claimed that after a while his father's business was successful, though due to the monotony of his isolation he sometimes succumbed to the temptations of society in Kandy and Colombo.¹⁵ It is very important to understand how Montagu could have purchased a share in a coffee plantation while he was still in his twenties. The answer probably is that Montagu may have borrowed money from his family, most likely his eldest brother, James Philby,¹⁶ who, as Monroe suggests, rose to the highest level of the learned professions and studied at Oxford; or else Montagu borrowed the money from his sisters whose husbands were a respectable succession of soldiers and merchants.¹⁷ Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that some of Montagu's ancestors were respected merchants in trade; he may have inherited enough money to travel to Ceylon and set up his own business.¹⁸

According to Monroe, Montagu was handsome, sociable and cheerful and when he had the chance of going to Kandy or Colombo, he enjoyed dancing and gaming.¹⁹ On one occasion, he met a girl and fell in love with her. Her name was Queenie (or May, as Philby called her) and her father, Colonel John Duncan,²⁰ commanded the local garrison.²¹ She was pretty, animated, good at dancing and very quick-witted. She was

¹⁴ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.27; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.4

¹⁵ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.8.

¹⁶ James Philby died in 1909. See *The Times*, 'Deaths', 20 December 1909.

¹⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.4.

¹⁸ One of the most notable examples of Montagu's merchant ancestors was James George Bridger, who set up a building business. See Monroe, *ibid*, p.3.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁰ His biography will be provided below.

²¹ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.2.

19 when she married Harry Montagu.²² Her mother belonged to the Cardew family and her ancestors were priests and soldiers. Cornelius Cardew, her great-grandfather, had a doctorate in theology and provoked his acquaintances by expressing the wish that the Americans would defeat Britain and become independent. His family was productive and plain-spoken. He died in 1831, the father of many children; indeed, 141 of his descendants fought in WWI, four of them from the Philby family. The Elliots, Lockharts, Bethunes and Hoopers among his descendants distinguished themselves in the army or in diplomacy. General Bernard Montgomery²³ was the greatest and most celebrated of these, the hero of the battle of Al-Elamein.²⁴

May's father, Colonel John Duncan, had a disturbing history. One day his son, also called John, who had been searching without success for all those relatives who carried the name of his family, asked his father what his grandfather's job had been. His father replied evasively that the grandfather had died young. The truth was that the real name of his grandfather had been Duncan McCleod and he had left Geanies in Easter Ross (in Scotland) to serve in the army, reaching the rank of lieutenant-general before his death in a fashionable part of London at the age of 76. He married and had a lively, quick-witted son, Duncan, who was born in India and raised by his grandfather in the home country. Duncan worked in India and eventually became Deputy Governor of the

²² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.4-5.

²³ Bernard Law Montgomery (1887-1976) was a British army officer. His fame came when he triumphed over the German force in the second battle of El Alamein in 1942. For further accounts, see his *Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1957); Antony Brett-James, *Conversations with Montgomery* (London: Kimber, 1984).

²⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.4-5.

Punjab. His son died and he had no more children of his own, but, before his death, he adopted two illegitimate children and gave them his surname. One of them, John Duncan, became the father of Philby's mother. Illegitimacy never disturbed Duncan, although it was socially a matter of shame at the time. When John Duncan, as a legitimate son, applied for membership of the East India Company, he provided the name of his adoptive father, Duncan McCleod, and then forgot the past and established a distinct line of succession in his own right.²⁵ However, Monroe's statement that John Duncan "cut the painter with the past"²⁶ seems not quite to be true. As stated earlier, it can be inferred from his reply to his son that his grandfather had died young and that he himself had probably not been reconciled to the fact of being adopted.

Despite his discontent, Duncan was successful enough in India to have been nominated as Vice- Consul; because of his expertise in foreign languages, he became a teacher at the Staff College at Camberley in the 1870s. A decade or so later he held a highly responsible post in the Adjutant-General's department of the Irish Command in Ceylon. By the 1890s, he was Deputy Assistant-General at the War Office. He died in 1898 while serving in Bombay, leaving his wife, Emily, and 11 children. May, Philby's mother, was the eldest of these.²⁷ Before ending this section and embarking on Philby's birth and childhood, it may be interesting to ask whether May was the social superior of her husband Montagu? In fact there seems to have been little difference in social rank

²⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.5.

²⁶ Ibid, p.5; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.2.

²⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.4; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.5.

between them, given that some of Montagu's relatives were merchants and lawyers and that, as Monroe asserts, the Montagu family considered themselves gentlemen and ladies.²⁸ Furthermore, Montagu, was at the beginning of his business a respectable trader and financially successful enough; this may have persuaded May's parents to accept him as a husband for their daughter.

Birth and childhood

On Friday 3rd April 1885, Harry St. John Philby Bridger was born in Ceylon, where his father, Harry Montagu, had sought his fortune in the coffee trade.²⁹ As Philby mentioned in his autobiography, he was born at Easter, the festive season marking the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, he did not consider that the date of his birth was any kind of omen and decided to choose figures and days which others dreaded as tokens of his own good fortune.³⁰ Such consideration may encapsulate Philby's character, which rejected the errors of perception of his time. Equally, it may illustrate Philby's conviction that life reflected the optimism of those who prospered.

Commenting on his first name, Warren Dockter states that Philby's first name was Henry.³¹ However, it seems that the name was actually Harry. Philby surmised that his

²⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.4.

²⁹ Wilfred Thesiger, 'Obituary H. St. John B. Philby, 1885-1960', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 126, no. 4 (Dec, 1960), p.563; Suleiman Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows] (Amman: Culture and Arts Publication, 1984), p.233; James Craig, 'Philby, Harry St John Bridger (1885-1960)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 13 Nov 2014; Ḥasan Sati, *Kesāt Abdullah Philby min khelāl al-wathaeq al-Britaniyah* [The Story of Abdullah Philby through British Documents], p.9.

³⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.5.

³¹ Dockter, *Churchill and the Islamic World*, p.165.

first name probably originated from the name of his father, Harry Montagu Philby, which is compatible with the details of the parish registers containing the names of Philby's father.³² Abdullah al-'ūthimin asserted that Philby's second name, St John, may have derived from the province of this name in Ceylon, where Philby was born.³³ His third name, Bridger, came from the Bridger family, which resided in Chigwell and enjoyed close a friendship with Philby's family.³⁴ In addition, with the exception of the British documents and Western and Arabic historical authors, among his family and close friends Philby was known as and called St. John.³⁵ In 1930 and under the advice of Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby changed his name to Abdullah Philby when he made his religious conversion to Islam.³⁶

Apart from Philby, her second child, who was nicknamed Jack, May had three other boys. The eldest was Ralph Montagu, who was born in 1884 in Taylors in Chigwell, where his parents were on holiday; he was nicknamed Tom. The third male was Harold Payne, born in 1887 in Ceylon, who was known as Tim. The fourth boy, Dennis, was born in England in 1889 and was called Paddy by his family.³⁷ Hammād and other

³² Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.8. See the name of Philby's father in the *parish record collection*, Chigwell, Essex, p.49, vol.4A.

³³ Al-'ūthimin (trans.), *Be'thāh ela Najd: St. John. B. Philby* [Philby Mission to Najd] (Riyadh: al-'bikan Library, 1998), p.53, translator's comments.

³⁴ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.8.

³⁵ Author's interview with Michael Engelbach, London, 14 August 2014.

³⁶ Regarding Philby's new name and his conversion to Islam, see Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.275-320; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.151-162; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, pp.147-149; Naser al- Nashabibi, *Madha jara fi al-Shraq al-osad* [What happened in the Middle East] (Beirut: Commercial Office publication, 1961), pp.160-161; al-Man'a, *Tawhid al- Māmlākah al- arabiah al- Sū'diah* [Arabia Unified], pp.272-274.

³⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.6.

historians alleged that Philby had four brothers – Tom, Jack, Tim and Paddy.³⁸ However, this claim is undoubtedly mistaken. Philby, in fact, had only three brothers, Ralph, Harold and Dennis; the name Jack (a diminutive of ‘John’) was the nickname of Philby himself.³⁹

It is worth noting how many members of Philby’s family worked for the British Empire. Apart from Philby, his three brothers all served their country. While his eldest brother, Tom, worked in the Royal Indian Navy; the third brother, Tim, was an army captain, who fought in France during WWI and was killed in 1916 at Ypres; Paddy, the youngest brother, was also a soldier, a sub-lieutenant in Bombay province, later also killed in action at Ypres at the beginning of WWI.⁴⁰

Philby stated that his mother travelled to England in 1888 for the birth of her fourth child.⁴¹ She left her three older boys in Ceylon in the care of an Irish nursemaid who was extremely religious and was always reminding Philby and his brothers about the Crucifixion or telling frightening tales of the punishments in wait for sinners. The Irish nanny was a Roman Catholic and had a firm conviction that the correct approach to

³⁸ Hammād, *Philby: Ket’h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.27; Abu al- Rab, ‘John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], p.5; Hamdi, ‘Nashat Philby’ [The Background of Philby], p.262.

³⁹ Philby asserted precisely that he had three siblings; see his autobiography, p. 11; Author’s interview with Michael Engelbach, 20 November 2014, London. Regarding Philby’s nickname. See Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.6. Also, see Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows], p.233; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.3.

⁴⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.26-27,34,45-46.

⁴¹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.10-11.

raising children was to fill them with the fear of God, people and the universe.⁴² Such fear and cruelty seem to have had a comprehensive impact on Philby's personality, in particular on the Christian conservatism of his childhood and early youth, which persisted until his time at Trinity College, Cambridge. In a revealing passage of his autobiography, he stated:

I suppose I was born a Christian and a Conservative, though life in Ceylon had scarcely been affected by such considerations despite the lurid insistence of our nurse on a proper respect for the wrath of God. I was certainly a Christian and a Conservative when, thirteen years later, I went to Cambridge as an undergraduate to find honest and serious-minded people like myself challenging the whole basis of such an ethic ... And when, in the last lap of my educational career, I came to doubt the justice of my convictions, I discarded them without remorse or bitterness. I had seen the light and never thought to temporize with expediency.⁴³

His father suffered business difficulties due to the coffee blight, which had started in the 1880s and extended to the highlands of Ceylon. In 1890, it destroyed the livelihood of all the farmers who had not been enterprising enough to change the produce of their land and transfer to tea cultivation. Although the father suffered a relatively light loss, he took to wine and women to assuage his woes.⁴⁴ May, Philby's mother, reached a point where she could no longer tolerate her husband and his inconsiderate escapades. Therefore, in 1891, she took the important decision to leave him and depart Ceylon.⁴⁵ However, Hammād presented an unimaginable story regarding the departure of May and her boys. He mentioned that it was Philby's father, not May, who decided

⁴² Ibid, p.12.

⁴³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.15.

⁴⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.6.

⁴⁵ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.230; Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows], p.233.

that the family should leave Ceylon in order to have his sons taught in English institutions.⁴⁶ Hammād's claim seems not to be quite logical. This is because Philby's father, who was suffering from a lack of money, did not show due responsibility towards his wife and children. Even after the departure of May with her little children to England, he did not regularly send them money.⁴⁷ After sailing for a few weeks, they arrived in England, where Philby's grandparents were waiting for her and took the family home with them and stayed at Princes Square in London. Philby remembered that life in his grandparents' house was simple and unpretentious. All the members of the family joined in daily prayer and they tended to go to Church on Sundays as a staple of existence.⁴⁸

Although the house was large, the grandmother, Emily, could not endure great noise and May realised that she had to look for an independent way of raising her children. She decided to move out of the house and at first chose rooms for herself and the four boys to settle in.⁴⁹ Life was a struggle and something akin to the life of a nomad until the year 1903. Philby realised how much his mother had suffered from the lack of money and how she had fought poverty with no support from her husband.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.28.

⁴⁷ Halperin suggested that Philby's father sometimes sent money to his impecunious wife. See his book, *Eminent Georgians*, p.132. Craig also remarked in his article that May left her husband because he was unsatisfactory and had always kept her and his children short of money. See his article, 'Philby, Harry St John Bridger (1885–1960)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 13 Nov 2014.

⁴⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.14-15.

⁴⁹ Hammād, *a'medat al-esti'mar fi al-'alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World] (Cairo: The National House Publication, 1935), pp.33.

⁵⁰ Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows], p.233.

It is probable that the social and economic difficulties which Philby experienced generated in him a spirit of challenge, determination and perseverance as well as the ambition underlying his multi-talented competence in both planning and implementing projects. Monroe noted that his relationship with his mother was the strongest of all the brothers. He never forgot her and, as soon as he started working, he continued to support her financially, sending substantial funds to her every month.⁵¹

The first stages of Philby's education were in Rothe's nursery, which was in Westbourne Grove, London.⁵² His honourable, honest, religious and rigorous grandfather, John Duncan, paid his fees and those of his elder brother Tom.⁵³ It is noteworthy that his support and encouragement played a vital role in Philby's education; without his assistance, Philby might perhaps have chosen another outlet for his ambition and a different career.

Of this kindergarten period, Philby had little memory. However, he provided considerable evidence of being a vigorous and hard-working boy. His vitality, energy and sometimes fractious behaviour surprised his uncles and aunts, who, true to British traditions, tended to be more still and phlegmatic and who considered Philby and his

⁵¹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.21.

⁵² Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.16.

⁵³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.7.

brothers to be strange creatures originating from the outskirts of a very different ethnic realm.⁵⁴

The family considered that Philby and his elder brother should be transferred to a boys' school which offered more discipline and good order than the kindergarten with its girlish atmosphere. The boarding school that the family chose was under the supervision of a Mr. William Keeling⁵⁵ in Gloucester.⁵⁶ Once again, the maternal grandfather paid the boys' fees. Here, Philby was influenced considerably, not only by the teaching but also by its concept of life. Montie (Harry Montagu), Philby's father, appeared suddenly and suggested in 1894 that Philby and Tom should be entrusted to the school at Henfield House in Sussex, where the education was perfect and the amusements varied.⁵⁷

After this visit to England, his father never saw Philby again. Harry was drowning in the difficulties of his financial problems. For a small salary, he worked in Ceylon and then he decided to fight in the South African War in a Bombardier regiment.⁵⁸ In 1907, he sent a letter telling Philby that he was still alive, but was remorseful to be so far away; his difficult circumstances had forced him to join the army. Although Philby kept this

⁵⁴ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.17.

⁵⁵ William Hulton Keeling (1840–1916), was one of the most important grammar school teachers. Between 1849 and 1859 he was a scholar of Manchester Grammar School. He became headmaster's assistant in Rossall School in 1865 until 1867. In 1871, he was headmaster of Bradford Grammar school and remained there until his death. See, David Smith, 'Keeling, William Hulton (1840–1916)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 14 Nov 2014.

⁵⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.17.

⁵⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.7; Hamdi, 'Nashat Philby' [The Background of Philby], p.262.

⁵⁸ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.132.

letter, he did not reply to it,⁵⁹ which may show how upset he was that his father had deserted his mother and that his father's negligence was the unforgivable sin.⁶⁰ Consequently, it may not be surprising to discover the few historical events in Philby's autobiography that portray his dissatisfaction with his father.

Philby indicated that his departure to boarding school was not easy for his mother, whom he left in floods of tears.⁶¹ His treatment at this school had a major impact on him and formed some of his lifelong predilections. For instance, he was impressed by the Classics, bird-watching and the game of cricket.⁶² It can be assumed that boarding school was his gateway to his hobbies and it conferred its distinctive mark on his later work as one of the most important explorers in the history of the Arabian Peninsula.⁶³ Though the teaching techniques at Henfield House were old-fashioned, the framework of its interests was immense. The aim of the staff was to infuse knowledge of the Classics into the pupils' minds. Such an education was intended to create scholars in various subjects among the Humanities.⁶⁴ Combined with the method of teaching, it may be noted that some of the personalities of the staff had a significant impact on

⁵⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.7-8.

⁶⁰ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.132.

⁶¹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.18.

⁶² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.7.

⁶³ The wealth of Philby's hobbies concerning the natural world was remarkable. His interests were based not only on collecting insects or birds but also on mammals, astronomy, geology, botany, reptiles and amphibians in which he took considerable interest. After his incredible explorations in Arabia, he provided the British Museum with hundreds of specimens, which may be seen as a valuable gift for scientists. See his hobbies and efforts in MECA, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, *Philby collection*, Re.GB165-0229, F. 7/1/1; 7/1/2; 7/1/3; 7/1/4; 7/1/5; 7/1/6; 7/1/7.

⁶⁴ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.19-20.

Philby and this is likely to have resulted in his diligence and success in the later stages of his education.

After more than two years at Henfield House, the dutiful Philby assumed that it was time to increase his knowledge and competitiveness in another institution. In view of his mother's poverty, his maternal grandfather, in 1897, again contributed the boys' tuition fees. Philby, Tom, and his young uncle were dispatched to J. V. Milne's school, Street Court. Philby was well prepared and in the preliminary examination to determine his level of proficiency, he outdid his brother and his uncle and was placed in the first class.⁶⁵ In studying, Philby performed outstandingly and, within a year, he had been awarded a scholarship to Dover College. However, the headmaster of the Milne school, who had the ability to discover talented students, advised May not to accept this award. He persuaded her that Philby deserved better and should apply in the following year for a place at Westminster School, where he could be better educated than anywhere else.⁶⁶ From this advice, it is evident that Philby performed outstandingly as a student; his record at the school was distinctive enough to be admired not only by his headmaster but also his teachers.

It is likely that, while Henfield House provided Philby with the pillars of his education, Street Court defined in him a sense of what education meant and what its purposes were. In addition, J.V. Milne was possibly one of the most important educators and

⁶⁵ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.20-21. Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.230.

⁶⁶ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.7; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.5.

Philby's time at Street Court marked a milestone in his life. Milne was a believer in discipline and, although demanding in character, he mitigated it with tenderness. Arriving in 1894, when he started as a teacher, he went on to become headmaster; Street Court was one of his achievements. Moreover, other members of staff held a conspicuous place in Philby's memory. Mr Chittenden, the deputy head, who also went on to become its headmaster, was good at teaching, although he had no patience with his students. H.S. Ladell was the second master, who taught games. He too had a great impact on Philby, through being so devoted to his career.⁶⁷

Westminster

Westminster may be described as one of the greatest public schools in the United Kingdom. The founder and the date when it was established are still uncertain, but the school seems to have developed from the original school appended to the Benedictine Monastery of Westminster.⁶⁸ In 1898, at the age of 12, Philby took up the challenge to enter Westminster and won a Queen's Scholarship, which, as Brown stated, may be considered a great act of personal fulfilment.⁶⁹ Westminster School archives show the subjects of the Challenge Examination that students had to pass before enrolling in the school. It consisted of papers on Latin Prose, Latin Verse, Latin Grammar, Latin Unseen Translation, Greek Prose, Greek Iambics, Greek Unseen Translation, Practical

⁶⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.22-24.

⁶⁸ John Carleton, *Westminster* (London: Blackie and Son Ltd., 1938), p.1.

⁶⁹ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.5; Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.230.

Chemistry, French, Euclid, Scripture Knowledge, General Grammar and Maths.⁷⁰ The papers of the Candidates Minors positively indicate how high Philby's marks were compared with other candidates' who were older than him. He was one of the best candidates in order of merit, achieving 336 marks in total.⁷¹

It may be added that, by entering Westminster, Philby proved that he was not only an intelligent student but also, despite his family's poverty, was studying very hard to advance in knowledge and achieving success.

Although the teaching was one of its strengths, the life there, as Monroe suggested, was rough and challenging, somewhat resembling life as a soldier.⁷² In line with Victorian expectations, the boys ate simple food, took regular cold baths and rose early.⁷³ During the six years that Philby spent at Westminster, it is probable that he learnt discipline, confidence, responsibility and the maintenance and enforcement of law. It may be inferred that his ability to thrive in this environment led to his becoming the captain of the school.⁷⁴

During Philby's time at Westminster, the first headmaster was Gunion Rutherford,⁷⁵ who had a remarkable personality.⁷⁶ Although he attracted the animosity and criticism

⁷⁰ The Challenge Examination Paper, *Westminster Archives*, no. WS/EXA/1/1/2/1898.

⁷¹ Candidates Minors, *Westminster Archives*, no. WS/EXA/1/1/3/1/1898.

⁷² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.7.

⁷³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.25.

⁷⁴ Philby became captain of the school in 1903. See, Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.29.

⁷⁵ William Gunion Rutherford (1853–1907) was a classical scholar. Greek was his favourite subject and he started to publish his works in 1878. What distinguished him from others were his remarkable reforms at

of conventional Conservatives, he rejected the charge that the school's outlook was based only on its ancient past. The ultimate radicalism of his reforms was outstanding. For instance, he abolished the supremacy of 'college' and inaugurated the Queen's scholarships to others, in particular the more intelligent of the town boys who were non-scholars.⁷⁷

Philby was deeply impressed by him, although Rutherford assumed that he should not teach students below the Seventh Form and Philby viewed this as a flaw in his perfection. Philby had the opportunity, when he was in the Sixth Form, of a closer approach to Rutherford, for he spent an hour each week discussing and interpreting the Greek Testament with him.⁷⁸ Such an opportunity perhaps shows Philby's desire from an early age to increase his knowledge in Classical subjects in particular. In addition, it can be assumed that Westminster was the main factor in creating Philby's interest in Ancient History and turning him into a Classical scholar. Consequently, it is not surprising to find Philby, after more than a quarter of a century, producing a mass of writings about the ancient history of the Arabian Peninsula and collecting its inscriptions.⁷⁹

Westminster; he created a modern side which contributed to the improvement of the old school. See, John Sargeant, 'Rutherford, William Gunion (1853–1907)', Rev. Richard Smail, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 15 Nov 2014.

⁷⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.24-25.

⁷⁷ Carleton, *Westminster*, pp.64-67; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.9.

⁷⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.24.

⁷⁹ Philby's writings on Ancient History can be found in the following books: *Sheba's daughter* (London: Methuen, 1939); *The background of Islam; being a sketch of Arabia in pre- Islamic Times* (Alexandria, Whitehead, Morris, 1947); *The Queen of Shaba* (London: Quartet, 1981); *The Land of Midian* (London:

Rutherford's successor was James Gow,⁸⁰ who came from Nottingham High School. He was also condemned for his reforms and innovations. He fought the old customs of the school and one day came to school wearing a short jacket rather than the customary cassock.⁸¹ He was gifted in many diverse subjects, such as Classics, mathematics and languages, and Philby believed that the three years that he spent with him were the happiest of his life.⁸² Philby stated:

At any rate by the time that he became head of the school and of College in 1903-4, Gow seemed to have settled down comfortably to an easy stroke and I do not remember a single occasion of serious disagreement between us on any matter connected with the maintenance of discipline, though there were matters on which, as I see it in retrospect, he might well have questioned my action or judgement had he had the slightest desire to interfere with our customs. He proved indeed to be a pillar of strength to the monitorial body, which responded to his support by working with him on a basis of mutual trust and friendliness ... a man of such sterling good sense and imperturbability. Gow was not born great and no one ever sought to thrust greatness upon him, but I think he did achieve greatness.⁸³

The quotation above well illustrates the relationship between Gow and Philby especially when the latter became captain of the school in 1903. In Philby's judgement, Gow encouraged students to work freely without any major intervention so this might strengthen their capacity and self-confidence to cope with later issues. However, the

Benn, 1957). Also see his article co-written with A. S. Tritton, 'Najran Inscriptions', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (Oct, 1944), pp.119-129. Philby was the main contributor and supervisor to the following books: Sir Alexander Kennedy, *Petra: Its History and Monuments* (London: Country, 1925).

⁸⁰ James Gow (1854-1923) was a scholar in classics and maths. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge in 1871. He became a fellow of Trinity in 1876. He wrote books of which the most important was *A Short History of Greek Mathematics*. For further accounts see: T.L.H., 'Obituary: Dr. James Gow', *Nature* (24 March 1923), no.2786 vol.111, p.403.

⁸¹ Carleton, *Westminster*, p.69.

⁸² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.9; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.132.

⁸³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.27.

quotation also shows Philby's fascination with the ideas of fame and self-aggrandizement. It also reflects how much Philby wanted to be in contact with a great man such as Gow, working with him and being close enough to appreciate his qualities and praise them.

A further opportunity to increase the knowledge that Philby was accumulating was to attend debates in the two Houses of Parliament. The archives of the Westminster magazine, *The Elizabethan*, show moreover that Philby was an active participant in the school's debating society, attending meetings on many occasions and showing his capacity for knowledge and debate. For instance, on 6 March 1902, the debating society met to discuss the motion: 'That in the opinion of this House the system of education at the Universities is in urgent need of reform.' In his speech Philby stated that there were two types of men who went to university: one group went to have a good time, the other went to get the degree they needed to obtain a job. Those who were not sporty, who wanted to work or had something useful to do, were not idle. It would be foolish to waste your money at university if you could not afford it. If somebody needed a profession, he would go somewhere else to learn about it.⁸⁴

From the above it may be assumed that being exposed to parliamentary debating would strengthen Philby's personality and self-esteem, as well as adding to his scientific

⁸⁴ *The Elizabethan*, Westminster, April 1902, vol.x, no.12.

knowledge. During his study in Westminster, Halperin described him as a successful student who performed well in all of his academic subjects.⁸⁵

The wider activities of the school may be seen as a further influence in terms of increasing Philby's knowledge. He was an enthusiastic participant in several different fields. For example, he very much enjoyed games such as football and cricket, where he "harvested every available prize".⁸⁶ He was stocky and generally healthy. Sometimes, if he was beaten at cricket he became upset⁸⁷ but in general his performance at this game was remarkable.⁸⁸

At the same time, he was an excellent chess player, reflecting his intellectual side; for his proficiency he was elected president of the school chess club in 1903.⁸⁹ In addition, he was very keen on social and intellectual activities even if they took place in the early morning, for he would awaken his friends early to read Greek plays in the belief that they were easier to understand if read in a group.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.132; Craig, 'Philby, Harry St John Bridger (1885–1960)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 27 Jan 2015.

⁸⁶ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.231.

⁸⁷ *The Elizabethan*, Westminster, April 1903, vol.x, no.22; June 1904, vol. xi, no.4; Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Window], p.233; Author's interview with Michael Engelbach, 20 November 2014, London.

⁸⁸ For further accounts of Philby's activities at cricket and football, see *The Elizabethan*, Westminster, May 1901, vol.x, no.4; December 1902, vol.x, no.16; December 1903, vol.x, no.28; February 1903, vol.x, no.20; May 1903, vol.x, no.23; February 1904, vol.xi, no.1; March 1904, vol.xi, no.2; June 1904, vol.xi, no.4; July 1904, vol.xi, no.4, 1904; August 1904, vol.xi, no.6; October 1904, vol.xi, no.7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, April 1903, vol. x, no.22; November 1903, vol. x, no.27.

⁹⁰ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.132.

At this stage, Monroe suggested that Philby's speeches in the school debates tended to be in favour of orthodoxy and the establishment. In 1903, he supported the employers as opposed to their employees.⁹¹ However, the school debating society met on 21 January 1904 and discussed the crisis between Japan and Russia. Philby, in the view of Monroe, appeared to contradict himself when he took the side of Russia in its war against Japan.⁹² Indeed, it seems unusual that a Conservative should support Russia at a time when the British Government had signed a treaty with Japan in 1902 that posited Russia as Britain's traditional rival in Asia.⁹³ But before examining such a contradiction, note should be taken of Philby's views in the magazine of the school. It runs:

The OPPOSER (Philby) defended Russia. He said Japan had no more right to Korea than England had to France. Russia, as she had been checked in Turkey, had every reason to expand; she was in favour of peace if possible. Japan does not want English help, but if she were defeated we should be drawn into the struggle. Although it is the general opinion that Russia is simply delaying to get troops ready, the Czar, who is all-powerful, is himself in favour of peace. To favour Japan because she is the smaller nation is absurd and unpractical.⁹⁴

The above paraphrase, although showing Philby's support for Russia against Japan, does not reflect that he altogether opposed the British policy of support for Japan. Philby at this stage was 18 years old. He was speaking in a debating society which kept

⁹¹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.9.

⁹² Ibid,

⁹³ For further account about the Anglo-Japanese Agreement, see G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the origins of the war 1898-1914, vol.II The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Franco- British Entente* (London: H.M.S.O., 1927), pp.89-137. Regarding the British- Russian rivalry during the 19th century, see Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the final struggle for central Asia* (London: I.B Tauris, 2002).

⁹⁴ *The Elizabethan*, Westminster, March 1904, vol. xi, no.2.

the formal roles of Proposer, Seconder and Opposer and the reason behind this formality was probably to encourage students to defend any position critically and logically in order to expand their capacity for learning and critical thinking, teaching them to accept differing views in a friendly atmosphere. Furthermore, Philby, during his time at Westminster, represented the idea of conservatism and Meyer and Shareen suggest that Philby, in this period, “defined himself as a Conservative and Christian”.⁹⁵ Even after entering Cambridge, Philby’s orthodox views remained; they led him to take the side of the British Government and criticise the Liberals who had objected to the policy of the British Government in the Denshawai episode in Egypt in 1906, as described below.

It seems plain that Philby was whole-heartedly under the influence of the thought and tradition at Westminster in his time there. Although substantial reforms had been introduced by Rutherford and Gow, Philby was still Conservative in his outlook. This may be interpreted as his taking the side of the Conservative staff in their struggle against the reformers. However, once he became an undergraduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, Philby changed his ideas and became more open to logical and rational thinking than to retaining his conventional habits of mind. Financially speaking, life was still a struggle for Philby’s mother. In 1903, therefore, her brothers lent her enough money to open a boarding-house in London in order to support her boys.⁹⁶ Although

⁹⁵ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.231.

⁹⁶ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.10. In his book (*Treason in the Blood*, p.4), Brown argued that May’s father, General John Duncan, was the man who lent her the money to set up her business in 1903.

Tom, her eldest son, had enlisted in the Royal Indian Navy, the three younger boys had to adjust to the new environment as best they could. The mother surrendered her room to Philby when he visited them; he stayed with her during his final term at school. May's venture was successful; all her rooms were occupied by well-disposed people and many friends from India and the army boarded with her. While Tim and Paddy wanted to be soldiers, Philby was trying to join and perhaps to get a high place in the ICS.⁹⁷

This raises the question of why Philby sought to be a member of the ICS. The answers may be wide-ranging. First, Philby was probably influenced by some members of his family who had occupied high positions in India. For instance, as previously noted his mother's father, John Duncan, had spent many years in serving the British Empire in India and then became a Deputy Assistant-General at the War Office. A second reason is his urge to be famous like his maternal grandfather. He was remarkable for this, given his background and may have believed that a shortcut to it was associated with India. Philby stated:

It was certainly due to him [sc. his maternal grandfather] I was earmarked at a very tender age for the Indian Civil Service, which was regarded in our perhaps excessively military family circle of those days as a glittering prize only [for] the best Brains in the

However, Brown's statement is undoubtedly erroneous because May's father died in 1898. See an account of his death in Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.4.

⁹⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.10.

country! The army and Navy were good enough in their way for the average boy who could be crammed into them at a pinch.⁹⁸

Thus the second motive may be associated with personal pride. Patriotism may be considered the third justification. Like any British patriot, Philby may have believed that serving his country was an essential duty and what he did for the British Empire illustrates his national loyalty and sense of duty, despite the fact that he later became, after his resignation from British service, the most important opponent of the policies of the British Government in the Middle East, India and Europe.

When Philby became captain of the school and a King's Scholar in 1903, he was widely criticised by some historians for the autocracy that he imposed during his captaincy. It seems that those historians' opinions were based on the account by Philby's forebear and associate, Percival Waterfield,⁹⁹ who described Philby's captaincy as a mixture of good and evil. He stated:

That he[Philby] raised morals from the low estate into which they had fallen [and] ... restored order and discipline where before had been little less than chaos, I do not deny. Nevertheless, although his system will I trust bring forth good fruit, at the moment it ... [is] not a success. Autocracy was his aim and autocratic rule his avowed intention. He meant to rule with an iron hand and had not the good sense to conceal it

⁹⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.4.

⁹⁹ Sir Alexander Percival Waterfield, (1888–1965) was a civil servant. He started his career by joining the Treasury in 1911. Between 1934 and 1939 he became Principal Assistant Secretary to the Treasury. In 1939 he was assigned the post of the first civil service commissioner, remaining there until his retirement in 1951. For more details, see Richard A. Chapman, 'Waterfield, Sir (Alexander) Percival (1888–1965)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 17 April 2017.

in a velvet glove. The result was that his year was conspicuous for internal dissensions.¹⁰⁰

In addition, during his captaincy, Philby was also described as a student who had some fierce encounters with masters and members of the school chess club. Furthermore, he was disdainful of the day-boys at his school, who were non-scholars, and he wanted to challenge teachers rather than cooperate with them.¹⁰¹ However, it should be borne in mind that Philby, at this period of his life, seems to have been a Conservative and conventional in outlook. He tended entirely to enhance the role of Westminster in practice, its tradition and its strict discipline. According to the old system of the school, the students who had gained scholarships were the impressive ones and were given greater freedom than the town boys. This, coupled with his own propensities, therefore, discouraged any reforms that might have advantaged the town boys and he tried to instil strict obedience to the rules. This may explain why Waterfield was so censorious of Philby's behaviour. However, it should be said that, while his way of enforcing discipline was at fault, his intention was to be truthful and impartial, as Monroe claimed.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.11; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.132-133; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.6.

¹⁰¹ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.133; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.6.

¹⁰² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.12.

Trinity College, Cambridge

According to the record of Westminster School, Philby finished his studies there in 1903.¹⁰³ Westminster had long been connected with Trinity College, Cambridge and Philby was awarded a scholarship in Classics in March 1904, joining the university seven months later.¹⁰⁴ In Cambridge, Philby encountered a new world in terms of philosophical sparkle, but not one that restricted his opportunities to amass knowledge according to the methods that he had learnt at Westminster. The method of teaching in Cambridge was based on criticism and discussion and was the most fundamental element of university life.¹⁰⁵

Although Philby admired this way of thinking, in particular when discussing issues of morality and the universe, he was not convinced at first by the new freedom of thinking until the final year of his studies. He was at first an advocate for the orthodox and the teachings of Christ.¹⁰⁶ For instance, his Conservative outlook is shown in a speech at the Cambridge Union: he criticised the Liberals who had opposed the policy

¹⁰³ J.B. Whitmore, G.R.Y. Radcliffe and D.C. Simpson, *The Record of Westminster* (London: Barnet: The Stellar Press, 1963), vol.3,p.301; Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.29; Craig, 'Philby, Harry St John Bridger (1885–1960)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 27 Jan 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.133; Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.231.

¹⁰⁵ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.15; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.7.

¹⁰⁶ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.133.

of the British authority in the Denshawai episode in Egypt, in which some Egyptian farmers had been killed by British soldiers in 1906.¹⁰⁷

It can be assumed in his defence that Philby would have been influenced by the conditions in which he had lived and been raised. Moreover, the atmosphere at Westminster, which was controlled by conventional conservatism, seems to have made a significant impact on his personality and above all on his religious views.

Philby became a member of the Trinity College Sunday Essay Society, which tackled controversial questions on subjects linked to religion. When he was asked to provide a paper, he chose as his title: '*The convenience of convention*'. In this paper, he enthusiastically defended orthodoxy.¹⁰⁸ However, a certain diffidence and internal conflict in his personality revealed itself after this and he began to embrace free thought, Socialism and agnosticism.¹⁰⁹

Of the scholars who taught Philby as an undergraduate and had a major influence on him, Edward Browne¹¹⁰ appears to have been the most inspirational. Browne was

¹⁰⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.14. Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.133. Regarding the Denshawai incident, see Jamal Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp.62-63; Kimberly Luke, 'Order or Justice: The Denshawai Incident and British Imperialism', *History Compass*, 2007, vol.5 (2), pp.278-287.

¹⁰⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.16. Philby's essay can be found in MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/1/1.

¹⁰⁹ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby A Piece of Arab History], p.30; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.134.

¹¹⁰ Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) was one of the great British scholars. Persia was the central object of his studies and he wrote and translated major books and articles about Persian literature and history. See his biography in A. J. Arberry, *Oriental essays: portraits of seven scholars* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960), pp.160–196; E. D. Ross, 'Browne, Edward Granville (1862–1926)', Rev. John Gurney, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 13 Nov 2014; Christopher N. B. Ross, 'Lord Curzon and

extremely enthusiastic with a great depth of knowledge in Persian literature and many of the students who were trained by him later held influential positions in the ICS, such as Gerard Young,¹¹¹ who rose from the rank of district officer to the secretaryship of the Army Department of the Government of India in 1926.¹¹² Philby was one who was influenced by Browne's regard for the East and its nations¹¹³ and, more importantly, by the spirit of free speech, especially when it became known that Browne was the most important critic of British policy before 1914. Philby's relations with Browne continued after Philby's graduation from Cambridge and even when he was working for Britain between 1908 and 1924. The private letters between Browne and Philby illustrate the close relationship and how keen they were to share a knowledge of the Middle East. One of the letters shows Browne's concern to arrange a lecture for Philby in Trinity College about his explorations in Arabia between 1917 and 1918.¹¹⁴

When it came to encyclopaedic knowledge and the ideal way to address it, John Mayor¹¹⁵ was a teacher whom no one could defeat. William Ridgeway¹¹⁶ was another

E. G. Browne Confront the Persian Question', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 52, no. 2 (Jun., 2009), pp.385-411.

¹¹¹ Gerard Young (1884–1965), was an administrator in India who had some knowledge of archaeology. See his biography in: Dilys Powell, 'Young, Gerard Mackworth- (1884–1965)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 11 Sept 2014.

¹¹² *The Times*, 29 Nov 1965.

¹¹³ E. D. Ross, 'Browne, Edward Granville (1862–1926)', Rev. John Gurney, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 13 Nov 2014; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.32.

¹¹⁴ Browne to Philby, 10 May 1920, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.2/3/4/2.

¹¹⁵ John Eyton Bickersteth Mayor (1825–1910) may be considered one of the greatest classical scholars. From an early age, he showed an interest in books and after an attack of scarlet fever, spent more than two years at home, reading and learning Greek and Latin with the help of his mother. In October 1844 Mayor entered St John's College, Cambridge. In 1849, he started his career as a master at Marlborough College. In 1853, Mayor decided to return to St John's, where he taught and published his books. For

who increased Philby's store of knowledge, in particular by his unexpected theories and unorthodox explanations "of the sources from which they were derived",¹¹⁷ which may have provided Philby's scientific methodology in searching for knowledge from original sources.

Although Philby was not affiliated with any groups, such as the Fabians, he made friends among people of all groups, owing to his passion for reading plays. As far as possible, he devoted his spare time to reading plays and writing jingles about his friends.¹¹⁸ With regard to acting, Philby took a small role in a play by Molière called *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*. In 1907 he also had a part in the Marlowe Society's production of *Doctor Faustus*.¹¹⁹ It can be seen that Philby's acquaintance with plays and his participation on the stage may have helped to open up a new horizon of social knowledge which led him to modify his Conservative outlook and free his thinking.

Philby became active as a member of the Trinity Debating Society, whose meetings were held on Friday evenings, but this seems to have been designed for thoughtless students who wanted to debate trivial subjects. In one of these discussions, Philby was

more details, see J. E. Sandys, 'Mayor, John Eyton Bickersteth (1825–1910)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed, 17 Nov 2014.

¹¹⁶ Sir William Ridgeway (1858–1926) was a remarkable scholar of classics and modern literature. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge where he won all the chief classical prizes. In 1883 Ridgeway was assigned to the chair of Greek at University College, Cork. In 1892, after publishing his first book he was appointed to the Disney chair of archaeology at Cambridge. See, A.C. Haddon, 'Obituary: Sir William Ridgeway', *Nature*, (21 August, 1926), no. 2964, vol.118, pp.275-276; R. S. Conway, 'Ridgeway, Sir William (1858–1926)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 17 Nov 2014.

¹¹⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days* pp.32-33.

¹¹⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.13-14.

¹¹⁹ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.134.

asked to speak on the abolition of the ordinary male dress of the day. Afterwards, he became the secretary of this society. At Cambridge, Philby was not as noticeable as he had been at school. However, he was dynamic and was popular enough in his last undergraduate term to become president of Trinity's 'M and S' Society, as well as participating in intercollegiate play-reading.¹²⁰

Concerning his educational achievements, Philby does not mention in his autobiography that he was greatly upset when he heard that Donald Robertson¹²¹ had taken first place in the first part of the Classical Tripos, leaving him second.¹²² After such dissatisfaction and discomfiture, Philby conceived the plan of changing to a degree in modern languages. Therefore, in 1906, he arranged a summer holiday starting in Paris and roved around France on his bicycle. Moreover, he proceeded to develop his German by spending two holidays in Germany, studying harder than before. Monroe stated:

Within days he had learnt the distressing news that whereas Donald Robertson had got a First in the first part of the Classical Tripos, he had only got a second. Worried and humiliated, he decided to switch to a subject at which he could shine – modern languages. He spent the summer vacation of 1906 working at French in Paris, and

¹²⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.15; Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.232.

¹²¹ Donald Struan Robertson (1885–1961) was a classical scholar. He entered Westminster school as a day boy where he was then able to gain a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge. Regarding his career, in 1911, he was assigned as an assistant lecturer at Trinity, where he spent most of his life, teaching and publishing his important books on Greek and Roman writers. For more accounts, see D. W. Lucas, 'Robertson, Donald Struan (1885–1961)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 19 Nov 2014.

¹²² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.17.

bicycling about France ... He improved his German by spending two vacations with a family at Elberfeld with whom he kept up for years.¹²³

Hence, it may be assumed that his efforts point to a state of ambition, perseverance and enthusiasm to be the first among his fellows which was rewarded by outstanding proficiency in modern languages. Consequently, it may not be surprising to find that he was awarded a First in modern languages.¹²⁴ In 1907, while he was in France studying the language, his mother, May, forwarded a telegram telling him that he had won a Trinity scholarship, which would enable him to spend another year in Cambridge, after which he would have to do well in the entrance exam of the ICS.¹²⁵

Philby was accepted for the ICS and stayed in Cambridge for a further year to study oriental languages under the supervision of Browne and Reynold Nicholson,¹²⁶ studying the law and the history of India, Hindustani and Persian before his sailing to Bombay in order to start his career with the ICS.¹²⁷

¹²³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.17.

¹²⁴ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.134.

¹²⁵ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby A Piece of Arab History], p.30; Hamdi, 'Nashat Philby' [The Background of Philby], p.263.

¹²⁶ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868–1945) was a scholar of oriental languages. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge where he was influenced by E.G. Browne in terms of reading Persian. It was known that his interests in oriental languages derived from time spent in his grandfather's library where he read collections of Arabic and Persian manuscripts. He became interested in Sufism and translated four fundamental Sufi works. For further details, see: Arberry, *Oriental essays: Portraits of seven scholars*, pp.197-232; H. A. R. Gibb, 'Nicholson, Reynold Alleyne (1868–1945)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 13 Nov 2014.

¹²⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.31, Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.134. Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.233.



Figure 1.
Philby at Cambridge, 1904-8
Source: Philby, *Arabian Days*.

Civil servant in India: 1908-1915

Before the thesis touches on Philby as a civil servant in India, it should briefly describe the ICS. The term 'India Civil Service' (or ICS) was first used by the East India Company, which was established formally in 1600, as a term for its establishment of non-military personnel. Its civilian members were originally traders, who were known as civil servants to distinguish them from the members whose duties were naval or military. It is believed that this term was well-established by 1765.¹²⁸ According to Ann Ewing, the ICS was a tiny administrative elite and the recruitment of its members was based on competitive examination held first in London and afterwards in India. Members of the ICS were appointed under Section XXXII of the Government of India Act of 1858.¹²⁹ However, after the Indian rebellion India was transferred to the British Crown and the ICS was headed by a member of the British Cabinet, the Secretary of State for India.¹³⁰ The ICS sought to appoint male university graduates from Oxford and Cambridge,¹³¹ of whom Philby was one. Even so, the ICS reforms were incremental rather than radical. Its three most far-reaching reforms, altering its whole approach, were to bring in competitive examinations instead of patronage in recruitment; more organised and

¹²⁸ Edward Blunt, *The I.C.S. The Indian Civil Service* (London: Faber and Farber Ltd., 1937), p.1

¹²⁹ Ann Ewing, 'Administating India: The Indian Civil Service', *History Today*, 1 June 1982, vol.32, p.43.

¹³⁰ Blunt, *The I.C.S. The Indian Civil Service*, pp.50-51.

¹³¹ B. Misra, *The Bureaucracy in India: An Historical Analysis of development up to 1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp.102-103.

less ad hoc training for staff; and the employment of a far greater proportion of indigenous workers.¹³²

On 6 November 1908, Philby left Liverpool for India and arrived in Bombay on 1st December¹³³ from where he was ordered to proceed to Lahore. Philby, accompanied by Gerard Young, a new recruit to the ICS, took the Panjab Express to Lahore. On the second night of the journey, near the district of Ambala, their train crashed head-on with another express. The accident would have left Philby greatly shocked, as a survivor of almost certain death, who saw a huge number of corpses and casualties. Furthermore, given his youth and inexperience, this dramatic introduction could easily have been left psychologically affected, even wishing to give up his new career and return to England. However, although there is no direct evidence of this, Philby never allowed this incident to disrupt his plans for the future. Consequently, after 12 hours, he reached Government House in Lahore and the hospitality of Louis William Dane, the Lieutenant-Governor.¹³⁴

¹³² Mohammad Khan, 'Civil service reforms in British India and united Pakistan', *International Journal of Public Administration*, (1999), vol.22:6, p.949.

¹³³ According to Philby's autobiography (*Arabian Days*, p.36.) and the accounts of some historians, such as Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.31; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.20; Abu al- Rab, *John Philby wa-dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan* [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], p.7; Hamdi, 'Nashat Philby' [The Background of Philby], p.263, Philby's arrival was on 2 December 1908. However, in his memorial to the Secretary of State for India, Philby asserted that his arrival was on 1st December 1918. See the memorial, 8 November 1911 in MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/2/2.

¹³⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.20; Hamdi, 'Nashat Philby' [The Background of Philby], p.263. The relationship between Dane (1856–1946) and the ICS began when he passed its examination in 1874 and was sent in the following two years to the Punjab as Assistant Commissioner in Dera. For further information regarding him, see Lovat Fraser, *India under Curzon and after* (London: William Heinemann,

Jhelum

On 8 December 1908, Philby went for training from Lahore to Jhelum. In this amazing city, Philby's experience, as Khairī Hammād suggested, was extended only by H.H. Jenkins,¹³⁵ the sub-divisional officer.¹³⁶ However, Philby's autobiography stated that he also owed something to Captain G.L. Brayne¹³⁷ who educated him in the rules and standards of administration.¹³⁸ At this time, India was benefiting from new projects under Minto's reforms,¹³⁹ which generally widened the opportunities for Indian people to participate in government; for example, despite a current of resentment, Minto appointed the first Indian to the Council.¹⁴⁰ It should be noted that Philby scandalized his friends by proclaiming Indian independence as an the ideal. It seems that his socialist ideas had influenced him ever since his final year at Cambridge, when he became "a closet Fabian (i.e., a Socialist) and freethinker";¹⁴¹ these were the main

1911), p.66-70; Edwin Haward 'Dane, Sir Louis William (1856-1945, ' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 2 Sep 2014.

¹³⁵ Sir Lawrence Jenkins, (1857–1928) joined the Council of India in 1908. He was one of the most remarkable supporters of John Morley, the Liberal Secretary of State for India. For further information, see S. V. Fitz Gerald, 'Jenkins, Sir Lawrence Hugh Jenkins (1857–1928)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 21 Aug 2014.

¹³⁶ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.31.

¹³⁷ Brayne was the district medical officer. See, Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.39.

¹³⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.39.

¹³⁹ Lord Gilbert John Elliot Murray, fourth earl of Minto (1845–1914) was the governor-general of Canada between 1898 and 1904. In 1905, he succeeded Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India and remained until 1910. For further information, see Carman Miller, *The Canadian career of the fourth earl of Minto* (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1980); M.N.Das, *India under Morley and Minto* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964).

¹⁴⁰ Regarding Minto's reforms, see Lewis O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service 1601-1930* (London: Murray, 1931), pp.117-118; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.134.

¹⁴¹ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.232; Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.30; Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, p.194. Monroe suggested that in spite of Philby's socialism, he "remained in some respects the epitome of convention...about the professions suited to a gentleman". See her book: *Philby of Arabia*, p.128.

reasons behind the opposition to imperialism that became unmistakable in the last years of his service in Iraq, as shown below. Therefore, it was not surprising that Philby was enthusiastic over the new order and Minto's reforms.¹⁴² Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that Philby's attitude seems to be the first sign of his opposition to the British policy; the situation is not as portrayed by Abu al- Rab that Philby only began to argue against his country when he was working in Iraq.¹⁴³

Philby's tour with British officials brought him into contact with local inhabitants teaching him their customs and ways of life and, more importantly, letting him practise and grapple with the language of Western Panjabi. Philby's proficiency in Oriental languages was remarkable. While he was at Cambridge, he studied the basics of Urdu and Persian. His autobiography suggests that, in India, he made amazing progress, despite the short time he had to prepare for the exam. His own account of it is revealing: "In the departmental Examination at Lahore in April, less than five months after my arrival in India, I passed my language tests with credit".¹⁴⁴

Without providing any reasons or supporting evidence for his opinion, John Halperin asserted that Philby "worked hard and quickly learned Urdu".¹⁴⁵ It may be inferred that the proclivity and proficiency that Philby showed in understanding Urdu and then the

¹⁴² By Philby's proclamation of the ideas of libertarianism, the wife of the Commissioner of Rawalpindi was frustrated, but she named Philby as "The Universal Provider". See Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.40.

¹⁴³ Abu al-Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsi fi Transjordan' [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], p.21.

¹⁴⁴ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.41-42; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.21.

¹⁴⁵ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.134.

higher standard examination in Urdu depended on many factors. First, he had been born and had spent his first six years in Ceylon and this may have laid the foundations of his skill with languages. Second, his grandfather on his mother's side, Colonel John Duncan, who had worked in India for many years, exerted a fundamental influence on him. Philby indicated that it was probably from his grandfather that he "inherited a certain facility for mastering the various languages of India and kindred lands".¹⁴⁶ This facility probably gave him enough confidence to be well-equipped for his Indian career and, more importantly for his personal ambition, as far as administrative promotion was concerned.¹⁴⁷

Philby spent nine months in Jhelum, learning and being trained regarding administration and public life in India.¹⁴⁸ It should not be forgotten that he owed much to the members of staff who built up his knowledge. For instance, Major Fox-Strangeways was a competent administrator and helpful chief. He and his wife were his hosts for a few weeks and Mrs. Fox-Strangeways supervised his social education, teaching Philby about life in India and provided him with a list of the civilian and regimental ladies to be called upon in his morning tours.¹⁴⁹ Jhelum, it is clear, was the gateway to Philby's subsequent life experiences and actual career.

¹⁴⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.4.

¹⁴⁷ Hamdi, 'Nashat Philby [The Background of Philby], p.263.

¹⁴⁸ Brown stated in his book (*Treason in the Blood*, p.11) that Philby spent six months in learning settlement training. However, the truth seems that Philby spent nine months on it. See, Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.44; Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.31.

¹⁴⁹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.43-44. Major Fox Strangeways was the Deputy Commissioner for Jhelum. See, Philby, *ibid*, p.44.

Rawalpindi

In September 1909, Philby was ordered to depart to Rawalpindi.¹⁵⁰ There A. J.W. Kitchen¹⁵¹ was not only an administrator of magnificent intelligence, but also was anxious to train the men who would become junior officials and was very keen to see that they gained all the benefits they required.¹⁵² In this city, Philby's primary duty was to work on assessing the value of crops damaged by British armed forces and to estimate the level of compensation for the local landowners.¹⁵³

Philby was also asked to make a census report of the district cattle. His report was approved by Kitchen and, significantly, praised and published by the Panjabi government.¹⁵⁴ In conjunction with a colleague, he also compiled a manual of local customary law.¹⁵⁵ Such achievement seems to have boosted Philby's self-confidence as well as his capacity to tackle more useful work. Although he worked as a magistrate

¹⁵⁰ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.31; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.22.

¹⁵¹ Arthur James Warburton Kitchen (1870-1957) was a member of the Indian Civil Service. After studying at Clifton College and Pembroke College, Cambridge, he passed the ICS examination in 1892. He spent most of his career in Punjab when he became a Deputy Commissioner. For more details, see *The Times*, 'Mr. A. J.W. Kitchen', 26 April 1957.

¹⁵² Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.45.

¹⁵³ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.135.

¹⁵⁴ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.46. It may be assumed that Philby's report was the first appearance of his writings.

¹⁵⁵ It was published as J.M. Dunnett and H. St. J.B. Philby, *The Customary Law of the Rawalpindi District* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1910).

and a judge, he seems not to have been interested in legal processes due to their “tedious and over-elaborated” nature.¹⁵⁶ It may be argued that Philby’s dislike of judicial work seems to conflict with the zeal for maintaining discipline that he learnt at Westminster. If this is true, then the only explanation of the conflict probably rests on two main features. One of the most important aspects of judicial work that lessened Philby’s interest in it was its rigour. The first official task he was assigned was to supervise the hanging of a man sentenced to death,¹⁵⁷ which may have disheartened Philby as a judge. However, it should be acknowledged that this incident is derived from Philby’s account and there is no further account to corroborate this, especially from Hammād and Monroe, the Philby’s biographers. Second, the conflict may suggest that Philby had no taste for the routine of daily work in an office and tended to prefer fieldwork and the more important chance to engage in social activities so as to absorb the local languages, in which he was markedly successful, as shown below.

The club in Rawalpindi held the main recreations of life for Philby, where he indulged his enjoyment of tennis, cricket, bridge and dancing. This was where he met Dora, the daughter of Adrian Hope Johnston¹⁵⁸ and the grand-daughter of Alexander Johnston.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.46.

¹⁵⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.46.

¹⁵⁸ Adrian Johnston was an executive engineer of the Rawalpindi Public Works Department and was a member of the British upper classes. See the accounts of him in Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.23, 26; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.48. It was suggested that his family had a trace of Indian ancestry. See, Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.12.

¹⁵⁹ Alexander Johnston (1815-1891) was a well-known Victorian artist. For further information see, L. H. Cust, ‘Johnston, Alexander (1815–1891)’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 4 Sep 2014.

On 20 September 1910, they were married at Murree,¹⁶⁰ a marriage which lasted for 45 years.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ In his book *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.32, Hammād stated that Philby and Dora married in Ambala. However, the truth was that they were married in Murree Cathedral in Sargodha and spent their honeymoon in Changla Gali. See, Philby *Arabia Days*, p.55; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.25.

¹⁶¹ Philby and Dora had one son, Kim, and three daughters, Diana, Patricia and Helena. See, Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.47-48,103-104; author's interview with Michael Engelbach, the son of Helena, Philby's youngest daughter, 14 August 2014, London; author's interview with Faris, Philby's son, Riyadh, 15 May 2015. Regarding Kim, the man who was involved in accusations of spying for the Soviet Union, see Kim Philby, *My Silent War* (New York: Grove Press,1968); Eleanor Philby, *Kim Philby, The Spy I Loved* (London: Hamish Hamilton,1968); Bruce Page, David Leitch and Phillip Knightley, *The Philby Conspiracy* (New York: Doubleday &Company,1968); Tim Milne, *Kim Philby, The unknown story of the KGB's master spy* (London: Biteback Publishing Ltd.,2014).

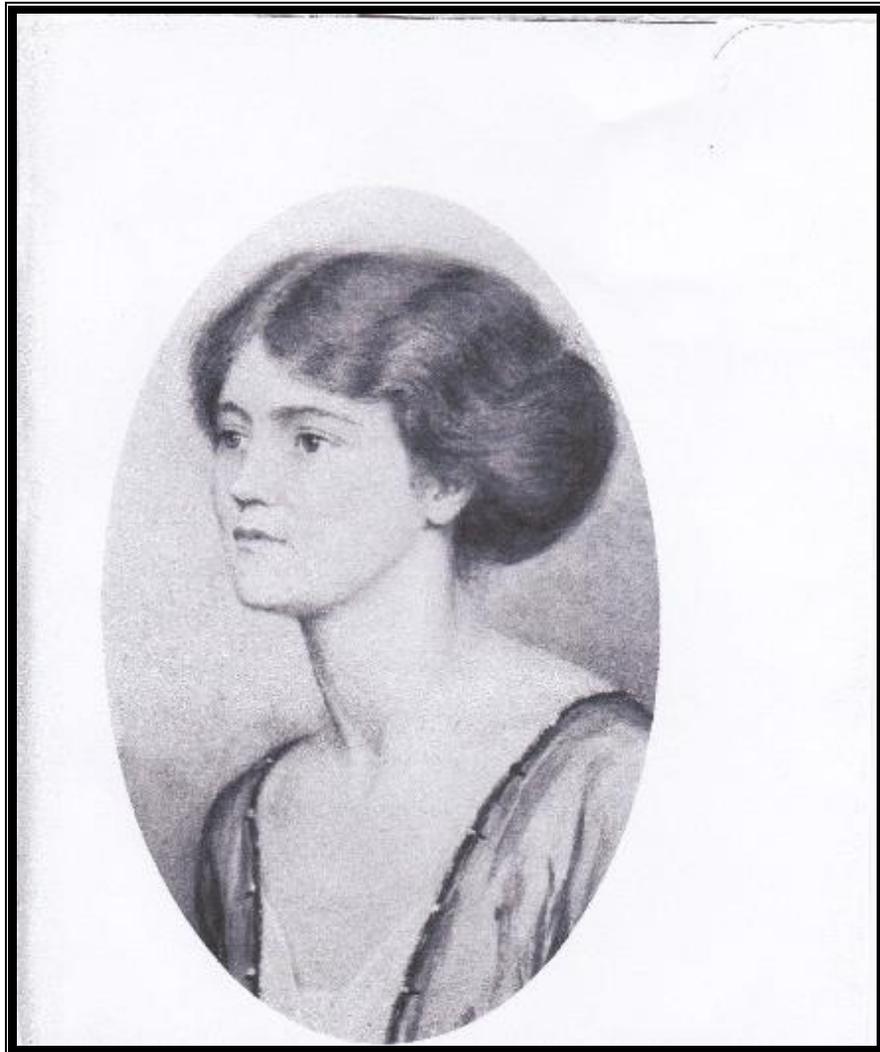


Figure 2.
Dora, Philby's wife
Source: Philby, *Arabian Days*.

In the meantime, Philby completed the training phase and graduated “well above the average”.¹⁶² It seems that there was no doubt that Philby was very determined to prove himself as an outstanding district officer among his peers and to reach the

¹⁶² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.22.

highest ranks of the ICS. Such an aspiration and ambition is illustrated by his concern over his matrimony. He wrote:

He [Kitchin] and certainly his wife, who watched over us juniors with a truly maternal solicitude, had doubtless observed my steady progress down the slippery slope toward matrimony; and he may well have recommended for me a transfer from the fleshpots of Pindi and the insidious charms of Murree, where I would spend a considerable part of the hot weather. In fact, if he did so, he was too late to save me for bachelorhood, as I was already committed to another course irrevocably and to my entire satisfaction. But I had no reason to complain of his intervention, for I found myself posted, in the ordinary course of the normal summer changes necessitated by the department of officers on leave, to the temporary charge of the Sargodha sub-division.¹⁶³

Anthony Brown claimed that Philby's marriage, which took place in the second year of his service in India, provoked serious dispute and contravened the rules of the Civil Service.¹⁶⁴ At this time, it was obvious that all the British authorities in India, including the Army, the Civil Service, businesses and banks, deplored matrimony for young people who had been less than five years in post. However, although the ICS tended to discourage marriage, its rules did not state clearly that its employees should not marry before five years had elapsed and "as the authority's power was not absolute, [Philby] went ahead with his plans for a wedding".¹⁶⁵ It seems that he considered his marriage his own affair, since it was not officially opposed to the rules or regulations of the Civil Service, but merely foreign to its traditional system. To substantiate this claim, it can be said that ever since the development of the administration the conditions of

¹⁶³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.48.

¹⁶⁴ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.13.

¹⁶⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.24.

recruitment (from 1834 to 1936) had made no indication of any proscription of marriage for members of the ICS.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, Brown's claim seems to be far from reality.

Sargodha

In May 1910, Philby was appointed temporary officer for Sargodha,¹⁶⁷ which had been built as one of the newest colonial cities of the Panjab and which had progressed under the supervision of G.D. Rudkin.¹⁶⁸ In Sargodha, Philby experienced serious issues which could have affected his career and distorted his reputation in the ICS. During his tour of Sargodha, he reached a Muslim town called Bhera and there came across a wedding between members of two privileged families. Without warning, a Hindu beggar, who had approached in search of alms, was beaten to death.¹⁶⁹

As the responsible magistrate, Philby ordered that an autopsy should be carried out on the corpse and this was undertaken by a Muslim assistant-surgeon. The report indicated that the deceased man suffered from splenomegaly and could have died as the result of a mere push.¹⁷⁰ However, Philby suspected that the surgeon had been bribed to provide false evidence and therefore he suspended the surgeon from his

¹⁶⁶ To recognise the establishment of the ICS and the rules of the recruitment of its members, see the Deputy Secretary of the GI to the Chief Secretary of the GI, 29 September 1898, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/2/1; Blunt, *The I.C.S. The Indian Civil Service*, p. 43 et seq.

¹⁶⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.48

¹⁶⁸ Rudkin was the Colonization Officer for Sargodha. He had the full knowledge of his district and its inhabitants and was adored by the people for his sympathy and tranquillity. See, Philby, *ibid*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.24.

¹⁷⁰ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.135; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.25.

duties, which frustrated the Muslim faction but overjoyed the Hindus.¹⁷¹ Philby made a serious mistake in refusing to release the surgeon, who was forced, as a condition of his bail, to walk the 20 miles from Sargodha to the District Commissioner in Shahpur, although the law held that the offence of perjury was beyond doubt punishable.¹⁷² Consequently, the incident was inflated by the Indian press into a great furore which obliged the British authorities to pacify the people and finally to exonerate the surgeon. It was proposed that Philby should be divested of his responsibility for a sub-division until he had proved his efficiency. However, the resolution was not enforced against him and he remained in charge of Sargodha.¹⁷³

Multan

At the beginning of 1911, Philby was dispatched to Multan in order to continue his judicial training.¹⁷⁴ As stated earlier, Philby had no liking for judicial work, so the authorities concluded that he was unfit to preside in a court of law.¹⁷⁵ Although he remained an Assistant Commissioner, he never curtailed his desire to learn more Oriental languages. By mixing in native society he was able to learn the Belushi language within six weeks and made such progress that he could efficiently carry out

¹⁷¹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.54.

¹⁷² Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows], p.229.

¹⁷³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.25.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.27.

¹⁷⁵ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.56.

his duties in this language and was awarded Rs 500.¹⁷⁶ Then he started to master the Arabic language.¹⁷⁷

For the first time, Philby's superior officer was an Indian, Diwan Narendra Nath, a man who competently and sympathetically guided him; the period that he stayed with him was one of the most enjoyable of his life. In the summer of 1912, Philby was again sent to a town called Chorutta, which had been built in the desert. His work was restricted to receiving requests for houses and shops and dealing with them and also to developing by-laws for managing municipal administration.¹⁷⁸ It may be inferred that, beside his knowledge of Oriental languages, Philby became a pioneer in dealing with administration, as became obvious during his time in Iraq.

Ambala

In 1911, during a difficult time of drought and famine, Philby was ordered to move to Ambala as the Revenue Assistant.¹⁷⁹ With his wife, he spent 14 months in this district¹⁸⁰ and because the work was light he continued studying Oriental languages and in 1912 obtained good enough exam scores to earn a certificate of High Proficiency in Urdu.¹⁸¹ Halperin suggested that Philby broke the Civil Service tradition by inviting Indians to his house and, more flagrantly, in putting forward an Indian as a member of the local

¹⁷⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.58-59.

¹⁷⁷ Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows], p.229.

¹⁷⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.57.

¹⁷⁹ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.14.

¹⁸⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.27.

¹⁸¹ MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/2/3.

club.¹⁸² In fact, Philby promoted what he believed to be Indian people's right to exercise authority together with the British. It should not be forgotten that he was simply following the new British policy in India, which was based on Minto's reforms and allowed the Indian people to join the Civil Service. However, Philby went beyond official policy and did not hide his contempt for racial discrimination when he condemned a presidential campaign that would have made an Indian vice-president ineligible. Philby proposed his Indian friend for membership of the club and finally prevailed, not only despite the wrath of its members but also at the risk of forfeiting his own membership, which he threatened to resign if the Indian was not elected.¹⁸³

The excellence of his work, however, was put in jeopardy through another incident. On a hot morning, when he was walking alone along a narrow path, he met an Indian teacher with a small group of schoolboys. The teacher spoke shamelessly to Philby, who could not tolerate his behaviour and boxed the Indian's ears.¹⁸⁴ Hammād, a writer who tends to be a fanatical nationalist, has suggested that Philby's action reflected his imperialistic outlook, which he normally concealed and which contradicted his reputation for liberal ideas.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.136-137.

¹⁸³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.28.

¹⁸⁴ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.235; Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows], p.229; Halperin, *Eminent Georgian*, p.137; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.16.

¹⁸⁵ Hammād, *a'medat al-esti'mar fi al-'alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World], pp.35-36.

However, Hammād's verdict appears unduly subjective and it seems that there was no contradiction in Philby's character. Philby's view regarding the imperial policies of his country matured and developed throughout his life. Philby at this stage was an extremely loyal Indian Civil Servant and he did not start to function on his own firm principles in opposition to imperial policies until the last year of his service in Iraq, as explored below.¹⁸⁶ Second, Philby confessed his action, which he said he regretted, as quite wrong; he in fact respected the new spirit of independence in India and had simply been out of temper on that day. As Philby stated:

Times had changed, of course, and were changing rapidly as a result of the new spirit of independence of which I approved so wholeheartedly ... That [his behaviour] was of course quite wrong.¹⁸⁷

Speaking impartially, it is harsh to judge someone's wrong action and infer from it a general judgment about his behaviour without studying the motives behind the incident and also without full knowledge of his life. Whatever the cause, Monroe suggested that someone writing under a pseudonym sent details of the incident to the Governor of the Punjab. The Governor, Sir Louis Dane, who had previously been angered by Philby's marriage and feared that the incident would be aired in the local

¹⁸⁶ Philby's opposition to his country's policy regarding India can be found in his articles in MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/2/9.

¹⁸⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.65.

press, decided to take a serious stand against Philby's lapse and punished him by a "stoppage of all promotion for two years."¹⁸⁸

Amritsar

In 1913, Philby was transferred to Amritsar for the purpose of settlement training.¹⁸⁹

There, he had the chance to develop his experience of revenue resettlement and was able to preserve a reasonable ratio "between the revenue payable by the landowners and the profits derived by them from their land".¹⁹⁰ Philby was pleased to make a comprehensive land survey of Amritsar and it is quite evident that his trainer made considerable efforts to educate him and teach him the essentials of cadastral survey, which equipped him for tasks in later years.¹⁹¹

At this point, Philby was devoting himself to gaining qualifications in Farsi, the Persian language, probably reflecting his desire to transfer to Persia. Although there was no evidence that his transfer had been declined, he immersed himself in learning Persian. The Philby collection at St. Antony's College shows how keen a student he was. He sent a letter to the Office of the Board of Examiners, to obtain the right books before

¹⁸⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.29. Although Philby agreed with the punishment he presented a memorial to the Secretary of State for India, stating the motivation for the incident and its circumstances. Philby was lucky that the duration of his punishment was reduced to nine months. See Philby's memorial in MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/2/2; Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.235.

¹⁸⁹ Abu al- Rab, ' John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan' [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], p.7.

¹⁹⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.68.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 68-69.

applying for an honours degree examination in Persian.¹⁹² In addition, in order to prepare for the exam, Philby hired a teacher from Khurasan who stayed with him.¹⁹³ He took the exam in 1913, once he felt capable of doing well. In the event, his exam scores were astonishing.¹⁹⁴

Lyllpur

In 1914, Philby became Acting District Commissioner at Lyallpur, the most ancient and considerable of the canal colonies. His own letter to his mother, May, revealed the extent of his enjoyment of power:

The feeling of real power and importance is of course very pleasant and I have not yet got used to seeing my police guard do sentry-go over me as I sleep.¹⁹⁵

While Philby was in this post, WWI broke out and he tried in various ways to take an active part in it, even after a Government circular instructed all civilians to remain in post.¹⁹⁶ The news of the conflict spread widely through India; the local press increased the spirit of insurgency, which soon made itself felt. The Viceroy declared war on Germany on behalf of Britain. It seems that Philby tackled the resulting sedition wisely. He had good relations with the proprietor and the editor of the newspaper,¹⁹⁷ whose name was Hardit Singh, and refused to order his arrest because the detention of such a

¹⁹² A letter of reply from the Board of Examiners Office to Philby, 19 May 1913, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/2/3.

¹⁹³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.69.

¹⁹⁴ See the certificate of Philby and his scores in MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/2/3.

¹⁹⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.33.

¹⁹⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.81.

¹⁹⁷ The newspaper was not identified.

figure would lead to dire consequences. Philby met Singh and managed to persuade him to stop criticizing Britain.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, Philby continued his work prudently, keeping prices low, receiving loyal delegations and registering outlanders.¹⁹⁹

Simla

In 1915, another job was offered to Philby. He was asked to join the Panjab Government Secretariat and take charge of the Press Office of the Investigation Department.²⁰⁰ It was notable that he was particularly pleased with his new post because he had been chosen on merit and without any mediation or influence. He was working under the supervision of Sir Michael O'Dwyer,²⁰¹ who was a highly important administrator in the area of land revenue settlement. It is noteworthy that Philby served his country very well in this post; for instance, Monroe suggested that he had to write a weekly bulletin. His job required him also to keep his eye on places where a spirit of nationalism was rising, such as Aligarh University.²⁰²

In February 1915, Philby went to Calcutta in order to take the degree exams in Urdu.

Again, the results were outstanding, as the following table shows:

¹⁹⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.81-82.

¹⁹⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.33-34.

²⁰⁰ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p, 137.

²⁰¹ Sir Michael Francis O'Dwyer (1864–1940) joined the ICS in 1885. See the biography in his book, *India as I know it* (London: Constable, 1925); Philip Woods, 'O'Dwyer, Sir Michael Francis (1864–1940)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 13 Sept 2014.

²⁰² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.33-34.

Table 4.
Philby's proficiency in Urdu exams

Subject	Score	Subject	Score
A written examination on the prescribed books. The papers included questions on Grammar and Prosody	85	Conversation	95
Translating a passage of prose into English	95	Manuscript	90
Translating a passage from English with accuracy, elegance and neatness of expression and perfect correctness of grammar and spelling	90	Dictation	95
Translating a passage into English	86	Essay	99

Source MECA, Philby collection, F. 1/2/3

After this achievement, the Government of India's Department of Education, in Delhi, authorized a donation to him of Rs 3,000.²⁰³ This money was indeed welcome to Philby, who needed it to support his wife and his mother, now in a bad financial situation.²⁰⁴ Philby was soon appointed Secretary to the Board of Examiners in Calcutta,²⁰⁵ the last post that he held in the country. His accomplishments probably paved the way to securing his high reputation and some fame as a scholar of Oriental languages.

Monroe indicated that Philby started to perfect his knowledge of Urdu and was insistent on learning this language, at the same time as Persian. This may testify to his

²⁰³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia* pp.32-34.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ See the appointment of Philby in L.C. Porter's letter, 10 February 1915, MECA, *Philby Collection*, F.1/2/1.

desire to work in the Political Department, which he had always had his eye on, not only for its eminence, but also because it would have given him a job in Persia, the Persian Gulf or Iraq.²⁰⁶

Sir Percy Cox, the Chief Political Officer in charge of Mesopotamia's occupied territories, declared his urgent need for linguists and civilian administrators.²⁰⁷ Philby's hopes were fulfilled when he was ordered to join the Indian Expeditionary Force in Iraq which had first been sent out in September 1914.²⁰⁸ Beside the shortage of civilian administrators, it is possible that Philby's outstanding work as an administrator and his capability as a scholar of Oriental languages were the main reasons behind his appointment to the Indian Expeditionary Force.

Overview

The chapter showed that the move of Philby's family from Norfolk to Chigwell occurred in the nineteenth, not the seventeenth century. It is worth considering that Philby's ambition to be famous may have been due to the lack of celebrity of his antecedents. The chapter suggested that Philby's account of the departure of his father, who

²⁰⁶ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.28.

²⁰⁷ Musa, *Nawāfidh Ghārbiah* [The Western Windows], p.235; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.36.

²⁰⁸ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.35. Regarding the Indian Expeditionary Force to the Persian Gulf, see F. J. Moberley, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918*, vol.1 (London: The Battery Press, 1997). There are several fundamental articles that discuss intensively the Indian Expeditionary Force and its real motivations. See, for example, V. H. Rothwell, 'Mesopotamia in British War Aims, 1914-1918', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Jun, 1970), pp. 273-294; S. A. Cohen, 'The Genesis of the British Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2 (May, 1976), pp. 119-132; Douglas Goold, 'Lord Hardinge and the Mesopotamia Expedition and Inquiry, 1914-1917', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Dec, 1976), pp. 919-945.

decided to go to Ceylon in order to invest in the coffee trade, is more accurate than Monroe's who claimed that Philby's father was sent off by his family. First, the reason for the departure of Philby's father was recognized only by Philby, the one who first recorded this event and could interpret it better than subsequent accounts did. Second, Monroe does not reveal the source that suggests Philby's father was sent away and hence Philby's account emerges as the more trustworthy one.

The chapter concluded that Monroe's statement that John Duncan, Philby's grandfather, ignored his past as a legitimate son is probably not quite true. It is plain that, despite his high status and successful career, the fact of his adoption had a negative impact on John Duncan for the rest of his life. This can be seen from his keeping the story of the adoption secret from his son.

The chapter revealed that Philby had three siblings, not four, as some historians believed. Moreover, the chapter showed that Philby's mother was the person who decided to leave Ceylon because of her difficult relationship with her husband and his unsatisfactory behaviour as a spouse. It is obvious that Philby had known difficult conditions as a result of his father's failure to support his mother, who took the full responsibility of raising her little boys. This resulted in May's decision to leave her husband and return to England. In his early education, it is noteworthy that Philby owed most to John Duncan, his maternal grandfather. Without his financial support, Philby's life and his future might have taken another route entirely.

Henfield House may be considered a vital factor which provided a basic pillar of Philby's education. Moreover, it may be inferred that the boarding school created Philby's hobbies, notably bird-watching and insect collections, whose results can be seen in Philby's later writings. Through his mother's support and his own intelligence, Philby in his early years was able to overcome the family's poverty and showed a significantly high capacity to learn. Hence, it may be considered that his early achievement is summed up by his gaining entrance to Westminster School in 1898 and becoming a Queen's scholar at the age of thirteen.

The religious environment in which Philby had been brought up had a significant impact on his thought. In addition, it is notable that the nature of the atmosphere at Westminster School, which seems to have given first place to ruthlessness and remorselessness, may have generated in Philby some idea of the power of his personality, and the value of rigorous perseverance in learning. Moreover, despite the radical reforms by some teachers to develop the educational system of Westminster, Philby remained Conservative and was long influenced by conventional conservatism. Still, the wider curriculum at Westminster may have had a further impact in terms of increasing Philby's knowledge. The chapter illustrated that Philby was extremely keen to follow the strict rules of Westminster which made his captaincy less than admirable to his fellows.

It is also clear that it has some bearing on the reasons why Philby chose to work for the ICS, though this was primarily due to the influence of his maternal grandfather, his desire to acquire celebrity and his ambition to serve his country.

It might be thought that Philby would remain staunchly Conservative or politically orthodox in outlook for the whole of his four years at Cambridge. However, his attitude slowly changed and he became more of a free-thinker, following his encounters with the university's spirit of debate and controversy. In addition, he was influenced by the method of teaching that relied on criticism and discussion and the methodology of searching for knowledge from original sources made him abandon his early religious views.

It is also obvious that Philby was influenced by the scholars who enhanced his knowledge, in particular Browne, who made a huge impact in terms of Oriental languages. Vitality in his activities and his membership of a range of societies were the benchmark for Philby during his university years, which may not only have increased his knowledge but also undermined his reliance on conservatism. In his exam, Philby showed high enough levels of attainment to qualify for the ICS, where proficiency in Oriental languages was vital. The personality traits, which became apparent when he ventured to the Middle East, were therefore formed during his childhood and early adulthood, with his education providing him with the necessary skills and free thinking to make an impact.

The chapter showed that the tragic sequence of incidents at the outset did not have enough impact on Philby to shake his resolve to work for the British Empire. Philby's experience was augmented by members of staff who taught him details of administration and public life in India. It is notable that Philby was not only influenced by Minto's reforms to provide the Indian people with freedom but also by the ideals of communism, perhaps the main factors behind his support for libertarian ideas. Hence, Philby's behaviour in India indicates apparently his first objections to the policies of his imperial government. It can be inferred that Philby's journeys generated in him a knowledge of the traditions and customs of various peoples. It is clear that Philby's proficiency in Urdu was not only due to his efforts and diligence, but also to his birth and residence in India for six years as well as the efforts of his grandfather. These undoubtedly had some influence on his proficiency in the language.

It is clear that, although he showed remarkable skill in making fiscal arrangements, he seems not to have been interested in acting as a judge. The routine of the daily work and the strictness of the legal tasks were probably the main reasons for his wanting to explore, which he did in the next few years. The chapter revealed that Philby's marriage was not against the rules of the Civil Service so much as against its traditions. Moreover, the Arabic allegations that Philby held imperialistic beliefs was shown to be far from accurate and to contradict entirely the historical evidence of what he did for the freedom of Indian people.

The Philby collection at St. Antony's College illustrates Philby's superiority in the Oriental language examinations, Urdu and Persian in particular. Such results contributed to his fame as a scholar of Oriental languages which probably explained his desire to obtain a high position in the British overseas services, most of all in the Middle East. Concerning his duty throughout WWI, Philby was able to deal with seditious movements, which reflect some aspects of his loyalty and sense of his duty.

The next chapter considers the beginnings of Philby's activities and influence in the Middle East.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BEGINNINGS OF PHILBY'S ACTIVITIES AND INFLUENCE IN THE

MIDDLE EAST,1915-1924

This chapter examines the beginnings of Philby's activities and the influence of his work for the British Empire in Iraq and Transjordan. It looks at various posts that he occupied in Iraq and assesses how far he proved himself as an adequate administrator on behalf of his country. It also seeks to define Philby's relationship with Cox and the methods that Philby used to strengthen Cox's authority in Iraq. It looks at the way in which Philby was able to augment the financial status of the occupied territories. It focuses on the main controversy between Philby and Cox and the circumstances that led to the end of Philby's career in Iraq. In addition, it examines the views of British officials about Philby and his appointment as Chief British Representative in Transjordan and asks why these views of him were negative. The chapter also deals with Philby's political role in Transjordan and illustrates his considerable efforts there and the steps that he took to gain independence for the territory. It also seeks to shed light on the main disagreements between Philby and the Amir Abdulla, the ruler of Transjordan. Finally, it investigates the facts behind his resignation not only from the ICS but also from the British foreign service.

Iraq: 1915-1921

After working for seven years in India without returning to England,¹ Philby, in company with some of his fellow-linguists, sailed to Iraq and arrived in Basra on 20

¹ In his article, Hamdi ' Nashat Philby' [The Background of Philby], p.263, indicates erroneously that Philby spent eight years in India, whereas Philby asserted distinctly that the period was seven years. See Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.91.

November 1915.² During his stay there, Philby had to deal with various tasks and, therefore, it may be helpful to discuss them first in some detail in order to assess his performance more easily.

Chief civilian at Basra

One week after his arrival, Philby met Cox and was informed that his task was to examine the finances of the occupied territory and to set up a permanent system for its financial accounting.³ Under the supervision of Sir Henry Robert Dobbs,⁴ the Revenue Commissioner, Philby worked hard to design a new system for the civil accounts. However, the system that he generated did not meet the requirements of the determined figure, Arnold Wilson, who had remarkable influence with Cox. Despite his opposition, however, Philby proceeded with his plan.⁵ It was perhaps this occasion that marks his first collision with Wilson and it may be true that political rivalry between these two was the main reason for their disagreement. According to their memoirs, it is apparent that Philby and Wilson shared some facets of personality: ambition, outspokenness and immense self-belief. In addition, both had great physical stamina, unusual skills as linguists (Arabic and Persian), and complete self-confidence, spending most of their career in the Middle East. However, the differences between the two

² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.37; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.138.

³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.40.

⁴ Sir Henry Dobbs (1871-1934) joined the ICS in 1892. Besides his eminent capacity for judicial work and fiscal management, he was an adventurer by temperament and explored widely in Persia and Afghanistan. In 1923, he became High Commissioner for Iraq and obviously played a fundamental part in keeping Iraq under indirect control. For further information, see J. E. Shuckburgh, 'Dobbs, Sir Henry Robert Conway (1871-1934)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 19 Sept 2014.

⁵ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.40.

men can also be easily illustrated. While Philby was a member of the ICS and had graduated from Cambridge, Wilson was an army officer who had come through the Royal Military College, Sandhurst.⁶ He retained the single principle of supporting the imperial policy of Britain even though he endeavoured to impose his own views and argued against British policy in the Middle East especially in the post war period. In general, however, he did not move far from the embrace of British imperial policy. Indeed, he had immense self-belief and like Philby he believed that his views were right rather than those of officials in the Foreign Office.⁷ In contrast, as discussed in Chapter One, Philby's character was in many ways the diametric opposite of that of the typical British official. Such politically-minded people, who dominated British imperial policy, were wholly in favour of a steady increase in the lands owning British sovereignty and in the degree of administrative control imposed on them.⁸ Philby's personality, however, was capable of a flexible response to events, for instance when his allegiance moved to the Liberal party (from a more right-wing position) in the year of his university graduation. This probably plunged him into chaos and intellectual self-conflict, wondering whether to follow what he believed in, a movement towards liberation, or remain an official of the Empire. This internal conflict continued until his time in Iraq, when he started to believe in the right of people to rule themselves, in

⁶ Marlowe, *Late Victorian: the life of Sir Arnold*, p.22.

⁷ *Ibid*, pp.251-257.

⁸ Regarding the British official mind, see Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: the official mind of imperialism* (London: Macmillan,1981), p.60 et seq; Frank Heinlein, *British government policy and decolonisation,1945-1963: scrutinising the official mind* (London: Frank Cass,2002), p.7.

particular when he met Arabs “with a capacity for leadership”.⁹ In addition, when Philby visited Central Arabia, for the first time in 1917, he was captivated by Ibn Sa‘ūd’s charisma and became fond of the Arabs and their lands, language and traditional life. This may have implanted in Philby the desire to take a leading part in the struggle for Arab freedom, believing that Ibn Sa‘ūd was “destined to lead and unite central Arabia”.¹⁰ When he was on leave in Persia after being dismissed from his post in Iraq, he started to criticise the imperial policy of his country.¹¹ Furthermore, what made historians, Howarth for example, describe Philby as an eccentric Englishman¹² was probably that Philby was fond of being critical or sarcastic; he enjoyed what he called ‘twitting’ others and making them feel awkward. The following admission by Philby clearly portrays his behaviour in conversation:

T.C. Fowle, who had come to the Political Department from service in Persia. ... was an intelligent but uninspired person who always said commonplace things in a commonplace way ... I twitted him one day at dinner with always talking like a leading article in the *Daily Telegraph*, and I think he took it as a compliment. One day he was prosing away and suddenly, my attention being arrested by a remark of his, I was actually heard to say: “I didn’t hear what you said but I entirely disagree with you.” Of course, there was a roar of laughter ... This remark has often been held against me by my friends to illustrate my tendency to be critical of everything.¹³

At any rate, Cox was very pleased with Philby’s efforts and his capacity to regulate the accounting system and decided to establish a new finance branch which was directly

⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.47.

¹⁰ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.242.

¹¹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.101.

¹² Howarth, *The Desert King*, p.100.

¹³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.135-136.

associated with his political office. He also decided to put Philby in charge of the new branch under the name of Financial Assistant.¹⁴ It seems that some crucial matters then came up. Dobbs, the Revenue Commissioner, rejected the new procedure because, as he may have been right to suspect, the new branch related to his own responsibility as Revenue Officer. But Cox instructed that all questions of civilian and military accounts should be under his personal supervision.¹⁵ To interpret Cox's action, it may have been the case that he wanted control of all the money that was being spent, sometimes recklessly, by officers during the war.

Monroe suggests that Philby was not "popular with lesser colleagues because he was too high-handed".¹⁶ Indeed, Philby's personality tended to be strict and domineering, in particular at work, but it should not be forgotten that Philby's constant contact with Cox and his remarkable efforts of regulating the account system and his post as Financial Assistant may have been to blame for the feuds or animosity and jealousy among the staff preventing Philby from being universally admired by his colleagues, not least when Cox decided to send him on an official mission to India.

Indian Mission

The alliance of Cox and Philby became unusually close and Cox's confidence in his junior increased rapidly. The closeness is apparent from Cox's agreeing to Philby's

¹⁴ Townsend, *Sir Percy Cox and the end of Empire*, p.104.

¹⁵ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.94

¹⁶ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.42.

proposal that the financial administration in the occupied territories should be independent and any acts of expenditure could be undertaken without the need to seek the authority of the Government of India. This meant that Cox, as the Chief Political Officer, would be responsible for all the funds disbursed in the Iraq administration and more importantly would control all the money that was spent ad hoc.¹⁷ It seems that such a financial change would not occur until the outcome was known of any conflicts between the Indian Government and Whitehall regarding the future of Iraq. After occupying Basra, despite London's warning that Basra was not an Indian territory, the Government of India ran the Iraqi law, justice, customs and police systems on the lines of the ICS and Indian officials were still arguing that only the Indian Government had made any sacrifice for the campaign.¹⁸ In contrast, to challenge the Indianization of Mesopotamia by the Government of India, Mark Sykes, who had held several influential positions in Whitehall during the war, appeared as one of the most important opponents to the policy of the officials in India. He argued that India's customs and laws were entirely different from those of the Arabs, asserting that Cox and his staff should be responsible to the Foreign Office and not the India Office.¹⁹ However, it should be noted that Sykes was intensely frustrated by the intervention of the Government of India in his secret negotiations with France over the division of the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire into British and French spheres of influence. These negotiations led to what was known as the Sykes-Picot agreement in May

¹⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p. 102.

¹⁸ Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.50 et seq.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.121.

1916.²⁰ Consequently, it can be said that while Cox was under pressure from Whitehall, especially after the transfer of the Mesopotamia campaign to the War Office, he had no desire to Indianize Iraq or to establish Indian legal codes there ²¹ and, therefore, that the effect of Philby's mission to Simla was probably to diminish the influence of India in Iraq.

At this particular juncture, Philby's vision of Iraq's future was determined by his being to all intents a Government of India man. He criticised the FO and the Arab Bureau which supported Arab independence under the leadership of Hussain and refused to include Iraq under the Government of India. Philby wanted the occupied territories to be under the control of the Government of India,²² believing that Iraq should enjoy a parallel status to that of the Indian provinces, but that Cox in Iraq should be responsible for all its expenditure. As he put it:

The Administration of the Occupied Territories should enjoy the same status as the provincial government in India and the Chief Political Officer [Cox] should be

²⁰ Priya Satia, 'Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War', *Past & Present*, 2007.vol.197, p.248. Regarding the Sykes-Picot agreement see James Thomas, 'The Sykes Picot Agreement of 1916: Its genesis in British Policy', (Baltimore: PhD thesis, University of Hopkins, 1971); Terence Eastwood, *Britain and the Sykes-Picot Agreement: The Making of a New Policy in the Middle East, 1914-1916*' (Edmonton: master thesis, University of Alberta,1977); Steven Wagner, 'Intelligence and the Origins of the British Middle East ' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, (2015),vol.43:4,pp.722;Pinar Bigin, 'What is the point about Sykes-Picot?', *Global Affairs*,(2016),vol.2(1),p.355.

²¹ Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.123; John Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-19* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p.51.

²² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.43.

the supreme sanctioning authority for all expenditure from the funds collected by the administration".²³

At any rate, in order to implement Whitehall's policy, Cox evidently had to conduct two main procedures. The first was to embark on full correspondence with the Secretary of the Government of India, presenting logical arguments that these territories had not been annexed by the His Majesty's Government and therefore it could not be regarded as a British territory. He also pointed out that these territories were still under military operation, and thus should be considered enemy territory. In addition, Cox asserted that the establishment of the new administrative department in Iraq would facilitate the military campaign against the Ottoman forces.²⁴ The second procedure was the despatch of Philby to Simla in order to persuade the Indian authorities to agree to the new arrangements.²⁵ Before his departure, Philby wrote a memorandum, presenting persuasive arguments and explaining that the Chief Political Officer (Cox) in Iraq did not have time for any objections from the Indian Accounts Department; any such objection would impede the military operations on the battlefield. Furthermore, according to the further expansion and achievements of the Indian Expeditionary Force in Iraq, Philby made it clear that the responsibility of the Chief Political Officer made it urgently necessary to establish an independent administration in order to organize the financial

²³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.102.

²⁴ Cox to A.H. Grant, Secretary to the GI, 12 June 1916, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/1/3.

²⁵ Cox to A.H. Grant, Secretary to the GI, 11 June 1916, *ibid*.

revenues, which financially would serve not only the population of these territories but also the British exchequer.²⁶

After providing the memorandum, which filled Cox with enthusiasm for its logical arguments, Philby sailed to Simla by an old *Orient Line* ship. He reached Karachi and then proceeded via Panjab until he reached Simla in the north of India. There, he had to go through a thicket of negotiations with the officials of the Indian Government. He was recalled to attend a first meeting in the Foreign Department.²⁷ At the outset, the finance officials of the Indian Government remarked that if Philby's memorandum was not withdrawn it would be responsible for the negotiations ending prematurely. It is quite interesting to speculate on the reaction of the finance officials. Approving Philby's memorandum would mean that the authority of the occupied territories would increase rapidly and, more important, they would enjoy the same status as a provincial government in India. In any case, it is clear that Philby, with his strong personality and high confidence, replied that he had no authority to withdraw the memorandum, which carried the approval of Cox and his task was simply to negotiate the content of the memorandum; he would accept any rational modifications to the project proposed but if major amendments were suggested he would have to return to Cox for further

²⁶ Philby, 'Memorandum on the question of Audit', MECA, *Philby collection*, not dated but obviously written in May 1916, F. 1/3/1/3.

²⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.102.

instructions. He concluded by stating that if the conference refused to discuss the issue he would inform Cox in any case.²⁸

In this confrontation, the Secretary to the Government of India intervened and asked for the conference to be adjourned until the following day; this delay would enable him to deliberate the matter with the Viceroy. The next day, the conference resumed and it was soon plain that Philby's project had gained the consent of the Viceroy, who also added some improvements to the proposed scheme. Therefore, it was agreed that Cox was authorized to take the fullest responsibility for the financial administration of the territory – no financial decisions that he took would be rejected, which meant that Iraq became indirectly controlled from the Government of India, especially when it related to the control of the financial expenditure.²⁹

Consequently, Cox seems to have been very pleased with Philby's success in the difficult negotiations with the British authority in Simla. The outcome of Philby's mission suggests that he had shown himself to be a competent negotiator with a thorough knowledge of financial administration. In addition, Cox may also have considered Philby a significant ally who had secured much power and independence in his position as Chief Political Officer in Iraq. However, it should be remembered that the account of this conference is derived only from Philby's own memoirs, which sometimes reflect his self-confessed desire for fame and tendency to inflate his own

²⁸ Ibid, p.108.

²⁹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.108-109.

achievements. Although Monroe mentioned that Cox sent Philby on a quick mission to Simla in order to resolve some procedures that concerned the civilian and military accounts and Philby secured much financial power for Cox,³⁰ the main reason for his success was not only his competence as a negotiator but also, as stated earlier, to the strong tendency of Whitehall to include the occupied territories under its policy instead of the India Government.³¹ At any rate, with the success of the Indian mission, it seems that Cox decided to offer Philby the post of Revenue Commissioner.

Revenue Commissioner

Despite the difficulties of life in wartime, Philby added to his success with the Indian mission by maintaining his high efficiency at work. Much impressed, Cox decided in July 1916³² to raise him to the position of Revenue Commissioner in place of Dobbs, who had been ill and had requested eight months leave.³³ Philby was proud of the new job because he thought that he was the youngest civilian officer to have been given this honour.³⁴ He spent most of his time out of the office, touring the Basra district,

³⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.46.

³¹ From 1915 onwards, there was a huge debate between India and Britain regarding the control of Iraq and finally the Mesopotamia Administration Committee recommended that Iraq should in the future be administered not by the Government of India but by His Majesty's Government. See IG, 'Future Administration of Mesopotamia', dated October 1917, IOR, L/PS/18/B246.

³² Although Graves suggests in his book (*The Life of Percy Cox*, p.212) that Cox appointed Philby in July, Monroe argues that the appointment began in October. See her book, *Philby of Arabia*, p.45. However, it seems that Graves, not Monroe, is right; Philby's reports and letters show that he became Revenue Commissioner before October. See, for example, Philby's memorandum to the senior judicial officer, 25 September 1916, *Philby collection*, F. 1/3/1/2.

³³ Graves indicates that Dobbs was extremely frustrated by this appointment which led to a quarrel between him and Cox. See, his book, *The Life of Percy Cox*, p.212.

³⁴ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.138.

discussing the season's crops and their prices with farmers and merchants.³⁵ The Philby collection reveals accounts of his tours of inspection in the occupied areas and the remarkable effort that he put in. For instance, on 14 September 1916, he toured the whole portion of Mattawa, an estate located in the Shatt – al- Arab district in the south of Iraq, and provided a basic description of its suitability for cultivation. In addition, in his report, he concluded that the district could be divided into two parts; the first one regarded as of poor quality whereas the second was superior for the miscellaneous cultivation of dates and vegetables. Moreover, there would be a great opportunity to increase its income through agricultural reclamation.³⁶ Furthermore, other inspections took place in Suwaib, Abuda and al- Duwa, other districts located near the Shatt – al- Arab. While Suwaib and Abuda were districts covered with small date plantations, the al- Duwa and other lands nearby were suitable for the cultivation of rice and corn, suggesting that these agricultural areas could be extended.³⁷

Obviously, Philby was entirely qualified for this work, since he had learnt to do fiscal planning in India. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that he increased the budget of the occupied territories to allow the expenditure of £120,000 by Cox on the military exchequer.³⁸ Such an increase may have come from his knowledge of ways to collect taxes from farmers;³⁹ it generated the means to ensure that Arab traders paid taxes on

³⁵ Hammād, *a'medat al-esti'mar fi al-'alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World], p.43.

³⁶ Philby, ' Inspection of Mattawa ', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/1/2.

³⁷ Philby, ' Inspection of Suwaib, Abuda and al- Duwa ', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/1/2.

³⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.46.

³⁹ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, p.24.

the fortunes that they had amassed during the occupation. Furthermore, he understood how to keep prices low, persuading Cox to open a local bank to break the monopoly of the Persian Bank at Basra.⁴⁰

Under the command of General F. Maude,⁴¹ the advance of British forces towards Baghdad increased the need for political officers for the new lands. Philby was infuriated to be told that he was to be one of these, the Political Agent at Amara, which would have meant the loss of his previous post as Revenue Commissioner.⁴² It is possible that, having reached so high a rank, he became indignant at the prospect of losing advancement. Philby claimed that his demotion would never have taken place without the influence of Wilson, the Deputy Chief Political Officer.⁴³ Possibly this claim is quite true; his fruitful activities and the progress that he had made in so short a period could hardly have gone unnoticed by Wilson, given their political rivalry. However, Cox's action in effectively demoting Philby was indeed unusual, but the remarkable increase in occupied territories certainly presented him with a problem of

⁴⁰ Hammād, *a'medat al-esti'mar fi al-'alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World], p.41.

⁴¹ Sir Frederick Stanley Maude, (1864–1917) was a British army officer. His military record was remarkable, starting with his part in the Sudan campaign in 1885. His military experience enabled him to defeat the Turks in Iraq. In his view, Cox argued, Maude was purely a soldier with no previous experience of the East or knowledge of political affairs. See Charles Edward Callwell, *The Life of Sir Stanley Maude* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1920); Cox to Retaxandum, London, repeated to Simla, 25 May 1917, *Cox collections*. Antony's Middle East Centre Archive (MECA), Oxford University, Re.GB165-0341, F.4/1; Andrew Sky (ed.), *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude, 1914-1917* (Stroud: History Press for the Army Records Society, 2012).

⁴² Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.40. Regarding Maude's advance and his victories, see his letter to William Robertson, 24 May 1917, TNA, FO 371/3056.

⁴³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.122.

understaffing. At any rate, it seems that Philby could do nothing about the change in his position and he finally accepted the new arrangement.⁴⁴

Political Agent at Amara

It is not clear exactly when Philby started his new job. In addition to the obscure years, the reader will find it difficult chronologically to trace the events in Philby's autobiography, due to the length of his digressions, which made him liable to forget or not be precise over the years. However, it emerges from Gertrude Bell's letters, that Philby arrived in Baghdad from Amara in May 1917⁴⁵ and from Philby's accounts that he spent four or five months at Amara.⁴⁶ Thus he may have begun work there in February 1917. In addition, to strengthen this conjecture, it can be observed from the Philby collection that the last memorandum showing Philby as Revenue Commissioner was written on 23 January 1917. This was not followed by any further reference to this post, but the collection goes on to show his new position as the political officer in Amara.⁴⁷

To make things easier for Philby, Cox consented to allow Dora, Philby's wife, to accompany him to Amara.⁴⁸ His most important achievement in the short time he

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.123.

⁴⁵ *The letters of Bell*, p.335.

⁴⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.123.

⁴⁷ See Philby's report, ' *Revenue Matters* ', 23 January 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/1/2.

⁴⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.47.

spent there was that he managed to supply the army with sheep. Ghḏbān, one of the important tribal Shaikhs,⁴⁹ broke his agreement with the army when he refused to sell his herd; he also sent his cattle to the Persian hills to be out of the army's reach.⁵⁰ After the army failed to obtain the cattle, Lieutenant-Colonel Gerard Leachman⁵¹ suggested that it would be better to arrange a punitive force against Shaikh Ghḏbān and his tribe. It was clear that Leachman's proposal would have had dire consequences, in particular at a moment when most Arabs were taking the British side against the Ottomans.⁵² Here, Philby intervened and suggested a different approach, to which Cox consented. He decided to visit Shaikh Ghḏbān in his own region and was able to persuade him to supply the British army with 10,000 sheep at a reasonable price.⁵³ From the above, it can be seen that Philby played an important role, resolving the issue diplomatically and saving the British army from engaging in a needless military operation.

⁴⁹ Shaikh Ghḏbān belonged to the most important tribe, the Bani Lam, whose lands extended from the south of Iraq to the Persian plateau. See 'Umar Khāhālh, *Mu'jam qabil al- Arab* [Dictionary of Arab Tribe] (Beirut: al-Resalah Publication, 1985), vol.5, p.165-166.

⁵⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.123.

⁵¹ Gerard Evelyn Leachman (1880–1920) was an army officer, an adventurous traveller and a linguist. He joined the Indian Service in 1902 and made his audacious journey into Tibet in June 1905. In 1909 he was sent to the south of Iraq where he learnt Arab customs and their language. Leachman was killed during the Iraqi revolt of 1920. See his biography in H. St J.B. Philby, *Legend of Lijman*, the unpublished historical biography of Colonel G.E. Leachman, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.4/1/4; N.N.E. Bray, *A Paladin of Arabia, The Biography of Brevet Lieut.-Colonel GE. Leachman* (London: Unicorn Press, 1936); Harry Winstone, *Leachman: 'OC Desert': the life of Lieutenant-Colonel Gerard Leachman* (London: Quartet, 1982).

⁵² To understand the Arabs' attitude toward the war, see Cox's report in Fouad Kzangi (ed.), *Iraq fi al-watheq al-Britaniyah* [Iraq in the British documents] (Baghdad: al-ḥuria Publication, 1989), p. 24; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.30-36.

⁵³ Hammād, *a'medat al-esti'mar fi al-'alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World], pp.44-45.

At Amara, Philby's isolation made him depressed. Another reason for his depression, as Monroe suggests, is that he was jealous of the political personnel who had been called to join Cox in Baghdad.⁵⁴ Philby's own claim to political advancement was perhaps justifiable, considering the extraordinary performance that he had put in for more than a year and he may have thought that he deserved more appreciation. He wanted to be close to the political administration in Baghdad, in order to play the important role which he thought was inevitably suited to his political ambition; he also may have had a desire for distinction and a certain degree of prominence. Therefore, he requested a transfer and was eventually invited to join Cox as his personal assistant.⁵⁵ It might be asked why Cox agreed to let Philby join him in the same office. In fact, it seems that there is no recorded explanation of this initiative by Cox, but from Monroe's account Cox was "doing everything himself ... even correcting articles in the newspapers";⁵⁶ he was in need of someone who was an efficient administrator and could assist him in the work of administration and it was likely that no one was better at this than Philby, who had worked before with Cox in Basra and proved himself a competent administrator, in various posts, since his arrival in Iraq in November 1915.

Personal Assistant

On 17 May 1917, Philby arrived in Baghdad and was warmly greeted by Gertrude Bell, the first person he met at the Political Office. After this, relations between them

⁵⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.47.

⁵⁵ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.44.

⁵⁶ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.47.

developed increasingly as they worked together in Cox's office. In her letters, Bell illustrated how good a friend Philby was to her and says that she was delighted to work with him, describing him as a quick and intelligent person.⁵⁷ As a famous explorer, linguist and archaeologist, it is quite evident that she made a considerable impact on Philby, especially in view of her explorations into Central Arabia and her knowledge of Arab affairs. Her influence was probably one of the main reasons behind Philby's later explorations.⁵⁸ Their relations remained harmonious, travelling together to negotiate with the Arab chieftains in the south of Iraq and "survey the Shatt-al-Arab".⁵⁹ However, their relations deteriorated in 1921 when Philby accused Bell of acting like the serpent in Ṭalib al-Naqib's detention⁶⁰ and of imposing Faiṣal Ibn Hussain as king of Iraq, as discussed in more detail below.

In Philby's current post, an important claim about his career should be checked. Brown claims that without Gertrude Bell Philby would not have advanced and that she was the key to his progress in Iraq.⁶¹ But Brown's assertion contradicts the historical evidence.

In the first place, Brown provided no substantiating statement or evidence to back up

⁵⁷ The account above is not included in the book *The letters of Gertrude Bell* because the editor selectively omitted part of a letter of hers. It is taken from the Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University: http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=239, accessed 16 March 2017.

⁵⁸ See her visit to Arabia in her article: 'A Journey in Northern Arabia', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 44. no.1 (Jan, 1914), pp.76-77

⁵⁹ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, pp.235-236.

⁶⁰ Ṭalib Ibn Rajab al-Naqib (1862-1929) was an Iraqi political leader who had played an important role in the Ottoman Empire. See further information regarding him in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.3, p.218; Philby's notes on Ṭalib, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/3, not dated; Philby's letter to Marsh, 26 June 1924, MECA, Samuel *collection*, MECA, Re. GB165-0252, B.1. As the archivist at St. Antony's College indicated, this Box has not yet been archived with its new reference. Author's Interview with Debbie Usher, the Archivist, 20 June 2016, Oxford; al-Wardī, *Lamaḥat ejtema'iyah min Tārīkh al-Iraq al-ḥadīth* [Social aspects of modern Iraqi history], vol.6, pp.31, 34-36, 42-44, 76-81.

⁶¹ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, pp.26-27.

this claim. In her personal letters, Bell provides no basis to support Brown's allegation, since she never refers to any influence she may have had in securing the new post for Philby. The only historical account she presents is that of his arrival in Baghdad in May 1917.⁶² Second, Philby came to Iraq in November 1915, whereas Bell joined Cox's staff only in March 1916.⁶³ Between Philby's arrival and Bell's advent, Philby was the object of Cox's admiration, due to his successful efforts to improve the country's financial administration. In addition, Cox knew of Philby's competence in his job; it explains why he appointed him first as Financial Assistant, second, as his official envoy to India and finally why he promoted him to the post of Revenue Commissioner. To Philby's colleagues, Cox stated, " Mr. Philby is an officer whom I brought here and whose abilities and services I have greatly valued in the past".⁶⁴ Consequently, to imagine that Brown might have ignored and concealed Philby's achievement or sought to diminish Philby's considerable efforts in his career seems to affront impartiality and neutrality.

Because Cox tended to over-centralize his authority and attend to all matters himself, Philby found that he had been given a mighty task: to organize and arrange all the papers destined for Cox's desk.⁶⁵ He stayed for five months in Cox's office, working every day from early morning until midnight. In order to deal with the arrears of the massive files and to regulate the work, he prepared a draft for each issue with its relevant files and from time to time took to Cox a batch of these drafts so that Cox

⁶² *The letters of Gertrude Bell*, p.335.

⁶³ Regarding Bell's arrival in Iraq, see her letters, p.302.

⁶⁴ Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox* p.298.

⁶⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.47.

could issue instructions for each case.⁶⁶ As a result, Philby's ingenuity and innovation in the office enabled him to deal with all current business without delay and to keep all matters up-to-date. Cox was entirely satisfied with what Philby was doing.⁶⁷

In November 1918, however, when he returned to Baghdad, Philby found that Wilson had become the Acting Civil Commissioner for Iraq in succession to Cox, who had been sent to Persia to tackle the complicated situation in Tehran.⁶⁸

Wilson's view regarding Britain's post-war policy over Iraq was first that he rejected the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 that guaranteed Arab independence. Second, he countered Lawrence, who was supported by the FO; his plan was to position Hussain's sons as rulers over Syria and Iraq, arguing that Lawrence's proposal was impracticable.⁶⁹ In order to challenge British Government policy, Wilson conducted a plebiscite in 1918, claiming that the result of the plebiscite revealed no consensus over a suitable ruler but that the inhabitants of Iraq preferred to be under British protection.⁷⁰

Before examining Philby's view of Wilson's scepticism about the capacity of Iraqis for self-government, it may be helpful to illustrate Philby's views on the correspondence

⁶⁶ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.46.

⁶⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.47; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.134.

⁶⁸ Cox was transferred in July 1918. See, Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox*, pp.246-247, p.140.

⁶⁹ Marlowe, *Late Victorian: the life of Sir Arnold*, pp.137-138. Regarding Lawrence's advocacy of Sharifian family see his proposal in Eastern Committee, 38th meeting minutes, 21 November 1921, TNA, CAB, 27/24.

⁷⁰ Wilson, *Loyalties*, vol.2, p. 194

between Sir Henry McMahon⁷¹ and Hussain. In his report to Wilson, Philby stated that while Hussain enjoyed great advantages in virtue of his spiritual position and of the resources placed at his disposal by Britain, his lack of political and administrative experience, as well as of tact and address, were some of the major reasons to doubt whether Hussain could fulfil his great ideal of Arab unity, or even whether he deserved his self-chosen title of *Malik Diyar al-Arab* (the King of the Arab countries). Hussain's assumption of this title, when he declared his revolt against the Ottomans in 1916, was impracticable and contradicted the treaties that the British had signed with the Arab rulers in the Gulf,⁷² most notably Ibn Sa'ūd, who had negotiated the Anglo-Saudi treaty in December 1915.⁷³ In Philby's view, Hussain strongly believed that his correspondence with McMahon embodied a solemn promise from Britain to make him

⁷¹ Sir Arthur Henry McMahon (1862–1949) was an army officer. He graduated from Sandhurst in 1882 and soon after he joined the Indian staff Corps in 1885. After serving in India for a while, he was assigned to hold the important post of foreign secretary to the government of India in 1911. When WWI broke out, McMahon was appointed as High Commissioner for Egypt. McMahon entered into secret correspondence with Hussain, promoting the Arab revolt against the Ottomans and promising Hussain that the Arabs would gain their independence after the war. The ambiguous letters between McMahon and Hussein resulted in huge controversy between the Arabs and the British Government who believed that there was any contradiction between the McMahon–Hussain correspondence and the Balfour declaration. For further accounts of McMahon, see *Great Britain, Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., K.C.I.E., C.S.I., His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo, and the Sherif Hussein of Mecca, July 1915–March 1916/presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by command of His Majesty (London: H.M.S.O., 1939)*; Paris, Britain, *The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sherifian Solution*, p.22 et seq; T. R. Moreman, 'McMahon, Sir (Arthur) Henry (1862–1949)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 22 Feb 2107.

⁷² Regarding the treaties between Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms see, India Office: 'Treaties and Undertakings in force between British Government and the Rulers of Bahrain, 1820-1914', dated as 1914, IOR/R/15/1/740; 'Treaties and Undertakings in force between British Government and the Sultans of Maskat [Muscat] and Oman', 1845-1914, dated as 1914, IOR/R/15/1/737; 'Existing Treaties between the British Government and the Trucial Chiefs', dated as 1906, IOR/R/15/1/735; Robert Harcourt, 'Memorandum respecting Kuwait', dated as December 1905, IOR/LPS/18/ B133A.

⁷³ See the British-Saudi treaty in Indian Government, *Treaties and Agreements between the British Government and certain Arab rulers* (Calcutta: Manager Government of Indian Press, 1926), pp.1-3, IOR, R/15/1/733; Penelope Tuson and Anita Burdett (eds.), *Records of Saudi Arabia*, (Oxford: Redwood Press Ltd., 1992), vol. 2, pp. 427-436.

king over all the Arab countries; he “was convinced that the British Government would never go back on its plighted word”.⁷⁴ In his outline of the political scene, Philby informed Wilson that such contradictions between British “promises” to Hussain and the Anglo-Saudi treaty would put the British Government in an awkward position after the end of WWI. To remove this inconsistency between the McMahon–Hussain correspondence and the British treaty with Ibn Sa‘ūd, Philby suggested that the British Government must preserve its relations with the Arab rulers, while Ibn Sa‘ūd himself would admit Hussain’s sovereignty only as a King over Hejaz, but not over himself and his people. Furthermore, Philby suggested that the ideal of Arab unity under a single governor was impracticable, warning the British Government of the negative impact of the Caliphate if Hussain declared himself its spiritual leader.⁷⁵

Wilson’s assumption that the people of Iraq were not capable of governing themselves and not ready for independence until they were educated in democratic procedures encouraged, as Susan Pedersen has suggested, “an Indian style of direct administration”.⁷⁶ Philby emerged as an important critic of this policy and portrayed Wilson as an imperialist, who saw the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 as a veritable bombshell to destroy his grandiose vision of governing all the territories in the

⁷⁴ Philby, ‘Report on the Najd Mission’, 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁷⁵ Philby, ‘Report on the Najd Mission’, 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁷⁶ Wilson, *Loyalties*, vol.2, p. 194; Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2015), p.40.

Middle East.⁷⁷ Predictably, Philby decided not to work with Wilson, preferring to take a period of leave in England, with which Wilson did not demur, suggesting a growing rift between them.⁷⁸ However, even while he was on leave Philby seems never to have given up supporting the spirit of Arab independence, believing profoundly that a democratic constitution would suit the Iraqi people. He prepared three copies of a long memorandum illustrating the main practical steps in implementing the Anglo- French declaration on Iraq. Before leaving Iraq, he sent the first copy to Wilson who, as Philby believed, ignored it. The second he handed to the Arab Bureau while he was in Cairo awaiting a ship to London but he thought this copy had been lost. When he arrived in London, he sent the third copy to the India Office, but it met with the same fate as the first one.⁷⁹

While it was obvious that Wilson was an extraordinary man in terms of integrity, his devoted service to his country and his distinguished efforts to improve the administration in Iraq,⁸⁰ he seems not to have realized the gravity of the Arab nationalists' propaganda for independence and the transition that they were engaged

⁷⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.173. In his article, Paris Timothy stated that "Wilson once described himself as a 'rank imperialist' with 'a strong personal leaning to radicalism' ".³⁶ He was certainly an imperialist, but if radicalism meant the espousal of new political ideas, Wilson was nothing like a radical. See, Paris, 'British Middle East Policy-Making after the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3 (Sep., 1998), p. 779.

⁷⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.174; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.86-87; Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.244.

⁷⁹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.174; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.86-87.

⁸⁰ Ali al-Wardi, *Lamaḥat ejtema'iyah min Tārīkh al-Iraq al-ḥadith* [Social aspects of Iraqi modern history] (Baghdad: al-Waraq Publication, 2010), vol.5, part. 1, pp.77-78.

in. The war probably enhanced these and, more importantly, so did the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 under which their independence was guaranteed.⁸¹

In May 1920, the Arab revolt broke out and spread all through Iraq. Although Wilson tried hard to pacify the rebels, it seems that the task was too much for him.⁸² The revolt shook the British Government and it was decided that Cox should immediately be ordered back from Tehran for consultations. Cox departed to London and accepted the new post as High Commissioner. Before leaving England for Iraq he selected some men to work under his administration, of whom Philby was one.⁸³ As a result, it can be supposed that Cox selected Philby because he knew him already and had realized his familiarity and skill as an administrator, together with his intelligence and his constant energy at work.

In late August 1920 Cox, accompanied by some of his staff, including Philby, sailed to Iraq. It was decided that the inhabitants should have their own government.⁸⁴ However, the British officials who worked with Wilson supposed that such political change was inconceivable. Cox, working together with Philby and Bell, insisted on proving that Wilson's policy in Iraq was wrong. At any rate, Philby and Bell presented a

⁸¹ Regarding the nationalist movement, see Gertrude Bell, 'Review of Civil Administration: 1918-1920', A. De L. Rush (ed), *Records of Iraq* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press Ltd., 2001), vol.2, pp.251-273.

⁸² Regarding the Iraqi revolt, see Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp.40-45; Charles Townshend, *When God made Hell: the British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2010), pp.463-477.

⁸³ Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox*, pp.263-264.

⁸⁴ Secretary of State to Cox, 23 October 1920, *Records of Iraq*, vol.2, p.427; Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox*, pp.263-264.

list of famous people who would be prepared to serve in a provisional Arab Government in order to bring about the change.⁸⁵

It should be noted that, throughout the war, Britain was in secret negotiations with France, which finally produced the Sykes-Picot agreement in May 1916; the intention was to divide the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire to create British and French spheres of influence. Under this agreement, Ottoman Asia would be carved into Red and Blue areas in which Britain and France could establish direct or indirect control. The Red area demonstrated the British influence in Basra and Baghdad, whereas the Blue area illustrated the French influence in Lebanon and Syria. Following this agreement, the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 promised a future Jewish 'Homeland' in the British zone of Palestine.⁸⁶ At the San Remo Conference in April 1920, Britain was awarded a mandate to govern Iraq, as well as Palestine and Transjordan. The idea was that Britain would teach these countries and lead them step-by-step to self-responsibility and independence.⁸⁷ For several reasons, Britain would

⁸⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.95.

⁸⁶ For further information regarding the Sykes-Picot agreement see James Thomas, 'The Sykes Picot Agreement of 1916: Its genesis in British Policy' (Baltimore: PhD thesis, University of John Hopkins, 1971); Terence Eastwood, 'Britain and the Sykes-Picot Agreement: The Making of a New Policy in the Middle East, 1914-1916' (Edmonton: master thesis, University of Alberta, 1977); Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus, 1995), p.398; Luigi Scazzieri, 'Britain, France, and Mesopotamian Oil, 1916-1920', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 2015, vol.26(1), pp.26 et seq.

⁸⁷ After WWI, the League of Nations established the mandate system that sought to put the former colonies of Germany and Turkey, the defeated countries, under the auspices of the Allied powers, Britain and France. These colonies would be ruled by the mandatories on behalf of the League of Nations. See H. Duncan Hall, *Mandates, Dependencies and trusteeship* (London: Stevens & Sons Ltd, 1948), p.29 et seq; Rosie Llewellyn Jones, 'The British Raj and the British Mandate in Iraq', *Asian Affairs*, 4 May 2015, vol.46 (2), p.276; Although Susan Pederson agrees that the mandate system was an instrument for implementing the imperial policy, she denies that it was a failure on the part of the League of Nations, asserting that the League became "an agent of geopolitical transformation", meaning that it inspired the

not simply abandon Iraq. It saw Iraq as a crucial region connecting it with Egypt and India. The British presence would secure the British interest in the oilfields in the south of Iran in Abadan in particular, whereas a British withdrawal would allow Russia to consolidate its influence and finally would threaten the British interest in these oilfields.⁸⁸ As a result, in order to protect the British interest, to curtail the financial expenditure and to satisfy Arab national aspirations, it was decided to create a sphere of indirect British control by putting an Arab government in place.⁸⁹ In 1914, following the Ottoman empire's choice to fight with the Central Powers, Britain immediately reacted by declaring that Egypt should be a British Protectorate. Egypt was too important to Britain to be left out of account, partly through its position as key to the route to India and partly because British cotton workers – and hence much of the Empire's economy – depended upon Egyptian cotton. The Egyptian people, conscious of belonging to a developed country and of the tensions building up in the decades of British occupation,⁹⁰ revolted in 1919. It took only two more years for Britain to cede formal independence to Egypt, but it must be admitted that the country was often in

struggle for human rights in organizations, groups, and individuals who hated the evil of imperialism Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the crisis of Empire*, Chapter one 'Making the Mandate system', pp.17-77. Also see Article 22 of Covenant of the League of Nations, *Ibid*, pp.408-409.

⁸⁸ Daniel Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.3-4.

⁸⁹ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp.43-47.

⁹⁰ Britain occupied Egypt in 1882. See Elizabeth Thompson, *Justice Interrupted* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2013), p.61; Lanver Mak, 'More than Officers and Officials: Britons in Occupied Egypt, 1882–1922', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (2011), vol.39 (1), p. 21.

practice still under Britain's thumb. The latter would not give up its power over Egypt's defences, Imperial communications, or the Sudan.⁹¹

With the San Remo decision, it might be assumed that Philby, at least at the outset, had no qualms about the mandate system that would enable the inhabitants of Iraq to stand by themselves after reaching a certain point of political and administrative development. Such a presumption is seen in a secret letter from Cox to inform Philby of the draft of the mandate even before the official announcement of the San Remo decision. Cox stated:

I see that my Secretary sent you a copy of the draft Mandate ... I told him he might show the print to you and other advisers confidentially, but I only got it demi-officially and have no authority to make it known officially ... You are not therefore authorised to communicate the text to your Minister and should take it off your files.⁹²

Therefore, the greater freedom and independence for the country seems to have satisfied Philby's liberalism, for the idea of a mandate was that it would be only temporary. Hence, he devoted himself to the preparation of a Provisional Arab Government, working with Abdulrahman al-Khilani,⁹³ who had been appointed President of the Arab Council of Ministers. Furthermore, it was decided also to appoint British advisers for each Iraqi minister in order to advise and train them in methods of

⁹¹ Balfour-Paul, 'Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East', pp.494, 499.

⁹² Cox to Philby, 11 December 1920, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/3/4/3.

⁹³ Abdulrahman Ibn Ali (1845-1927) was a vital figure in Iraqi society. He was the Naqib of Baghdad or the head of the respected and religious al-Khilani family which belonged to the Sharifian dynasty. See his biography in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.3, p.319.

government and administration.⁹⁴ In November 1920, the Arab government was established under the leadership of al-Khilani. It consisted of twenty-one notable Iraqis from Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Although the Sunni Arabs held the most important posts, the Council of Ministers included some eminent members of Shi'a, Christian and Jewish groups.⁹⁵ It was evident that Philby and Bell worked very hard under the leadership of Cox and played a vital role in terms of regulating the secretariat and establishing the rules of the nexus between the Iraqi ministers and British advisers. The Iraqi administrative body composed 14 articles that defined the tasks of the Prime Minister and his ministers. It also indicates that Cox, as High Commissioner, had the fullest responsibility for running the country, representing the British Government until the Iraqi electoral law should be formulated. In addition, the council should meet once a week and its decisions would be effective and approved only after Cox's consideration and approval.⁹⁶ Since this arrangement was praised by Cox,⁹⁷ it is fair to say that if Cox was the man who first created the modern Iraqi state, Philby and Bell formed its first ever modern Provisional Government. Moreover, Cox rewarded Philby for his remarkable efforts and appointed him adviser to the Minister of the Interior (the equivalent of Home Secretary), as discussed below.

⁹⁴ Ian Rutledge, *Enemy of the Euphrates* (London: Saqi Book, 2014), p.392; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.190.

⁹⁵ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp.45.

⁹⁶ 'The Iraqi administrative body', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/2, dated November 1920; *The letters of Bell*, p.464.

⁹⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.95. Regarding Philby's efforts to organize the relations between the ministers and their advisers, see the instructions for the Iraqi administrative body in MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/2, dated as November 1920; *The letters of Bell*, p.464.

British Advisor to the Minister of the Interior

Philby strongly believed that Sayyid Ṭalib,⁹⁸ the Minister of the Interior, would be the next prime minister, so he spent much time in training him and passing on the right ideas for the new administration.⁹⁹ From the private papers at St Antony's College, it can be seen that Philby showed a great deal of patience towards Sayyid Ṭalib who tended to arrive at the office very late and who believed that paperwork was not necessary or to be seen as important.¹⁰⁰ However, Philby was apparently able to make a change in Ṭalib who soon began to attend the ordinary office regularly and create a satisfactory *modus operandi* for his job. Together, they worked hard to foster the new-born democracy; modifying the draft of the electoral law and submitting it to the Council of State, which had a small committee composed of Philby himself, Ṭalib and other Arab ministers. Many meetings of this committee were held, starting on 30

⁹⁸ Ṭalib Ibn Rajab al-Naqib (1862-1929) was an Iraqi political leader who had played an important role in the Ottoman Empire. See further information regarding him in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.3, p.218; Philby's notes on Ṭalib, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/3, not dated; Philby's letter to Marsh, 26 June 1924, MECA, *Samuel collection*, MECA, Re. GB165-0252, B.1. As the archivist at St. Antony's College indicated, this Box has not yet been archived with its new reference. Author's Interview with Debbie Usher, the Archivist, 20 June 2016, Oxford; al-Wardi, *Lamaḥat ejtema'iyah min Tārīkh al-Iraq al-ḥadith* [Social aspects of Iraqi modern history], vol.6, pp.31, 34-36, 42-44, 76-81.

⁹⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.96; Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), p.205.

¹⁰⁰ Monroe, 'Notes on Sayyid', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/2.

November 1920; it framed the text of the law and agreed to some principal resolutions; most important was to make sufficient provision for tribal participation and arrangements for this were drafted by Philby.¹⁰¹

Hence, it can be supposed that Philby and some Iraqi ministers were among the first personnel who established a set of electoral laws in the modern history of Iraq. However, while the members of the committee continued their meetings in order to discuss the final draft of the electoral law, the Arab Council of Ministers could not discuss it because of the Cairo Conference, in March 1921, under the supervision of Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary. One of the most important decisions of this conference concerned the reward to the sons of Hussain for their help in the war. It was agreed there that Faiṣal, the third son, was a fit person to become the ruler of Iraq.¹⁰²

In the meanwhile, anxiety and rumours spread through Iraq regarding the appointment of Faiṣal. Ṭalib, with his enormous ambition to rule Iraq, showed opposition toward the introduction of Faiṣal and, because he was famous and had support in the south of Iraq, Cox decided to arrest him and send him to Ceylon.¹⁰³ Hammād has suggested that Philby knew in advance about Ṭalib's detention and therefore accepted Cox's offer to

¹⁰¹ Ṭalib to Philby, 26 October 1920, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/2; Philby, 'Notes from Adviser to Minister of the Interior', *ibid*.

¹⁰² The conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem between 12 and 30 March 1921 to organize the settlement of the Arab problems from Iraq to Aden. See 'Report of Cairo and Jerusalem Conference', written by the CO, 21 July 1921, TNA, FO 371/6343.

¹⁰³ Al-Wardi, *Lamaḥat ejtema'iyah min Tārīkh al-Iraq al-ḥadith*[Social aspects of Iraqi modern history], vol.6, pp.76-81; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp.42, 253-254, n.1.

make him Acting Minister of the Interior in Ṭalib's place.¹⁰⁴ However, it seems that Hammād's suggestion is not credible for a number of reasons. First, Hammād did not support his allegation with logical piece of documentary evidence. Second, Philby was Ṭalib's most important supporter and his request for him to resign illustrates his disapproval of Ṭalib's arrest. Third, Philby was entirely opposed not only to Cox's action in this matter but also to the appointment of Faiṣal before an election could be held.¹⁰⁵ More importantly, there was a crucial piece of evidence of Philby's indignation and his support for Ṭalib was his letter in 1924 to the Labour Colonial Office begging it to revise the decision to detain Ṭalib and allow him to return to Iraq. Philby stated:

S.T. [Sayyid Ṭalib] Pasha, who was Minister of the Interior in 1921-22 and who deserved a better fate for the assistance he courageously gave us during the Iraq rebellion, was deported from Baghdad in circumstances exceedingly discreditable to the British government. Since then he has been in exile in various lands and forbidden to return to Iraq ... So, the injustice, for which the British not the Iraq government is responsible, is perpetuated ... All I ask is justice.¹⁰⁶

In addition, Philby in another private letter, which has not been traced, identified precisely the personnel who were behind Ṭalib's detention, picturing the actual plot of the detention as immoral behaviour on the part of Cox and Bell who, in Philby's view, were the ones mainly responsible for the treachery. Philby wrote:

¹⁰⁴ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.93.

¹⁰⁵ See Philby's resignation in Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, pp.141-142.

¹⁰⁶ Philby to CO, 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/2.

I am afraid that there can be no doubt that Cox, with Gertrude [Bell] acting the part of the serpent, deliberately stood to an act of treachery, which he justified to his conscience on high political grounds.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, Philby's intense frustration at Ṭalib's treatment is well illustrated in Bell's account; she indicated frankly that Philby ignored and sulked at her for a week after Ṭalib's arrest, suggesting that she had something to do with his fate. On 25 April 1921, she stated:

I can scarcely understand how Mr Philby, who was his Advisor, could have had any illusions about him [Ṭalib], but he was certainly – and indeed is – much distressed at what has happened. He boudéd [sulked at] me for a week until I forced a heart to heart talk upon him and made him admit that at any rate I had done nothing but what was obviously incumbent upon me.¹⁰⁸

From the above, it can be assumed that Bell had nothing to do with the conspiracy to arrest Ṭalib but she may have been one of the main factors in his detention, especially since he was, as she saw it, the main threat to the appointment of Faiṣal. She accused Ṭalib of mobilizing public opinion against the British decision to appoint someone such as Faiṣal who had not come from Iraq and of insisting that Iraq was for the Iraqis alone. Therefore, Bell wrote a report to Cox, alerting him to the danger of a pro-Ṭalib movement: she says:

But didn't I tell you that there was no one like Sir Percy in the handling of a delicate political problem! For my part I feel a load off my mind. Talib was capable of anything.

¹⁰⁷ Philby to Graves, 26 April 1939, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/3/4/2.

¹⁰⁸ The above quotation is not included in the book *The letters of Gertrude Bell* because the editor selectively omitted part of a letter of hers. The above quotation is taken from the Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University: http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=469, accessed 30 March 2016.

He was already gathering round him the band of cut throats whom he used to employ in Turkish times at Basrah; a gentleman who was well known to have killed a Turkish general by Ṭalib's orders (it is the most sensational episode in Ṭalib's career) ... It was an item which I added to my report yesterday because I wanted to warn Sir Percy that he was almost certain to attempt the assassination of Faisal if the latter came here.¹⁰⁹

Acting Minister of the Interior

Philby accepted this new post only after Cox had reassured and persuaded him that the detention of Ṭalib would not betoken the introduction of Faiṣal as king.¹¹⁰ In his new post, then, Philby continued to serve his country without knowing the outcomes of the Cairo Conference. The Prime Minister, Abdulrahman al-Khilani, handed Philby a telegram to inform him that "His Highness Sharif Faiṣal sailed today for Basra: prepare suitable welcome".¹¹¹ Philby took the telegram to Cox, who reiterated his assurance that he had no further information about it. But, on 12 June 1921, the truth came out when Churchill announced that Faiṣal was on his way to Iraq to present himself as a candidate for the throne of Iraq.¹¹²

Cox despatched Philby to Basra to receive Faiṣal in the hope that the latter's poise would impress Philby and change his attitude. Regarding Faiṣal's reception, Philby, according to the declared policy of holding a free election, made it clear to the District Officers and their British advisers that Faiṣal was coming only as a candidate, not a king.

¹⁰⁹ Again, the above quotation is not included in the book *The letters of Gertrude Bell* because the editor selectively omitted part of a letter of hers. The above quotation is taken from the Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=468.

¹¹⁰ Philby to Graves, 26 April 1939, *MECA, Philby collection* F. 1/3/4/2.

¹¹¹ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.93.

¹¹² Philby, *Arabian Days*, p, 200.

Faişal was greatly angered not so much by his cool reception as by Philby's telling him that there was no guarantee of his becoming king without a free election.¹¹³

The turning point of Philby's time in Iraq seems to have been when Cox, at the Cairo Conference on 12 March 1921, was informed by Churchill that Faişal should be appointed to rule Iraq and that it was time to adopt the Sharifian policy. The Cabinet soon fell in with this plan.¹¹⁴ Cox suggested and was promised at least the holding of a referendum in order to avoid the bad effect on public opinion.¹¹⁵ It was no surprise when, in response, Philby, who would have preferred a republic to a monarchy, indignantly rejected Cox's order to hand in his resignation, since he disagreed with the policy of compelling people to accept Faişal as their king.¹¹⁶ However, it should be noted that Philby was not only the British official who hesitated to welcome the prospect of a ruling Sharifian family. After the end of the war, the IO denounced Lawrence's choice of Hussain and his sons as the outstanding leaders but the FO, influenced by Lawrence's logic, differed from the India Office especially when any question arose over Britain's future policy towards Iraq. Wilson, for instance, was the

¹¹³ Townsend, *Sir Percy Cox and the end of Empire*, p.170.

¹¹⁴ 'Report of Cairo and Jerusalem Conference', written by the CO, 21 July 1921, TNA, FO 371/6343; Klieman, *Foundation of the British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921*, p.124. In fact, the name of Faişal had been put forward in 1919 but due to the conflicting views between the policy-makers, Curzon above all, the Cabinet decided to postpone the project until further enquiries had been made. Curzon believed that this appointment would upset the French Government. See Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sherifian Solution*, pp.125-126. For further information regarding the huge controversy between the Foreign Office and the India Office over the British interest in Iraq after the war, see Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-19*, p.42 et seq.

¹¹⁵ Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox*, pp.300-304.

¹¹⁶ Philby, *Arabian Mandates*, unpublished book, original copy preserved by Michael Engelbach, the son of Philby's daughter, London, p.69.

main opponent of the Sharifian solution; the main difference between his view and Philby's was that he preferred Iraq to be under direct control while Philby favoured a republican regime. In any case, as Paris suggests, the controversy between the FO and the IO remained until 1921 when the British Government accepted Churchill's plan to make Faiṣal king of Iraq.¹¹⁷

Be that as it may, aware of Philby's reluctance, Cox sought to justify his order to expel Philby from Iraq. Cox stated:

Mr. Philby is an officer whom I brought here and whose abilities and services I have greatly valued in the past. Unfortunately, his past experience has given him a somewhat pronounced anti-Sharifian bias, and he was I think constitutionally unable to accommodate his personal view and attitude to the now declared 'Sharifian' policy of His Majesty's Government. It had in fact become a matter of common talk that he held views different from those of the High Commissioner and he was a strong advocate of a Republic.¹¹⁸

The above suggests that the crucial controversy between Cox and Philby was based on two issues. The first one is illustrated clearly by Philby's memorandum to Cox expressing his support for the adoption of the previous British policy, which set out the principle that the Iraqi people had a right to choose their own future.¹¹⁹ The second issue concerns Cox's claim that Philby was anti-Sharifian, which does not seem logically to be altogether true, at least at this stage of Philby's life. The historical support for this

¹¹⁷ Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sharifian Solution*, pp.53, 142.

¹¹⁸ Grave, *The Life of Percy Cox*, p.298. Regarding this occasion, it should be asserted that Cox informed Churchill by making a decision against Philby. Churchill, in return, ratified Cox's decision, and suggested appointing Colonel Cornwallis as an adviser to the Ministry of the Interior. See Churchill to Cox, 6 August 1921, MECA, *Cox collection*, F.5/37.

¹¹⁹ See Philby's memorandum in MECA, *Philby collection*, dated as July 1921, F.1/3/4/4.

assumption is that Philby, after leaving Iraq, was appointed as Chief British Representative in Transjordan in order to serve Amir Abdullah, the second son of Hussain. But it is likely that, if Philby had been opposed to the British policy toward the Sharifian family, at least at this stage, he would have not agreed to be sent to Transjordan to serve another Sharifian ruler, Abdullah Ibn Hussain.

At any rate, after his request to resign and not to work with Cox, Philby found himself without a job. In order to avoid the embarrassment of his presence in Baghdad, he decided, on the advice of his wife, to take three months' leave in Persia.¹²⁰ In contrast, Cox communicated with Churchill and the latter agreed that Philby was "clearly unsuitable for the post in view of his pronounced anti-Sharifian tendencies".¹²¹

Furthermore, although Cox explained to John Shuckburgh,¹²² the Secretary of the Political Department in the IO, that he was extremely sorry for what had happened to Philby and had a great regard for him, he considered that his action against him was the only safe one for the policy of His Majesty's Government (HMG).¹²³ This would mean that Philby was not persuaded by the new British policy to control Iraq and this

¹²⁰ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.142.

¹²¹ Churchill to Cox, 6 August 1921, MECA, *Cox collection*, F.5/37.

¹²² Sir John Evelyn Shuckburgh (1877–1953) was a British civil servant who started his career in 1900 when he passed the civil service first-division examination and entered the India Office. He had long experience of coping with the Indian provinces. After the creation of the Middle East Department, Churchill, as Colonial Secretary, appointed Shuckburgh as his senior civil service adviser and he became Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Colonial Office. In 1931 he became the Deputy Under-Secretary of State and in 1939 was appointed as Governor of Nigeria. He retired from the service in 1942. For more information, see: Roger T. Stearn, 'Shuckburgh, Sir John Evelyn (1877–1953)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 3 June 2015.

¹²³ Cox to Shuckburgh, 27 August 1921, MECA, *Cox collection*, F.5/37.

may explain why he was thought to be a risk for the British presence in Iraq. His view would embarrass Britain, but he would have considerable influence not only on the junior British officials in Iraq but also the Iraqi nationalists. Therefore, to allow Cox to impose the new British policy in Iraq without any obstacle, it was agreed that Philby must leave the country.

In putting Philby and his family in a difficult situation, Cox regretted in particular when he learned that Philby had not saved enough to support his wife, who was about to give birth, and his young family. Consequently, Cox sent telegram after telegram to India, Persia and the Gulf in order to find him a suitable post. The news came from the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, offering him a post in Transjordan to replace Colonel Lawrence, the temporary Chief British Representative.¹²⁴ This decision seems to place an unresolved contradiction on Philby's appointment, since Philby had been assigned the task of serving the Hashemite family, the arch-enemies of Ibn Sa'ūd, despite his own strong preference for Ibn Sa'ūd in Central Arabia. Philby always had the good of Arabia at heart, in fact, and it is not surprising to find that he wrote a private letter to Cox, discussing possible alternative posts for him and indicating clearly that his "heart is in Arabia" and his desire was "to remain connected in some way with that country."¹²⁵ However, as stated above, Philby was probably not inimical to the Hashemite family but he was against any plan to make Hussain the spiritual and

¹²⁴ Shuckburgh Minute, 28 October 1921, TNA, CO 537/15; Young Mintie, 15 November 1923, TNA, CO 733/50; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.207.

¹²⁵ Philby to Cox (draft), 19 August 1921, MECA, *Cox collection*, F.5/37.

political leader over all the Arabic countries in the Middle East. Furthermore, it can be asked why, if Philby was not anti-Sharifian, he opposed the appointment of Faişal Ibn Hussain as ruler of Iraq? To answer the question, it can be said that what Philby opposed was the method of imposing Faişal as a king on the Iraqi people without conducting a free election, especially when Philby had worked hard to organize the electoral law in Iraq, stating that Faişal could be one of the candidates. Consequently, it can be assumed that if Philby had been opposed to the British policy toward the Sharifian family, at least at this stage, he would not have agreed to be sent to Transjordan to serve another Sharifian ruler, Abdullah Ibn Hussain.

Chief British Representative in Transjordan 1922-1924

Before dealing with Philby's role in Transjordan, it may be helpful to clarify the origins of the Emirate of Transjordan in order to understand the basis of its establishment and the circumstances in which it was created. At the end of WWI, Amir Faişal was announced as the new king of Syria, of which Transjordan was part. However, in accordance with the resolutions of the San Remo Supreme Council, which marked the spheres of influence between France and Britain, the French army drove Amir Faişal out of Damascus and reinforced French control over Syria.¹²⁶

Britain's intention not to include Transjordan in the promised Jewish National Home generated a new political system to administer the territory. For this, Herbert Samuel,

¹²⁶ Suleiman Musa, *Tasis al-Emarah al-Ordiniyah 1921-1925* [The Establishment of Transjordan] (Amman: al-Muhtasib Library, 1971), pp.18-19.

the High Commissioner for Palestine, met some notables from Transjordan, confirming that Britain had decided to set up a system of self-government in different parts of Transjordan and had appointed six British officers to run them in the hope of empowering the local people to begin governing themselves. The task of these British officers was also to teach the notables how to manage an administrative and taxation system.¹²⁷

The new autonomous government did not last, however, nor succeed in its objectives. This, as Walid Kazziha suggests, was due to the move to Amman by Amir Abdullah, who had in the past been frustrated in his attempt to become the ruler of Iraq and now was disgruntled by the removal of his brother, Amir Faişal, from Syria.¹²⁸ However, it was perhaps Abdullah's arrival in Amman that puzzled Britain, for it could not reconcile its support for the Sharifian party with the recent development of mandatory power. At the same time, it should never be forgotten that there were some additional reasons for the failure of the autonomous government. The first one is that the six British officers who ruled the government were, in fact, young, inexperienced and suffered from a lack of knowledge of Arabic. A further reason is a lack of financial aid combined with limited British military support to the new regime.¹²⁹ An additional reason, which may

¹²⁷ Samuel, *Memoirs*, p.159; Walid Kazziha, 'The Political evolution of Transjordan', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2 (May, 1979), p.239; Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel*, pp.251-252.

¹²⁸ Kazziha 'The Political evolution of Transjordan', p.240. Regarding the Amir Abdullah's arrival in Amman, see Allenby's telegram to the FO, 13 November 1920, TNA, FO 371/5066; Samuel, *Memoirs*, p.160.

¹²⁹ See Samuel's memorandum to CO, not dated but perhaps was in April 1920, MECA, *Samuel collection*, B.1; Yoav Alon, 'Heart-Building Araby on the Frontier of Empire: Early Anglo-Arab Relations in Transjordan', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, April 2009, 36(1), p.55.

be even more important, was the desire of the British Government to appoint Abdullah to rule over Transjordan. The desire of the British Government was probably not based only on consideration of its new policy to adopt the Sharifian solution, nor on the fact that Abdullah had been the first one to seek contact with the British authorities in Cairo and had persuaded his father, Hussain, to join Britain in its war against the Ottomans.

¹³⁰ Britain was also well-disposed towards Abdullah because his personality was deemed to be malleable; he would thus find it easy to follow the new British policy in the Middle East. Edwin Montagu¹³¹ stated that “if Abdullah is the lascivious, idle creature he is represented to be, he is the ideal man, because he would leave the British Administrator to govern the country wholly”.¹³² As a result, it can be said that the scanty British support and the adoption of the new British policy to support the Sharifian solution combined with Abdullah’s malleable personality were together enough to bring an end to the experiment in Transjordan.

As it happened, Abdullah’s advance to Amman, coincided with the Cairo Conference, in which Churchill showed himself determined to resolve all the issues with Hussain and his sons and to reward them for their efforts during the war. Therefore, he recalled

¹³⁰ Regarding Abdullah’s contact with British authority in Cairo on the eve of WWI, see Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule 1920-1925*, pp.22-23.

¹³¹ Edwin Samuel Montagu, (1879–1924) was a prominent British politician. He graduated from Clifton College and then entered Trinity College, Cambridge. In early 1910, Montagu started his career in the India Office and became its Under-Secretary of State, remaining until 1914 when he became Financial Secretary to the Treasury, joining the cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the following year. Between 1917 and 1922 he was Secretary of State for India. For more details, see *The Times*, ‘Obituary : Edwin Samuel Montagu’, 17 November 1924; David Waley, *Edwin Montagu, a Memoir and an Account of His Visit to India* (New York: Asia Pub. House, 1964).

¹³² Quoted in Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.41; Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sharifian Solution*, p.154.

Amir Abdullah to Jerusalem and offered him temporary rule over Transjordan for six months with a monthly subsidy.¹³³

Other historians have backed Philby's claim that the appointment of Amir Abdullah did not coincide with the wishes of Herbert Samuel, who as High Commissioner had a relationship with the Zionist Organization and who wanted Transjordan to be included as part of the Jewish National Home.¹³⁴ Monroe takes a different view that the main reason behind Samuel's intention to occupy Transjordan was to secure Palestine.¹³⁵ In terms of objectivity, it seems beyond doubt that Samuel had connections with the Zionist Organization. In his memoirs, he illustrates his admiration for the purpose of Zionism:

I said that I myself had never been a Zionist, because the prospects on any practical outcome had seemed so remote that I had not been willing to take a part in the movement. But now the conditions are profoundly altered. If a Jewish State were established in Palestine it might become the centre of a new culture. The Jewish brain is rather a remarkable thing, and under national auspices, the state might become a fountain of enlightenment and a source of a great literature and art and development of science.¹³⁶

However, Samuel's fears over securing Palestine were quite logical, for a number of reasons. First, the tribes and their chiefs who inhabited the east of Transjordan and

¹³³ 'Report of Cairo and Jerusalem Conference', written by the CO, 21 July 1921, TNA, FO 371/6343.

¹³⁴ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.230; Kazziha 'The Political evolution of Transjordan', p.242; Abu al- Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawruh al-siāsifi Transjordan' [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], p.25; Amjad al-Zu'bi, 'Herbert Samuel wa- tasis Transjordan' [Herbert Samuel and the Establishment of Transjordan] ((Jordan: Master's thesis, Yarmouk University, 1997), pp.47-51, 71. In contrast, the Arabs were disappointed by Samuel's appointment, owing to his Judaism. See Edmund Allenby's telegram to Curzon, 9 June 1920, TNA, FO 371/5120.

¹³⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.103.

¹³⁶ Samuel, *Memoirs*, p.140.

who had led the Kura revolt, did not welcome Abdullah's regime and their recalcitrance jeopardised the region's security.¹³⁷ Second, the Syrian nationalists, who had come from Syria to Transjordan after the ejection of Amir Faişal from Damascus, were a major threat to Palestine, notably when Amir Abdullah, having reached Amman, announced that he would cooperate with them.¹³⁸ In addition, in 1921, the Jewish villages were exposed to attack by the Arab tribes who belonged to Transjordan and who stole most of its sheep and cattle.¹³⁹ Furthermore, it seems that Samuel was under pressure, in particular after the French remonstrance against the Amir Abdullah and the Syrian nationalists. They were accused of trying to assassinate the French High Commissioner, who was in fact injured, and of killing one of his officers.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, it should be noted that, while Samuel could show his private feelings to the Zionist Organization and was unwilling to establish a Sharifian Arabic government that would conflict with the Palestine mandate, he was at the time struggling with the unstable political conditions in Transjordan.

Therefore, for the reasons stated above, Samuel was not convinced of Amir Abdullah's capacity to rule Transjordan; he sent a telegram to the Colonial Secretary, stating that Amir Abdullah should be relieved of his temporary assignment and Transjordan should

¹³⁷ Regarding the Kura rebellion see 'Transjordan Reports', 1 July 1921, TNA, FO 371/6372.

¹³⁸ See Amir Abdullah's declaration to support the Syrian nationalists in Samuel's telegram to Curzon, 7 January 1921, TNA, FO 371/6371.

¹³⁹ Philby, 'Transjordan and other Near East problems', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1.

¹⁴⁰ For the accusation against Amir Abdullah and his nationalist leaders, see the French Ambassador's letter, in London, to Curzon, 2 August 1921, TNA, FO 371/6373.

be administered in combination with Palestine.¹⁴¹ However, Samuel's opinion differed from that of the CO and the British Government in general, which had previously decided that Britain should support Hussain's sons and assign Iraq and Transjordan to them to rule.¹⁴² Hence, Churchill decided to despatch Lawrence, his man, in order to figure out the facts of the situation and to report the conditions in Transjordan.¹⁴³ Lawrence arrived in Amman on 10 October 1921, and found that Samuel had exaggerated the facts about the Amir Abdullah. He suggested a remedy: that Abdullah should remain in charge of Transjordan and that all the British staff who were acting as advisers to Abdullah should be sent away. He also recommended total political separation between Transjordan and Palestine as well as the appointment of Philby as a new British Representative to replace Lawrence in Transjordan.¹⁴⁴ It may be helpful to examine the reason behind Lawrence's recommendation that Philby should succeed him in his post in Transjordan. The relations between the two men date back to 1919, when they met by chance in Crete and flew together to Cairo.¹⁴⁵ Monroe suggested that the two Arabian specialists discussed Arabia affairs and Lawrence listened with

¹⁴¹ Samuel to CO, 13 June 1921, TNA, CO 733/17.

¹⁴² Report of Cairo and Jerusalem Conference, 21 July 1921, TNA, FO 371/6343.

¹⁴³ Philby, 'Transjordan and other Near East problems', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1; Churchill to FO, 30 August 1921, TNA, FO 371/6461.

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence Minute, 7 July 1921, TNA, CO 537/822; Lawrence's report entitled 'Situation in Transjordan', 24 October 1921, TNA, FO 371/6373; Philby, 'Transjordan', *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, vol.11, issue 4(1 Jan 1924), p.302. Monroe suggests that Hubert Young and not Lawrence was the man who recommended Philby for the post. See her book, *Philby of Arabia*, p.105. However, it seems that Lawrence first proposed the name of Philby, as he indicated in his Minute, 7 July 1921, TNA, CO 537/822. There is besides Philby's quotation of the Colonial Office's telegram stating that "Lawrence, temporarily chief British Representative Transjordan, wants to be relieved immediately and suggests Philby as successor. We agreed. Please offer post to Philby". See Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.207.

¹⁴⁵ *The Letters of T.E. Lawrence*, p.279; Aldington, *Lawrence of Arabia*, p.279.

interest to Philby's account of the recent developments in Arabia.¹⁴⁶ This would provide evidence for Lawrence's admiration of Philby, especially regarding his knowledge of the Middle East, which may be considered one of the factors that led Lawrence to recommend Philby as his successor. Although Lawrence differed from him when it came to the McMahon- Hussain correspondence, he admired and liked Philby and recommended him so long as he "would do well and play fair."¹⁴⁷ Consequently, it can be inferred that Lawrence realized that Philby had first-hand knowledge of Ibn Sa'ūd and Wahhabism and wished that Philby could reconcile his opinion of Abdullah with that of Ibn Sa'ūd, for example, after Abdullah's defeat by Ibn Sa'ūd's forces in the battle of Truabah.¹⁴⁸

Indeed, Lawrence's sympathy with the Hashemite royal family may not have been the only reason for wanting to enhance Abdullah's position in Transjordan; it may also be attributed to the policy adopted by Churchill and some like-minded members of the CO staff that the Sharifian case had been disregarded and it was the time to consolidate Abdullah, who had little support from Britain.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, Churchill, without asking any questions, accepted Lawrence's recommendation and informed Samuel that he did

¹⁴⁶ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.90.

¹⁴⁷ Lawrence Minute, 7 July 1921, TNA, CO 537/822. On Lawrence's admiration, see Lawrence Minute, 21 June 1921, TNA, CO 730/17.

¹⁴⁸ The Battle of Truabah will be discussed in Chapter Five.

¹⁴⁹ Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sherifian Solution*, pp.194-195.

not wish to change the British policy but would retain Abdullah. He said of himself, in forceful language, that he and not Samuel was the one responsible.¹⁵⁰

According to the British officials, Philby's appointment in Transjordan resulted in considerable controversy, given the circumstances surrounding Philby's departure from Iraq. From a Minute by Shuckburgh, it can be observed that while Philby was described as a man of great capability and experience, he was not able to adjust to the policy that he was asked to implement and this was what made it hard or arduous for him to work amicably with his associates.¹⁵¹ Cox, the man whom Philby worked with for many years, referred to Philby as fanatical in nature and with opinions which always contradicted the interests and policy of His Majesty's Government. He also sought to justify his decision to end Philby's career in Iraq and did not want him to work under his administration because of Philby's difficulty in reconciling his personal views with official ones, assuming that this would have a negative impact on his subordinates.¹⁵² Andrew Ryan,¹⁵³ the first British Minister in Saudi Arabia, had a strong adverse opinion of Philby, portraying him as a man who loathed the British policy in the Middle East.¹⁵⁴ Reader Bullard, who served in Iraq with Philby, shared Cox and Ryan's view and added that Philby had a personality that tended to be truculent and contentious, always

¹⁵⁰ Churchill to Samuel, 22 November 1921, TNA, CO 733/7.

¹⁵¹ Shuckburgh Minute, 8 October 1921, TNA, CO 733/6.

¹⁵² Cox to Churchill, 6 July 1921, TNA, CO537/822; Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox* p.298.

¹⁵³ Sir Andrew Ryan (1876-1949) was the first British minister in Ibn Sa'ūd's kingdom from 1930 to 1932. He served the British Government in many places such as Turkey and Albania. See a further account in his autobiography: *The last of the Dragomans*.

¹⁵⁴ Ryan, *The last of the Dragomans*, p.266.

opposed to everyone, a characteristic that Bullard had never before encountered.¹⁵⁵

Like the above British officials, Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner of Palestine, indicated that, while Philby was a man of energy, ability and full awareness of the East, he entirely regarded "his own judgment as infallible and everyone else's as very much the reverse".¹⁵⁶

However, the question that should be asked is why these British officials agreed in describing Philby's character in such wholly negative terms? To respond, it may be said that Philby was obviously stubborn and opinionated in his talk and discussion, but this is not at issue. The issue is that, while the British officials implicitly followed the policy of HMG, Philby attempted to distinguish himself by taking a different path; this was, indeed, at the bidding of his indomitable independence of mind which apparently contradicted the policy of his country in particular when ideas of liberation and independence were the issue. In his unpublished book, Philby wrote:

It was the "hard light" of Cambridge which had opened my eyes to the true nature of the popular fallacies ... And already, during my seven years of service in India, I had shown unmistakable signs of revolt against the conventions and shibboleths of the greatest administrative service ... For its record in the past nobody had, or has, a greater admiration than myself: the modern India and Pakistan and Burma would have been impossible without it. But what I did find it difficult to condone was the inability of my colleagues ... to adjust themselves in my time to the new strains and stresses of a changing world. I had left India, to spend the rest of my years in the Arab world:

¹⁵⁵ Bullard, *Two Kings in Arabia*, p.49, n.1.

¹⁵⁶ Samuel to CO, 18 July 1924, MECA, *Samuel collection*, B.1.

developing and ... assisting in the realization of my advanced ideas about Arab independence.¹⁵⁷

However, it seems that the path of supporting the ideas of liberation and independence may not have been chosen only in the light of Cambridge but also in response to his own ambitious personality. Although he was supposed to follow orders as a government official, he may have thought that his chosen path would put him in the limelight in Arab society and lend him as much fame as Shakespear and Lawrence, whose reputation in these lands was considerable. At all events, Philby denounced the imperial policy of the British Government in the Middle East and, therefore, it is not surprising that his personality and his political views were not appreciated by his superiors and colleagues at work, nor by the important political officials of the British Government. This leads to the next question: with this character and these political concepts, why was he given the important post of representing British policy in Transjordan? The answer is perhaps two-fold. To begin with, Philby was characterized by his extreme administrative efficiency, which he acquired in India and Iraq. Combined with his awareness of Arab affairs, he also had an intimate knowledge of Arabic which was beyond question remarkable. Second, and in fact more important, was Philby's political outlook, which supported Arab independence. Such views were in line with the desire of the British mandate to give the Arabs their freedom, but only after teaching them the requirements of administration and government. Consequently, Lawrence

¹⁵⁷ See Philby's view regarding his advocacy of independence in his unpublished book: *More Arabian Days*, original copy preserved by Michael Engelbach, Philby's grandson, unknown date, p.1

and Churchill may have hoped that Philby would play a vital role in promoting Arab independence and would show Hussain and his sons that Britain kept its promise to reward them for the part that they had played in the war.

However, Philby's appointment seems to have been conditional on his meeting Churchill in London. The latter probably wished to figure out Philby's personality and estimate how far Philby would implement the new British policy in Transjordan. After being interviewed by Churchill, it seems that Philby, as a fluent and attractive speaker, impressed Churchill by his explicit judgments.¹⁵⁸ Philby was delighted by Churchill's assurance that Arab independence in Transjordan would be encouraged. He stated:

Mr. Churchill gave me all the assurance I needed. The mandate for Palestine and Transjordan, both under the supreme control of a single High Commissioner, would be administrated quite separately. The Zionist clauses of the mandate would on no account apply to Transjordan. And, so long as that country [Transjordan] refrained from being a nuisance to all its neighbours as it certainly had been of late, the British Government was prepared to let it develop as a self-governing entity.¹⁵⁹

At the meeting, Monroe stated, Churchill was impressed by Philby who was a lively, fascinating talker and who introduced "his ideas so lucidly that he won over ... successive critics".¹⁶⁰ Monroe also indicated that Churchill did not want Philby to return to India. Instead, he outlined a new task in Transjordan, offering him the opportunity to

¹⁵⁸ Regarding the Churchill's approval of Philby's appointment, see Young to Shuckburgh, 3 November 1921, TNA, CO 733/15.

¹⁵⁹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.209. Also, see the meeting between Philby and Churchill in Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tārīkh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], pp.110-111; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.105; Musa, *Nawāfīdh Ghārbīah* [The Western Windows], p.239.

¹⁶⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.105.

enhance Arab independence there without any supervision in recognition of his wholehearted efforts.¹⁶¹ From the above, it can be seen that Philby was given the chance to strengthen Arab independence, in line with his own political instincts. It can also be inferred that, if he took this new and important post, he would be free to perform his duties without any supervision. These reasons persuaded him to accept the post immediately.

The arrival in Amman

Philby was instructed by Cox that his service had been transferred from the administration in Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and a military plane had been arranged to despatch him to Amman.¹⁶² After having interviews with Amir Abdullah, Lawrence in Amman, Samuel in Palestine and Churchill, as mentioned above, in London, he reached Amman in November 1921 but he did not take up his new post until Lawrence had left.¹⁶³ The instructions given to Philby were that Transjordan should be under the control of the Palestine administration for a while, but at the same time the Amir Abdullah with his people should be left free to pursue their own course without intervention either from the Palestine administration or even Philby. The main reasons for the policy of non-interference are illustrated in Philby's words:

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Cox to Philby, 12 October 1921, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1; Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.208-209.

¹⁶³ Hammād, *a'medat al-esti'mar fi al-'alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World], pp.103-04; Abu al- Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawruh al-siāsifi Transjordan'[Philby and his political role in Transjordan], pp.38-40.

I was wedded to the principle of non-interference in the internal administration of an independent country for several reasons. In the first place, interference would merely have exasperated the Amir and his government without doing any good to the people ... in the second place, I did not think that the people were entitled to independence if they were unable to achieve it by their own effort ... And finally, the collapse of Abdullah's administration seemed to be bound to lead to the reimposition of Palestine control, which I regarded as disastrous.¹⁶⁴

In his new post, Philby had to tackle serious and complicated issues: first, how he could calm the tension with the French authorities in Syria regarding the arrest of the Syrian nationalists who had been involved in the attempted assassination of the previous French High Commissioner, Henri Gouraud. Second, how he could defend the disjunction of Transjordan from Palestine and then establish a new democratic government with a representative body elected by the citizens. These substantial issues are examined below.

Philby and the French authorities in Syria

From his unpublished diary, it appears that Philby pursued his first objective, aimed at reducing the tension between Transjordan and the French authorities in Syria. To this end, in April 1922 he visited Damascus and met the French officials, discussing various aspects of the relations between Syria and Transjordan. The attack on the French High Commissioner was raised. The French delegate was surprised to receive a report from Philby which indicated that 11 of the people demanded by the French authorities did not exist and two of them were in Syria already. Eventually, Philby was able to show

¹⁶⁴ Philby, ' Transjordan and other Near East problems ', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1; Philby, ' Transjordan ', p.305.

that the remaining names on the French list were women and children, two or three of whom had died before the incident in question.¹⁶⁵ As a result, with France's willingness to have a friendly relationship with Transjordan, Philby succeeded in reconciling the two parties.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, it was evident that Philby recognized that Transjordan had little in the way of economic resources. In order to increase its income, he took the opportunity to raise the question of the payment of taxes. He asserted that Transjordan was very keen to impose customs duty on all goods coming from Syria to Transjordan. The French authorities agreed with Philby's proposal to increase the income from customs duties and promised that such an arrangement would be considered when the Federal Council in Syria was established.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, it seemed that Philby not only tried to encourage Transjordan to further its own political interests in its relations with neighbouring countries, which would gradually erode the British authority's influence in Palestine, but also to enhance the economic resources of Transjordan.

Philby's efforts to promote Transjordan's independence

Philby made it his priority to further the purpose of separating Transjordan from the Palestinian administration. From the historical events, it can be observed that he

¹⁶⁵ Philby's Transjordan Diary , 2 and 4 April 1922, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/3/3.

¹⁶⁶ After meeting with Philby, the French authorities in Syria became willing to recognize Amir Abdullah's regime in Transjordan. See a report regarding the situation in Transjordan, 1 April 1922, TNA, CO 733/23; Mary, *King Abdullah, Britain and the making of Jordan*, p.71; Abu al- Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan'[Philby and his political role in Transjordan], pp.83-86.

¹⁶⁷ Philby's Transjordan Diary , 2 and 4 April 1922, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/3/3.

managed to take some steps towards this separation. First, he recalled all the British staff who had supervised the districts of Transjordan in the past and sent them to Palestine.¹⁶⁸ Such a procedure perhaps demonstrates that the presence of the British officers would weaken the regime of Amir Abdullah and also that the inhabitants of Transjordan would not accept their presence. More important, the existence of the British representatives would contradict Philby's stated aim of securing independence for Transjordan. In addition, while this action on his part also shows how keen he was to play a leading role in his new post, he was, in fact, following the policy of Lawrence who was on the Sharifian side and had previously recommended the removal of the British officers from Transjordan.¹⁶⁹

A further illustration of Philby's efforts to separate Transjordan can be seen in his telegram strengthening the financial independence of Transjordan and insisting that he, as the Chief British Representative in Transjordan, should be in charge of its administration, while Transjordan should be allowed all the rope it needed to exercise all the elements of administration including the administration of financial independence. This meant that he saw Transjordan as a distinct political unit. His concern is illustrated in his words to Samuel:

Your Excellency is well aware that, while I enjoy full control of the C.O. vote and all disbursements in respect thereof, I am not in the same position as regards the revenue and expenditure of the Transjordan Government, which would resent any attempt on

¹⁶⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.211; Philby, 'Transjordan and other Near East problems', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1.

¹⁶⁹ See Lawrence's report, 'Situation in Transjordan' 24 October 1921, TNA, FO 371/6373.

the part of H.M.G. to enforce a detailed control over its finances and would have no difficulty in defeating any inquisition on my part.¹⁷⁰

Philby also convincingly argued that Transjordan should be separate. His argument was based on the fact that Transjordan, if it were granted absolute independence and the necessary freedom, would rely on own its resources “without costing the British taxpayer a penny” and this would benefit not only the treasury of Transjordan but also the economic interests of Palestine in terms of joint customs duty.¹⁷¹ In addition, his effort to promote Transjordan’s separation can be seen in his assertion that the removal of Palestine’s control over the part of the Hejaz railway that passed through the lands of Transjordan would make the economy of Transjordan more effective and enhance its administration to a decent state of capability.¹⁷²

Philby’s actions and his persistent efforts to gain *de facto* independence for Transjordan as well as *de jure* recognition were unceasing. It was clear that he put forward a persuasive argument and used political influence to exclude Transjordan’s financial administration from Palestinian supervision. Evidence of this lies in his conviction that, if Transjordan were not independent, the influence of its political leaders, who were Syrian and Palestinian, would reach Syria and Palestine.¹⁷³ However, Samuel did not follow Philby’s recommendation, stating that the financial

¹⁷⁰ Philby to Samuel, 18 February 1922, TNA, CO 733/20.

¹⁷¹ Philby, ‘Memorandum on Transjordan and other Near East problems’, 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1.

¹⁷² Philby to Lawrence, 13 February, TNA, CO 733/39; Philby’s memorandum, 13 February 1922, *ibid.*

¹⁷³ Philby, ‘Memorandum on the Future Administration of Transjordan’, 2 May 1922, TNA, CO 733/22.

administration of Transjordan should remain under the aegis of Palestine according to the terms of the British Mandate.¹⁷⁴

However, throughout the first 18 months of his posting, Philby demonstrated that he could make palpable progress and success for Abdullah's administration and regime. For these reasons, in October 1922 Britain invited the Amir with his prime Minister to London in order to negotiate the terms and the independent status that would be admitted by the British Government.¹⁷⁵ Britain assigned Gilbert Clayton (the Chief Secretary for Palestine) to be its representative in the negotiation. In his memorandum, Clayton asserted that Philby attended one meeting and, at his request, Philby translated the Arabic memorandum presented by Amir Abdullah, which proposed the unconditional acceptance of Amir Abdullah's Emirate as well as the full secession of Transjordan from Palestinian administration. Consequently, the outcomes of the visit resulted not only in the promise that British financial aid to Abdullah would remain at £150,000 annually and the gain of a further £36,000 for his civil expenses but also Clayton's assurance that the matter of British recognition of Transjordan was a vital issue and that a constitutional regime would have to be established.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Samuel, 'Notes on Mr. Philby's memorandum', 26 May 1922, MECA, *Samuel collection*, B.1. Also see MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1.

¹⁷⁵ Regarding the visit of Amir Abdullah to London and the negotiation with Britain, see G. Clayton's memorandum, 11 November 1922, Durham University Library: Archives Special Collection (DULASC), *Clayton's papers*, Re.SAD.471/3/; Musa, *Tasis al-Emarah al-Ordiniyah* [The Establishment of Transjordan], pp. 173-175.

¹⁷⁶ Clayton's memorandum, 11 November 1922, DULASC, *Clayton's papers*, Re.SAD.471/3. Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.115.

From the above, it can be said that Philby played an important role on Transjordan's behalf. The turning point in his endeavour to secure its independence was when the Colonial Secretary agreed to his proposal to define the border between Palestine and Transjordan.¹⁷⁷ More important, in March 1923, the League of Nations endorsed Britain's proposal that Transjordan should have its independence under the auspices of the British Government.

Subject to the approval of the League of Nations His Majesty's Government recognizes the existence of an independent administration in Transjordan under His Highness the Amir Abdullah provided that it shall be conducted on constitutional and democratic lines and shall, by an instrument to be negotiated hereafter, place His Majesty's Government in a position to perform their international obligations in respect of the territory in question.¹⁷⁸

It is clear that such an announcement would betoken Transjordan's political independence, above all because it extracted the country from Palestine administration and beyond the borders of the Jewish National Home. Consequently, with the announcement of the League of Nations, Samuel, the High Commissioner in Palestine, informed Amir Abdullah that Britain had promised to give Transjordan independence. For this historic occasion, he made a trip to Amman, where he met the Amir, assuring

¹⁷⁷ Churchill to Samuel, 30 August 1922, TNA, CO 733/24; Clayton Note, 23 September 1922, DULASC, *Clayton's papers*, Re.SAD.694/10.

¹⁷⁸ Philby, 'Memorandum on Transjordan and other Near East problems', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1. See also a report regarding conditions in Palestine and Transjordan, dated as May 1923, TNA,FO 371/8998.

him that he could set up a constitutional government, the vital condition that would bring independence to his Emirate.¹⁷⁹

Wilson asserted that such recognition did not entail independence from the British Government, meaning that Transjordan was still under the British mandate.¹⁸⁰ This claim was entirely true but, at the same time, it should not be forgotten that Philby played a fundamental role in pressing for Transjordan's recognition despite the obstacles from the British authorities in Palestine. Furthermore, it is likely that Philby was the one who took the first steps towards full independence for Transjordan which was granted some decades later.¹⁸¹

At any rate, it seems that Philby was aware of the formulated announcement of the League of Nations which indicated that Transjordan would need a democratic and constitutional government in order to achieve independence.¹⁸² This would mean that Philby himself could not secure its formal recognition and would not be able to enter into any formal negotiations between Transjordan and Britain without generating an official representative assembly. Therefore, as his post required advice and invited criticism, Philby, without delay, put more pressure on Abdullah to set up a representative assembly, which would meet the known desire of the people of

¹⁷⁹ Musa, *Tasis al-Emarah al-Ordiniyah* [The Establishment of Transjordan], p.174.

¹⁸⁰ Wilson, *King Abdullah*, p.76.

¹⁸¹ Transjordan received formal recognition in 1946, when the Amir Abdullah was proclaimed king of the Hashemite Kingdom. See Suleiman Musa, *Emarat sharq al-Ordin: Nashatūha wa- taṭworaha: 1921-1946* [Transjordan Emirate: its birth and evolution (Amman: Committee of Jordan's history Publication, 1990), pp.283-288.

¹⁸² Philby, 'Memorandum on Transjordan and other Near East problems', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1

Transjordan. However, Philby indicated that Abdullah was reluctant to take any steps which might lead to the restriction of his own autocratic power. He also presented a further reason for halting the establishment of a representative assembly. It was the fear of the mostly Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi ministers and advisers of Abdullah, who had great influence on the Amir; they were worried that the establishment of a national government would weaken their influence and, more important, jeopardise their lucrative posts.¹⁸³ However logical Philby's reasons may have been, there was also a significant factor that led Abdullah to hesitate. It was his belief that Transjordan was part of his father's kingdom in Hejaz; he was unwilling to risk any trouble with his father, preferring not to cut relations with Mecca, the capital of the kingdom of Hejaz. This prompts the suspicion that he hoped to succeed his father as ruler of the Hejazi kingdom and would have done nothing to endanger this prospect.¹⁸⁴

As a result, the introduction of a representative assembly remained in abeyance. Philby was patient with the reluctance of Abdullah and also with his maladministration. He did not lose hope but tried to find another way to make the idea of a representative assembly acceptable. He exploited the financial crisis caused by the personal extravagance of Abdullah and his biased administration, which favoured some Bedouin tribes and their Shaikhs, exempting them from tax, while other poorer tribes were taxed more than their due amount. Philby informed Samuel of the chaotic financial administration, naming the financial management as the essential factor to improve if

¹⁸³ Philby, ' Transjordan ', pp.304-305;

¹⁸⁴ Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sherifian Solution*, pp.207-208.

the Emirate were to be saved but that improvement would not be successful unless the government's exchequer was subject to or controlled by the representative assembly.¹⁸⁵

The other approach that Philby took to gain his purpose was to assure the prime minister of the Emirate, Madhar Raslan,¹⁸⁶ that the best way to strengthen the Emirate was to set up bodies which would represent the inhabitants of Transjordan.¹⁸⁷ It seems, however, that these initiatives were not sufficient to bring about the implementation of constitutional government. Philby's purpose could not be achieved without eliminating the Arab nationalists, who had entered Transjordan from elsewhere and now had considerable influence over Abdullah. They had reasons of their own, as discussed above, for not wanting to establish a constitutional government. But the chance to get rid of them came when the Balqa revolt against Abdullah's regime broke out in the summer of 1923. This is described in more detail below.

Philby and the revolt of the Adwan

¹⁸⁵ Philby to Samuel, 11 October 1923, TNA, CO 733/50.

¹⁸⁶ Madhar Raslan was a Syrian nationalist who worked with Faişal in Syria and then with Abdullah in Transjordan. For more accounts see Musa, *Emarat sharq al- Ordñ* [Transjordan Emirate], p.57, et seq.

¹⁸⁷ Abu al- Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawruh al-siāsi fi Transjordan' [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], pp.59-60.

The Adwan were a tribe living in the west of Transjordan.¹⁸⁸ Their revolt was a significant incident in the early years of the history of Jordan, which had a great deal of sympathy from most areas of the new Emirate. According to some historians, several factors led to the revolt. First, the Adwan tribes and their leaders were much frustrated by the policy of Abdullah, who had his favourites, as noted above, and lavished privileges, such as tax exemption, on Bani Shakir, another Bedouin tribe, while tribes such as the Adwan were ordered to pay not only the due taxes but also the uncollected taxes dating back to 1918, before the Emirate of Transjordan was even created. This led, predictably, to increased tribal rivalry and animosity between them. Second, the domination of the Arab nationalists, in particular those from Syria, in the governmental administration made the original inhabitants of Transjordan highly discontented at finding themselves without any participation or political influence in their homeland.¹⁸⁹ For all these vital reasons, the unequal taxation, the tribal competition and the marginalization of the original inhabitants in their own country, the leader of the Adwan, Sultan al- Adwan,¹⁹⁰ headed a revolt and marched on Amman at the end of August 1923 in the hope of driving Abdullah out of the country. It was evident that the Sultan was determined in this revolt, as can be observed in his letter to Philby:

¹⁸⁸ For more information on the Adwan tribe and its tribal branches, see Abduraof al-Rwābdah, *Mu'jam al-'shae al- Ordiniyah* [Dictionary of Jordanian tribes](Amman: Jordanian Press, 2010), pp. 365-373.

¹⁸⁹ Musa, *Tasis al-Emarah al- Ordiniyah* [The Establishment of Transjordan],p.175; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p119; Wilson, *King Abdullah*,, p.77-78; Alon Yoav, ' The Balqa Revolt: Tribes and early state-building in Transjordan ', *Die Welt des Islam*, 2006, vol.64, p.19.

¹⁹⁰ Sultan Basha Ibn Ali al- Adwan became a leader of the tribal coalition in 1900. His ancestors had inhabited Transjordan in the middle of the 17th century. For more information, see al- Rwābdah, *Mu'jam al-'shaer al- Ordiniyah*[Dictionary of Jordanian tribes] , pp.365, 370.

The Arabs revolted to defend their rights and obtain justice in particular for the inhabitants of Balqa. Our aim was to get rid of Abdullah's oppression. The revolt was just an internal affair and would not be considered [a revolt] against the British authority. I warn you, if you intervene in favour of Abdullah, I will report you to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.¹⁹¹

In response, Philby angrily told the Sultan to "disband or be attacked."¹⁹² The Sultan then managed to block the road between Amman and Jerusalem. Philby, whose duty required him to protect Abdullah, sent a final letter to the Sultan, informing him that if he did not withdraw with his followers they would be attacked within the hour by the available forces. On the night of the revolt, Abdullah could not sleep and was on the verge of escaping. The Sultan ignored Philby's warning and advanced with his rebels on Amman where they encountered the motor vehicles and armoured cars of the Royal Air Force. Within half an hour the revolution was suppressed, with about 70 casualties among the rebels.¹⁹³

Many historians have suggested that Philby was pleased that a revolt had occurred, in particular when it became known that the rebels had, among other things, demanded that the Syrians should be ousted and a representative assembly should be set up, an idea that had invariably been rejected by Abdullah. Historians have also blamed Philby for abandoning the rebels, for which he earned the distrust of the Adwan tribes, his

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Abu al- Rab, ' John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan' [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], pp.108-109.

¹⁹² Philby, ' Transjordan ', p.306.

¹⁹³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.119; Yoav, ' The Balqa Revolt ', p.33.

former friends.¹⁹⁴ To be sure, Philby's sympathy for the rebels before the revolt was obvious and what he had needed to do was simply to put more pressure on Abdullah to satisfy the League of Nations by transferring the country to constitutional government in the hope of achieving independence. In addition, Philby did not expect the fateful destiny that befell Sultan and his supporters when fighting broke out after a series of errors.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Philby had been obliged to save Abdullah; moreover, even given the considerable progress already made by the Emirate, a successful rebellion would have been disastrous to the idea of Transjordan's independence. Hence Philby regretted and was disappointed over what happened to the rebels, accusing Abdullah of being the main cause of the revolt.¹⁹⁶

However, it should be noted that the most important result of the suppression of the revolt was the departure of the prominent Arab nationalists, which improved the position of Transjordan. In addition, Philby seems to have received the credit for this change by encouraging the Jordanians to join in ruling the country. However, he failed to persuade Abdullah to establish a constitutional regime and the serious tension between them increasingly came to a head.¹⁹⁷

Philby and the controversy with Abdullah

¹⁹⁴ Musa, *Tasis al-Emarah al-Ordiniyah* [The Establishment of Transjordan], p.175; Abu al- Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsifi Transjordan' [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], p.109.

¹⁹⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.119.

¹⁹⁶ Philby, 'Transjordan', p.306.

¹⁹⁷ Mary, *King Abdullah, Britain and the making of Jordan*, p.76-78; Musa, *Tasis al-Emarah al-Ordiniyah* [The Establishment of Transjordan], pp.155-162; Abu al- Rab, 'John Philby wa- dawrūh al-siāsi fi Transjordan' [Philby and his political role in Transjordan], pp.109-112.

Combined with Abdullah's refusal to become a constitutional monarch, there were further historical incidents that intensified the tension between him and Philby. For instance, the Wahhabis' occupation of al-Jauf, the south-east frontier region of Transjordan, put the Amir Abdullah into a state of severe consternation; he announced that he would leave Transjordan if Ibn Sa'ūd was not driven out of al- Jauf.¹⁹⁸ Philby's view of the occupation of al- Jauf was not the same as his and Samuel's. He pointed out that there was no need for an active attack to drive out the Wahhabis because Ibn Sa'ūd and his people were already occupying the district. Ibn Sa'ūd, as Philby stated, was aware of the British interest in the region and would not advance further to occupy Transjordan.¹⁹⁹

Another confrontation occurred between the Amir and Philby when the Amir decided to build a mosque for Amman. Philby welcomed the idea and volunteered to identify the right direction for the Qibla to face Mecca. However, the next day, Philby discovered that the Amir had ordered the construction workers to destroy a sixth-century Byzantine bell-tower and part of a basilica wall. Philby lost his temper at what

¹⁹⁸ Abdullah to Samuel, 30 July 1922, TNA, CO 733/23. The Amir's state of alarm may be explained by events going back to 1919 when he was defeated by Ibn Sa'ūd's forces in the battle of Turabah and most of his men were killed. See a memorandum written by Captain H. Garland, 4 June 1919, TNA, FO 406/ 41. Regarding Ibn Sa'ūd's occupation of Jauf, see al- Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth wa-mulḥaqātih* [The History of modern Najd and its dependencies](Beirut: al- 'Imiah Publication, 1928), pp.283-284; H.St J.B.Philby *Arabian Jubilee* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1952),p.70.

¹⁹⁹ Philby to Samuel, 30 July 1922, TNA, CO 733/24.

he saw as a desecration, while the Amir, enraged at Philby for his outburst, announced that he himself was the sole judge of Islamic affairs.²⁰⁰

It seems that, after these incidents, the parties had no wish to communicate with each other. The Amir informed the Palestine authorities that he and Philby could not work together and one of them had to leave.²⁰¹ Instead of reaching reconciliation with the Amir, Philby exploited the intemperance of the other and reported to Jerusalem not only that he had initiated the demolition of a historic building but also that the Amir had not succeeded in setting up a constitutional government, which was a condition of Transjordan's independence.²⁰²

It may be noted that Abdullah's displeasure with Philby was the initial factor in consolidating the relationship between the former and Samuel, the High Commissioner in Palestine. In addition, it was perhaps the case that Samuel was happy to hear of this conflict, for he could no longer tolerate Philby's authority and sent his Chief Secretary, Clayton, to reduce the tension between the parties. Although the Amir Abdullah agreed with Clayton's opinion that antiquities were a tourist attraction, he never forgave Philby for his threats.²⁰³ However, on the advice of Clayton, Samuel became satisfied that Philby should be got rid of as Chief British Representative. In his telegram to the CO, Samuel asserted that a change should be made in the office of the Chief British

²⁰⁰ Philby to Bell, 20 June 1923, TNA, CO 733/59; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.118.

²⁰¹ Wilson, *King Abdullah*, p.77.

²⁰² Philby, 'Memorandum on Transjordan and other Near East problems', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1; Philby to Clayton, 1 July 1923, TNA, CO 733/47.

²⁰³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.118.

Representative, suggesting that the main cause of the unsatisfactory conditions in Transjordan was allowing Philby “an unduly free hand”.²⁰⁴ It is perhaps pertinent to ask why Philby was given much authority and the question cannot in fact be answered without some consideration. In the first place, it should be noted that the British imperial system seems to have given much power to all British officials, not only Philby but also people such as Lawrence or Sykes who were fond of the Middle East and had explored its regions even before the outbreak of the Great War.²⁰⁵ Satia suggests that Britain, from the beginning of the war onwards, recruited these official agents because of their deep knowledge and their preconception of Arabia as a space of romance and adventure and gave them much authority to maintain the British policy,²⁰⁶ thereby extending its imperial power. Second, it may be true that Britain gave these individuals great authority because they had so much charismatic power or because Whitehall was too far away, leaving them to take a free hand in making policy.²⁰⁷ Third, it is evident that Whitehall deliberately encouraged such licence for its officials in the Middle East.²⁰⁸ For instance, Cox, who spent most of his life in the Middle East, was given much authority during the war; in August 1917 he became Civil Commissioner and was

²⁰⁴ Samuel to CO, 18 July 1924, MECA, *Samuel collection*, B.1

²⁰⁵ Regarding Sykes’ early Eastern travels, see Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur*, pp. 35-51.

For Lawrence’s early explorations, see Anderson, *Lawrence in Arabia: War*, pp.23-24.

²⁰⁶ Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, pp.71-72,129.

²⁰⁷ John Mackenzie agrees that the imperial system “emerged by default not from design” and the size of British empire was immense. See his article: ‘The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (2015), vol.43(1), pp.103,116.

²⁰⁸ Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, p.129.

authorised to report directly to HMG through the Secretary of State for India.²⁰⁹ After the Iraqi revolt in 1920, Cox became High Commissioner and held the main responsibility for the British mandate in Iraq, acting and “playing with a free hand”.²¹⁰ The above reasons allow one to surmise that Philby was given much authority in his post, which left him free to encourage his own ideas of Arab independence. He believed that Transjordan’s independence would have not been granted without the separation from Palestinian administration. Such authority would explain the frustration of Samuel, who was convinced that Philby’s policy was not in line with official British policy.

It was perhaps the outcome of such contentions that forced Samuel to ignore Philby and allowed the Amir Abdullah to correspond with him directly.²¹¹ Such negligence may have left Philby in a state of frustration which in the end forced him to resign not only from his position as Chief British Representative but also from Government service.²¹²

Moreover, in terms of his relations with the CO, Philby may have believed that his efforts were not wanted. Without the specific authority of the CO, he visited Al. Jauf and Wadi Sirhan in order to extend the political influence of the Transjordan tribes of

²⁰⁹ ‘Mesopotamia. Administrative Record during British Occupation’, IOR, L/P&S/18/B328.

²¹⁰ Graves, *The life of Sir Percy Cox*, pp.263,316.

²¹¹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.118. Philby claimed that Samuel encouraged the Amir to belittle Philby’s schooling. See his autobiography, *Arabian Days*, p.236.

²¹² A report entitled ‘ The Cause of Mr. Philby’s Resignation ’, 17 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1.

the region.²¹³ It was obvious that Philby's behaviour was not satisfactory to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who wrote to Samuel as follows:

Both [the Amir] Abdullah and Philby should be informed without delay that this agreement was concluded without the authority of His Majesty's Government and His Majesty's Government are not bound thereby. Mr. Philby should also be informed that he should only proceed with negotiations under instructions.²¹⁴

It is possible that Philby wanted to make his name among such British officers as Lawrence, who had played a vital role in the war; however, his views and manner were not welcomed either by the British authorities in London or Palestine, which made him feel unappreciated.

It may be concluded that the constraints on Philby form a political reason for his resignation. Perhaps the financial aspect should be considered a further cause. When Philby was in Iraq acting as adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, his salary was £2500 annually but when he was despatched to Amman his salary was reduced to £2100.²¹⁵ Such a steep reduction may have caused difficulties for Philby, not least because he would have been earning no more than a District Commissioner in Palestine. As Monroe suggested, he was in need of money when he, in innocence but in a state of resentment, allowed himself, without authority, to use some money from the

²¹³ Philby to Samuel, 27 May 1922, TNA, CO 537/857.

²¹⁴ Telegram from the Secretary of State to Samuel, 1 July 1922, TNA, CO 537/857.

²¹⁵ Philby, 'Memorandum on Transjordan and other Near East problems', 26 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1.

administrative budget.²¹⁶ Philby explained to Whitehall the financial of his economic situation and after long debating, Whitehall came to the decision that Philby owed only £567.²¹⁷ The Palestine authorities discovered the incident and found that Philby “owed and was ordered to give the money back”.²¹⁸ Such difficult economic circumstances may have added to the causes of his resignation. There may be a further reason behind Philby’s decision. When Philby had previously resigned and no longer desired to work with Cox in Iraq, owing to his objection to the appointment of Faiṣal as king of Iraq, he wrote a private letter to Cox to explain the following statement:

A possible alternative would be employment in the Persian Gulf but that involves the Gulf ...As you know my heart is in Arabia and it’s my only desire to remain connected in some way with that country.²¹⁹

From the above, it can be extrapolated that, although Philby did not precisely state in what way his heart was connected with Arabia, his ambition to explore the unknown areas of Arabia seems perhaps to have been one of the main reasons for his resignation. Furthermore, the relations between Philby and Ibn Sa’ūd were extraordinary and perhaps Philby felt that he would find every possibility of assistance not only for the exploration of Arabia but also to help with his financial circumstances; this coincided with his decision to resign and leave Transjordan for Arabia, as discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Before ending this chapter, it seems important to ask how Philby fitted into the gallery of kingmakers who played a vital role in the Middle East implementing British policy during WWI and in the years that followed. In their book, Karl Meyer and Shareen

²¹⁶ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.120.

²¹⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.120.

²¹⁸ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.143.

²¹⁹ Philby to Cox, MECA, *Cox collection*, F.5/38.

Bryson suggest that British individuals such as Mark Sykes, T. E. Lawrence, Arnold Wilson, Gertrude Bell and John Philby were “instrumental in building nations, defining borders and selecting or helping to select local rulers”.²²⁰ The authors state that while Sykes and Lawrence wielded great influence in increasing the British presence and preserving British interests in the region by adopting the policy of indirect control, Wilson was the one who may be judged the builder or designer of the present Iraqi state, but with the addition of Bell who dedicated her life’s work to establishing the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq.²²¹ As regards Philby, the authors claim that, although he opposed the policy of his country and then became the prominent champion of Ibn Sa’ūd, when in the service of Britain he “emerged as the Western kingmaker who left the deepest strategic imprint on the Middle East”.²²² However, Paris is not inclined to say that Wilson, Bell and Philby had considerable influence and made decisions with heavy impact on the Middle East. He believes rather that they ultimately were not key figures or kingmakers, while agreeing that Sykes and Lawrence were central figures who shaped British policy in the Middle East.²²³ He asserts that Wilson adopted a reactionary policy, wanting Iraq to be under direct colonial rule but this did not accord with the policy of Whitehall, which was content to exert indirect control and adopted the Sharifian solution. Wilson’s reactionary outlook ended his political career and he

²²⁰ Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, pp.105-123,206-213.

²²¹ *Ibid*, p.144.

²²² *Ibid*, pp.227-230.

²²³ Timothy Paris, review of *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Middle East*, by Karl Meyer and Shareen Bryson, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 2010, vol.12(3), p.194.

was sent home in the end.²²⁴ Paris also argues that few historians would include Bell among the policy-makers in the Middle East and the claim that she established modern Iraq is not substantiated by evidence. His view is based on the fact that Bell became a leading defender of the Sharifian solution in 1920, just after the heroic efforts of Churchill and his man Lawrence to set Faiṣal up as King of Iraq which bore fruit in 1921.²²⁵ As for Philby, Paris states that when Cox returned to Iraq as High Commissioner in 1921 he chose Philby as his main support, but the latter remained in Iraq for only a few months more, due to his objections to seeing Faiṣal as the king of Iraq. Thus, Philby did not leave the deepest strategic imprint on British policy. In addition, when Philby later became Chief British Representative in Transjordan, he was at odds not only with Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner in Palestine, and the British officials in the Colonial Office but also with Amir Abdullah, the ruler of Transjordan, whose relations with Philby became steadily more complicated. More importantly, the fate of Transjordan was in the hands of Lawrence and Winston Churchill, who “were primarily responsible for establishing and maintaining Abdullah’s rule” there.²²⁶ After his resignation from British service in 1924, Philby, according to Paris, had no connections with British policy in the Middle East; he even settled in Saudi Arabia and became the most important supporter of Ibn Sa’ūd.²²⁷ Indeed, few would

²²⁴ Timothy Paris, ‘review of *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Middle East* by Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac’, p.194.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Paris, ‘review of *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Middle East* by Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac’, p.194.

²²⁷ Ibid.

argue the claim that Philby was not a typical imperial official. He cannot be compared with Sykes or Lawrence who created the nation-states of the modern Middle East. However, throughout his service for the British Government, Philby and Bell made efforts, which cannot be ignored, to establish self-government in Iraq and to install the country's first provisional government in modern history, regulating the secretariat and establishing a national administrative body before Whitehall decided to appoint Faişal as sovereign.²²⁸ Furthermore, as the following chapters show, Philby, in his mission to Arabia, was influential in preventing conflict between its foremost leaders, Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain, at least during the Great War. In addition, when Philby left the British service in 1924 and lived in Saudi Arabia, Ibn Sa'ūd benefited from Philby's political capacity in a number of different ways, such as securing American recognition for his country, the provision of wireless, which was a vital factor in preserving the internal security of Saudi Arabia, and defining the border with Yemen.

Overview

²²⁸ See Philby and Bell's efforts in p.117.

The chapter showed that Philby's preparation of a permanent system for the Iraqi government's financial accounts was remarkable; it led to Cox's appreciation and Wilson's resentment. In addition, the value of Philby's talent for financial administration and his proposal for the control of the unsupervised expenditure probably led Cox to establish a new financial branch and appoint Philby as Financial Assistant. This chapter concluded that it was not only Philby's manner that made him unwelcome among his colleagues but also his efficiency. His close relationship with Cox may also be considered a factor.

The Indian mission suggests that giving Cox such great authority over Iraq's financial administration was not simply the result of Philby being a competent negotiator in his negotiations with the Indian authorities. Fundamentally, it was the controversy between the Government of India and Whitehall regarding the future of Iraq that was mainly responsible for it.

As Revenue Commissioner, Philby played a vital role in increasing the budget of the occupied territories, which allowed Cox to exploit it during the war in the interests of military operations. Philby's demotion from Revenue Commissioner to Political Agent was perhaps due to the political competition between Wilson and himself; Wilson saw Philby's fruitful activities and progress as a threat to his own ambitions. However, it should not be forgotten that the huge expansion of the occupied territories also called

for more district officers and this too was behind Cox's decision to offer such a post to Philby.

By comparing Philby's autobiography with his private papers at Oxford and also with Bell's accounts, it seems clear that Philby commenced his new post at Amara in February 1917. There, Philby's diplomatic training played a vital role in helping him prevent the British army from taking offensive action against the rebellion of the most important tribal leader in the south of Iraq. The chapter put forward the view that Philby's isolated state and his personal ambition on the political scene were perhaps behind his transfer from Amara to Baghdad.

The chapter also demonstrated why the allegation that Gertrude Bell created Philby's career in Iraq is not quite true. This is because Philby entered Iraq *before* the arrival of Bell and he had already performed well enough to persuade Cox to promote him to Financial Assistant and then to Revenue Commissioner. Therefore, it can be assumed that the allegation is not likely to be accurate. As Cox's personal assistant, Philby, with his capacity to organize and put things in order as well as his incredible energy, was able to relieve Cox from a huge backlog of papers and files. However, after the departure of Cox to Persia, it was obvious that differences of opinion between Philby and Wilson would have been enough to propel Philby back to England on leave.

The chapter concluded that Cox, after his appointment as High Commissioner, chose Philby to work in his administration because of his energy, intelligence and his gift for

organization. The chapter also showed that Philby had no quarrel with the mandate system as long as it was tentatively imposed and aimed at enabling the people of Iraq to acquire the principles of sound administration and government so that they could eventually rule the country by themselves.

The chapter illustrated that Philby played an important part in organizing the secretariat and setting up the rules that defined the tasks of the Iraqi ministers and British advisers. Furthermore, the chapter makes the assumption that if the creation of modern Iraq is owed to Cox, still Philby and Bell, in view of their struggle and effort, may be seen as providing the main foundation of the first provisional government in the modern history of Iraq. In addition, Philby's incredible industry made Cox decide to give him the post of adviser to the Minister of the Interior.

In this post, the chapter revealed, Philby worked hard to change the personality of Sayyid Ṭalib, who tended to lack enthusiasm for ordinary office disciplines. The chapter also concluded that Philby, together with some Iraqi helpers, was the first to formulate an electoral law in the modern history of Iraq.

The chapter brought evidence to show that it is not reasonable to accuse Philby of being involved in the conspiracy to detain Ṭalib. Private letters from Philby refute this accusation and suggest that Philby was disappointed over the arrest of Ṭalib who was to Philby's mind an important instrument to serve Britain in Iraq. He blamed Cox and

Bell for the fate that Ṭalib met and asked the British Government to release him and restore him to his country.

The chapter also indicated that Philby left Iraq because of his dispute with Cox. The cancellation of elections and the referendum on Faiṣal as the King were the main factors in Philby's departure. Cox's opinion that Philby was hostile to the Sharifian policy of His Majesty's Government seems not to be logical, since he was appointed to a post in Transjordan to work with another Sharifian Amir.

Concerning Transjordan, it may be observed that the major reason for the failure of self-government was not only Abdullah's arrival in Amman but the lack of knowledge and experience among the British officers who administered the country and the absence of British financial and military support. The chapter suggested that while Samuel showed his partiality toward the Zionist Organization, he was at the same time working to stabilise the conditions in Transjordan which might have threatened the security of Palestine.

The chapter indicated that the reasons behind Lawrence's recommendation that Philby should succeed him in Transjordan were perhaps based on two main points. First, Lawrence may have been convinced that Philby had a wide first-hand knowledge of Arab affairs. Second, given the close relations between Philby and Ibn Sa'ūd, Lawrence may have believed that Philby would do much to clear the atmosphere between the Sharifian family and Ibn Sa'ūd.

The chapter concluded that the dissatisfaction among the British officials over Philby's appointment was not owing to Philby's personality and opinions, which appeared to be eccentric. It was because Philby differed from the British officials who were entirely in favour of British policy. They all thought that British officials were not expected to object to any aspect of British imperial policy and this rigour presents Philby to his fellow-officials in such a bad light, as the first dissenting British official in the Middle East, who opposed British imperial policy and supported the nationalist movement. The chapter also asserted that Philby's appointment as Chief British Representative was not only because he was a good administrator or a good speaker of Arabic but also perhaps because of his attitude in terms of advocating Arab independence, which matched the British commitment to rewarding Hussain and his sons for their participation in the war. In addition, in his new appointment, Philby was, for the first time, responsible for representing British policy in Transjordan without any supervision and this may have been another reason for him to have consented to take the post.

As Chief British Representative, it was obvious that Philby's visit to Syria was successful in reducing the tension between the French authorities and Transjordan and reconciling the two. It can also be seen from his visit that he endeavoured to strengthen the economy of Transjordan by proposing a system of customs duties between Syria and Transjordan.

With regard to the separation of Transjordan from the Palestine administration and its search for independence, it is clear that Philby was following Lawrence's desire to provide independence for Transjordan. Clearly, Philby took some serious steps and used persuasive arguments which contributed to the recognition of Transjordan by the League of Nations. Such evidence supports the view that Philby was the one who made the first moves towards Transjordan's independence, which it gained in the 1940s.

In terms of the communication between Philby and the Amir Abdullah, it was apparently the establishment of a constitutional government with its representative assembly that disturbed the relationship between them. This was not only due to the Amir's fear of losing his power but also to the Arab foreigners who at first had considerable influence on Abdullah's regime and wanted to remain on the political scene in Transjordan. The chapter also indicates that Philby was in favour of the Adwan demand to impose constitutional government with his help and to get rid of the Arab foreigners. However, while Philby succeeded in expelling these foreigners and opened the door to Jordanian influence on Abdullah's regime, he was not able to set up a constitutional government.

The chapter concluded that the failure to establish a constitutional government was not the only cause of the damaged relations between Philby and Abdullah. The Wahhabis' occupation of al-Jauf and the destruction of the sixth-century Byzantine bell-tower as well as the bad management of Abdullah's administration also generated

substantial controversy between them. At the same time, these incidents probably led to improved relations between Abdullah and Samuel, the High Commissioner in Palestine, who took the opportunity to communicate with the former directly and thus reduced Philby's role. Moreover, it may have been the case that these political incidents were not the only reasons for Philby's resignation. There were also his political views, which were not appreciated either by the British authorities in Palestine or the CO; they led him to believe that he could never join the band of celebrated British officers and forced him finally to resign. However, it must be admitted that the reduction of Philby's salary may have been a further cause of his resignation. Furthermore, Philby's desire to explore Arabia and the good relations between him and Ibn Sa'ūd may be regarded as further reasons for Philby to believe that Sa'ūd would help him not only in his desire but also in his financial difficulties.

The next chapter deals with the British contact with Ibn Sa'ūd and the first part of Philby's mission to Arabia.

CHAPTER THREE

PHILBY AND THE BRITISH CONTACT WITH ARABIA:

THE FIRST PART OF PHILBY'S MISSION, 1917-1918

This chapter seeks to shed light on the first contacts between Britain and central Arabia. Then it examines critically Philby's mission to Arabia, studying first the main reason that he was so keen to lead it and second the objective that the mission undertook. It deals with the clash that occurred between Philby and Robert Hamilton regarding the leadership of the mission and asks why Philby was portrayed as initially responsible for this clash. It argues that the mission as a whole was not successful but seeks to show Philby's success at least in persuading Ibn Sa'ūd to play his part in the common cause, studying the factors that contributed to this success. It also focuses on the main reason for Hussain's deciding not to send a Cairo mission to join Philby's mission in Riyadh and asks why Philby, together, with Ibn Sa'ūd, decided that Philby should cross the Arabian Desert to meet Hussain with the Cairo mission and what was gained from his journey to the Hejaz. It traces the main reasons for the failure of negotiations between Cairo and the Najdi mission and asks if Philby was to blame for the failure.

Early British contact with Central Arabia

Before dealing with Philby's political role in Arabia, the beginnings of the relationship between Britain and central Arabia should first be clarified. From the primary sources, it may be noted that the first British Government official to visit the centre of Arabia was Colonel Lewis Pelly,¹ the British Resident in the Persian Gulf, in 1865. It was clear

¹ Sir Lewis Pelly (1825–1892) was a British political officer who served in India. After completing his education, he joined the East India Company in 1841. He was famous for his incredible journeys, in

that the primary objectives of the Pelly mission were to bring to an end the state of hostility between Britain and the Wahhabis which marked British policy at the time of the slave trade; and to prevent the Wahhabis from interfering in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, it seems obvious that Pelly wanted to prove to other British officers that central Arabia was not difficult to penetrate and also to gather some knowledge of the history and geography of this part of the Arabian Peninsula.²

Pelly held three friendly interviews with Imam Faiṣal,³ the ruler of Najd; their negotiations concerned a variety of political subjects, such as maintaining peace in the Persian Gulf and British assistance, together with the case of the Sultan of Muscat. Imam Faiṣal wanted his country to be given British aid to fight the Ottoman forces or neighbouring tribes. Pelly made it plain that the British Government had no interests in the central region and would not provide any support that might lead to aggression, seeing all its neighbours as friends and traders in its territories.⁴

Afghanistan, the east part of Persia as well as Arabia. He served as Political Resident in the Gulf from 1862 until 1871. For more information, see Frederic Goldsmid, 'Obituary: ' General Sir Lewis Pelly, K. C. B, K. C. S. I, M. P ' *The Royal Geographical Society*, vol. 14, no. 6 (June, 1892), pp.416-421; William Broadfoot, 'Pelly, Sir Lewis (1825–1892)', *Oxford Dictionary*, accessed 21 March 2016.

²J. G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia* (Shannon: Gregg international publishers Ltd., 1970), vol.1, part 1, pp.1118-1119.

³ Imam Faiṣal Ibn Tūrki al- Sa'ūd (unknown-1865), was the grandfather of Ibn Sa'ūd. He ruled the country between 1834 and 1865. He was considered the actual founder of the second Saudi State. See his biography in Othmān Ibn Bisher, *'Unwān al- Majd fī Tārīkh Najd* [The Symbol of Glory in the History of Najd] (Riyadh: King Abdul Aziz Foundation, 1982), pp. 124-291; Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 169-217.

⁴ Lewis Pelly, 'A Report on a Journey to the Wahhabee Capital of Riyadh' Penelope Tuson and Anita Burdett (eds.), *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 1, pp. 444-445; Lewis Pelly, 'A Visit to the Wahhabee Capital, Central Arabia ' *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. 35 (1865), p.177.

Philby asserted that the visit of Pelly resulted in a signed treaty, although no such text has ever been found in the archives of Riyadh.⁵ In any case, Philby's assumption seems to have been unfounded, for a number of reasons. First, in the report of his visit, Pelly did not mention any treaty signed between him and Imam Faiṣal.⁶ Second, it seems that there is no indication either in the India Office Records or the National Archives that this treaty had been signed or ever existed. Furthermore, Captain William Shakespear, the Political Agent in Kuwait, specifically denied the existence of any such signed treaty. He stated:

It was at about this time that the British Government showed how close were their relations with Najd by sending one of their officers (Colonel Lewis Pelly) to Riyadh and he renewed old treaties and friendship though not by an actual written document.⁷

Therefore, it seems that the treaty was in fact only a spoken understanding. Even so, this suggests both the hope of opening a new and friendly relationship between the two states and Imam Faiṣal's desire that the British residency would protect Saudi interests in the Persian Gulf, since he had vowed to punish his people for any acts of piracy that might be committed on the coasts of Qatif and Uqair.⁸ But unfortunately the visit did not produce any long-term advantage, since Imam Faiṣal died three months after Pelly's departure.⁹ His son, Imam Abdullah,¹⁰ succeeded him, but the

⁵ Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 216.

⁶ See Pelly, 'A Report on a Journey to the Wahhabee Capital of Riyadh', pp. 442-452.

⁷ Shakespear to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, 8 April 1911, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, p. 206.

⁸ Pelly, 'Report on a Journey to the Wahhabee Capital of Riyadh', p. 452.

⁹ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, vol. 1, p.1120.

country was disrupted during his regime by the civil war between him and Saud,¹¹ his younger brother. The ensuing chaos resulted in the loss of Ḥasa province to the Ottoman and in the collapse of the Wahhabi state, which was conquered by its local enemy, Mohammed Ibn Rashid,¹² the ruler of Ḥail. In 1890, Ibn Rashid overcame the last Wahhabi ruler, Imam Abdulrahman,¹³ the father of Ibn Sa'ūd, and exiled him with his family to Kuwait.¹⁴

The Rise of Ibn Sa'ūd and his relations with Britain 1902-1915

The beginning of official British involvement in the Middle East dates back to 1763, when the East India Company set up its base in Bushire in order to engage in trade with Persia.¹⁵ It is equally clear that the British interest increased rapidly after the occupation of Aden in 1839, following the signing of some treaties with Arab Shaikhs in

¹⁰ Imam Abdullah Ibn Faiṣal (1831-1890), was the fourth leader of the second Wahhabi State. He was described as a weak leader who could not maintain the gains and the power of the Wahhabis. See his biography in: Ibrahim Ibn Eisā, *Tārīkh ba'd al-ḥawādithal-wāqī'ah fī Najd* [The History of some historic incidents in Najd] (Riyadh: Dār al -Yamāmah, 1966), pp. 129-141; memorandum written by E. C. Blech, preserved in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, pp. 44-50; al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.4, p.113.

¹¹ Imam Sa'ūd Ibn Faiṣal (1833-1875), was the fifth leader of the Wahhabi State. He defeated his brother Abdullah several times and ruled Riyadh. For further accounts of him see Ibn Eisā, *Tārīkh ba'd al-ḥawādithal-wāqī'ah fī Najd* [The History of some historic incidents in Najd], pp. 129-135; Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 218-225; al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.3, pp.90-91.

¹² Mohammed Ibn Abdullah Ibn Rashid (unknown- 1897), was regarded one of the most powerful rulers in the late 19th. His regime extended from the south of Najd to the southern border of Iraq and Syria. For additional information see Ḍārī al- Rashid, *Nubdh fī Tārīkh Najd* [A short history of Najd] (Riyadh: al-Yamāmah Publication, 1966), pp.107-117; .al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.6, p.244.

¹³ Imam Abdulrahman Ibn Faiṣal al-Sa'ūd (1850-1928), was the last ruler of the second Wahhabi State. His reign was filled with turmoil, which helped Amir Mohammed Ibn Rashid to seize the remaining parts of the Saud State for his Emirate. See al- Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth wa-mulḥaqātih* [The History of modern Najd and its dependencies, pp.85-91; al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.3, p.322.

¹⁴ Howarth, *The Desert King*, p. 18; Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 216.

¹⁵ For further information regarding the relations between the East India Company and the Persian Gulf, see India Office, 'Selections from State Papers, Bombay, regarding the East India Company's Connection with the Persian Gulf, with a Summary of Events, 1600-1800', dated as 1908, IOR/L/P&S/20/C227.

the Persian Gulf in the same century.¹⁶ It seems, as Abdol Rauh Yaccob claims, that the reason behind British expansion in the region was not only its desire to secure the sea route between Britain and India.¹⁷ It also had several equally important reasons for wanting this: to combat the piracy in the Gulf, to confront the slave trade, suppress the arms traffic and, above all, to prevent any advance by a Western power upon India.¹⁸ Apart from the British sphere of influence over the Arab Shaikhdoms on the Gulf coast and Aden, the Ottoman Empire controlled the entire Arabia Peninsula. However, in view of the difficult geography and the massive desert areas of Central Arabia, the Ottomans decided to wield indirect control over the region through such prominent Arab leaders as Ibn Rashid.¹⁹

In 1902, after some years in exile, however, Ibn Sa'ūd, the ruler of Najd and the founder of the present kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was able to drive his arch-enemy, Ibn Rashid, out of Riyadh.²⁰ In the next two years he defeated Ibn Rashid in several battles

¹⁶ Concerning the British occupation of Aden see 'Military report on the Aden Protectorate' dated 1915, IOR/L/MIL/17/16/6. Regarding the treaties between Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms see, India Office: 'Treaties and Undertakings in force between the British Government and the Rulers of Bahrain, 1820-1914', dated as 1914, IOR/R/15/1/740; 'Treaties and Undertakings in force between the British Government and the Sultans of Maskat [Muscat] and Oman', 1845-1914, dated 1914, IOR/R/15/1/737; 'Existing Treaties between the British Government and the Trucial Chiefs', dated 1906, IOR/R/15/1/735; Robert Harcourt, 'Memorandum respecting Kuwait', dated December 1905, IOR/L/P&S/18/ B133A.

¹⁷ Abdol Rauh Yaccob, 'British policy on Arabia before the First World War: an internal argument', *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, vol. 38, 2008), p.320.

¹⁸ Daniel Silverfarb, 'British relations with Ibn Saud of Najd 1914-1918' (Wisconsin: PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972), p.1.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.3.

²⁰ Charles Kemball to GI, 19 February 1902, IOR, L/P&S/20/FO12; H. C. Armstrong, *Lord of Saudi Arabia* (London: Penguin Book Ltd., 1924), pp. 44-56.

and recaptured and extended his territory to the areas of Wadi al-Dawaser, located to the south of Riyadh, and of Qasim, to its north.²¹

The considerable triumphs of Ibn Sa'ūd were an obvious provocation to the Ottomans to take revenge on him for this defeat of their ally. Fearing this, Ibn Sa'ūd sought a strong country to protect him and could find none better than Britain, the imperial power that had enforced its presence in the Gulf since the 19th century. Therefore, he opened communications with the British Government in the year 1902. Ibn Sa'ūd may have asked his father, who was in Kuwait at the time, to contact the British Residency in the Gulf, suggesting himself as one of the men who might form a relationship with Britain, but the Residency and the Government of India suspected that Ibn Sa'ūd might triumphantly set himself up in Najd and therefore they chose not to respond.²² In his second attempt in November 1903, Ibn Sa'ūd sent a Wahhabi envoy to meet the Political Agent in Bahrain, seeking British aid specifically to expel the Ottomans from Ḥasa and although the Government of India decided not to adopt any hostile stance towards the Ottomans, it recommended that Ibn Sa'ūd should not be ignored since he had now consolidated his position in Central Arabia and keeping contact with him would benefit the British interest in the Gulf coast.²³ At the beginning of 1904, the

²¹ Slāh al-din Mūkhtār, *Tārīkh al- Māmlākah al- arabiah al- Sū'diah* [The History of Saudi Arabia] (Lebanon: al-Ḥayiah Publications, not dated), pp. 47-54; Hafiz Wāhbāh, *Khamsūna 'āman fī jazīrat al- 'Arab* [Fifty years in the Arabian Peninsula](Cairo: al-Ḥalabi Publication, 1960), p.27.

²² Kemball to GI, 22 May 1902, IOR, L/P&S/20/FO12. Philby asserted wrongly that contact began only in 1904. See his book: *Arabian Jubilee*, p.34.

²³ Ravinder Kumar, *India and the Persian Gulf Region 1858-1907* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p. 201.

Indian Government suggested sending a British officer to study the political situation in central Arabia and to enter into direct dialogue with Ibn Sa'ūd.²⁴ At this period, the British Government was clearly consistent in its constructive policy toward Central Arabia while maintaining good relations with the Ottomans. Therefore, the FO, in February 1904, rejected the Government of India's proposal and stated that "no steps should be taken to enter closer relations with Najd, or send Agents there, without the previous sanction of His Majesty's Government".²⁵ Although the Government of India agreed with this British decision, in the following month it assented to the recent developments in Central Arabia, notwithstanding Ibn Sa'ūd's victories over Ibn Rashid, and over the Ottoman garrison, together with the capture of Qasim province in 1904. Therefore, when these developments occurred, the Government of India thought that Britain would soon be forced to take more interest in Central Arabian affairs. Furthermore, the Government of India also suggested that if Ibn Sa'ūd extended his regime, which seemed likely, the British Government should again reconsider its decision not to contact Ibn Sa'ūd and might then enter into relations with him.²⁶

This led Abdulrahman, the father of Ibn Sa'ūd, to reveal to Britain, via Shaik Mūbark,²⁷ the ruler of Kuwait, that negotiations had been held between the Russian Consul and

²⁴ Kemball to Louis Dane, 5 February 1904, IOR, R/15/5/24.

²⁵ FO to IO, 8 February 1904, IOR, R/15/5/24.

²⁶ IO, 'Memorandum Respecting British interests in the Persian Gulf', 12 February 1908, IOR, L/P&S/18/B66. Regarding Ibn Sa'ūd's victories, see Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 245.

²⁷ Mūbark al- Sūbah (1838-1915), was the seventh ruler of Kuwait. He was regarded as one of the most prominent Arabic rulers in the 20th century. He came to the Emirate after assassinating two of his brothers. To secure his country from the Ottoman, he signed a treaty with Britain in 1899. See Harold Dickson, *Kuwait and her neighbours* (London: George Allen &Unwin, 1956), pp.136-157; Briton Busch,

his son, Ibn Sa'ūd, in which the latter rejected the Russia offer of aid.²⁸ It could be inferred from Ibn Sa'ūd's continued and persistent pleas for British support that he had realised since his exile that the British Government was a trustworthy power which could be depended on against the Ottoman, not least when he saw that Mūbark had signed a treaty of protection with Britain in 1899.²⁹ However, with the British refusal to enter into relations with Ibn Sa'ūd, the latter found himself in a position to negotiate with the Ottomans and signed a treaty with them in February 1905. The main articles of the agreement were that the Ottomans recognised Ibn Sa'ūd's authority and committed themselves to forcing their ally, Ibn Rashid, to stop his intervention in Ibn Sa'ūd's affairs. In return, Ibn Sa'ūd consented to be a local governor of the Ottoman lands in Central Arabia.³⁰ It is clear that after the peace settlement with the Ottomans Ibn Sa'ūd's turned his attention to the Trucial Shaikhs, travelling in the summer of 1905 until he reached the border of Qatar. There, he was warned that if he continued his advance he would be confronted by the forces of Qatar and Abu Dhabi. In response Ibn Sa'ūd decided to send letters to the Trucial Shaikhs, informing them of his intention to visit them in the next few years.³¹ Daniel Silverfarb claims that the reason behind Ibn

Britain and the Persian Gulf 1894-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp.94-113; al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary],vol.5, p.270

²⁸ Letter from Ibn Sa'ūd's father to Mūbark, 1 May 1904. It is preserved in its Arabic text in IOR, R/15/1/476.

²⁹ Regarding the treaty between Kuwait and Britain see Dickson, *Kuwait and her neighbours*, p.137; Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, pp.108-109.

³⁰ Regarding the Saudi-Ottomans treaty, see al-Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth wa-mulḥaqātih* [The History of modern Najd and its dependencies], pp.132-134; Kumar, *India and the Persian Gulf Region 1858-1907*, p.204; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain*, p22.

³¹ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain*, p.23.

Sa'ūd's visit was that he may have wanted to levy taxes on the Shaikhs,³² which meant that Ibn Sa'ūd was seeking to increase his suzerainty. However, the Saudi primary sources, al-Rihani for instance, suggested that there was a civil war in Qatar and Shaikh Qasim Ibn Thani³³ recalled his friend Ibn Sa'ūd to help him to suppress the revolt against him.³⁴ Whatever the cause, Ibn Sa'ūd's visit resulted in serious attention from the British authorities in the Gulf who wrote to Ibn Sa'ūd warning him that any further intervention in the affairs of the Trucial Coast would be regarded as an unfriendly act.³⁵ In February 1906, Ibn Sa'ūd replied that he did not mean any harm by his visit and had no intention of extending his suzerainty over the Trucial Shaikhs.³⁶

The agreement between Ibn Sa'ūd and the Ottomans did not last long and the war between Ibn Sa'ūd and Ibn Rashid started again; Ibn Sa'ūd not only defeated Ibn Rashid this time but managed to drive the Ottoman garrisons from the northern part of Central Arabia.³⁷ Therefore, in order to secure his regime against the Ottomans, Ibn Sa'ūd, in late 1906, informed the British authorities that his intention was to occupy

³² Daniel Silverfarb, 'British relations with Ibn Saud of Najd', p.15.

³³ Shaikh Qasim Ibn Thani (1821-1913) was the founder of Qatar. His territory had belonged to Bahrain but after several battles he defeated the Shaikh of Bahrain and then signed a treaty with Britain. For more information see, al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.5, pp.184-185.

³⁴ Al- Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth wa-mulḥaqātih* [The History of modern Najd and its dependencies], p.138; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain*, p.23.

³⁵ IO, 'The Wahabi Amirs and Ibn Saud: Their Relations with Eastern Arabia and with the British Government 1800-1934', dated as September 1934', IOR, L/P&S/18/B437.

³⁶ Ibid; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain*, p.23.

³⁷ Regarding Ibn Sa'ūd's triumphs against the Ottomans and Ibn Rashid, see Cox to Louis Dane, 2 December 1906, IOR, L/P&S/10/50; Al- Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth wa-mulḥaqātih* [The History of modern Najd and its dependencies], pp.139-147.

Ḥasa,³⁸ which was under Ottoman domination; he demanded British protection from any Ottoman naval assault if he could manage to seize the province. He also asked for a signed treaty and the appointment of a British Agent in Ḥasa.³⁹ Cox now realized how strong a position Ibn Sa'ūd was in and asked Britain to reconsider relations with him, suggesting the following points:

- If Britain refused to enter into a relationship with Ibn Sa'ūd, it would turn him into an enemy.
- A friendly treaty between Ibn Sa'ūd and Britain would clear the atmosphere and relieve the fear of the Trucial Shaikhs as well as the Sultan of Muscat regarding Ibn Sa'ūd.
- Such friendly relations with Ibn Sa'ūd would help suppress piracy in the Gulf.⁴⁰

However, the response of the British Government, however, was on the same lines as usual; the traditional concern “of preserving the maritime peace of the Gulf”⁴¹ and an unbroken general policy of non-intervention in the affairs of central Arabia. Nevertheless, Cox, who had seen Ibn Sa'ūd's outstanding capacity to rule his

³⁸ Obviously, Ḥasa was a very substantial province for Ibn Sa'ūd on account of its basic resources and also as a gateway for Najd's imports and exports. Gary Troeller mentions that Ḥasa is a crucial area, thanks to its strategic location. See his book: *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p. 32, n. 100.

³⁹ Captain Francis Prideaux, the Political Agent at Bahrain, to Percy Cox, 9 February 1906, IOR, R/15/1/478.

⁴⁰ IO, 'Memorandum Respecting British interests in the Persian Gulf', 12 February 1908, IOR, L/P&S/18/B66.

⁴¹ IO, 'The Wahabi Amirs and Ibn Saud: Their Relations with Eastern Arabia and with the British Government 1800-1934', dated as September 1934', IOR, L/P&S/18/B437.

Shaikhdoms and his continuing desire to be one of Britain's allies, had been brought to believe that Ibn Sa'ūd could play a vital role in serving British interests in the Gulf.⁴²

When Captain Shakespear made his exploratory journey into the Arabian Desert, he had met Ibn Sa'ūd in 1911 in his camp.⁴³ Shakespear was impressed by his host's generous hospitality and friendly manner. Ibn Sa'ūd expressed his detestation of the Ottoman and repeated his previous demands for British protection if he could drive them out of Ḥasa; but in reply, Shakespear could explain only that he had no official authority to discuss such matters. At Ibn Sa'ūd's insistence on negotiations over political affairs, Shakespear had to inform him that Britain's interests were limited to the Gulf coast and, besides, it was on friendly terms with the Ottoman Empire. However, Shakespear, in his report on this interview, proposed that the occupation of Ḥasa would reinforce the British position in the region.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Foreign Office rejected such overtures and confirmed that the policy, as before, remained "strict non-intervention in the affairs of the desert".⁴⁵

In the spring of 1913, after meeting Ibn Sa'ūd, Shakespear informed Cox that the invasion of Ḥasa was only a matter of time and that Ibn Sa'ūd was ready to attack it, wishing that the British Government would feel concerned over his interests and affairs

⁴² In fact, Cox's support for Ibn Sa'ūd effectively started in 1906. See his letter to Dane, 16 September 1906, IOR, L/P&S/10/50.

⁴³ Shakespear had already met Ibn Sa'ūd in 1910 when the latter visited Kuwait. See Shakespear to the Political Resident, 3 March 1910, IOR, R/15/1/479.

⁴⁴ Shakespear's report to Cox, 8 April 1911, IOR, L/P&S/7/248.

⁴⁵ Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p. 35.

in this part of the world.⁴⁶ Jacob Goldberg assumes that Ibn Sa'ūd realized that he could not improve his relations with the British Government unless he could include part of the coast under his dominion and that the capture of Ḥasa would place Britain in a state of *de facto* recognition and cause it to revise its policy toward him.⁴⁷ Goldberg's assumption seems to be reasonable; in addition, Shakespear may have strengthened Ibn Sa'ūd's action over Ḥasa by providing him with substantial information about the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, which for much of 1912 was engaged in a war against Italy (until October) as well as the first Balkan war.⁴⁸ Consequently, Ibn Sa'ūd captured Ḥasa without British help in May 1913, provoking no serious reaction from Constantinople. He ousted the Ottoman garrison from Ḥasa and thereby extended his territory as far as the Gulf Coast. This finally forced Britain to take notice of him, especially when he consolidated his suzerainty in Central Arabia, the eastern coastal region and the land to the north and south of Najd; he thus became one of the most powerful leaders in Arabia.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Shakespear to Cox, 15, May 1913, IOR, R/15/5/27. Ibn Sa'ūd was aware of the Turkish difficulties since they were reported by Captain Leachman, who met him in Riyadh in December 1912 and had a long conversation about the Turko-Balkan war. Therefore, Ibn Sa'ūd wanted, through his interview with Shakespear in 1913, to be sure of the weakness of the Turkish position. Concerning the visit of Captain Leachman, see his article: 'A Journey through Central Arabia' *Geographical Journal* vol. 44, no.5 (May 1914), pp. 516.

⁴⁷ Jacob Goldberg, 'The 1913 Saudi Occupation of Hasa: Reconsidered', *Middle Eastern Studies I*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan. 1982), p.24.

⁴⁸ Shakespear to Cox, 15 May 1913, IOR, R/15/5/27.

⁴⁹ Regarding the conquest of Ḥasa see: Cox to the GI, 26 May 1913, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, p. 221; Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p. 35. Goldberg in his article: 'Hasa Occupation', p. 27, n.2, states that Howarth was incorrect to state in his book (*The Desert King*, p.80) that Ḥasa was captured in May 1914. What may be added here is that Cox and Dickson were also incorrect in putting the date of the capture of Ḥasa as early 1914. See Cox, 'Review: Journeys in Central Arabia: Review', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 73, no. 3 (Mar, 1929), p. 271; Dickson, *Kuwait and its neighbours*, p. 149.

The turning point of British-Saudi relations was on the eve of WWI, when Britain felt that the Ottoman Empire would enter the war on the side of Germany. Such a change in its policy was a response to the prospect of changes that would affect its interests in the Middle East, in particular regarding the oil in Persia and the naval routes from the Gulf to India.⁵⁰ Consequently, it may be inferred that Britain found itself in the position of soliciting Ibn Sa'ūd's support, after more than a decade of neglecting him under the traditional policy of non-intervention.

After the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and the Ottomans, the Government of India authorized the current Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to send a letter to Ibn Sa'ūd saying that Britain wished the ruler to join the Shaikhs of Kuwait and Mohammarah for the purpose of capturing Basra from the Ottoman forces. In return, Britain promised to recognize Ibn Sa'ūd as the independent ruler of Najd and Ḥasa, to guarantee him against attack by sea, to secure him against Ottoman revenge and also to negotiate a treaty with him.⁵¹ In answer, Ibn Sa'ūd, on 28 November 1914, wrote to Cox, asserting that coordination and co-operation with the Shaikhs of Kuwait and Mohammarah were essential factors to enhancing the common interests of Britain and its cordial friends in the region. He also suggested that he should personally discuss

⁵⁰ Armstrong, *Lord of Arabia*, p.96; Daniel Silverfarb, 'The Anglo-Najd Treaty of December 1915', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Oct. 1980), p.168.

⁵¹ Knox to Ibn Sa'ūd, 3 November 1914, IOR, L/P&S/10/463; FO, 'Memorandum on British Commitments to Bin Saud', dated as December 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

with Britain the general framework of a treaty based on the British guarantees mentioned in the letter from the Political Resident mentioned above.⁵²

Shakespear, who was always an ally of Ibn Sa'ūd, was on leave in London and was ordered to return promptly to the Middle East in order to meet Ibn Sa'ūd and dissuade him from helping the Ottomans.⁵³ On 31 December 1914 Shakespear met Ibn Sa'ūd when he was encamped to the north of Riyadh. According to Shakespear's report, war would not change Ibn Sa'ūd's attitude toward Britain. He explained that he would not ally himself with Britain unless he could have a definite treaty of alliance which would safeguard him from Ottoman revenge and full British recognition of his position in Najd and Ḥasa.⁵⁴ Shakespear sent a draft of the treaty to Cox which resulted in the Anglo-Saudi Treaty concluded on 26 December 1915. The main terms of this treaty were:

- 1- Britain would agree to recognise and guarantee Ibn Sa'ūd and his dynasty as the independent rulers of Najd and Ḥasa.
- 2- In the case of unprovoked aggression by any foreign powers, Britain would be prepared to defend and protect him to the extent and in the way required by the conditions.
- 3- In return, Ibn Sa'ūd would not be allowed to deal with any foreign powers without informing Britain.

⁵² Ibn Sa'ūd to Cox, 28 November 1914, IOR, L/P&S/10/387.

⁵³ GI to Shakespear, 5 October 1914, TNA, FO 371/2143.

⁵⁴ Shakespear to Cox, 4 January 1915, IOR, L/P&S/10/387.

4- Ibn Sa'ūd would not be able to concede or confer any part of his territories to any foreign power without the approval of the British Government.⁵⁵

It is plain that the most substantial outcome of the treaty, as Troeller suggests, was the flagrant departure from the conventional British policy of steering clear of entanglement in the affairs of central Arabia.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the treaty provided Britain with full control over Ibn Sa'ūd's land; it was not until 1927, when Ibn Sa'ūd signed the Jeddah treaty, that he was released from British protection and his country given absolute independence.⁵⁷

As Cox was concluding this treaty with Ibn Sa'ūd, Shakespear, despite several attempts by Ibn Sa'ūd to restrain him from taking part in the fighting, was killed on 24 January 1915. He was giving instructions for the firing of one of Ibn Sa'ūd's guns in the battle of Jarrab against the forces of Ibn Rashid, the ruler of Ḥail and a Turkish ally.⁵⁸ Some historians suggest that Ibn Sa'ūd wrote to Cox, asking for another British official to replace Shakespear but no one was sent to Arabia for the next two years, due to the

⁵⁵ For further information regarding the whole treaty and its analysis, see: Indian Government, *Treaties and Agreements between the British Government and certain Arab rulers* (Calcutta: Manager Government of Indian Press, 1926), pp.1-3, IOR, R/15/1/733; *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, pp. 427-436; Mūkhṭār, *Tārīkh al- Māmlākah al- arabiah al- Sū'diah* [The History of Saudi Arabia], pp.174-176; Silverfarb, 'The Anglo-Najd Treaty of December 1915', pp. 170-172; Jacob Goldberg, 'The Origins of British-Saudi Relations: The 1915 Anglo-Saudi Treaty Revisited', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 28, no. 3 (Sep. 1985), pp. 693-703.

⁵⁶ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.89.

⁵⁷ Sir Gilbert Clayton concluded the treaty of Jeddah on 20 May 1927 with Amir Faiṣal, the second son of Ibn Sa'ūd. See the treaty in IOR, L/P&S/10/1166; DULASC, *Clayton's papers*, Re.SAD.471/10-11; Daniel Silverfarb, 'The Treaty of Jeddah of May 1927', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Jul, 1982), pp. 276-285.

⁵⁸ Regarding Shakespear's death, see the report of Khalid Ibn Bilal, Shakespear's cook, 20 May 1915, IOR, R/15/2/31; Cox's telegram to GI, 16 February 1915, IOR, L/P&S/10/387; Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 270-272; Goldberg, 'Shakespear and Ibn Saud', pp. 74-75.

lack of a suitable British officer in Iraq.⁵⁹ However, it must first be said that the shortage of qualified British officers in Iraq seems not to be wholly accurate. Iraq did have suitable officers, such as Captain G. Leachman whose Arabic was perfect and knowledge of Arab affairs valuable. More important, he had visited Ibn Sa'ūd in 1912 in his capital, Riyadh.⁶⁰ As a result, it may be inferred that the main reason for the delay in despatching another officer to Ibn Sa'ūd was perhaps that Shakespear's death caused a severe shock and had considerable impact on the course of the war in Arabia, which made Cox afraid to send anyone else, lest he met the same fate as Shakespear.

In the event, due to the new development of the war and in the hope of organizing and unifying all the efforts against the Ottoman forces in Arabia, it was decided to despatch another officer to meet Ibn Sa'ūd. Philby was assigned to head the mission to meet him in central Arabia, a mission that will be discussed in more detail below.

Philby's mission

It may be useful, before resuming the account of Philby's mission, to look at the early stages of divergence in the policies of Cairo and Baghdad and of the FO and the Government of India and ask why it was that some officials supported Ibn Sa'ūd and others supported Hussain. In the first two years of the war, Britain sought cooperative allies in its war against the Ottomans in the Middle East. In the west of Arabia, where

⁵⁹ Howarth, *The Desert King*, pp. 87-88; Silverfarb, 'The Anglo-Najd Treaty of December 1915', p. 170.

⁶⁰ Regarding Captain Leachman's visit to Riyadh, see Leachman's article: 'A Journey through Central Arabia', pp. 516-519.

Hejaz is located, was Hussain Ibn Ali, the ruler of Mecca. In the view of the Cairo authorities, Hussain was the logical choice of ally. From the religious standpoint, Hussain was the custodian of the Holy Places. As a member of the Hashemite family, that had descended from the Prophet Mohammed, he would be considered by all Muslims one of the most important figures in Islam.⁶¹ In addition, having Hussain on the side of Britain would be advantageous and would halt any decision by the Sultan of the Ottomans to declare *al- Jihad* (Holy War) against Britain. The latter naturally feared that such a declaration would have a negative impact on the Muslims who were under British authority in India and Egypt.⁶² A further reason might be considered as a strategic one. As the Hejaz railway crossed Hussain's territories, a revolt by Hussain would deprive the Ottomans of any benefit from the railway, which it would be unable to use for military purposes.⁶³ As a result, Britain entered into long negotiations with Hussain, known as the Hussain-McMahon correspondence. In the end, McMahon was instructed by the FO to inform Hussain that Britain would recognise and support the cause of Arab independence after the elimination of the Ottoman Empire. However, because Hussain desired to be Caliph or the pre-eminent ruler over all the Arab peoples, McMahon clearly indicated that districts such as Mersina, Alexandretta and the regions in Syria lying to the west of the cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo

⁶¹ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.76.

⁶² Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs 1914-192*, p.8; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.76.

⁶³ Silverfarb, 'British relations with Ibn Saud of Najd 1914-1918', pp.72-73.

were not purely Arab and the vilayet of Baghdad and Basra should benefit from special administrative arrangements from the British Government.⁶⁴

Reginald Wingate,⁶⁵ who succeeded McMahon as High Commissioner in Egypt, strongly advocated the Arab Revolt under the authority of Hussain. His plan was to wean the Arabs away from the Ottoman Empire and thus prevent it from using Pan-Islamic propaganda, as described above. Furthermore, Wingate did not see the Arab Revolt as a temporary wartime solution to the problem of the Ottoman Empire. Rather, he “sought to utilise the Arabs to create a favourable post-war balance of power in the Middle East” because the Turks would remain anti-British after the war and would threaten British interests not only in the Middle East but also in India. Therefore, supporting Arab independence would reduce the Turkish influence and allow Britain some indirect control over all the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁶ It is evident that most of the British officials in Cairo supported Wingate’s policy in the Middle East. For instance, Hogarth, the Director of the Arab Bureau, outlined the reasons behind British support for Hussain, saying that he

⁶⁴ McMahon to Hussain, 24 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2486.

⁶⁵ Sir Francis Reginald Wingate, first baronet (1861–1953), was a British officer and colonial governor and administrator. He studied at the Royal Military Academy, where he was commissioned lieutenant in 1880. After serving in India and Aden, he was despatched to Egypt and Sudan where he spent most of his career. He succeeded Lord Kitchener in his position as governor-general of Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian army in 1899. In October, he became the High Commissioner for Egypt until 1919 when the Egyptian revolution broke out; at this point, the FO decided to replace him by Lord Allenby. For more information see M.W. Daly, *The Sirdar: Sir Reginald Wingate and the British empire in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1997) ; Roy Pugh, *Wingate Pasha the life of General Sir Francis Reginald Wingate 1861-1953: first Baronet of Dunbar and port Sudan and maker of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2011); M. W. Daly, ‘Wingate, Sir (Francis) Reginald, first baronet (1861–1953)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 21 March 2016.

⁶⁶ Silverfarb, ‘British relations with Ibn Saud of Najd 1914-1918’, pp.82-83.

... could exert throughout the Moslem world a moral influence which would, and did, make a very great difference indeed. His action, involving the secession of Holy Land from the Caliph's War would, we know, be received variously – with at least as much reprobation as approbation; but everywhere it would create division and prompt action. In adopting this policy we were not looking beyond the War.⁶⁷

In contrast, Government of India officials were not inclined to support the Arab Revolt under Hussain's leadership. They preferred to support the local leaders directly by means of subsidies,⁶⁸ especially when most of the Arab Shaikhs in the Gulf had concluded treaties with Britain. In addition, they also saw little reason to support Cairo's policy of establishing an independent state in the Middle East. Lord Hardinge,⁶⁹ the Viceroy, for example, in November 1915, strongly rejected the idea of creating a strong Arab State, which would have a negative impact on British interests in the Gulf and Iraq.⁷⁰ After the treaty was signed between Britain and Ibn Sa'ūd in December 1915, Hardinge informed Wingate that he had little faith in Hussain's potential to lead

⁶⁷ D. G. Hogarth, 'Wahhabism and British interests', *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* (1925), p.72.

⁶⁸ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.80.

⁶⁹ Charles Hardinge (1858–1944) was a diplomatist and later Viceroy of India. After his graduation from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1880, he joined the FO, working as second secretary in several cities such as Washington, Sofia and Constantinople. In 1906 he became permanent Under-Secretary at the FO before being appointed as viceroy of India (1910-1916). When he left India and returned to his former post as Permanent Under-Secretary at the FO but did not like the work. He was then chosen as ambassador to Paris in 1920 before retiring from the British foreign service in 1922. For a further account, see Briton Busch, *Hardinge of Penshurst: a study of the old diplomacy* (Hamden: Archon Books,1980); Katherine Prior, 'Hardinge, Charles, first Baron Hardinge of Penshurst (1858–1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 3 April 2017.

⁷⁰ Hardinge to Chamberlain, 4 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2486.

the Arab Revolt, arguing that the Arab leaders would not recognise his suzerainty.⁷¹ Furthermore, the officials of the Government of India had a further reason for not supporting the Arab Revolt under Hussain: it would create political difficulties with Indian Muslims who would believe that Britain had intervened in the Hejaz, where the Holy Places of Islam were located.⁷² Like Hardinge, Sir Hamilton Grant,⁷³ the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, disliked Cairo's activities. He suggested that "What we want is not a United Arabia: but a weak and disunited Arabia, split up into little principalities so far as possible under our suzerainty-but incapable of co-ordinated action against us, forming a buffer against the Powers in the West".⁷⁴ It seems that with this policy from the Government of India, Ibn Sa'ūd's position strengthened rapidly in Central Arabia, especially after the signing of the Anglo-Najdi treaty in December 1915. In the opinion of the Government of India, the treaty not only precluded Ibn Sa'ūd from siding with the Ottomans but also provided Britain with a long run of considerable benefits. For instance, the treaty gave Britain complete control of the eastern coastal strip of Arabia and control of the arms traffic in Central Arabia. In addition, the treaty provided for increased trade throughout the ports of the Persian Gulf due to Ibn Sa'ūd's control of his tribes and the strong security that British

⁷¹ Hardinge to Wingate, 28 December 1915, TNA, FO 882/13.

⁷² Silverfarb, 'British relations with Ibn Saud of Najd 1914-1918', p.95.

⁷³ Alfred Hamilton Grant (1872-1937) was administrator in India. He studied Classics at Oxford University and graduated in 1894. He then decided to join the ICS and successfully passed the ICS entry examinations. He occupied several posts, the most important one in 1912 when he became the Deputy Secretary of the Foreign Department, remaining in this post during WWI. He retired in 1922. For more details see *The Times*, 'Obituary: Sir Hamilton Grant', 25 January 1937; Katherine Prior, 'Grant, Sir (Alfred) Hamilton, twelfth baronet (1872-1937)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 4 April 2017.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs 1914-1921*, p.62.

domination brought. Furthermore, the power that Ibn Sa'ūd had over the Arabian Bedouin tribes would increase as the Ottoman Empire collapsed, which would help Britain.⁷⁵ Hence, beside these advantages and the choice of Ibn Sa'ūd in defiance of the British officials in Cairo and London, the British officials in Iraq and India also wanted Ibn Sa'ūd to play a significant role in the war by sending forces against Ibn Rashid, the Ottomans' ally. In addition, they wanted Ibn Sa'ūd to assist Britain to impose the blockade in order to prevent the caravans of smugglers in Arabia from falling into enemy hands.⁷⁶

Between the declaration of Hussain as king of all the Arab territories and the arrival of Philby in November 1917, tension grew between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain and it became time to send a mission to Arabia to clear the atmosphere between the two leaders and encourage them to cooperate in the war against the Ottomans in Arabia. This was the mission led by Philby as shown below.

In mid-1917, Philby's position as Cox's assistant allowed him to be fully aware of Cox's political papers regarding the disputes between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain and the disagreements between the British authorities in Cairo and in Baghdad in dealing with the two rival leaders. He was also charged with reporting to Cox about the developing events in Arabia and realized that a British mission had to be sent there.⁷⁷ This mission

⁷⁵ Silverfarb, 'British relations with Ibn Saud of Najd 1914-1918', pp.45-46.

⁷⁶ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, pp.91-116.

⁷⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.44; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.49.

was under the supervision of Ronald Storrs,⁷⁸ who had been selected to replace Shakespear. He arrived in Baghdad on 8 May 1917, on behalf of the Arab Bureau, to negotiate with Cox in order to see what Ibn Sa'ūd could contribute to the common cause.⁷⁹

However, within two days of his departure for Arabia, Storrs went down with sunstroke, obliging him to return to Kuwait.⁸⁰ Despite the failure of the mission, Cox was fully determined to proceed with his plan to send an envoy to Ibn Sa'ūd, sympathising with his aversion to Hussain's pretensions, which culminated in early November 1916, when he declared himself king of the Arabian nation.⁸¹

Philby was not among Cox's options for the leadership of a new mission. Thus, it is necessary to identify why Philby was appointed to lead it, although some personnel were more qualified and expert in Arab affairs than he was, for example, Leachman,^{the} Political Agent of the Desert in Iraq, and Hamilton, the Political Agent in Kuwait, who

⁷⁸ Sir Ronald Henry Amherst Storrs, (1881–1955), was a British official and Arabist, spending most of his service in the Middle East. After his graduation from Cambridge in 1903, he entered the Egyptian Government as an Egyptian civil servant and not more five years later he was promoted to be the Oriental Secretary of the British Agency in Cairo. In 1917 he became the political officer of the Egyptian expeditionary force and after the war he was assigned as military governor of Jerusalem until 1921, when he was appointed the civil governor of Jerusalem. He left the Middle East in 1926 when he became governor of Cyprus and then governor of Northern Rhodesia, before asking for retirement in 1934 on health grounds. For more information, see Storrs's book: *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (New York: G.P. Putnam's sons, 1937); Ritchie Owendale, 'Storrs, Sir Ronald Henry Amherst (1881–1955)', *Oxford Dictionary*, accessed 18 March 2016.

⁷⁹ Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox*, p.222; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs: 1914-1921*, p.248.

⁸⁰ Major Arthur P. Trevor's report, 5 July 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/827.

⁸¹ Cox to IO, 2 June 1917, TNA, FO 371/3054; Cox to IO, 28 September 1917, TNA, FO 371/3061; IOR, L/P&S/10/388. For Hussain's claim as king see Sir Henry McMahon to Foreign Office, 2 November 1916, TNA, FO 371/2782.

had previously been appointed to head the mission.⁸² It is also fundamental to ask why Philby was so enthusiastic to join the mission and why Cox consented to his appointment and in the end abandoned his previous decision that Hamilton was to lead it.⁸³

It seems that there were two main reasons behind Philby's leadership. The political quarrels and differences of opinion between Cox's staff regarding British policy with regard to Iraq may be regarded as the first reason. Philby – and others, such as Gertrude Bell, who worked at Cox's Political Office in Baghdad – advocated the rights of the Arabs and were convinced that Iraq had to be self-governing, whereas Wilson insisted, on the lines of Britain's policy in India, that Iraq would never become suited to self-government and that its future should be that of a British colony.⁸⁴ The second reason may be seen in Wilson's ambition; he was now far away from the Political Department of Baghdad and may have wanted to take over Philby's position as Cox's assistant.⁸⁵ Consequently, being isolated in Basra, Wilson seemed not to tolerate these interventions by the political officials, Philby and Bell, and therefore decided to go to Baghdad. Together with Cox and Philby, he was able to reach a solution and to take over Philby's position. Philby reported the following conversation:

⁸² See the appointment of Hamilton in Cox's letter to Ibn Sa'ūd, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.141.

⁸³ Hamilton was the first man to replace Storrs as head of the Najdi mission. See: Lord Belhaven, *The Uneven Road*, p.24.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Monroe, ' Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) ', *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 7, no.1 (1980), p.19; Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, p.199.

⁸⁵ Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson*, p.116.

Wilson: I don't like the ways things are being done up here, and I have been talking things over with Cox. He suggested that I should discuss arrangements with you. Philby: Why, what is it really you want? Let us be perfectly frank. Do you want to take over this work that I have been doing? Wilson: Yes, it amounts to that, I suppose. I can't go on working at Basra if my proposals are criticized from here and turned down. Philby: Then I don't think there is any need to quarrel about it. You know we have been making arrangements for this mission to Arabia. If I could be sent on that it would leave the field clear for you. If you can fix it up with Cox, I am prepared to hand over to you straight away. Wilson: Alright. I will go and see Cox at once. Philby: In five minutes he was back, saying: "Cox agrees".⁸⁶

To compare the above quotation from Philby's writings with Wilson's historical account, it seems somewhat strange that Wilson did not provide any indication of the political deal that had been arranged with Philby. The only allusion to it that can be found is his criticism of Philby. In Wilson's view, while Philby was on the one hand a distinguished traveller, an expert in Arab affairs, extraordinarily well qualified for the work, diligent and methodical in analysing the various issues that he had to cope with, on the other hand he was "one of those men who are apt to assume that everything they come across, from a government to a fountain-pen, is constructed on wrong principles and capable of amendment ... and we did not always agree."⁸⁷ Hence, with Wilson's negative opinion of Philby, it can be surmised that what deterred Wilson from revealing the actual terms of the deal between him, Cox and Philby was that he may not have wanted his book to uncover his political ambition to take over Philby's post. However, John Marlowe, Wilson's biographer, asserts that Philby and Wilson came to

⁸⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp. 142-143; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.50-51; Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, pp.236-237.

⁸⁷ Wilson, *Loyalties*, vol.1, pp.281-282; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs* p, 249; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.109.

an agreement over the Najdi mission and, more important, he includes in his account the above quotation from *Arabian Days*. Nevertheless, Marlowe claims that Philby's account of this historical incident is not entirely truthful. His argument relies on one main factor. He mentions that an official telegram conveyed Cox's approval for Wilson's move from Basra to Baghdad on 31 August 1917, while Philby's account states that Wilson's move to Baghdad was in September.⁸⁸ However, it is clear that there is no contradiction between Philby's account and Marlowe's evidence in many essential respects. First, the documentary evidence (the official telegram) did not mean that Cox approved the substitution of Wilson for Philby as his assistant; all it indicates is Cox's permission for Wilson to join the Political Department in Baghdad. Second, in his autobiography, Philby was merely writing about the political agreement between him and Wilson which came about in early September; he was talking not about the appointment of Wilson in Baghdad but about a telegram that came from Wilson, asking for ten days' leave. Philby stated:

Then in September came a telegram from Wilson to Cox, asking if he might come up to Baghdad for ten days, as he felt in need of a short respite from work and would be glad of a change of air and scene.⁸⁹

Therefore, it would not have been acceptable for this agreement to have been reached in August, since the official resolution that Wilson should leave Basra was ratified only on the last day of August, as Marlowe himself suggests.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Marlowe, *Late Victorian*, pp.116-117.

⁸⁹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp. 142.

To answer the question why Philby was so enthusiastic to head the mission, he may have been influenced by some of the Western explorers and travellers in Arabia, such as Bell and Leachman.⁹¹ In addition, it may have been true that Hamilton had a great influence on Philby and had awakened his enthusiasm for adventures of exploration in Arabia by telling him of Shakespear's explorations.⁹² The evidence that supports this assumption can be seen in Hamilton's visit to Cox's Office at Baghdad in 1917 in order to discuss the mission to Najd that he had been put in charge of. Philby had a conversation with him which left him impressed by the extent of Hamilton's knowledge. In his autobiography, Philby presents the following conversation between himself and Hamilton, which expresses how deeply Philby was influenced and how much he longed to take part himself in an Arabian adventure:

In conversation I learned much from him [Hamilton] that I did not know, and I remember envying him his luck in going off on such a grand adventure.⁹³

Consequently, it can be said that Philby, at this stage, was probably eager to add his name to the list of these travellers and that a thirst for fame, ambition and a love of adventure seem to have been the main reasons behind his desire to travel in Arabia. This opened the door to his becoming one of the greatest explorers of the Arabian

⁹⁰ The collection of Wilson's papers, which are held in the Imperial War Museum, mainly relates to his service in Iraq from 1918 to 1919 and therefore it contains no indication of Philby's departure from Cox's office in 1917. See Wilson's private letter, *Imperial War Museum*, catalogue no: document 14120.

⁹¹ For Bell's and Leachman's journeys of exploration into Arabia, see Bidwell, *Travellers in Arabia*, pp.152-159.

⁹² Regarding Shakespear's adventures, see Shakespear's report to Cox, 8 April 1911, TNA, FO 371/1249; IOR, L/P&S/7/248; Carruthers, 'Captain Shakespear's Last Journey', pp. 321-334.

⁹³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p. 141.

Peninsula. However, Philby's thirst for fame, ambition and love of adventure may not have outweighed his concern for the Arabs. Believing that the Arabs could run their affairs by themselves, his sympathy towards the Arabs increased after meeting some Arab leaders in Iraq.⁹⁴ Furthermore, his compassion for the Arabs had grown rapidly after he visited their lands for the first time in 1917. There, his personality was captivated by Ibn Sa'ūd's charisma and his prudent policies. Throughout his life in Arabia and his lengthy explorations, he loved the Arabs and the simplicity of their way of life, which not only helped to integrate him into their society but also to embrace their religion in 1930.

The departure to Najd

The mission consisted of Philby as head, in political charge of the mission, and Lieutenant-Colonel Cunliffe Owen⁹⁵ as its military advisor. Before leaving Baghdad, Cox, who was very anxious about the safety of the mission's members, gave instructions to the Political Agent in Bahrain to inform Ibn Sa'ūd that the mission would leave Baghdad in four days and to ask him to lend it his help, not only at the Najdi ports but in every way.⁹⁶ In addition, the Political Agent at Bahrain sent letters to Ibn Sa'ūd as well as to his local governors at Uqair and Ḥasa to take the important steps needed to secure the

⁹⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.47.

⁹⁵ Lieutenant-Colonel Cunliffe Owen was an army officer and a military adviser who was fighting on the Salonika front and was recalled to Iraq before joining Philby in his mission to central Arabia. Owen might be considered as the first European who visited the southern territories of Najd. See his report titled as 'Report on the Mission to Ibn Saud', 18 April 1918, TNA, FO 882/9; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.145.

⁹⁶ Cox to Percy Loch, 2 November 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.248.

mission, which would not only guarantee its safety but would also help it to reach Riyadh very quickly.⁹⁷

Philby left Baghdad in late October 1917, having been, with Owen, instructed by Cox on the various objectives for the mission. Philby was to discuss with Ibn Sa'ūd the Ottoman dominion in Arabia and form an opinion on the question of whether Ibn Sa'ūd could uphold the common cause against the Ottoman. Second, the mission must try to relax the state of tension in Ibn Sa'ūd's relations with both Hussain, the ruler of Hejaz, and the leader of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire, and Salim,⁹⁸ the ruler of Kuwait. Furthermore, the mission was to manage a permanent or at least temporary solution to the question of the Ajman tribe, who had beaten the forces of Ibn Sa'ūd and escaped to Kuwait, and also to unify the efforts to impose an economic blockade against the enemy inside Arabia.⁹⁹ Finally, combined with Ibn Sa'ūd's request for the appointment of a permanent British Political Agent in Najd, the mission had to discuss Ibn Sa'ūd's demand for the minting of a copper coinage.¹⁰⁰ For his part, Owen was also ordered to supply a written report that illustrated the movement of the artillery which

⁹⁷ Cox to Cairo, 13 November 1917, IOR, R/15/2/38. See also the Political Agent's telegram (Bahrain) to Philby, 14 November 1917, *ibid*; Loch to Ibn Sa'ūd, 3 November 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33.

⁹⁸ Salim Ibn Mūbark al- Sūbah (1864-1921), was the ninth ruler of Kuwait. He was very keen on history and literature and was described as a strongly religious person. It was said that the personal enmity between him and Ibn Sa'ūd contributed to a serious conflict. For more information, see Hamilton ' Notes for the visit to Najd ', dated as November 1917; IOR, L/P&S/18/B286; Abdul Aziz al- Rashid, *Tārīkh al- Kuwait* [The History of Kuwait] (Beirut al- ḥyah Library, 1978), pp.232-236.

⁹⁹ The questions of Kuwait, the Ajman and the blockade are discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁰ Cox's memorandum to Philby, 31 October 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2. The date is not mentioned in this memorandum but is stated in Philby's report on the Najd mission. See his report to Arnold T. Wilson, the Officiating Civil Commissioner, 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

would be used against Ibn Rashid, an Ottoman ally, and to describe the condition of Ibn Sa'ūd's guns and ammunition, with the capacity of his gun detachments.¹⁰¹

With his companions, Philby left Baghdad on 29 October, taking a launch to Basra where they arrived on 2 November. There, two vital tasks that had to be delayed for eight days were waiting for the mission. The first was that Philby had to gather the supplies, stores and equipment that the mission required. The second was that Philby had to hold discussions with some Arab chiefs who took the British side in the war against the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰² The most important of these chiefs was Sa'ūd Ibn al-Sabhān,¹⁰³ the brother-in-law of the Ottomans' ally, Ibn Rashid, and his personal adviser, who announced his opposition to the Rashidi Emirate. al-Sabhān had escaped with his followers to Basra and was asking for British support in order to succeed to the throne of this Emirate.¹⁰⁴ Philby claimed that Ibn Sabhān was furnished with a monthly subsidy of Rs 6,000, together with ammunition, arms and supplies in the hope that the latter would actively operate to halt any caravans that might fall into enemy hands in Arabia. Philby also stated that Ibn Sabhān had not shown any positive action to join the common cause and for this reason his substantial subsidy was reduced to Rs 3,000 per

¹⁰¹ Cox to Owen, 25 October 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

¹⁰² Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁰³ Sa'ūd Ibn Şaleh al-Sabhān belonged to the branch of the Shammar tribe called Abdah which has close kinship with the Rashidi Emirate. After he assassinated his cousin, the Amir of Ḥail wanted to take revenge but Sa'ūd escaped to Basra and settled there until his death in 1919. See some accounts of him in Cox's report 'Ibn Rashid', 3 January 1917, TNA, FO 882/8; Suleiman al-Dakhil, *al-Qāol al-Sādid fi Emarat al-Rashid* [The history of Ibn Rashid Emirate] (Riyadh: al-Yamāmah Publication, 1966), pp.159-160.

¹⁰⁴ Cox's report 'Ibn Rashid', 3 January 1917, TNA, FO 882/8.

month.¹⁰⁵ It is quite evident that Britain recognized Ibn Sabhān's political project to rule Ḥail, a project which turned out fruitless, for two main reasons. First, such an ambition would conflict with one of the mission's objectives, which was that Ḥail should be invaded by Ibn Sa'ūd, the ruler of Najd, who was working to include Ḥail under his sovereignty and would not allow any competitors, including Ibn Sabhān, to snatch it away from him. Second, Ibn Sabhān was involved in the treacherous murder of his predecessor, his cousin, and his action had resulted in a state of discontent among the Shammar tribe who may not have accepted his authority.¹⁰⁶ If, as can be said, Britain endeavoured to exploit every opportunity that would serve its interests throughout the war, then Philby's visit to Ibn Sabhān would signify that the latter could rest assured in every way of British support, at least during the war. Most important, this reassurance would keep Ibn Sabhān away from any approach to a member of his close family, Ibn Rashid, the enemy of the Allies. Thus Philby's contact with Ibn Sabhān may be regarded as the first political activity of his mission that apparently met with good luck.¹⁰⁷

On 11 November the mission embarked on H.M.S. *Lawrence* and sailed to Bahrain, arriving on 13 November, where the Political Agent of Bahrain had prepared a dhow for

¹⁰⁵ Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁰⁶ Regarding Ibn Sabhān's conspiracy to assassinate his cousin, see 'Notes by the Arab Bureau', not dated but certainly written in January 1917, TNA, FO 882/8.

¹⁰⁷ The evidence that supports Philby's success in persuading Ibn Sabhān to take Britain's side was that the latter remained opposed to the Ottoman until his assassination. See Ibn Sabhān's attitude and the last years of his life in al- Dakhil, *al- Qāol al Sādid fī Emarat al- Rashid* [The History of Ibn Rashid Emirate], p.160.

the mission to continue to Uqair. On 15 November, they were received at Uqair by the local governor of Ibn Sa'ūd and proceeded to Ḥasa, reaching there on 19 November. They stayed with the Amir Abdullah Ibn Jiluwi,¹⁰⁸ the Governor of Ḥasa.¹⁰⁹ Monroe stated that Ibn Jiluwi equipped the mission with better camels and he ordered that the members of the mission should change their British uniform to local dress to keep them safe while they were crossing the fanatical territories of Najd.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the safety of the mission's members was a crucial issue and it is relevant here to note that if the mission had been exposed to any attacks by Ibn Sa'ūd's tribesmen, it would have affected on his status and, worse, he might have lost the support of the British, in particular when it was well known that his relations with Britain had declined after the death of Shakespear, as noted above.

¹⁰⁸ Abdullah Ibn Jiluwi al-Sa'ūd (1870-1935) was a cousin and close friend of Ibn Sa'ūd. He made a considerable contribution to the unification of Saudi Arabia. In 1909, he became a governor of Qasim before being appointed ruler of Ḥasa. He was known for his strict discipline, specifically against the Bedouin raiders. For further accounts, see al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.4, p.77.

¹⁰⁹ Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; R. Jarman (ed.), *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf* (Slough: Farnham Common Archive edition, 1990), vol.6, p.401.

¹¹⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.56.

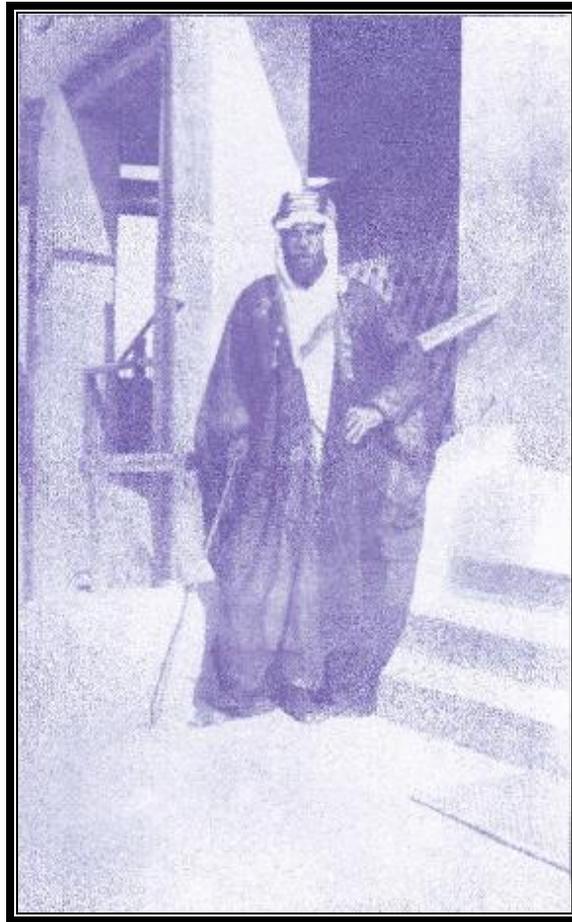


Figure 3.
Philby after opting for Arab dress
Source: Philby, *The Heart of Arabia*

The journey on camel-back took eight days, until 30 November 1917, to reach Riyadh. Hamilton, who had previously launched out into the Arabian Desert, was chasing a smuggler who was travelling with Shammar's caravan and who had to be handed over to Ibn Rashid. Hamilton was now in Riyadh, awaiting the arrival of the mission according to Cox's instructions¹¹¹ and had no idea when he went to greet the mission

¹¹¹ Cox to GI, 25 November 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/388.

that the arrangements regarding its leadership had changed.¹¹² Some historians suggest that Philby fell out with Hamilton on this matter and was responsible for the clash that made Hamilton return to Kuwait, a battle which Philby won.¹¹³ However, although Philby's personality tended to be intransigent, it is not logical to believe that he was always wrong or was someone who creates problems. It seems that the reason why some historians seek to criticise Philby at every opportunity and present a black image of him was Philby's continual criticism of his own country. To respond to the clash between Hamilton and Philby and explain why it took place, it should not be forgotten that the former was in a state of vexation at the change of the mission's leadership. As Monroe stated, he had expected to head the mission, in particular because he was 14 years older than Philby and better acquainted with Arabian affairs.¹¹⁴ Hence it is difficult to accuse Philby of being the one who provoked the clash, for three considerations clearly exonerate him. The first one is the documentary evidence which suggests that the official decision to change the mission's leader to Philby had been made by Cox, who sent a telegram to the Political Agent in Bahrain, asking for Hamilton to be informed.¹¹⁵ Second, further documentary evidence

¹¹² Philby's telegram to Bahrain, 2 December 1918, IOR, R/15/2/38; Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.51-52.

¹¹³ Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*. p.66; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.250; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.109.

¹¹⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.52. Philby stated that Hamilton was 18 or 20 years older than him. See Philby's autobiography, p.151. However, it is plain that Monroe was correct rather than Philby when she indicated, above, that the two men were 14 years apart. To clarify this point and support Monroe, it can be said that Philby was born in 1885, as stated in Chapter One, while the year of Hamilton's birth was 1871. See Hamilton's autobiography above, pp.10-11, n.17.

¹¹⁵ See Cox's telegram to Bahrain, 2 November 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33.

exculpates Philby, in the form of a letter of explanation written by Cox who had given it to Philby to hand to Hamilton in Riyadh:

... I have been obliged to depute another officer whom after receipt of the views of H.M. Government I could equip with information and instruction up to date. The officer I have deputed is Mr. Philby, whom you know well. He will consult you fully and bring you all deliberations but you will I am sure realise that it is essential that the officer who is instructed by me from here must be himself responsible to me and I must therefore leave the management of the mission in his hands. I am sure I can depend on your loyal acceptance of this position in the event of your meeting, as I hope you will.¹¹⁶

From the above, it can be said that while Hamilton, with his experience and knowledge of Arabia affairs, deserved to head the mission, he was responsible for the collision with Philby and if these historians need to blame anyone, it should not be Philby, of course, but Cox, the extraordinary and inimitable British officer who had made the decision.¹¹⁷

Meeting with Ibn Sa'ūd

Philby arrived at Riyadh on 30 November 1917 and spent nine days conferring with Ibn Sa'ūd on all the mission's objectives.¹¹⁸ Daniel Silverfarb suggests that the first objective of the mission was to define the amount of military and monetary assistance

¹¹⁶ Cox to Hamilton, 31 October 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.151.

¹¹⁷ It can be noted that even Lord Belhaven, the son of Hamilton, was frustrated at what happened to his father but still places the full responsibility on Cox and not on Philby. See his book: *The Uneven Road*, pp.24-26.

¹¹⁸ Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

that Ibn Sa'ūd would need before he could begin an active offensive against Ḥail.¹¹⁹ However, when Hamilton no longer wanted to be a member of the mission, as stated above, he agreed with Philby that the first debate must be the question of the disputes between Ibn Sa'ūd and the ruler of Kuwait.¹²⁰ Therefore, the first objective was not British assistance to Ibn Sa'ūd, as Silverfarb suggests, but the Kuwait question.

Philby had more than 12 interviews with Ibn Sa'ūd and it seems beyond doubt that they understood each other and their relations became increasingly harmonious until the death of Ibn Sa'ūd.¹²¹ In his first book, which describes his mission and his first adventure of crossing the Persian Gulf eastwards to the Red Sea west of Arabia, Philby stated that it did not take him long to discover that Ibn Sa'ūd was a figure of inexhaustible energy, who considered his own affairs the most important in the world. Philby also discovered some of the private aspects of Ibn Sa'ūd's life, such as the restriction of his sleeping hours to no more than four per night.¹²² In addition, from Philby's report of his mission, it can be observed that Ibn Sa'ūd's knowledge and his political view of his relationship with Britain may have had more than a positive impact on Philby. They also greatly assisted Philby's mission and enhanced Anglo-Najdi relations; one example is Ibn Sa'ūd's informing Philby that he was genuinely satisfied

¹¹⁹ Daniel Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission to Ibn Sa'ūd, p.273.

¹²⁰ Philby's memorandum, 2 December 1917, IOR, R/15/2/38; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p. 151-153.

¹²¹ Ibn Sa'ūd died on 9 November 1953. See the Saudi announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 November 1953, TNA, FO 371/104885.

¹²² H. St. J.B. Philby, *The Heart of Arabia*, a record of travel and exploration (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1922), p.79.

with the British alliance, which would secure the interests of his country and people.¹²³

At the same time, Ibn Sa'ūd was deeply impressed by Philby, describing him as a sagacious man in whom he saw all the signs of familiarity and long acquaintance. These persuaded Ibn Sa'ūd that Philby and his mission would augment the friendly relations between Najd and Britain.¹²⁴ Additionally, it seems that Ibn Sa'ūd admired Philby for another reason. Philby's adoption of the Arab character and life, for instance, his speaking Arabic, growing a beard, dressing in Arab garments, in particular the *dishdasha* (white shift) and the *Thoab* (overshirt), using only the right hand in eating, and sleeping on the ground had its influence on Ibn Sa'ūd, who saw Philby as a sincere friend serving common causes in general and the Arab cause in particular.¹²⁵

Even before the negotiations in the Najdi-Hejazi dispute opened, there is some evidence that Philby would probably be successful in resolving the two issues that underlay the mission. First, behind the issuing of copper coinage, as Ibn Sa'ūd demanded, Cox seems to have believed that Ibn Sa'ūd had been seeking to strengthen his autonomy. Philby handled Cox's instructions well, informing Ibn Sa'ūd that his request was not practicable until the war ended and, more important, that his demand was inconsistent with the terms of the treaty that he had signed with Britain in 1915.¹²⁶

The second issue relates to the appointment of a British officer in Najd and Philby

¹²³ Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹²⁴ Ibn Sa'ūd to Loch, 11 December 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33.

¹²⁵ Regarding Philby's adoption of Arab ways, see Philby, *The Heart of Arabia*, pp.86-88; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.140.

¹²⁶ Cox to Philby, 31 October 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

seems to have been able to persuade Ibn Sa'ūd to relegate this for negotiation at some future date.¹²⁷

Philby's role in the Najd-Hejaz rivalry

Silverfarb suggests that Philby distorted Cox's instructions when he interpreted the prime object of the Najd Mission as the launching of Ibn Sa'ūd on a campaign of active aggression against Ibn Rashid. Furthermore, he describes Philby's motives for deviating from Cox's instructions as not altogether clear and speculated that Philby perhaps visualized himself "in a glamorous leadership role comparable to that of T. E. Lawrence" with Hussain's forces in the Hejaz. Or perhaps he simply disliked the prospect of devoting so much time and effort to "a project barren of concrete achievement".¹²⁸ Indeed, the prime purpose of the Najdi mission was to clear the atmosphere between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain and any distortion of the mission's objective would have meant that Philby desired to share the glory of Shakespear or that a Lawrence of Arabia necessitated also a Philby of Najd. However, beside the fame that Philby was looking for, the invasion of Ibn Rashid would ensure a crucial benefit for the Allied cause. It was to distract Ibn Sa'ūd's attention from Hussain and oblige him to take offensive action against Ibn Rashid and that would cement the improved relations between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain, just what Britain was looking for.

¹²⁷ Philby, *Arabia Jubilee*, p.54.

¹²⁸ Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission', pp.272-273.

Philby stated:

I was mainly interested in two problems. *In the first place, it was of paramount importance to prevent any serious conflict between Ibn Saud and King Hussain, whose pretensions to hegemony in Arabia were daily growing more blatant and aggressive and whose continued co-operation was vitally necessary to Lawrence's campaign against the Turks on the flank of General Allenby's army, now within striking distance of Jerusalem. Secondly, and partly also to aid the attainment of my first objective, it was necessary to divert Ibn Saud's attention from his grievances by inducing him to undertake operations against his other rival and our declared enemy, Ibn Rashid of Hail.*¹²⁹

Therefore, to substantiate Philby's view, it can be said that, before he reached Riyadh, Sir Mark Sykes, having met the British officials in Cairo, informed Cox that the capture of Hail by Ibn Sa'ūd would be vital.¹³⁰ More importantly, while Philby was in Arabia Cox, in December 1917, informed the Government of India that the termination of the movement in Hail would no doubt be an ideal opportunity. He stated:

Should the movement terminate by the capture of Hail Ibn Saud would I fancy install one of the members of Rashid family who have been refugees with him for some years past remaining with him until he had gained adherence of the Shammar and then leave him as his deputy.¹³¹

From the above, it can be surmised that Philby may not have distorted Cox's instructions but that he was following the policy of both Cairo and Baghdad. If he had shown any sign of distorting Cox's instructions, his view would not have been

¹²⁹ Philby, *Arabia Days*, p.153. The italics are those of the Author's emphasis. The invasion of Ibn Rashid will be examined in the following chapter.

¹³⁰ Sykes to Cox, 10 May 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/388.

¹³¹ Cox to GI, 23 December 1917, TNA, FO 882/8.

compatible with the desire of Cox and Cairo to capture Ḥail and thus improve the relations between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain.

In any case, one of Britain's major purposes may be considered to be a reduced state of tension and hostility between Najd and Hejaz. Thus, Philby, in his negotiations, found that there were some essential developments that disquieted Ibn Sa'ūd. The first was that Hussain had taken for himself the title of *Malik Diyar al- Arab* (the King of the Arab countries) and Ibn Sa'ūd suspected that Hussain's title was based on some secret understanding between him and Britain. The second concern was that Ibn Sa'ūd was very eager to have comparable treatment, political support and financial assistance from Britain with what Hussain was receiving. On these fundamental issues, Ibn Sa'ūd wanted to know where he would stand after the war, so he requested more definite assurances in order to distinguish himself from Hussain.¹³² From these demands, it is apparent that Ibn Sa'ūd may have realized that the conquest by the Allied forces would rapidly strengthen Hussain's power among the Arab leaders and if this happened he may have believed that Britain would abandon him. Furthermore, Ibn Sa'ūd was aware of McMahon's undertakings to Hussein and knew that the British Government had decided to encourage Hussain to take the lead in the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans so that at some future date he would be the ruler or the head of an independent Arab state, which might have an essential effect on Ibn Sa'ūd's sovereignty. Ibn Sa'ūd rejected the British-Hejazi understanding and in the negotiations before the Anglo-

¹³² Philby's telegram to Bahrain, 2 December 1917, IOR, R/15/2/38; Haifa al-Angari, *The Struggle for power in Arabia* (Reading: Ithaca, 1998), p.172.

Najdi treaty in December 1915, he informed Cox that Hussain could not be trusted, describing him as a trivial and unstable character. Ibn Sa'ūd stated that he would not accept any intervention in his affairs or recognise the Caliphate, as Hussain claimed. After his meeting with Ibn Sa'ūd, Cox described him and said that his

present relations with ... [Hussain] were quite normal and friendly, but that the Sharif was essentially a trivial and unstable character and could never be depended on ... Sounded as to the general question of the Caliphate in the event of Turkey breaking up, he said his own view was that, as far as the ruling Chiefs of Arabia were concerned, no one cared in the least who called himself Caliph, and reminded me that the Wah[h]abis did not recognise any Caliph after the first four.¹³³

The month after the proclamation of Hussain's revolt against the Ottomans in June 1916, Ibn Sa'ūd sent a letter to Cox to indicate his concern that Hussain would want a commitment from Britain that would enable him to rule the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire. In his letter, he also showed his extreme apprehension towards Hussain's official communique which illustrated Hussain's desire for political leadership over all the Arabs, stating that he and his people would never subordinate themselves to Hussain.¹³⁴

It is plain that Ibn Sa'ūd was aware of the political developments surrounding him and, more importantly, he was aware of the controversy between Cairo and India regarding Hussain's leadership. In his view, Cairo and the British Government were unable to understand the political conditions in Arabia. He informed Cox:

¹³³ Cox, 'Note regarding the interview with Ibn Saud', 27 December 1915, TNA, FO 882/8.

¹³⁴ Translation of Ibn Sa'ūd's letter (in Arabic) to Cox, 20 July 1916, Ibid.

I feel it incumbent on me to state to you (though you are much better informed in regard to the affair than I am) that my fear is that the Sharif [Hussain] may obtain from the British Government an undertaking for his independent control over the Hedjaz and the Arabs. Although you yourself probably appreciate my fear, it is possible that the representative of the British Government who is actually conducting negotiations with the Sharif is not acquainted with the position.¹³⁵

According to Hamilton,¹³⁶ Briton Busch says, Ibn Sa'ūd wished to see an Ottoman victory against Britain, so as to bring about the collapse at Ottoman hands of Hussain's power.¹³⁷ However, it seems that the allegations by both Hamilton and Busch are unlikely to be soundly based. Hamilton's claim was presented and assessed in November 1917¹³⁸ and all the military evidence and indications testify to the superiority of British military might against the Ottoman forces. These had been devastated not only in Iraq but also in Arabia and Britain's superiority could not have been absent from Saud's mind.

Hence, in order to remove Ibn Sa'ūd's suspicions of Britain and Hussain, Philby had to dispel these ideas, confirming to Ibn Sa'ūd that Britain had no intention of reneging on its obligations toward him, in particular the duties and commitments based on the Anglo- Najdi treaty that Ibn Sa'ūd had signed with Cox. Consequently, Philby was able to extract a solemn promise from Ibn Sa'ūd that he would abstain from all aggression against Hussain.¹³⁹ It should be described here how Philby managed to keep Ibn

¹³⁵ Translation of Ibn Sa'ūd's letter (in Arabic) to Cox, 20 July 1916, TNA, FO 882/8.

¹³⁶ Notes by Hamilton, dated as November IOR, L/PS/18/B286.

¹³⁷ Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.251.

¹³⁸ See Hamilton 'Notes for the visit to Najd', dated as November 1917; IOR, L/P&S/18/B286.

¹³⁹ Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p. 153.

Sa'ūd away from Hussain, most of all at this crucial juncture of the war. First, regarding Hussain's improved status, Philby probably explained to Ibn Sa'ūd that he had no option but to engage in the common cause, not only to obtain the benefit from Britain (military support and financial assistance) but also to feature on the political scene, which would help to protect his sovereignty. Second, in the long negotiations, Philby appeared to be an able disputant, possessing all the means of persuasion. This can be seen, as Monroe suggested, when he reminded Ibn Sa'ūd that Hussain was providing Britain with much valuable service while Ibn Sa'ūd himself had not lifted a finger to assist Britain.¹⁴⁰ As a result, it can be said that Philby not only succeeded in suppressing or shelving the hatred and enmity between the two rivals but also gained Ibn Sa'ūd's cooperation with Hussain, which would support Britain's interests in the war while also improving relations between Britain and Ibn Sa'ūd.

Combined with Philby's mission, it was decided that the British authorities in Cairo should once more send Storrs to Hejaz in order to meet Hussain. Storrs would be entirely guided by Hussain and would carry any messages to Ibn Sa'ūd or raise any political questions that he wished.¹⁴¹ The Cairo officials hoped that Storrs's visit to Riyadh would have the fruitful consequences of bringing the two parties into cooperative participation in the war against the Ottoman. In order to reach the convergence between the views from Hejaz and from Najd, Storrs was also instructed

¹⁴⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.61.

¹⁴¹ Arab Bureau in Cairo, to Bassett, the Acting British Agent in Jeddah, 2 November 1917, TNA, FO 882/8; Wingate to Cox, 2 November, TNA, FO 371/3061; Baghdad to Philby, 3 November 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

to inform Ibn Sa'ūd that the latter would be able to despatch his personal representative to negotiate with Hussain, who had previously welcomed and approved the Cairo mission and its objectives.¹⁴²

However, while Philby was waiting for Storrs to join him in Riyadh and continually recommending Storrs's visit, Hussain prevented Storrs from setting out, stating that he could not guarantee that Storrs would be safe from Ibn Sa'ūd's tribesmen and, therefore, he would not permit him to risk a journey from the coast of Hejaz to the interior of Arabia.¹⁴³ Although London and Cairo made considerable efforts with Hussain to revoke his decision regarding the Cairo mission, Reginald Wingate, the High Commissioner in Egypt, asserted that Hussain also prevented a native representative from being sent to the negotiations and from joining Philby's mission in Riyadh; he confirmed that any attempt to press Hussain to change his decision would be worthless.¹⁴⁴ Philby suggested that the reason behind Hussain's action was to obstruct the aims of the mission and to "discourage any negotiations between his hated rival and Great Britain".¹⁴⁵ In the event, Hussain could not discourage or curtail Saudi-British relations because it was known that Ibn Sa'ūd had signed a treaty with Britain in 1915. Furthermore, regarding the British interest, Britain was in need of Ibn Sa'ūd's

¹⁴² Cox to FO, July 28, 1917, TNA, FO 371/3061; FO to Wingate, 5 November 1917, *ibid*; John Shuckburgh's memorandum, 10 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

¹⁴³ Cox to Wingate, 12 December 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/388; Bassett to Arab Bureau, 19 November 1917, TNA, FO 882/8.

¹⁴⁴ Baghdad to Bahrain, 2 November 1917, IOR, R/15/2/38.

¹⁴⁵ Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.154.

assistance both in the case of the invasion of Ḥail and in imposing the blockade against enemies in Arabia. As a result, it may be assumed that the motivation for Hussain's refusal was political: he did not want to recognise Ibn Sa'ūd's sovereignty or his independent rule because he viewed the latter as one of his servants.¹⁴⁶ Still, it may be noted that, while Ibn Sa'ūd made it plain that he was not prepared to become a mere follower of Hussain, he showed more statesmanship than Hussain and he welcomed the deputation of Storrs to his territories. More important, he explicitly showed the British authorities in Cairo that he was able to send an adequate escort to the Hejaz and would make all the necessary arrangements to bring Storrs safely to Riyadh. Philby illustrated Ibn Sa'ūd's attitude toward Storrs's visit as follows:

Ibn Sa'ūd heartily welcomes proposed deputation of Storrs as likely to give Egyptian authorities glimpse of other side of shield but spontaneously expressed the opinion that Sherif's desire to disclaim responsibility after he leaves Hejaz frontier is merely ruse to deter Egypt from proceeding with proposal. He however agrees to send adequate escort and guarantee safety of Storrs in his territories.¹⁴⁷

After Hussain's refusal to permit the Cairo mission to proceed to Najd through his lands, it is likely that Philby and Ibn Sa'ūd worked together to show the Cairo officials that the story of the disturbance on the boundaries between Hejaz and Najd was no more than imaginary. Evidence for this comes in Philby's asking Ibn Sa'ūd for permission to travel to Hejaz in order to meet Hussain.¹⁴⁸ He sent an apology to Cox,

¹⁴⁶ See Hussain's memorandum to Edward Wilson, 2 November 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/637.

¹⁴⁷ Philby to Bahrain, 2 December 1917, IOR, R/15/2/38; Cox to Wingate, 15 December 1917, TNA, FO 371/3061.

¹⁴⁸ Howarth, *The Desert King*, p.103

explaining his decision as occasioned by the urgency of the matter; he said that he believed that Storrs should be brought to Riyadh and wanted to show that Hussain was at fault in claiming that the country was unsafe. Without waiting for Cox's response, Philby set off on his journey, leaving his escorts in Riyadh.¹⁴⁹ Some historians claim that the reason behind Philby's decision to travel to Hejaz was a desire for personal fame for his exploration and vanity in presenting himself as a distinguished explorer across Arabia from east to west, following in the footsteps of its greatest European explorers.¹⁵⁰ They cite Philby's comment on his motivation:

I should confess, perhaps, that my motives in making that proposal were of a mixed character, and not wholly based on the actual requirements of the situation, but that is a trifle and I have never regretted my action.¹⁵¹

Philby's decision was not, of course, one of the mission's objectives and it is possible that, as these historians suggest, he simply wanted to be famous for such a journey. However, from Philby's confession in the above quotation, it is clear that his choice of words to describe his motivation is ambiguous. He never revealed precisely what he meant by "the mixed character" or the "trifle". Of his long journey between Najd and Hejaz, Monroe remarked persuasively that Philby may simply have wanted to give the perceptive signal that Ibn Sa'ūd was stronger than Hussain and had implicit control

¹⁴⁹ Philby, ' Report on Najd mission ', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁵⁰ Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, p.67; Howarth, *The Desert King*, p.103; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.111.

¹⁵¹ Philby, *The Heart of Arabia*, pp.105-106.

over immense areas of central Arabia.¹⁵² In support of Monroe's contention, it should not be forgotten that Philby shocked the British authorities in Cairo when he argued with D.G. Hogarth and announced, for the first time, that the destiny of Arabia lay with Ibn Sa'ūd and not with "Hussain Ibn Ali, the darling of Cairo".¹⁵³

Al-Man'a, Howarth and Troeller criticise Philby because, in travelling to the Hejaz, he deviated from his war-time duty in order to satisfy his personal desire to explore.¹⁵⁴ As stated above, perhaps the claim is quite proper as far as the desire is concerned, but not because he avoided his duty in war-time; his decision may have been beneficial in that it postponed the conflict between the two parties, which had been expected to break out at any time. Moreover, his decision was welcomed by Cox, who wanted to strengthen Ibn Sa'ūd's position against Hussain, the most powerful figure in Arabia, and who also had the full support of the British authorities in Cairo; Cox wanted Philby to meet Hussain and gauge the state of his suspicions about Ibn Sa'ūd. In addition, it can be noted from Cox's telegram to Philby that there was no indication of Cox's displeasure over the unexpectedness of Philby's visit to Hejaz. As Cox stated:

Government know your movement and it will be worthwhile your waiting Jeddah few days pending communication on their decision. Please give my cordial respects to King

¹⁵² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.63.

¹⁵³ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.158.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Man'a, *Tawhīd al- Māmlākah al- arabiah al- Sū'dīah* [Arabia Unified], p.270; Howarth, *The Desert King*, p.103; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.111.

[Hussain] and endeavour to dispel his suspicions and wire appreciation after seeing him.¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, combined with Cox's appreciation of Philby's visit to Hejaz, Priya Satia makes the salient point that Cox opposed the officials of the Cairo Bureau who were determined to monopolise the policy-making in Arabia and, more significantly, tried to encroach on Cox's affairs by the continual visits of their officials to Iraq, in the hope of weakening the policy of the Indian Government.¹⁵⁶ It can be inferred from this that Philby's visit may not only have safeguarded Cox's rule in Arabia but also confronted and limited the interventions in Arab affairs from Cairo, in particular those concerning Ibn Sa'ūd, who was regarded as under Cox's authority.

Further support for the view that Philby did not deviate from his war-time duty arises from the fact that his journey produced valuable information. To do this he crossed more than 400 miles, studying the mystery and society of the desert, mapping unknown areas, gathering geological specimens, listing the names of towns, villages, roads and mountains and marking the pilgrim route. Following his long journey, he also provided significant information about sections of the Arab tribes and their social customs and tribal genealogies.¹⁵⁷ Consequently, it can be concluded that the benefits

¹⁵⁵ Cox to Wingate, 15 December 1917, TNA, FO 882/2; Cox to Philby, 1 January 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

¹⁵⁶ Priya Satia, 'The Secret Center: Arabia Intelligence in British Culture and Politics, 1900-1932' (Berkeley: PhD thesis, University of California, 2004), pp.371-372.

¹⁵⁷ Regarding Philby's journey, see, H.St. J.B. Philby's lecture titles, such as, ' Across Arabia: from the Persian to the Red Sea ', *The Geographical Journal*, vol.LVI, no.6 (December 1920), pp.446-468; *The Heart of Arabia*, Chapter IV, pp.108-173 and Chapter V, pp.174-233; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p. 65; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.140.

of Philby's journey included not only its scientific contributions but also its value to the British authorities both in Baghdad and in Cairo. It acquainted them with political conditions, namely, the disputed borders and the names of the tribes between Najd and Hejaz. It also gave Philby remarkable knowledge and allowed him to present Ibn Sa'ūd's views in the negotiations held in Jeddah between Philby and Hussain, who was supported by the British officials in Cairo.

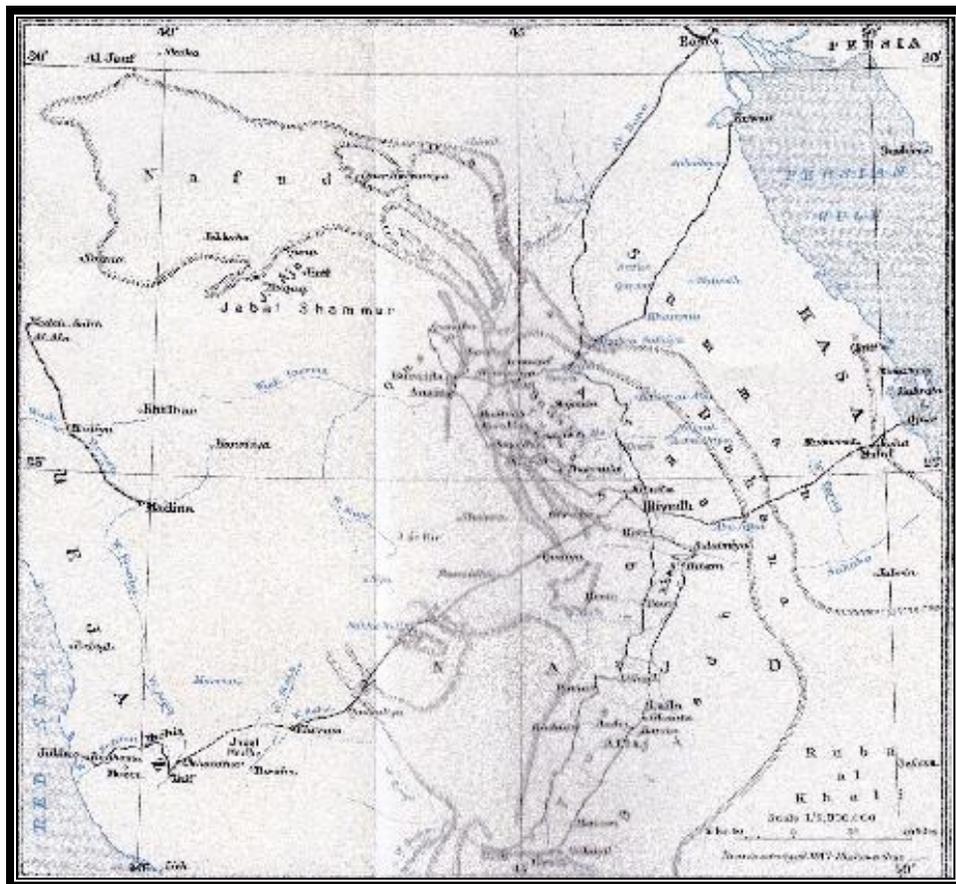
On 9 December 1917, leaving Colonel Owen in charge of the current business of the mission, Philby proceeded from Riyadh to Hejaz;¹⁵⁸ he was provided by Ibn Sa'ūd with everything that the campaign might require and was escorted by 25 reliable men from Ibn Sa'ūd's royal bodyguard, who were given strict instructions to obey Philby in all things.¹⁵⁹ After 14 days he reached Ṭaif, where his host, on behalf of Hussain, was the Acting Ruler of Ṭaif. The Acting Ruler had been shocked and surprised to learn of Philby's visit and more so when he received Philby's messengers, telling him that Philby arrived at Ṭaif and wished to see Hussain. Philby had to stay there three days, waiting for Hussain to approve his visit. Although Hussain was not expecting Philby, he welcomed him and arranged an escort to bring him to Jeddah.¹⁶⁰ At this stage, it was decided that Storrs would again confer with Philby, but in Hejaz, not Najd. Following the collapse of Jerusalem, however, Storrs was appointed its first Governor; Hogarth

¹⁵⁸ Owen, 'Report on the Mission to Ibn Saud', 18 April 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

¹⁵⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.63; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.155.

¹⁶⁰ Philby, 'Across Arabia', p. 461; Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.155-157; Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Deputy Foreign Minister of Hussain's government to Philby, 25 December 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2; Eastern Committee, 4th meeting minutes, 18 January 1918, TNA, CAB, 27/23.

was appointed to replace him and to join Philby in the negotiations with Hussain that would be a great opportunity for all the parties to resolve their political controversies.¹⁶¹



Map 1. Philby's Map, illustrating his crossing of Arabia from East to West

Source: Philby, 'Across Arabia from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea'

¹⁶¹ Wingate to FO, 30 December 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/388; British Agency to Philby, 28 December 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

Meeting with Hussain

Philby arrived in Jeddah on 31 December 1917 and arranged several interviews there between 8 and 15 January 1918. Hogarth conducted three interviews with Hussain, while Philby, who was introduced to Hussain by Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. Bassett¹⁶² as the leader of the Najd mission to negotiate active cooperation between Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd, attended two. On the first evening, the negotiations turned to the business of Najd. Hussain opened the meeting by talking about himself, his sons and the lineage of his family.¹⁶³ Then various issues were discussed, but what is important here is to examine his strained relations throughout with Ibn Sa'ūd. At first, Hussain did not want to discuss the case of Ibn Sa'ūd, portraying him as a powerless figure of little importance, who showed no sincere attempt to ally himself with the common cause. He was also upset by the British tendency to place him and Ibn Sa'ūd on an equal footing and when the latter received communications from Fakhri Pasha,¹⁶⁴ the Ottoman Commander in Madina, Hussain accused him of collaborating with the enemy.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² The only information about J. R. Bassett is that he was a major at this period, working as deputy to Cyril Edward Wilson, Political Agent in Jeddah. See Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.157.

¹⁶³ Wingate to FO, 12 January 1918, TNA, FO 371/3383; Hogarth, 'Report on Mission to Jeddah', 28 January 1918, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

¹⁶⁴ Omar Fakhru-din Pasha (1868-1948) was regarded as the last knight-defender of the Ottoman Caliphate. Although the Ottoman announced the capitulation to the Allies in October 1918, Fakhri was still fighting for 70 days in Madina before he surrendered to the Amir Abdullah, Hussain's son, on 10 January 1919. For more information, see: A.L. Tibawi, 'The Last Knight of the last Caliphs', *A L Islamic Quarterly*, Oct 1, 1971, 15, (4), pp.159-163.

¹⁶⁵ Cox to GI, 14 January 1918, TNA, CAB 27/23; Hogarth, 'Report on the Mission to Hussain', 28 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/7.

However, it seems that Hogarth was able to bring up the subject again and induce Hussain to reach a peaceful settlement with Ibn Sa'ūd. He began by stating that there was no evidence for accusing Ibn Sa'ūd of treachery. He also indicated that Britain respected the Anglo-Najdi treaty signed with Ibn Sa'ūd and would treat him as a friend unless he proved himself an adversary. Therefore, Hogarth informed Hussain that Britain was expecting him to respect and recognize Ibn Sa'ūd, with all his tribal and territorial rights. However, it was clear that Hussain never lost his suspicion of Ibn Sa'ūd. As Hogarth suggested, Hussain's fears were substantially based. First, he strongly believed that Ibn Sa'ūd was at the heart of the religious Wahhabi movement that formed a vital danger to the Hejaz territory. Second, Hussain was extremely frustrated by the implacable opposition of Ibn Sa'ūd to his claim to be 'king of the Arab countries'.¹⁶⁶

As Hussain did not show any sign of peaceful intentions toward Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby, in response, reverted to Hussain's accusations, in particular that Ibn Sa'ūd was collaborating with the enemy. He offered to show Hussain Fakhri's original letters, but Hussain refused to take these letters or even to look at them, claiming that they were all a blind. In order to work out what was going on, Philby asked Hussain to produce evidence for his accusations but Hussain promised to do so the following day. If he had kept his word, he would have weakened the status of Ibn Sa'ūd and showed his own full cooperation with the common cause. He said that he would be pleased if Ibn Sa'ūd

¹⁶⁶ Hogarth, 'Jeddah Meeting', 8 January 1918; MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

could capture Ḥail and, if he could not, then he himself would try. Moreover, Hussain indicated that he knew Ibn Sa'ūd's plans, claiming that he himself was loyal to the people of Qasim province and the Ateibah and Mateir tribes, which were under Ibn Sa'ūd's control.¹⁶⁷

The next day, Hussain made the point that, despite his feelings toward Ibn Sa'ūd, which would not affect his cooperation, he was entirely in the hands of the British Government. In contrast, Hogarth, in his report, described how Philby brought up the subject of Fakhri's unanswered letters to Ibn Sa'ūd, which the latter had given to Philby; in one of these, Fakhri complains of never receiving a reply. Again, Hussain refused to hear or read them and dismissed them as misleading although he had promised, the day before, to substantiate his accusations against Ibn Sa'ūd.¹⁶⁸ The Philby collection contains the original of Fakhri's last letter but does not include Ibn Sa'ūd's reply, which might have undermined Hussain's accusations.¹⁶⁹ From the above, it can be assumed that Philby was not only conversant with the points of disagreement between Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd but also showed his marked ability to represent and press Ibn Sa'ūd's demands.

¹⁶⁷ Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Hogarth, 'Report on the Mission to Hussain', 28 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/7; Bassett to the Arab Bureau, 9 January 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

¹⁶⁸ Hogarth, 'Report on the Mission to Hussain', 28 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/7, Philby to Cox, 8 January 1918, TNA, CAB 27/23

¹⁶⁹ See Fakhri Pasha's letter in the MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5. As the archivist at St. Antony's College indicated, this Box has not yet been archived with its new reference. Author's Interview with Debbie Usher, the Archivist, 17 May 2014, Oxford.

However, in terms of neutrality, it is quite evident that Philby's report on Fakhri's unanswered letters was incompatible with the account that he gives in his autobiography. There, Philby mentions that he also showed Hussain a copy of a reply by Ibn Sa'ūd to Fakhri Pasha, in which he refused "Fakhri's request for supplies".¹⁷⁰ It may be assumed in this case that Philby's report and not his autobiographical account is to be trusted, for a number of reasons. To begin with, Hogarth's sketch was entirely compatible with Philby's report.¹⁷¹ Second, the account by Bassett, who attended the meeting, is not only similar to Hogarth's and in general agreement with it, but also to Philby's report.¹⁷² Third, Philby's telegram to Cox says that he showed Hussain Fakhri's letter, to which there was no sign of a reply from Ibn Sa'ūd.¹⁷³ To explain the discrepancies in Philby's autobiography, it is probable that Philby, writing his autobiography in 1948 when he was living in Saudi Arabia and working as an advisor to Ibn Sa'ūd, wanted to show the reader that Ibn Sa'ūd was innocent of dealing with the enemy. Otherwise, he may have become confused because the meeting with Hussain had been held in 1918, a long time before the writing of the autobiography. In any case, whether or not Philby showed Hussain the copy of the reply by Ibn Sa'ūd to

¹⁷⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.161.

¹⁷¹ Hogarth, 'Report on the Mission to Hussain', 28 January 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

¹⁷² See Bassett's report to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 12 January 1918, TNA, FO, 882/9.

¹⁷³ See Philby's words which are quoted in Cox's telegram addressed to the Foreign Minister and repeated to the Secretary of State for India, 11 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

Fakhri, the ultimate result was that Hussain could not show that Ibn Sa'ūd was in contact with the enemy, which put him in an invidious position.¹⁷⁴

Throughout the negotiations, it can be observed that, while Hussain insisted that Ibn Sa'ūd should acknowledge his sovereignty over all Arabia and that he had Britain's solemn promise, as he thought, to make him a king of all the Arab countries, Philby made it clear to Hussain that Ibn Sa'ūd was an independent ruler, ready to acknowledge Hussain's sovereignty only over the Hejaz, not the Arab world.¹⁷⁵

Hussain also raised the subject of the town of Khurma, another main cause of the dispute between him and Ibn Sa'ūd. He stated that the inhabitants of the town were preparing to attack his people, the al-Buqum tribe. Philby had known of this since one of his conferences with Ibn Sa'ūd; he had seen messengers from the Khurma tribe in Riyadh asking Ibn Sa'ūd for help against the al-Buqum and a general mobilization declared under Hussain's orders. Ibn Sa'ūd replied to them, in Philby's presence: "he [Philby] is an envoy of the British, and assures me that the Sharif will not be allowed to attack you. If he does, defend yourselves and send to me again. I will come to your rescue".¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Hamilton also saw the original of Fakhri's letters when he visited Ibn Sa'ūd in Riyadh; he believed that Ibn Sa'ūd never replied to the Ottoman commander. See: Hamilton 'Notes for the visit to Najd', dated as November 1917, IOR, L/P&S/18/B286.

¹⁷⁵ Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁷⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.161-162. The Khurmah dispute will be discussed in Chapter Five.

It appears that Hussain started to use forceful language and tried to change the subject, turning to discuss the sudden visit of Philby to Hejaz. In his view, Hussain stated, the visit was a great mistake; a Christian man (Philby) should not have ventured to cross his lands, resulting in damage to his prestige and giving a powerful sign to his enemies that he had sold Mecca (the Holy City) to the British.¹⁷⁷ Hussain's claim against Philby is plainly not logical, for several reasons. First, Philby had not even entered the route to Mecca; he had obviously crossed the mountainous country of the Hejaz and then travelled via the coastal plain until he reached Jeddah.¹⁷⁸ Second, if Hussain was rightly angry at Philby's visit and was anxious to protect his prestige and the Holy City, why had he then sent his emissaries to receive and escort Philby, who was about 100 miles from Jeddah? Third, if Hussain was embarrassed by a Christian presence entering Hejaz, why were his sons fighting along with Lawrence in the north of Hejaz and, more important, why he then was receiving several European Agents in Jeddah, a city that lies about 49 miles from Mecca? Hence, it is clear that Hussain was simply trying to sabotage the negotiations not only at the time of Philby's visit but apparently from the very beginning when he refused to allow Storrs to cross his land to reach Ibn Sa'ūd in central Arabia.

¹⁷⁷ Bassett to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 12 January 1918, TNA, FO, 882/9.

¹⁷⁸ To examine the course of Philby's journey to the Hejaz, see Philby, 'Across Arabia', pp.461-463. For this journey, it should be remembered that Philby was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society for crossing Arabia from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. See: Meetings: Royal Geographical Society: Session 1919-1920', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Jul, 1920), pp.78-79.

Although Hussain treated Philby harshly and would not permit him to return to Riyadh overland, Philby seems not to have wished to take him up on this point because he wanted to control the negotiations on Ibn Sa'ūd's affairs. Hussain, however, disappointed not only Philby but also Hogarth by saying that it would be wise not to report Ibn Sa'ūd's crimes before he ended the negotiations that night.¹⁷⁹

On 10 January another night of discussions began. Hussain started by drawing attention to the Sharifi genealogy, in particular his own branch, claiming that his predecessors had considerably outranked other tribes. Then he turned to Arab affairs, apart from Ibn Sa'ūd, and gave biographical sketches of Imam Mohammad al- Idrisi,¹⁸⁰ another British ally and the ruler of Sabia, and of Imam Yahya,¹⁸¹ the ruler of Yemen, who were both fighting the Ottoman forces even before WWI broke out.¹⁸² This suggests that Ibn Sa'ūd was the most considerable thorn in his flesh, enough to make him determined to ignore the relationship between them. Consequently, because of Hussain's digressions and his ignoring the subject of Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby seems to have been quite convinced that there would be no peaceful settlement capable of reducing the tension between

¹⁷⁹ Hogarth, ' Report on the Mission to Hussain ', 28 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/7.

¹⁸⁰ Mohammad Ali al- Idrisi (1876-1923), was the founder of the Idrisi state in Jizan, Asir and the west coast of Yemen. Before the establishment of this state, his father sent him to Cairo where he graduated from al- Azhar University. See his autobiography in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.6, p.303; Ameen al- Rihani, *Moūlk al- Arab* [Kings of Arabs] (Beirut: Dar al- Jil publication, not dated) pp.315-392; Ameen al- Rihani, *Around the coast of Arabia* (London: Constable Ltd., 1930), Chapter II, pp.122-225.

¹⁸¹ Imam Yahya Ibn Mohammad Hamid Al Dain (1869-1948), was the founder of the kingdom of Yemen. He fought the Ottoman forces until 1911, when he gained Ottoman recognition for his regime in the north of Yemen under Ottoman sovereignty. He was assassinated in a rebellion against him in 1948. See Mohammed Zabarah, *Tārīkh al-a'immah al-Zaydiyyah fī al-Yaman ḥattā al-'aṣr al-ḥadīth* [The History of al-Zaydiyyah to the Modern Era] (Cairo: al- Thaqafah Library, not dated), pp.169-171; al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.7, pp.170-171.

¹⁸² Bassett to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 12 January 1918, TNA, FO, 882/9.

Hejaz and Najd. Therefore, Philby raised the subject of his return to Ibn Sa'ūd, but Hussain did not forgive Philby's sudden visit, stating that the visit had been a disaster, which had had an adverse political effect on his regime. In this way, Hussain declared emphatically that Philby should not take a land route out of Hejazi country but should go through India.¹⁸³

It seems that the negotiations broke down and there was no sign that they might ever be concluded. While Philby and other historians have suggested that the reason behind the failure to lessen the animosity between the two rivals was the intransigence and stubbornness of Hussain toward Ibn Sa'ūd,¹⁸⁴ other historians and some British officials in Cairo emphasized that the surprise visit of Philby to Hejaz, his demeanour in the negotiations and his advocacy of Ibn Sa'ūd irritated Hussain and indisputably had an adverse effect on him.¹⁸⁵

In fact, it was not, perhaps, Philby's manner that caused the collapse of the negotiations. The main factors may be judged to be the long history of hostility between Hejaz and Najd that had begun during the early decades of the 19th century,

¹⁸³ Hogarth, 'Report on the Mission to Hussain', 28 January 1918, TNA, FO, 882/7.

¹⁸⁴ Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; al-Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd], p. 215; Hamdi, *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia fi 'hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ūd* [Philby and Saudi Arabia in the ear of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ūd], p.44.

¹⁸⁵ Bassett to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 12 January 1918, TNA, FO, 882/9; Hogarth, 'Report on the Mission to Hussain', 28 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/7; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.255; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.70; Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, p.67; Troeller, *The Birth of Saud i Arabia*, p.89.111; Brown, *Treason in the blood*, p.41.

which resulted in the capture of Hejaz by the Wahhabi Amir in 1803.¹⁸⁶ Another factor in the collapse of the negotiations can be seen in Hussain's political dream to be the king over all the Arab countries, a dream which was non-negotiable, while Ibn Saud in return, was prepared to recognize Hussain's dominion over Hejaz alone, not other parts of Arabia. A further crucial factor that led to the failure of the Hejazi-Najdi to be reconciled was that the competition between the British authorities in Cairo and Baghdad to shape British policy in Arabia may have contributed; the British officials in Cairo were always being encouraged by the Foreign Office. Bassett, for example, was frustrated not only by Philby's manner but also by his insistence on representing the views of the British officials in Baghdad. He stated:

On the whole, the discussions have done more than harm than good, in my opinion. Mr. Philby has had a very difficult part to play, and has been *compelled to press the view of the Iraq administration* upon King Hussain's unwilling ears.¹⁸⁷ [Italics by the author.]

In contrast, Philby's insistence on imposing the support of Ibn Sa'ūd by the Baghdad authorities and opposing the British officials of Cairo, who desired to make Hussain the prominent leader in Arabia, may be considered an additional reason for the collapse of the negotiations. In his letter to Wingate, Hogarth described Philby as follows:

¹⁸⁶ IO, ' Historical memorandum of the Wahabi Amirs ', 26 September 1934, IOR, R/15/1/745; Francis Warden, ' Historical sketches of the Wahabee Tribe of the Arabs from the year 1795 to the year 1818 ', *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol.1. pp. 244-252; Ibn Bisher, '*Unwān al- Majd fī Tārīkh Najd* [The Symbol of Glory in the History of Najd], vol.1, pp.259-263.

¹⁸⁷ Bassett to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 12 January 1918, TNA, FO, 882/9; Wingate to Balfour, 12 January 1918, TNA, FO 371/3883.

You will find Philby full of energy, push and ability. Although he began to learn Arabic only two years ago he speaks it better than nine out of ten who profess the language. But his knowledge of Arabian affairs does not go much beyond what he has seen. He is only thirty-two and having been ten years in the I.C.S., he has not [learned to] ... look at things from any but an Indian and Mesopotamia standpoint.¹⁸⁸

In fact, it seems that Philby was not only following the views of the Iraqi administration, but also that he was aware of the Government of India's view, rejecting any attempt to revive the Caliphate after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸⁹ In his report to Wilson, Philby spoke of his concern for Britain regarding the negative consequences of the Caliphate if Hussain declared himself spiritual leader; it would seriously affect British interests.¹⁹⁰

As peaceful compatibility between Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd was unattainable, Philby, as a leader of the Najdi mission, had to return to Ibn Sa'ūd in Riyadh. Hogarth suggested that Philby should aim to return overland by a different route, crossing south of the line that he had previously taken en route for Hejaz, in order to discover the unknown and untouched lands of the wadis (valleys) of Asir.¹⁹¹ Changing the line of the return journey and choosing a more southerly route perhaps expressed the interest in geography that motivated Philby. However, his ambition was not gratified; it was opposed by Hussain, who forbade Philby, as stated above, to return to Riyadh overland and although Hogarth and Cairo tried several times to persuade Hussain to change his

¹⁸⁸ Hogarth to Wingate, 19 January 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

¹⁸⁹ Regarding the India Government's objection towards the Caliphate, see Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp.61-62.

¹⁹⁰ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁹¹ See Hogarth's observation on Philby's lecture: 'Across Arabia', pp.463-465.

decision, reminding him that Philby's stuff and caravans were awaiting him at Ṭaif, Hussain insisted on Philby's compliance and, to confirm his authority, ordered Philby's baggage to be brought from Ṭaif.¹⁹² As a result, Philby finding his situation unproductive, decided to go with Hogarth to Egypt, sailing in H.M.S. *Hardinge*. They arrived at Cairo on 20 January 1918,¹⁹³ where another round of negotiations awaited Philby.

The meeting of the Cairo Residency

The day after his arrival, Philby attended a meeting held in the Residency in Cairo with Sir Reginald Wingate, the High Commissioner, and some members of the Arab Bureau, such as Hogarth and Major Kinahan Cornwallis.¹⁹⁴ In answer to a question from Wingate, Philby described the general attitude of Arabia, seeking to provide an alternative solution to the hostility between Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd. He suggested telling Hussain that Ibn Sa'ūd would recognise him as King of the Hejaz, but nothing more and that he wanted to be King of Najd, including Ḥail. Philby then pointed out the

¹⁹² Jeddah to Cairo, 6 January 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.; Hogarth, 'Report on the Mission to Hussain', 28 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/7.

¹⁹³ Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁹⁴ Sir Kinahan Cornwallis (1883–1959), was a British diplomat and administrator. After his graduation from Oxford University in 1905 he started extensively learning Arabic until he left Oxford in the following year. Then he started his career by joining the Sudan Civil Service. By the time of the war, Clayton recalled him to Egypt and he became a member of the Arab Bureau. Soon afterwards, he became the Deputy Director of the Arab Bureau under the supervision of Hogarth until 1916, when he succeeded Hogarth in his post as the director of the Cairo Arab Bureau. Between 1941 and 1945 he worked as British Ambassador to Iraq before being appointed as chairman of the Middle East committee in the Foreign Office in 1946, but owing to poor health he retired in the same year. For more accounts, see Stephen Longrigg, 'Iraq and Cornwallis', *The Spectator*, 4 May 1945; Martin Bunton, 'Cornwallis, Sir Kinahan (1883–1959)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 20 March 2016.

Wahhabi respect for Mecca and Madina and said that Ibn Sa'ūd would totally recognise Hussain's superior claim to these two cities.¹⁹⁵

A further comment by Philby is that Ibn Sa'ūd had no intention of expanding his lands beyond Najd, although he was anxious to resolve in his own favour the difficult issue of who should control the Ateibah¹⁹⁶ tribesmen. Although Wingate confessed that there was a conflict of policy between Cairo and Baghdad over the two parties, he treated Hussain as a special case, describing him as the protagonist of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman, whose vital political and military contribution had benefited Britain in its war against its enemies.¹⁹⁷

It was not expected that Philby's proposal for Ibn Sa'ūd's occupation of Ḥail would be appreciated because Hogarth had previously opposed such a suggestion, stating that the occupation would strength Ibn Sa'ūd's power which might become a danger to peace; hence, it was reasonable to keep Ḥail independent.¹⁹⁸ In the meeting, Hogarth asserted that it was difficult to demarcate the Hejazi- Najdi boundary and each party should show good will, suggesting coordination as a tool to unify the policy in Arabia.¹⁹⁹

Hence, it is quite evident that Philby was the only official who represented the authority of Baghdad, which was, in fact, overwhelmed by the views of the Cairo

¹⁹⁵ ' Private Note of meeting held at The Residency ', Cairo, 21 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

¹⁹⁶ 'Ateibah is regarded as the second most powerful tribe in the interior of Najd and most of its branches occupy the eastern part of Hejaz. See Arab Bureau, 'Handbook of Hejaz ', 26 February 1917, IOR, L/PS/20/E81.

¹⁹⁷ ' Private Note of meeting held at The Residency ', Cairo, 21 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

¹⁹⁸ Hogarth's telegram to Wingate, 31 December 1917, TNA, FO 882/8.

¹⁹⁹ Note by Hogarth, not dated, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2; ' Private Note of meeting held at The Residency ', Cairo, 21 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

authorities, who were totally on the side of Hussain. Therefore, in order to make the views of the authorities in Baghdad prevail, Philby again asserted the importance of occupying Ḥail, which would eliminate the Ottoman presence in the territory. However, Cairo's view was that the elimination of Ḥail was now of little importance, owing to the British victories in Palestine, and therefore it would not be of much use for Ibn Sa'ūd to capture Ḥail; it would merely increase his power and upset the present balance of power with Hussain.²⁰⁰

It seems that Hogarth not only sought to strengthen Hussain's position against his rival, Ibn Sa'ūd, but also attempted to belittle Philby's persuasive arguments by stating that Philby's views were "not a judge's appreciation of the available evidence, but the ex-parte pleading of an advocate for a client".²⁰¹ Furthermore, while Hogarth praised Philby for his ability in spoken Arabic, he suggested that Philby had had only ten years in the service, lacked experience and always looked at things from an Indian standpoint. Hogarth also described Philby as a man who alone believed that Ibn Sa'ūd was a hero against Hussain, the "Cairo Champion".²⁰² Consequently, it may be inferred from the controversy over British policy in Cairo and Baghdad and the absence of a sincere desire to find a logical solution that the failure to reduce the tension further inflamed the subsequent conflict in Arabia between Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd.

²⁰⁰ ' Private Note of meeting held at The Residency ', Cairo, 21 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

²⁰¹ Note by Hogarth, not dated, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

²⁰² Hogarth to Wingate, 19 January 1918, *ibid.*

Having spent more than 20 days in Egypt, Philby left Cairo on 16 February 1918 and took the long route to Basra, via Suez, Karachi and Bombay. He disembarked on 24 March 1918.²⁰³ At this point the first part of Philby's mission may be assumed to have ended. The second part started in March 1918, when he was asked to return to Arabia to discuss with Ibn Sa'ūd an active offensive against Ibn Rashid in Ḥail,²⁰⁴ which is described in the following chapter.

Overview

The chapter demonstrated that the first British official to enter into direct negotiations with the Wahhabis in central Arabia was Colonel Lewis Pelly in 1865. It showed that there was no treaty signed between Najd and Britain and Philby may have been wrong to have asserted that the negotiations had culminated in one. During his exile, Ibn Sa'ūd perceived that the only power likely to assist him in his political project was Britain, not the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, more than a decade after he captured Riyadh in 1902, he was struggling for British assistance to protect him but the British Government had no interest in this part of Arabia and did not want to disturb its relations with Constantinople. Therefore, it exercised its traditional policy of non-intervention in the affairs of Najd. Although the British Government refused to enter into formal relations with Ibn Sa'ūd, it was obvious that Shakespear's efforts, with Cox, to support Ibn Sa'ūd were the main way of drawing attention to the importance and

²⁰³ Philby, 'Report on Najd mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

²⁰⁴ Cox to GI, 3 March 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

strength of Ibn Sa'ūd's position in Arabia. Shakespear probably helped the capture of Ḥasa by providing Ibn Sa'ūd with important information regarding the weak position of the Ottoman forces in Europe and the Middle East. However, the turning point for the two parties occurred at the beginning of WWI, when Britain realized that its interests in the Gulf were in danger due to the attitude of the Ottoman Empire, which had entered the war on the side of Germany. Consequently, through the efforts of Cox and Shakespear, Britain concluded a treaty in 1915 which ended the British isolation from the rulers of central Arabia and enabled Britain to take complete control until the Jeddah treaty, which was signed in 1927, providing Ibn Sa'ūd with complete independence. The chapter found that the reason behind the delay in sending another officer to Ibn Sa'ūd after Shakespear's death was probably not the shortage of suitable political officers; the main reason for the delay was that Shakespear's death itself was regarded as a serious disaster.

The chapter revealed that Philby's appointment to the leadership of the Najd mission was made for several reasons. To begin with, the political dispute between Cox's staff regarding the future of Iraq made Cox change his decision about this post from Hamilton to Philby. Second, the political aspiration of Wilson to be Cox's assistant may be regarded as a further inducement to Cox to let Philby to head the Najdi mission so as to leave the place open for Wilson.

The chapter found that Marlowe's allegation about the deal between Philby and Wilson – that it was made before September 1917 - is likely to be inaccurate for two main reasons. To begin with, the documentary evidence (the official telegram), that Marlowe points to, contains the only ratification of Wilson's appointment in Baghdad. Second, in his book, Philby stated that the political understanding was with Wilson, who coveted Philby's post. Since Cox agreed to transfer Wilson from Basra to Baghdad on 31 August 1917 it would have been difficult for Wilson to conclude a political bargain at a time when he was still in Basra. Therefore, it can be said that Marlowe's claim seems less than fair in describing Philby's account of this incident as entirely incorrect.

The chapter answered the question of the motivation behind Philby's keenness to head the mission. Philby's desire to pursue adventure, fame and exploration was influenced by the example of British officials who had travelled all over Arabia. Philby may have believed that he was no less distinguished than these and he desired to have his name placed among them.

The chapter demonstrated that the first political act that Philby took in his mission was his communication with Saud Ibn Sabhān, who became a British ally. It provided evidence that Philby was able to reinforce Ibn Sabhān's relations with Britain and resulted in keeping the latter among the Allies, distancing him from any rapprochement with his cousin, Ibn Rashid.

The chapter concluded that the safety of Philby's journey was a vital issue for Ibn Sa'ūd, for two principal reasons. First, if the mission was endangered by any Wahhabi raids, it would reflect on Ibn Sa'ūd's reputation and his boast of having complete control over his territories. Second, if there had been any danger, the British support to Ibn Sa'ūd might have diminished. The evidence for this assumption is that there was a slight hiatus in relations between Ibn Sa'ūd and Britain after the death of Shakespear, who was killed fighting on the side of Ibn Sa'ūd in the battle of Jarrab.

The chapter suggested that the claim that Philby was mainly responsible for the conflict between him and Hamilton regarding the leadership of the mission is likely not to be accurate. The reason behind this slur on Philby is perhaps related to the public criticism that Philby tended to subject his country to, but this does not mean that Philby was always wrong or was the main cause of the clash with Hamilton. One reason is that Hamilton was more experienced than Philby, but seems to have believed that he was unfairly treated in not being given the honour of leading the mission, which put him into a state of frustration and provoked the clash. Another reason is that the official decision to change the leadership from Hamilton to Philby was made by Cox and any reproach for it should lie with him.

The chapter illustrated that Silverfarb's assumption is probably incorrect: that the financial aid and military support were the first items that the mission discussed with Ibn Sa'ūd. As Hamilton did not wish to continue the negotiations in Najd, it was decided

that the first issue to be examined, before Hamilton left Riyadh and went to Kuwait, would be the relationship between Najd and Kuwait.

The chapter suggested that Philby was successful in the first part of his mission. Indeed, Ibn Sa'ūd's apparent belief that Britain was the strongest power to depend on may not have been the only factor that eased Philby's mission. It was helped also by his capability, awareness and honest desire to be integrated into the Arab community; these were further factors that led to the total compatibility between the two men, which reinforced the Anglo- Najdi relations throughout the war.

The chapter found that the accusation that Philby distorted Cox's instructions by presenting the Ḥail invasion as a prime objective instead of clearing the atmosphere between Hejaz and Najd, may not be persuasive. Philby's argument was based on one consideration, that the invasion of Ḥail would distract Ibn Sa'ūd from acts of aggression against Hussain and thus lead to reconciliation between Hejaz and Najd. In addition, Philby, with his persuasive arguments and full explanation to Ibn Sa'ūd about Hussain's status in the war, was able to obtain a solemn promise from Ibn Sa'ūd that he would not attack Hussain, which prevented any outbreak between Hejaz and Najd, at least during the war.

The chapter showed that Philby's visit to Hejaz may not only be regarded as part of Philby's intention to go through the eastern region of Arabia to the west; there was also a vital political factor behind his venture. It was an attempt to show the power of

Ibn Sa'ūd who totally controlled the territories between him and Hussain. In addition, those historians who criticise Philby for exceeding Cox's instruction by going to Hejaz must concede the evidence that Cox was very pleased by Philby's visit, which provided him with the opportunity to limit all the interference from the Cairo officials in Arab affairs, and mainly in the east which was under Cox's administration. Moreover, a further advantage of Philby's visit is the scientific information about his journey that it yielded, but also its political benefit for Baghdad and Cairo. It let them see the specific conditions in Arabia and the tribal controversy between Najd and Hejaz. Moreover, the journey furnished Philby with all the information he needed to present Ibn Sa'ūd's demands in the political talks that occurred in Jeddah later on.

In the negotiation that took place in Jeddah, the chapter concluded that Philby showed a remarkable knowledge of the dispute between Hejaz and Najd and provided persuasive responses to Hussain's accusations against Ibn Sa'ūd. Although Philby stated in his telegram to Cox and in his report to Wilson that Ibn Sa'ūd did not answer the letters of the Ottoman commander, Fakhri Pasha, Philby, three decades later, mentioned in his autobiography that Ibn Sa'ūd had replied to the commander, refusing his request to support him against the Allied. This implies that Philby's report was more accurate than his autobiography, according to the essential evidence that Hogarth's and Bassett's reports endorse Philby's report, all written at the time. The contradiction between Philby's report and his autobiography occurs perhaps because Philby, wanted, in his book, to emphasize that Ibn Sa'ūd had had no contact with the enemy or Philby

may have become confused in the long interval between 1918, when the incident occurred and 1948, when he wrote his autobiography. Whether Philby provided Hussain with the copy of Ibn Sa'ūd's reply to Fakhri or not, the outcome was that Hussain failed to substantiate his accusation that Ibn Sa'ūd had communicated with the enemy.

The chapter found that Hussain's allegation that Philby, as a Christian, damaged Hussain's status when he crossed the Hejazi lands and gave a sign to the enemy by his visit that Hussain had sold the holy places to Britain seems not to be logical, for a number of reasons. First, Philby avoided the whole route to Mecca. Second, Hussain's allegation contradicts his order that Philby should be received and brought to Jeddah. Third, if Hussain was embarrassed by a Christian's visit to the Hejaz territories why was he at the time receiving a great many European Agents in the Hejaz? Therefore, it is plain that Hussain's allegation had only one intention: to damage the negotiations and avoid a peaceful settlement with Ibn Sa'ūd.

Finally, the failure to reduce the tension between Husain and Ibn Sa'ūd could not have resulted from Philby's visit nor from his behaviour in the negotiations, as some historians have misleadingly suggested. The long history of enmity between the two tribal families, dating back to the early decades of the 19th century, was one of the most important reasons for the continuing conflict between them. Hussain's insistence on being acknowledged the king of the Arab countries and ignoring the sovereignty of

the other Arab leaders may have led to the failure of the negotiations. Furthermore, the different attitudes to designing the policy in Arabia and the competing ambitions between the British authorities in Cairo and Baghdad may also be considered significant in the fuelling of the conflict and thus inflaming the hostility between Hejaz and Najd.

The next chapter focuses on Philby's efforts to promote the common cause throughout the second part of his mission to Najd.

CHAPTER FOUR

PHILBY'S EFFORTS IN THE COMMON CAUSE: THE SECOND PART OF THE NAJDI MISSION, 1918

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on three historical topics that developed in Arabia during WWI: the issue of the Ajman tribe, the question of the blockade and the invasion of Ḥail. The chapter presents a brief history of the relations between the Ajman tribe and Ibn Sa'ūd and then examines the main reasons that led to the Ajman revolt against the former. It first asks why Philby resolved the Ajman issue before anything else and examines the arrangements that he prepared in order to resolve this issue and what the advantages of resolving it would contribute to the Allied cause. It focusses on Philby's efforts in connection with the blockade and what arrangements he made to control the smuggling of goods in order to keep them out of enemy hands. It goes on to show how he persuaded Ibn Sa'ūd to comply with the policy of the blockade and the fruitful outcomes of Philby's efforts in this regard. It also deals with Philby's efforts during the invasion of Ḥail and asks why he was so keen to impose this target and what arguments he advanced in support of Ibn Sa'ūd, although the British authorities in Cairo, India and London were opposed to his action.

The Ajman revolt

During WWI Ibn Sa'ūd and Mūbark, the ruler of Kuwait, joined the British Government in its war against the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, according to Joseph Kostiner, Cox regarded them as the most important East Arabian leaders capable of taking offensive action against the Ottomans and their ally in central Arabia, Ibn Rashid.¹ However, it

¹ Joseph Kostiner, ' Saudi Arabian's Territorial Expansion: The Case of Kuwait 1916-1921', *Die welt des Islam*, New Series, vol.33, issue 2 (November, 1993), p.222.

appears that the Ajman revolt soured Saudi-Kuwaiti relations, even though Britain tried to relax the resulting tension.

The causes of the Ajman revolt

To comprehend precisely the issue of the Ajman tribe and the nature of the problem, a brief historical account is needed regarding the relations between this tribe and Ibn Sa'ūd. Most of the Ajman tribe inhabited East Arabia and when Ibn Sa'ūd captured Ḥasa in 1913, Ajman fell under his rule.² In January 1915, Ibn Sa'ūd, accompanied by Shakespear, faced their enemy, Ibn Rashid, in what was called the battle of Jarrab. According to the Arabic sources and British documents, the Ajman withdrew from the battlefield, ensuring the defeat of Ibn Sa'ūd as well as the death of Shakespear.³

It is obvious that the Ajman revolt raised serious issues. The question that should be asked is why the leaders of Ajman tribes betrayed Ibn Sa'ūd by deserting him in this battle and why they determined to fight him thereafter. The answer can probably be summed up under one major point.

During the Ottoman occupation before Ibn Sa'ūd's conquest of the eastern region of Arabia, the Ajman, thanks to the Ottoman authorities in Ḥasa, had enjoyed certain

² Cox to GI, 26 May 1913, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, p. 221; Memorandum entitled 'The Relation[ship] with Ibn Sa'ūd', written by Cox to the Arab Bureau in Cairo, 12 January 1917, TNA, FO 371/3044; Goldberg, 'Hasa Occupation', pp. 21-29

³ Ibn Eisā, *Tārīkh Ibn Eisā* [The History of Ibn Eisā] (Dar al-āsemah: Riyadh, 1999), p.301; Hamilton, 'Report of the visit to Najd,' 19 to 28 December 1917, IOR, R/15/5/103; Mūkhtār, *Tārīkh al- Māmlākah al- arabiahal- Sū'dīah* [The History of Saudi Arabia], pp.164-165. Concerning the death of Shakespear, see: Ibn Sa'ūd to Cox, 4 February 1915, TNA, FO 371/2479; Cox to GI, 16 February 1915, IOR, L/P&S/10/387; Khalid Ibn Bilal's report, 20 May 1915, IOR, R/15/2/31.

privileges such as the tolls from the traders and pilgrim caravans which crossed the peninsula.⁴ But in order to impose stability in his territories Ibn Sa'ūd had abolished this perquisite. Consequently, the Ajman continued to threaten this area and the flank of Ibn Sa'ūd's forces in order to drive Ibn Sa'ūd himself out of Ḥasa.⁵

For their aggressive actions and their perfidious desertion at the battle of Jarrab, Ibn Sa'ūd, in June 1915, prepared a military expedition against them. Comparing their few fighters to Ibn Sa'ūd's forces, the Ajman asked for a truce, which was, in fact, appreciated by Ibn Sa'ūd. However, he imposed one condition: that they should meet the next day to arrange a permanent peace settlement.⁶ Then Ibn Sa'ūd's favourite younger brother, Sa'd,⁷ who was absent when the armistice was arranged, rejected the agreement and insisted on a sudden attack against the tribesmen. Under this pressure from Sa'd, Ibn Sa'ūd acquiesced in the resumption of fighting. Despite their few warriors, the Ajman determined to fight to the death and their stubborn resistance not only defeated Ibn Sa'ūd, who was wounded, but also killed his brother Sa'd in the

⁴ Ḍidāidan Ibn Ḥithlain, the leader of the Ajman tribe, announced that he would ally his people with the Ottoman army in order to take revenge against Ibn Sa'ūd. See his letter to the Ottoman army commander, 12 January 1916, IOR, R/15/5/25. In fact, the enmity of Ibn Sa'ūd and Ajman date back to the late 19th century when they waged a relentless war against Imam Abdullah Ibn Faiṣal, the uncle of Ibn Sa'ūd. See Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.13.

⁵ Cox to the Arab Bureau in Cairo, 12 January 1917, TNA, FO 371/3044.

⁶ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁷ Sa'd Ibn Abdulrahman Ibn Fisal (1890-1915), was Ibn Sa'ūd's sibling. He was famous for his courage. For more information see al- Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd], pp.172-173, 203; Howarth, *The Desert King*, pp.73, 92-93; Hafiz Wāhbāh, *Jazīrat al-'Arab fī al-qarn al-'ishriīn* [Arabian Peninsula in the 20th century] (Cairo: Dar al- Afaq Publication, 1956), pp.205,243.

battle called Kanzan.⁸ Soon after, they escaped to Kuwait where Shaikh Mūbark gave them refuge. Jabir,⁹ who had succeeded his father Mūbark, was willing to have good relations with Ibn Sa'ūd and placated him by ejecting the Ajman from the Kuwaiti territory to the south-west of Iraq.¹⁰

In these unsettled conditions, which were not in favour of Britain's alliance with the Arab leaders to help them against their common enemy, Cox met with Ibn Sa'ūd and Jabir in November 1916 in Basra. One of the outcomes of this meeting was a truce between Ibn Sa'ūd and the Ajman which was intended to last for the duration of the war against the Ottoman Empire: Ibn Sa'ūd promised not to molest the Ajman in their new lands; the Ajman, in return, undertook to abstain from molesting Ibn Sa'ūd's tribes.¹¹ However, this solution did not last long, owing to the resumption of raids by the Ajman in the East and the interior of Ibn Sa'ūd's territories; some of them even made contact with Ibn Rashid, the enemy of the allies.¹²

It seems that the political disagreements between Ibn Sa'ūd and Salim, who succeeded his brother Jabir in February 1917, made the issue of the Ajman more difficult. For one

⁸ Armstrong, *Lord of Arabia*, p.100 et seq; Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi Books, 1998), p.239. Troeller in his book (*The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, pp.92-93) suggests that the battle occurred in 1916. However, the truth is that the battle took place in the summer of 1915, as the British documents and Arabic sources make clear. See T. Keyes' telegram to Cox, 25 July 1915, IOR, R/15/5/25; Mūkhtār, *Tārīkh al- Māmlākah al- arabiahal- Sū'diah* [The History of Saudi Arabia], p.167.

⁹ Jabir Ibn Mūbark al- Sūbah (1860-1917) was the eighth leader of Kuwait. Despite the shortness of his regime, he made some notable economic reforms. See his autobiography in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.2, p.104; al- Rashid, *Tārīkh Kuwait*, [The History of Kuwait] pp.230-232.

¹⁰ William Grey to the Political Resident in the Gulf, 2 February 1916, IOR, R/15/5/25; Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, p.239.

¹¹ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹² Percy Gordon Loch to Cox, 4 April 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33.; 'The question of Ajman ', not dated, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

thing, Ibn Sa'ūd started to levy taxes on the al-'wazim,¹³ who were essentially a Kuwaiti tribe, and persuaded them to settle in his territories.¹⁴ In contrast, Salim's reply to this behaviour was to provide protection not only to the Ajman rebels but also to the Shammari¹⁵ tribes.¹⁶

Philby's arrangements to resolve the Ajman issue

Cox thought that it would be wise to despatch a British mission to Ibn Sa'ūd in order to reduce the tension between the British allies and decided that Philby had to be the leader of this mission.¹⁷ It was one of the objectives of the British mission to Najd, to comply with Philby's wish and induce Ibn Sa'ūd to respond aggressively to the hostile action on the part of Ibn Rashid, an ally of the Ottomans. However, Ibn Sa'ūd, as expected, asserted to Philby that he could not do so while the Ajman tribespeople were sheltering in Kuwaiti territory to the rear of the Najdi forces and were a danger to them. Indeed, Philby and Hamilton, the Political Agent in Kuwait, generally agreed with Ibn Sa'ūd but Philby, given his desire to solve the Ajman issue, pointed out that it was not logical to expand the number of antagonists, in particular at this important

¹³ The 'wazim are one of the most important tribes, which had been settled in Kuwait since time immemorial. The first mention of the tribe dates back to the 15th century when the Amir Zamel al- Eqili invaded them. In the time of Shaikh Mūbark, the 'wazim formed a major pillar of his army. See, Mohammed al-Taib, *Mu'jam al-qbaail al- Arabiah* [The Dictionary of Arabic tribes] (Cairo: Dar al- Feker Publication, 1996), vol.2, pp.258-459; Dickson, *Kuwait and her neighbours*, p. 40 et seq.

¹⁴ Hamilton's memorandum, 2 April 1918, IOR, R/15/1/513.

¹⁵ The land of the Shammari tribe extended from Saud Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq to Syria. It consisted of several clans which formed their own Shaikhdom. See Khāhāl, *Mu'jam qabil al- Arab* [Dictionary of Arab Tribe], vol.2 pp.608-610.

¹⁶ Ibn Sa'ūd to Cox, 20 March 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33; Mūkhtār, *Tārīkh al- Māmlākah al- arabiah al- Sū'diah* [The History of Saudi Arabia], p.172

¹⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp. 142-143; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.50-51.

moment of the war. Therefore, Philby and Ibn Sa'ūd, in the end, came to an agreement

on the following actions:

- 1- The Ajman should leave Kuwait from the north and move towards Iraq where they would join Shaikh Fahad Ibn Hadhdal, an ally of the British and the chief of the section of the 'Nzāzāh tribe called the Amarat. From this point, the Ajmans' friendliness could be shown by their loyalty to the Allied cause or at least by their neutrality in the war.
- 2- The leaders of the Ajman should declare officially their obedience to Ibn Sa'ūd who, in response, should forgive their previous offensive on condition that they remained in the new region that Ibn Sa'ūd would define and did not cause trouble.
- 3- If the Ajman tribe rejected both of these options, they must remove themselves from any British occupied territory or Kuwaiti province and in this case they would be considered enemies.¹⁸

From the above, it is plain that Philby played a crucial role in the resolution of the Ajman issue. He was of course aware that the primary objective of these conditions was to remove the Ajman tribe from Kuwaiti territory. If he succeeded in persuading them, his achievement would not only reduce the tension between Ibn Sa'ūd and the ruler of Kuwait but would also give Ibn Sa'ūd the chance to act against Ibn Rashid, the objective that he had long been pursuing.

¹⁸ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

Thus, on 2 December 1917, Philby telegraphed Cox and informed him of the new arrangements, stating that Colonel Hamilton, the Political Agent in Kuwait, consented to this procedure and would deliver the conditions of the agreement to the Ajman tribe. Consequently, after his arrival to Kuwait, Hamilton met Shaikh Salim and ʿĪdāidan Ibn Ḥithlain,¹⁹ the leaders of the Ajman chiefs, and agreed to sign the treaty that provided asylum for the tribe in the south-west of Iraq on the following terms:

- 1- The paramount chief of the Ajman should bring all his people and settle them in the region of Zubair or any other part of the occupied territories.
- 2- The Ajman tribe must abstain from crossing the borders of Kuwait.
- 3- The Shaikhs of the Ajman would receive a substantial subsidy when they signed the agreement and henceforward would be considered under British protection like other tribes such as the Dhafir.²⁰

However, Philby suggested that, in spite of signing the treaty, the Ajman did not seem to be keeping their side of the agreement. They were delaying their departure from Kuwait to Zubair and, at the same time, Salim was not making any effort to force them

¹⁹ ʿĪdāidan Ibn Ḥithlain was the chief of Ajman tribe. After his conciliation with Ibn Saʿūd, ʿĪdāidan became one of the leaders of Ikhwan, the religious people who helped Ibn Saʿūd to unify the country. However, when the Ikhwan revolt broke out, ʿĪdāidan joined the rebel leader of Ikhwan but he was killed on 1st May 1925. See Wāhbāh, *Jazīrat al-ʿArab fī al-qarn al-ʿishriīn* [Arabia Peninsula in the 20th century], p.297; Dickson, *Kuwait and her neighbours*, pp.300-306; John Habib, *Ibn Saʿūd 's warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and their role in the creation of the Saudi kingdom 1910-1930* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), p.70, et seq.

²⁰ 'The British-Ajman Treaty ', 4 March 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/2. It seems that Britain exercised to put some pressure on Salim to conclude this treaty and he therefore sent a letter to Ibn Saʿūd that he made his order to evacuate the Ajman tribes. See his letter to Ibn Saʿūd, 16 April 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2/1. Dhafir is the tribe which nowadays inhabits in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq. See Khāhālḥ, *Muʿjam qabīl al- Arab* [Dictionary of Arab Tribe], vol.2 pp.669; al- Taib, *Muʿjam al-qabāil al- Arabiah* [The Dictionary of Arabic Tribes], vol.3.p. 507 et seq.

to leave his territory.²¹ Seeing their hesitation, Ibn Sa'ūd announced his objection and sent constant letters complaining of the Ajman presence in Kuwait. Philby, in return, insisted on communicating with the Political Agent in Kuwait and the result was the eviction of the Ajman from Kuwait to a point about 20 miles south of Şafwan.²² Although Philby had made a major effort not only to strengthen the common cause but also for the sake of Ibn Sa'ūd who was struggling to contain the Ajman revolt, it seems that the Ajman were not satisfied with the agreement that they had been forced to sign. In evidence of this, they started to raid the interior lands of Ibn Sa'ūd. For instance, they attacked the camps of the Subai²³ and Muţair,²⁴ both tribes of Ibn Sa'ūd, using the province of Kuwait as a springboard for their offensive.²⁵

Despite the unsettled conditions in Arabia, Philby was able to persuade Ibn Sa'ūd not to take revenge for the Ajman provocation but to focus on preparing a military expedition against Ibn Rashid, their Ottoman ally. In addition, Philby suggested to Ibn Sa'ūd that he take hostages from the Ajman in order to forestall any attempt from them to be

²¹ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

²² Percy Gordon Loch to Philby, 7 May 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2/1.

²³ The Subai tribe lives in central Arabia. This tribe showed complete loyalty not only to Ibn Sa'ūd but also to his ancestors during the first and second Saudi States in the 19th century. See al-Taib, *Mu'jam al-qbaail al- Arabiah* [The Dictionary of Arabic Tribes], vol.3.p. 93 et seq.

²⁴ The Muţair may be considered one of the biggest tribes in Saudi Arabia. It extended from Madina, in the west, to Kuwait. It was obvious that the Muţair with other tribes were the essential factor in helping Ibn Sa'ūd to control the north and the east of Arabia. See al-Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd], pp.219-231,249-255; al- Taib, *Mu'jam al-qbaail al- Arabiah* [The Dictionary of Arabic Tribes], vol.3.pp. 1-92 et seq.

²⁵ Regarding the Ajman raids on Ibn Sa'ūd 's tribes, see the Subai tribes' letter to Ibn Sa'ūd , 1 August 1918,MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/2; Ibn Sa'ūd to Salim, 12 September 1918,*Philby collection* ,Ibid.

hostile, but his suggestion seemed to be ineffective or impractical.²⁶ However, Philby did not lose hope of a resolution. He reported that the Ajman were raiding Ibn Sa'ūd's tribal territory under the protection of the 'wazim tribes who belonged to Kuwait and that their ruler, Salim, was responsible for them. He also suggested that Salim should be warned of future raids by the Ajman which crossed his territory, and that serious action would be taken against the leader of the wazim.²⁷ The Political Agent in Kuwait recommended despatching "not less than half a Battalion and a Squadron of Cavalry to Kuwait".²⁸ It is evident that Philby played an essential role by expressing an opinion in favour of Ibn Sa'ūd. His efforts not only resulted in warning Salim but also led to the following British announcement of actions to be taken against the Ajman tribe:

- 1- The stoppage of the Ajman subsidies if they continued their raids or entered the local markets.
- 2- A free hand for Ibn Sa'ūd in facing the Ajman tribe, on condition that the railway would be safe.²⁹

It can be inferred from this that the Ajman tribe could do nothing but obey these orders; in the event, they remained quiet and did not constitute much of a threat against Ibn Sa'ūd, especially after they had been expelled from Kuwait to the south of

²⁶ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

²⁷ Philby to Loch, 18 July 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

²⁸ Loch's comments on Philby's telegram, 18 August 1918, *ibid*.

²⁹ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; anonymous to Philby, 22 September 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.110.

Iraq. The British authority in Kuwait accepted Philby's proposal and sent him the following:

They [the Ajman] have been warned that if raids continue their small subsidy will be finally discontinued. Beyond this no other action is at present contemplated. Ibn Saud is therefore at liberty so far as we concerned to take action against the Ajman.³⁰

From the above, it may be noted that Philby achieved much, not only regarding the stability of Ibn Sa'ūd's territory but also for Britain, in order to focus all effort in the common cause of fighting the Ottoman Empire and its allies.

The question of the blockade

After the Arab Revolt was announced in June 1916, the British organized naval blockades in both the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea ports, especially in Kuwait and Hejaz. Although the Red Sea blockade was eased owing to the progress of the revolt, the Gulf blockage remained until 1918 in order to cut the supply lines of the Ottomans and Ibn Rashid in Iraq and Syria.³¹ In Central Arabia there were two main routes of egress towards the north: the Wadi Rummah, which began in Qasim and pointed north-eastwards to Basra, and the Wadi Sirhan, which started at al-Jauf and pointed north-westwards to Amman in Transjordan.³²

³⁰ Political Agency, in Kuwait, to Philby, 22 September 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

³¹ Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, pp.10, 15; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.102. Regarding the removal of Ajman, see Loch to Philby, 7 May 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

³² Arnold Toynbee, *International Affairs, Survey of International Affairs 1925*(London: Milford, Oxford University Press, 1927), vol.1, p.329.

The blockade was planned to cover all the territories in the northern area as well as the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula. This required the full cooperation of Ibn Sa'ūd, Britain's ally in Arabia, who was asked to prevent the infiltration of supplies to the enemy across his territories, and of Salim, the ruler of Kuwait, whose task was to deny the enemy any chance of accessing the Kuwaiti market.³³

However, Armstrong and other historians claim that Ibn Sa'ūd took a position of neutrality during the war, as a wise policy for his country, and would not let himself be exploited by the English or by any foreigners for their own interests.³⁴ In addition, Ṭālāl al-Ṭurifi suggests, in his article, that Ibn Sa'ūd was not inclined to implement the British policy, in particular regarding the imposition of a blockade, since putting an embargo of goods caused serious resentment among his people.³⁵ Such claims seem not to be logical, however, for it is clear that Ibn Sa'ūd was in fact involved in the war, since he had signed a treaty with Britain in 1915 and was thus bound to take the side of the British Empire.

³³ Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, pp.10, 15; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.102.; Farah al-Nakib, 'The Lost "Two-Thirds": Kuwait's Territorial Decline between 1913 and 1922', *Journal of Arabian Studies*, vol.2, no.1, (January, 2012), p.28.

³⁴ Armstrong, *Lord of Arabia*, p.112-113; Mūkhtār, *Tārīkh al- Māmlākah al- arabiahal- Sū'diah*[The History of Saudi Arabia],p.47; al- Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd] , p.132; al-Zerekly,*al-Wajīz fī sīrat al-Malik Abdul Aziz*[The Biography of King Abdul Aziz] (Beirut: Dar al-'ilm,1972),p.68

³⁵ Ṭālāl al- Ṭurifi, '*al-awḍā' al-eqtiṣādiah fi Ḥail khelal al- ḥarb al-'alamiah al- ūlā'* [The Economic Condition of Ḥail during the First World War], *al- Dir'iyah*, no.15 (Jan. 2014), p.216.

It is clear that the treaty put Ibn Sa'ūd under British protection, the principal purpose of which for Britain was to "secure Ibn Sa'ūd's allegiance for participation in the war".³⁶ Moreover, in 1916, after the treaty, Ibn Sa'ūd was given Rs 300,000 by Britain,³⁷ so he must have been in need of British assistance and not in a position to refuse any request. Furthermore, before Philby's arrival in Najd, Ibn Sa'ūd suggested that one of the strategies to defeat Ibn Rashid, the enemy of the Allied cause, was to impose a blockade against him.³⁸ Therefore, it can be argued that by the time Philby arrived, Ibn Sa'ūd was surrounded by British officials from the Persian Gulf to Iraq; he would, therefore, have had no chance to maintain his suzerainty without participating in the war and could not have rejected Philby's proposal to mount a blockade. As can be seen in the following paragraphs, Ibn Sa'ūd made a great effort to serve British interests, in particular when it came to supporting the blockade under Philby's instructions.

Although the borders between Central Arabia and Iraq were largely secured,³⁹ Kuwait, during the life of the blockade, had obviously become responsible for a leakage of supplies to the enemy. It was described as a territory of monopolism, making big profits. In contrast, Qasim, the city of Ibn Sa'ūd, which had an important overland trade

³⁶ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.90.

³⁷ Terence Keyes's memorandum, 27 January 1916, IOR, R/15/2/32.

³⁸ See Ibn Sa'ūd's letter to Cox, 3 June 1917, TNA, FO 371/ 3057.

³⁹ In Zubair, in the south-west of Iraq, the Baghdad authorities assigned local Shaikhs, such as Ḥamūd Ibn Suweïṭ, a British ally, to monitor the smugglers between Basra and Nasiriya, in the south of Iraq, and to prevent these smugglers from entering the Iraqi markets. See a report on Ḥamūd Ibn Suweïṭ, written by the political Agent of Zubair, 3 November 1917, MECA, *Philby collection* B.15/2.

function, was “profiting by the enjoyment of corresponding advantages as a distributing centre”.⁴⁰

Philby’s contribution to the imposition of the blockade

Before Philby’s arrival in central Arabia, the blockade was decisively contravened at the end of September 1917. Hamilton, the Political Agent in Kuwait, set off in pursuit of a caravan of 3000 enemy camels which had come from Kuwaiti territory to obtain dates and rice and was now heading for Qasim. The caravan was led by two Shaikhs of the Sinjara, a section of the Shammari tribe which had seceded from Ibn Rashid, the Amir of Ḥail, and joined Ibn Sa’ūd.⁴¹ They were holding a letter of safe-conduct signed by Tūrki,⁴² Ibn Sa’ūd’s son. Tūrki’s function was not only to engage in military action against Ibn Rashid but also to be responsible for obstructing any leakage of supplies to the enemy.⁴³ In a meeting in Qasim, Tūrki explained to Hamilton that the letter that he had supplied to the caravan was simply a safe conduct for a few Shammari crossing Ibn Sa’ūd’s lands and not a device for supplying goods to the enemy.⁴⁴ Regarding the responsibility for the smuggling, Philby pointed out that Ibn Sa’ūd had admitted that the caravan had reached the enemy lines and had accused Salim of being enmeshed in contraband business yielding a huge profit. In addition, Philby conveyed to the British

⁴⁰ Philby, ‘Report on the Najd Mission’, 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁴¹ Cox to the Secretary of State for India, 21st October 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2; Hamilton’s report on situation of Kuwait, not dated, IOR/R/15/2/71.

⁴² Tūrki (1900-1919) was the eldest son of Ibn Sa’ūd. He and two of his brothers died in the epidemic of so-called ‘Spanish influenza’ that spread over Arabia in 1918-1919. See Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p.277; Armstrong, *Lord of Arabia*, pp.136, 139.

⁴³ Cox to GI, 12 November 1917, TNA, FO 371/3057.

⁴⁴ Kuwait to Baghdad, 10 November 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

authorities in Kuwait Ibn Sa'ūd's belief that some of the Najdi people were also to a certain extent embroiled, but the bulk of the smuggling was done directly from Kuwait.⁴⁵ Cox also blamed Salim, the ruler of Kuwait, for the smuggling and asserted that the latter had given permission for the caravan to load up and leave Kuwait before receiving a licence from Hamilton, the Political Agent there.⁴⁶

Although the British authorities in Baghdad decided to prevent the Shammar tribes, Ottoman allies, from reaching their usual marketplaces in central Iraq, the only gate through which these tribes could bring food for themselves and other enemies was in Kuwait.⁴⁷ Philby evidently learned about the smugglers' methods and more importantly he realized that the Shammar tribes were smuggling goods via the two main routes in Central Arabia that crossed Ibn Sa'ūd's territories on their way to Iraq and Syria. As Kuwait was the centre of the contraband trade, Philby suggested a system of passes for legal caravans to be reserved for the merchants who carried a license signed by Ibn Sa'ūd or his local agent in Kuwait.⁴⁸ Ibn Sa'ūd consented to this proposal and told his Agent that he must obtain permission from the British Political Agent in Kuwait for Najdian merchants to have passes. At the same time, Ibn Sa'ūd warned his Agent that

⁴⁵ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁴⁶ Cox to the Secretary State for India, 21st October 1917, MECA *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2; Hamilton to Cox, 10 October 1917, IOR, R 15/5/25.

⁴⁷ Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.10.

⁴⁸ Ibn Sa'ūd to his Political Agent in Kuwait, 22 April 1918, *Philby collection*, B.15/2.; Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

he must refuse any requests from any traders who were dealing with Ibn Rashid, an ally of the Turks, or who had connections with the Turks in Syria.⁴⁹

Moreover, Philby began to put more pressure on Ibn Sa'ūd over the blockade; he took more serious steps to prohibit any attempt by contraband caravans from Kuwait to reach the enemy. These were his arrangements:

- 1- Ibn Sa'ūd began to impose a powerful blockade on the enemy's territory and consented to take personal responsibility for preventing any goods smuggled across his borders from reaching the enemy.
- 2- The British Government should organize an efficient blockade in Kuwait.
- 3- No-one was allowed to export anything from Kuwait unless they had the permission of or a signed pass from the Amir of his region.
- 4- The permission would not be extended to Shammari allies unless they were escorted by a reliable representative of Ibn Sa'ūd himself.
- 5- During the negotiation with Ibn Sa'ūd, a form of pass should be arranged without delay and sent to the local regional governors for their use; those who held them should present them to the British authorities in Kuwait in order to get them ratified.⁵⁰

The above restates the point that Philby's contribution – his insistence on Ibn Sa'ūd's commitment to the blockade – should not be forgotten; he indicated to Ibn Sa'ūd that

⁴⁹ Ibn Sa'ūd to his Agent, 22 April 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/2.

⁵⁰ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

his interests, no less than those of the British Government, and the significance of preventing supplies from reaching the enemy could not be overstated.⁵¹ The outcome of Philby's efforts can be seen clearly in Ibn Sa'ūd's announcement to his people:

You realize that Britain is very anxious to prevent the flow of money [goods] that might reach the Turks or their ally, Ibn Rashid. I have promised Britain that I am fully committed to capturing any caravans that might be sent to the enemy.⁵²

At the same time, Philby, in a practical sense, moved to Qasim and it seems that this move put him in a good position to observe any movement of contraband that would reach the enemy in Syria and Iraq. From his surveillance, he evidently discovered that the Governor of the Zilifi region, who was under Ibn Sa'ūd's suzerainty, was involved with the Turks and was buying up food and other goods for profit. In addition, Philby was informed by the Political Agency in Kuwait that the son of the Amir of Zilifi had also engaged in smuggling, suggesting that Ibn Sa'ūd should instruct his local governors to each provide a personal letter specifying the kind and quantity of merchandise required for their own town.⁵³ Immediately after, Philby complained to Ibn Sa'ūd about this behaviour by the Amir's son. Ibn Sa'ūd then wrote to the governor of Zilifi, accusing him of dealing with the enemies of God (the Turks) and castigating his action as an evil conspiracy. He not only exiled him from his Emirate but even from his own town.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Philby's memorandum, 20 April 1918, IOR, R/5/15/101.

⁵² A letter (in Arabic) from Ibn Sa'ūd to his people in the centre of Najd, 22 April 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/2.

⁵³ Philby's memorandum, 20 April 1918, IOR, R/5/15/101; Blockade Office in Kuwait to Philby, 9 April 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

⁵⁴ Ibn Sa'ūd to Abdul Aziz Ibn Othmān, 1 May 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/2.

It cannot be denied that the blockade imposed hardship on Ibn Sa'ūd and his people in central Arabia and Ḥasa. Its effect led to disturbances by the Najdi people which might have disrupted Ibn Sa'ūd's relations with Britain. In order to avoid such chaos and to supply the people of Najd with goods and also to control illegal leaks, Philby suggested some new arrangements, namely, that all Najdi caravans should be escorted by special emissaries on behalf of Ibn Sa'ūd. In addition, Ibn Sa'ūd's political Agent in Kuwait was instructed to assign a personal representative to deal with the tribal parties who "were not in a position to come in to procure a special envoy, e.g. the eastern tribes such as the Muṭair and Subai and finally, that all regular town caravans should carry passes signed by the local Amirs".⁵⁵ As a result, the consent of the British authorities to Philby's arrangements suggests that Philby both effectively contributed to controlling the smuggling and eased the harsh pressure on the people of Najd by ensuring that they were adequately supplied with goods.

However, in April 1918 Philby encountered a major dilemma. A considerable number of Ibn Sa'ūd's tribespeople, with 3000 camels, had come to Kuwait for the customary spring journey that would stock them up for the summer, but the Blockade Office was suspicious of the enormous quantities of goods that they were asking for and requested Salim to send them away with nothing. Shaikh Salim accordingly declared

⁵⁵ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

that all Najdi caravans should return to central Arabia until he made contact with Ibn Sa'ūd.⁵⁶

Naturally, the accusation of not supplying these put Ibn Sa'ūd under serious pressure, which made the Kuwait Agency contact Philby and instruct him to assure Ibn Sa'ūd that Salim had nothing to do with decision of the Blockade Office. The main reasons for this decision had been the large number of enemy elements escorting the caravans of his people as well as the great quantity of foodstuffs the tribes had requested.⁵⁷

In order to settle the issue, Philby, in reporting that the prohibition of the Najdi caravans had caused considerable irritation in Najd,⁵⁸ suggested that it was not feasible to intercept the goods on their journey from Kuwait to central Arabia, in particular after arrangements had been made between these two trading centres. Philby's argument seems to have been thought reasonable; he asserted that, since the imposition of the blockade on all the Arabian outlets such as Mecca, Damascus and Basra, as well as on the eastern ports, Kuwait was now the only territory that could supply central Arabia. Consequently, the British authorities in Kuwait agreed to his suggestions, which restored the confidence of the Najd.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Philby to Baghdad, 24 April 1918, IOR, R/15/5/10; Kuwait Agency to Philby, 6 May 1918, *Records of Kuwait*, vol.1, p.671.

⁵⁷ Loch, 'Report on institution and working of the blockade at Kuwait', 1st September 1918, IOR, R/15/2/71.

⁵⁸ Kuwait to Baghdad, 7 May 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

⁵⁹ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Kuwait Agency to Baghdad, 7 May 1918, *Records of Kuwait*, vol.1, p.672.

In fact, it may be conceded that Philby, to a large extent, was able, by his constant monitoring, to stop the flow of contraband from Kuwait to Central Arabia en route for Iraq and Syria. However, Salim, who had benefited from the illicit supplies, was extremely frustrated by Philby's success. It was evidence that the reason why Salim opposed the blockade was that he was a trader and had good relations with all the merchants. Before going on leave, Hamilton, the Political Agent in Kuwait, described Salim as follows:

I have said enough to show that to all appearances, Salim's position in Kuwait is secure and his relations with the merchants (he is a keen trader himself) are good. Were this not the case, he would hardly have taken so firm a stand in the matter of the Blockade Post, for this was actually the first time since his accession that he had failed to comply with a definite request from us.⁶⁰

Indeed, because Kuwait was the centre of trade in Arabia, Salim was unwilling to stop any of it, including the activity of smuggling, which made a very high profit. Salim's reluctance to restrict the smuggling had made Cox consider despatching troops to Kuwait to strengthen the blockade.⁶¹ However, despite his uncompromising opposition to the blockade, Salim, after considerable pressure, consented to comply with it and accept the fact that two British officers and four British soldiers were sent to monitor

⁶⁰ Hamilton's report on situation of Kuwait, not dated, IOR, R/15/2/71. Percy Loch, who relieved Hamilton on 15 March 1918, stated that Salim "would no doubt like to discredit the blockade but I do not think he did anything on that occasion as I think he feared that his position was not very secure". See Loch's telegram to Baghdad, 14 May 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

⁶¹ Baghdad to Kuwait, 29 May 1918, *Philby collection*, *Ibid.*

the posts to the interior of Arabia and to control the blockade arrangements.⁶² Notwithstanding of Salim's compliance, it appears that foodstuffs and piece goods continued to be smuggled by Kuwaiti traders. This can be seen from the agreement to make a fresh effort to restrain the movement of contraband, following discussion between Cox and the Government of India. All exports from India to Kuwait had to be halted unless they had special authorization from the Political Agent in Kuwait and exports had to be organized monthly according to the needs of Kuwait and Arabia.⁶³ Moreover, Cox decided that it was necessary to impose a sea blockade of Kuwait because all the supplies from there were falling into enemy hands via Syria.⁶⁴ As a result, even though Philby's efforts and the policy of limiting the exports and imposing a sea blockade were able to reduce the level of smuggling, considerable controversy between Najd and Kuwait was generated. The first clash between them occurred just after the end of Philby's mission.⁶⁵

Philby's mission was also required to make contact with the autonomous Shaikhs in order to turn their capabilities to good use, with the especial purpose of preventing smuggled goods from reaching the enemy. One of the Shaikhs was Ḍāri Ibn Ṭawala.⁶⁶

⁶² Loch, 'Report on institution and working of the blockade at Kuwait', 1st September 1918, IOR, R/15/2/71.

⁶³ Kuwait to Baghdad, 2 June, 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

⁶⁴ Dickson, *Kuwait and her neighbours*, p.243; Cox to FO, 20 August 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

⁶⁵ Kostiner argues that the controversy between Salim and Ibn Sa'ūd was based on politics. See his book, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.15. Also see his article, 'Saudi Arabian's Territorial: The Case of Kuwait 1916-1921', pp.222-234.

⁶⁶ Ḍāri was the tribal chief of a section of the Shammar tribe called al- Aslam. See some accounts of him in al-Rashid's book, *Tārīkh Kuwait*[The History of Kuwait], p.252; 'Report on visit to camp of Ḍāri Ibn

Ḍāri had quarrelled with Ibn Rashid, an ally of the Ottoman, and had decided to leave central Arabia for Safwan, a region in the south of Iraq. Ḍāri had great influence with his tribe and Philby thought that he should be included to assist in the common cause.⁶⁷ This raises the question why Philby chose him. The obvious answer is that Ḍāri was one of the most important tribal chieftains in Arabia and his efforts with his tribe might have enhanced the military operations of the British alliance. Furthermore, because Ḍāri's tribe was the same as Ibn Rashid's, the enemy of the allies, it would be prudent to prevent any rapprochement between them. In addition, if Ḍāri was not included in the common cause, he might join his cousin, Ibn Rashid, and then form a source of precarious supply to his tribe in Ḥail and also might constitute a standing threat to Ibn Sa'ūd, who had been asked to take offensive action against Ibn Rashid.

Joseph Kostiner claims that Philby did not divulge to Ḍāri that the purpose of the alliance was to attack Ibn Rashid.⁶⁸ Such a claim seems to be logical, in particular because it concerns the benefits to Ḍāri, with his powerful tribe, or the exploitation of him in the war. However, it should not be forgotten that one of the purposes of Philby's mission was also to impose a blockade in Arabia and part of its strategy was to employ powerful forces to cut off the enemy's supplies.

Ṭawala', written by Lieut. Collum, the Assistant Political Officer In Zubeir, 1 November 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2; Benian al-Turkey, 'Shaikh Ḍāri qera'h Tārīkhiah fi al-mashikhāt wa-al frūsiāh [Shaikh Ḍāri Ibn Ṭawala: historical readability in Shaikhdom and Equestrian], *The Annals of Art and Social Science*, vol. 33, no.368 (December, 2012), pp.212-235.

⁶⁷ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁶⁸ Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.22.

At any rate, on 7 November 1917 Philby held interviews with Ḍāri and afterwards suggested an increase of his allowance. He then ordered Ḍāri to move down with his followers to Hafer al- Batin, in central Arabia, in order to prevent any attempts at smuggling.⁶⁹ Although Ḍāri was passionately loyal to his tribe, the Shammar, he did very well to intercept a caravan carrying goods that belonged to a branch of the Shammar called the Abdah, to which Ibn Rashid, the ruler of Ḥail, belonged.⁷⁰ The consequent decision of Philby to transfer Ḍāri to central Arabia may be considered a strategic resolution, which contributed effectively to strengthening the blockade against the Emirate of Ḥail and thus depriving the Turkish garrisons in Madina of supplies.

However, Ḍāri changed his position and left al-Hafer for Safwan, in the border region between Kuwait and Iraq. Kostiner asserts that Ḍāri did not obey Philby's request that he should remain in al- Hafar. Kostiner presents two reasons for his disobedience. First, Philby had been absent in Arabia and so he had not yet paid Ḍāri's monthly subsidy. The second reason relates to Ḍāri himself: he feared to have an open clash with the Shammar tribe, to which he and Ibn Rashid belonged, and also feared the toppling of Ibn Rashid's emirate.⁷¹

To respond to Kostiner's claim, the reason behind Philby's absence should first be clarified. After meeting Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby went to Hejaz, where its ruler, Hussain,

⁶⁹ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁷⁰ Ḍāri to Philby, 22 August 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/2.

⁷¹ Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.23.

refused to allow him to return to Ibn Sa'ūd over land. He forced Philby to take the long route from Jeddah to Basra, via Suez, Karachi and Bombay before reaching Basra in March 1918. Consequently, the blame for his long absence lies not with Philby but with Hussain's non-cooperation. Regarding the payment, in the second part of his mission to Najd in April 1918, Philby met Ḍāri for a second time and paid him the subsidy owing for the five previous months, plus the next three months in advance. Documentary evidence for this is in a letter in Arabic, which has not so far been cited by historians; it was sent from Ḍāri himself to Philby:

My friend Mr. Philby, I sent my men to you with several letters but unfortunately they could not find you. I wanted to say that, as you instructed, I moved to Hafar in order to take military action against the blockade running. My friend, you remember that, when we met at al- Hafar and you paid me 10,000 Riyals as a subsidy, you promised me that if I attacked any caravans smuggling goods to the enemy you would remunerate me.⁷²

Regarding the second reason for Ḍāri's move, Kostiner seems to think it logical that Ḍāri would not wish to fight against Ibn Rashid and his tribe, which was also his own. Therefore, Ḍāri might believe that the best way for him was to attack the caravans of the smugglers from his new location of Safwan, and this would extricate him from any awkward or embarrassing confrontation with Ibn Rashid.

Thus, in departing without Philby's permission, it seems that Ḍāri had to search for a logical excuse. He could not find a better one than the absence of Philby and the non-payment of the subsidy that Philby was already giving him. He contacted the Political

⁷² Ḍāri to Philby, 22 August 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/2; Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

Agent in Zubair and it was decided that he should be transferred from Philby's supervision to the Agent's, as the following communication confirms.

On April 20th Philby wrote asking that persons bearing written authority from Ḍāri Ibn Tawala should be given foodstuff [in] reasonable amounts. He has taken since April 26th 4413 bags of rice which is about two and half months' supply and now asks for a further 435 bags. I also learn that he is at the same time taking sufficient to feed his following from Zubair. Philby is now quite out of touch with Ḍāri and therefore suggests that Ḍāri should be replaced under A.P.O. Zubair and will issue a permit to Ḍāri's men if they bring a written pass.⁷³

Before ending this section, it should be noted that the capitulation of Fakhri Pasha, the Turkish commander of Madina, was due not only to Hussain's war effort, but also to the success of the blockade policy, to which Philby had contributed.⁷⁴ At any rate, after resolving the issues of Ajman and the blockade, Philby proceeded to implement the last objective of his second mission, which was the invasion of the Rashidi Emirate. This is examined below.

The invasion of Ḥail

The hostility between the houses of Ibn Sa'ūd and Ibn Rashid coincided with the interests of Britain in its war against the Ottoman Empire in Arabia. In 1915, Ibn Sa'ūd experienced the fundamental challenge of being defeated by Ibn Rashid at the battle of

⁷³ Kuwait to Baghdad, 2 June 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2. Ḍāri's admitting the payment is consistent with Philby's report. See, Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁷⁴ After a severe test of his steadfastness, Commander Fakhri surrendered on 10 January 1919. See, Reginald Wingate, the High Commissioner in Egypt to FO, 14 January 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Wingate to the Viceroy, TNA, FO 371/4144.

Jarrab.⁷⁵ In these difficult circumstances, Cox obviously realized that Ibn Sa'ūd's position was in danger and it appears that Ibn Sa'ūd's control of the internal Najd as well as the projected invasion of Ḥail would not be achieved unless Ibn Sa'ūd was furnished with artillery and British financial aid. Therefore, Cox met Ibn Sa'ūd on 11-12 November 1916 at Uqair and agreed to supply the latter with 3,000 rifles, 250,000 rounds of ammunition, four machine guns, and £5,000 per month in financial assistance. In return, Ibn Sa'ūd promised to equip an army of 4,000 men in the province of Qasim, south of Ḥail, with a view to threatening Ibn Rashid.⁷⁶ During the spring and early summer of 1917 Ibn Sa'ūd was in command of a military expedition in the neighbourhood of Ḥail, to fulfil his obligations to the British for their financial and military aid. He returned to Riyadh for the fasting month of Ramadhan, leaving his son, Tūrki, to lead the operations.⁷⁷

Philby and Owen estimated that Ibn Rashid commanded 15,000 tribesmen, with 20,000 good modern rifles, and five mountain guns, while Ibn Sa'ūd had four machine guns and about 8000 rifles.⁷⁸ Therefore, in his telegram to Cox, Philby suggested that a total force of 15,000 men, four guns with trained personnel to manage the artillery, 10,000 rifles with ammunition and an initial grant of £20,000 for purchasing animals, transport

⁷⁵ William Grey's telegram to Cox, 19 February 1915, TNA FO 371/2479; Cox to GI, 15 September 1915, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Regarding the meeting, see Cox's telegram to the Secretary to GI, 13 November 1916, TNA, FO 371/2769. Some of these forces and equipment reached Ibn Sa'ūd. See Loch to Ibn Sa'ūd, 12 December 1916, IOR, R/15/2/33; Ibn Sa'ūd to Loch, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Ibn Sa'ūd to Cox, 20 July 1917, TNA, FO 882/8; Loch to Cox, 5 July 1917, IOR, R/15/2/33.

⁷⁸ Philby also provided the figure of 12,000 men as the strength of Ibn Rashid. See his book, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.54.

and foodstuffs would be required to ensure Ibn Sa'ūd's success in his offensive against Ḥail. This pleased Ibn Sa'ūd, who was minded to take this opportunity to procure basic assistance from Britain and agreed to embark upon the invasion of Ibn Rashid's territory.⁷⁹

Howarth reprimanded Philby for going to Hejaz on 9 December 1917 and leaving Ibn Sa'ūd just when he was set to begin an active offensive against Ḥail. Philby's four-month absence, he said, had prevented Ḥail from being attacked at the crucial moment.⁸⁰ Howarth's contention is unlikely to be true, however, for a number of reasons. First, Ibn Sa'ūd had not been ready; he had been waiting for British arms and ammunition to be despatched to him once his military needs had been assessed. Second, when Philby arrived at Jeddah on 24 December 1917, he discovered that it was no longer necessary to march on Ḥail,⁸¹ due to the marked improvement in the performance of the British forces when General Edmund Allenby⁸² defeated the

⁷⁹ Philby to Cox, 8 December 1917, TNA, FO 882/8; Cox to the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 21 December 1917, *ibid*; Owen, 'Report on the Mission to Ibn Saud', 18 April 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

⁸⁰ Howarth, *The Desert King*, p.103.

⁸¹ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IRO, L/P&S/10/390.

⁸² Edmund Henry Allenby (1861–1936) was an army officer. The first war that he took part in was the South African (1899-1902). The turning point of Allenby's life occurred in 1917, during WWI, when he made remarkable efforts to defeat the Ottoman forces in Palestine. Such an achievement may count as one of the main factors in his growing reputation; it led him to become the High Commissioner in Egypt in 1919. After a long period of serving the British Empire, Allenby retired in 1925. For more details regarding his life and career see his papers held by King's College, London, Re: GB0099 KCLMA Allenby; Sir Archibald Wavell, *Allenby: a study in greatness: the biography of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby of Megiddo and Felixstowe* (London: George Harrap, 1940); Great Britain, *A brief record of the advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary under the command of General Sir Edmund H. H. Allenby* (London: H.M.S.O,1919); Brain Gardner, *Allenby* (London: Cassell,1965); Lawrence James, *The life and times of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby 1861-1936* (London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson,1993); Matthew Hughes, *Allenby and British strategy in the Middle East, 1917-1919* (London: Frank Cass,1999); Matthew Hughes,

Ottoman in Palestine in early November 1917.⁸³ Allenby's success essentially changed the attitude of the British officials in Cairo, who no longer thought it important to pursue the invasion of Ḥail. As Wingate stated:

The importance of the capture of Ḥail had lessened in the past few months and although the elimination of this Turkish centre was still very desirable we should not [take the risk of] upsetting the present balance of power as between Sharif and Ibn Sa'ūd by largely increasing the fighting value of the latter's forces.⁸⁴

Kostiner presents another circumstance that may have persuaded the British authorities in Cairo not to support Ibn Sa'ūd's position in Arabia. This was the fear lest the spread of the illiberal Wahhabi movement would increase its power in Arabia and therefore Ibn Sa'ūd should be cut off from any military assistance.⁸⁵ This may or may not have been a valid reason. Philby entirely opposed the refusal of the British authorities in London and Cairo to furnish Ibn Sa'ūd with financial and military aid. Philby also argued that Ibn Sa'ūd was facing a difficult economic situation and to overcome the shortage of Ibn Sa'ūd's income, he suggested that Ibn Sa'ūd should be immediately given £50,000 a month for the period of the operations.⁸⁶

'Allenby, Edmund Henry Hynman, first Viscount Allenby of Megiddo (1861–1936)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 14 June 2015.

⁸³ Jerusalem surrendered on 9 December 1917. See, Bassett to King Hussain, 13 December 1917, TNA, FO 686/37; David Woodward, *Hell in the Holy land: World War I in the Middle East* (Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 2006), p.81

⁸⁴ 'Private Note of meeting held at The Residency, Cairo', 21 January 1918, TNA, FO 882/9; MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2; Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, pp.20-21.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Philby to Cox, 8 December 1917, TNA, FO 882/8; Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

As a result, it may be inferred that the threat of reducing a substantial sum of money was the crucial factor in accelerating the subsequent negotiations with Ibn Sa'ūd and achieving Philby's aim to invade Ḥail.

Cox also strengthened and endorsed Philby's proposal to Ibn Sa'ūd to mount an active attack on Ibn Rashid in Ḥail.⁸⁷ Silverfarb suggests three reasons behind Cox's decision. First, he was perhaps under the influence of Philby, who strongly believed that the repercussions of the campaign would be decisive. Second, Cox may have "acted partly from a sense of loyalty to his subordinate." The third reason, which is probably the most important, is that Cox may have wanted to strengthen Ibn Sa'ūd's position in order to maintain a sufficient counterpoise to that of Hussain in Hejaz and, with regard to Britain's undertakings to Hussain, he may have believed that these would weaken the British authority in Iraq after the war.⁸⁸

However, apart from Philby's influence, Silverfarb's assumption seems to be justified. In fact, Philby may have had no great influence on Cox, due to the fact that Ibn Sa'ūd had been Cox's protégé ever since Cox had written about the importance and increased power of Ibn Sa'ūd's sovereignty in central and Eastern Arabia. Thus, Philby was, in fact, following in the footsteps of Cox who had previously laid the basis for the relationship

⁸⁷ Cox to the Foreign Affairs Department of the Government of India, 23 December 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/388. See also Cox's telegram in TNA, FO 882/8.

⁸⁸ Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission', p.267. Kostiner also shares with Silverfarb the view that Cox was under the influence of Philby. See his book, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.24.

with Ibn Sa'ūd in the official British policy in Iraq.⁸⁹ However, the question that should be asked is why Cox sent the telegram to the Government of India to say that the invasion of Ḥail should be undertaken at this time in particular. Cox thought the opportunity had come when a large body of 'Nzāzāh tribespeople, called the Amarat,⁹⁰ emigrated from Syria to Iraq and announced their readiness to join Britain. Cox believed that the cooperation between these tribes and Ibn Sa'ūd would contribute to the elimination of the Rashidi Emirate in Ḥail, given that they were the bitterest enemies of the Shammar tribe to which Ibn Rashid, the ruler of Ḥail, belonged. He also provided a persuasive argument that, after the elimination of Ḥail, Ibn Sa'ūd would guarantee the peace in these territories by the appointment of a member of the Rashidi family, who many years before had escaped to Riyadh and joined Ibn Sa'ūd. He promised too that the Rashidi Amir would be set over the Rashidi Emirate, ruling on behalf of Ibn Sa'ūd.⁹¹ In his telegram, Cox summarized the outcomes of invading Ḥail:

Such an event would have tremendous effect both among the Bedouin of the desert and tribes as it would sweep away stronghold of Turkish influence and intrigue. It would at the same time make our position on Lower Euphrates Valley line much more satisfactory ... I assume therefore that it is common ground that the accomplishing of the project is in interests of our war aims: while from tribal point of view there can be no doubt that present moment is ideal opportunity for action. Should the movement terminate by the capture of Ḥail Ibn Sa'ūd would I fancy install one of the members of

⁸⁹ See Chapter Three, showing that Cox signed a treaty with Ibn Sa'ūd.

⁹⁰ The 'Nzāzāh tribes are considered the largest of all the Arab tribes. For further information see Ahmed Zakaria, *Asha'er al-Sham* [The *al-Sham* Clans], Beirut: Dar al-feker, 1983), pp.257-283.

⁹¹ Cox to GI, 23 December 1917, IOR, L/P&S/10/388.

Rashid family who have been refugees with him for some years past remaining with him until he had gained adherence of the Shammar and then leave him as his deputy.⁹²

In addition, although Silverfarb's claim is clearly persuasive, in particular regarding Cox's attempt to reduce the influence of Cairo in Arabia, he does not support his view by any evidence. In this regard, it can be said that, by supporting Ibn Sa'ūd, Cox used Philby as an essential instrument to strengthen the views of the Baghdad authorities; it seems that he was not happy about the ambition of the British officials in Cairo to control policy touching Arabian affairs and attempted to diminish their influence by depriving Hussain of power, above all after the war, against his archenemy, Ibn Sa'ūd. Such an assumption is substantiated by Cox's clearly indicating that support for Ibn Sa'ūd would not only establish an adequate counterpoise to Hussain in the Hejaz but would also simply work in Baghdad to "... automatically correct secret inconvenient pre-eminence which our policy has obliged us to accord to [Hussain]."⁹³

It was apparent that Cox was not only experiencing considerable divergence between him and Cairo but also that another obstacle was awaiting him. On 5 January 1918 Cox learned that his support for Philby's proposal was not echoed by the Government of India, which signalled that in its view Ibn Rashid did not constitute a serious threat. The important issue was to maintain the power balance between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain and this would be achieved by retaining Ibn Rashid in Arabia. As the Government of India ran the affairs of Central Arabia, Cox was informed that he "should keep Ibn Sa'ūd in

⁹² Cox to GI, 23 December 1917, TNA, FO 882/8.

⁹³ Ibid.

play by a present of money but that, except very sparingly, assistance with arms and instructors should not be given ... we wish to avoid the possibility of putting him in a position to upset the equilibrium of Arabia by means of our generosity".⁹⁴ Consequently, it should be noted that the Government of India was minded to keep Ibn Rashid as an instrument for maintaining the balance of power among the Arab rulers in Arabia and believed that eliminating him would increase the chance of rivalry and hostility between the important rulers now remaining in Arabia, Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd.

However, it seems that Philby would not give up his support for Ibn Sa'ūd. He recommended that the elimination of the Rashidi Emirate would serve the common cause, stating that Ibn Sa'ūd was prepared to attack Ḥail as long as he received British military aid.⁹⁵ Consequently, on 12 January 1918, when the Middle East Committee of the War Cabinet held its meeting, it discussed Philby's recommendation that Ibn Sa'ūd should receive substantial assistance for an invasion of Ḥail. This committee was under the supervision of Lord George Curzon⁹⁶ and consisted of representatives from the Foreign Office, India Office and War Office. In the meeting, it was mentioned that

⁹⁴ Viceroy of India to the IO, 5 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁹⁵ Shuckburgh's memorandum, 10 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁹⁶ Lord George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925) was one of the most important British politicians in the first half of the 20th century. In 1898, he became Viceroy of India (ending in 1905). His performance in India was considerable, notably in improving the infrastructure and education. In 1905, he resigned and returned to Britain, involving himself in politics. Then he served in the FO where he spent the rest of his life. For more information, see, Sirdar Ali Khan Syed, *Lord Curzon's administration of India: what he promised; what he performed* (Bombay: The Time Press, 1905); George Nathaniel Curzon, *Lord Curzon in India: being a selection from his speeches as Viceroy & General of India 1898-1905* (London: Macmillan, 1906); Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-19*; James Parker, *Lord Curzon, 1859-1925: a bibliography* (New York; London: Greenwood Press, 1992); David Gilmour, 'Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859–1925)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 11 June 2015.

Wingate, regarding Ibn Rashid as a weak governor too unimportant to justify the financing of Ibn Sa'ūd's capture of Ḥail, strongly opposed Philby's proposal and was averse to arming Ibn Sa'ūd on any large scale, because it would intensify the conflict between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain.⁹⁷ It was evident that the members of the Government of India and the Foreign Office on the committee shared Wingate's view and were against the entire elimination of Ḥail, which would upset the balance of power in Arabia. They recommended that Ibn Sa'ūd "should not be supplied otherwise than very sparingly either with arms or military personnel".⁹⁸ However, while some members of the committee insisted that it was indispensable to aid Ibn Sa'ūd in a major operation against Ibn Rashid, Curzon believed that it would be injudicious to equip Ibn Sa'ūd, since the British funds were running short and the British Government no longer had any interest in Philby's plan for Ibn Sa'ūd to launch a campaign against his arch-enemy. Therefore, notwithstanding Ibn Sa'ūd's claims and Britain's obligations and commitment to Najd, Curzon concluded that Britain should procrastinate over Ibn Sa'ūd's present demands.⁹⁹

However, Philby, who represented the policy of Iraq, opposed this decision, saying that the expulsion or elimination of Ibn Rashid would be a grave blow to Ottoman prestige in Arabia and would further enfeeble the Turkish position in the Hejaz, most of all in

⁹⁷ See Wingate's view in his telegram to Foreign Office, 2 January 1918, TNA, FO 371/4144; Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.23.

⁹⁸ Note Prepared for Meeting of 12 January 1918, written by Shuckburgh, 10 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; IOR, IOR/L/PS/18/B279.

⁹⁹ Middle East Committee, 11th meeting minutes, 12 January 1918, TNA, CAB 27/22.

Madina, where the last Turkish garrison was strongly resisting. Philby also claimed that the collapse of Ḥail would enable the borders between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain to be defined.¹⁰⁰ As a result, In order to challenge the decision of the committee, Cox immediately demanded a reconsideration in view of a number of telegrams from Philby recommending that Ibn Sa'ūd should take Ḥail while Hussain had a chance to capture Madina. Once the Ottoman were driven from Arabia there would be a great chance to demarcate the boundary between the two rivals.¹⁰¹

Kostiner suggests that Cox's reconsideration tended to underplay Hussain's dominance in the eastern area of Ibn Sa'ūd's territories, which might jeopardize Britain's interests in the Gulf; and that the only way to keep the Gulf peaceful was to cooperate and to maintain friendly relations with Ibn Sa'ūd.¹⁰² Persuasive though Kostiner's opinion is, it should be remembered that Hussain could not extend his dominance over Ibn Sa'ūd's territory for one major reason. This was that Ibn Sa'ūd had signed a treaty of protection with Britain, which acknowledged Ibn Sa'ūd's domination not only over the sea approaches to the eastern part of his Emirate but also the interior lands in central Arabia. At a later date Britain would not indeed allow Hussain to intervene in Ibn Sa'ūd's affairs.

At any rate, although Philby was disappointed with the Middle East Committee, he never lost the hope of enhancing Ibn Sa'ūd's position, indicating that, even if the

¹⁰⁰ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁰¹ Cox to GI, 14 and 19 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; TNA, FO 371/3383.

¹⁰² Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.24.

campaign against Ḥail was not an urgent military necessity, it would still enable Ibn Sa'ūd to shift his forces against the Hejaz railway or join Allenby's forces in a campaign against the Ottoman in Syria. Consequently, including Ibn Sa'ūd in the war would, Philby believed, distract Ibn Sa'ūd from the situation with Hussain. He also pointed out that ignoring Ḥail would give a clear signal to Ibn Sa'ūd that Britain regarded Hussain, not him, as the most powerful leader in Arabia.¹⁰³ Finally, Philby pointed out that unless the campaign against Ḥail went ahead, it would lead to the abortion of his mission, which would damage British standing in Arabia and put an end to the cherished relationship that Shakespear had built up.¹⁰⁴ This is evidence to support the claim that Philby played an essential role in strengthening Ibn Sa'ūd in Arabia, that of fighting any decisions that might undermine the position of the latter. Despite the remarkable efforts of Philby and Cox, the India Office did not in the end consent to Philby's proposal that Ibn Sa'ūd's campaign against Ḥail should be supported. John Shuckburgh, the Secretary of the Political Department in the India Office, believed that if General Allenby had been successful in cutting the Hejaz railway, the Ottoman cause would have been lost, and therefore it would not have been necessary to take Ḥail. Shuckburgh also remarked that the original objective of the Najd mission was solely to

¹⁰³ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

provide suggestions based on practical possibilities and the idea of Ibn Sa'ūd's invasion of Ḥail was considered "a necessary corollary of the negotiations".¹⁰⁵

Going by Philby's reports regarding the importance of the mission, Cox did not despair and his call for the question to be reconsidered was enough to persuade Lord Curzon to re-visit it in a Middle East Committee meeting. On 19 January 1918, consequently, the committee ordered the War Office to produce a memorandum regarding the military situation in Arabia in order for it to be discussed in the next session.¹⁰⁶ On 21 January, however, the War Office provided a memorandum which entirely refused to reconsider the committee's decision and advised that the financial subsidy suggested by Philby should be reduced, on the grounds that Ibn Sa'ūd did not offer any military advantages to Britain and there was no comparison between his weak efforts and the important role of Hussain, who had dispersed the Ottoman troops from most parts of the Hejaz; it would not be an exaggeration to believe that he would succeed in capturing Ḥail.¹⁰⁷

At the Middle East Committee meeting of 26 January 1918, therefore, the earlier decision not to provide substantial financial assistance to Ibn Sa'ūd was upheld and it was plain that the War Office memorandum had influenced this resolution.¹⁰⁸ It seems that there was no room for flexibility in the committee's decision and Cox was

¹⁰⁵ Note by Shuckburgh, 18 January 1918, TNA, CAB 27/23; Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.58; Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission', p.278.

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum written by Shuckburgh, 18 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389, Middle East Committee, meeting minutes 1st, 19 January 1918; TNA, CAB 27/23.

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum regarding Ibn Sa'ūd, produced by the War Office, 21 January 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

¹⁰⁸ Middle East Committee, meeting minutes 2nd, 26 January 1918, TNA, CAB 27/23; Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission', p.278.

therefore deputed to explain to Ibn Sa'ūd that Britain was not then in a good position to help him with military support.¹⁰⁹ As a result, on 12 February 1918, Cox sent a telegram to Philby outlining these new resolutions. He asked Philby to recommend a suitable way of communicating the recent developments to Ibn Sa'ūd and finally decided to despatch Philby to him in person.¹¹⁰

On 9 March 1918 Cox informed the Foreign Affairs Department of the Government of India that he had instructed Philby to inform Ibn Sa'ūd that the British Government was not able to provide any appropriate artillery personnel for his guns and, therefore, he must depend on his own men. Furthermore, the only assistance that the British Government could supply him with was 1,000 Winchester rifles, 10,000 rounds of ammunition and the endowment of two months' subsidy in advance. In principle, Cox indicated to Philby that if there was no interception Ibn Sa'ūd would proceed with his plan against Ḥail and if he was successful the Government would increase his monthly subsidy from £5,000 to £10,000.¹¹¹

While he was in Basra, somewhat resentful over the shift of British policy concerning Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby received Cox's instruction to return to Arabia and to acquaint Ibn

¹⁰⁹ From the Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 28 January 1918, TNA, CAB 27/23.

¹¹⁰ Cox to Philby, 16 February 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*. 1/4/1/2/1. Silverfarb suggests that Cox asked Philby to return to Najd on March 1918. See his article, 'The Philby Mission', p.279. This telegram was sent later but the actual order was made on 16 February 1918. See the account in Cox's telegram, above.

¹¹¹ Cox to the Foreign Affairs Department of the Government of India, 9 March 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.58.

Sa'ūd of the British Government's decision.¹¹² In April 1918, Philby commenced the second part of his mission. He penetrated into the desert of the Dahna via the wells of Hafar Batin and met Ibn Sa'ūd at Shauki, his customary spring bivouac in the desert.¹¹³ It was clear that the news from Philby left Ibn Sa'ūd in a state of exasperation. Ibn Sa'ūd complained that the shortage of finance and income would prevent him from carrying out a major action against Ibn Rashid. He concluded that, if the British decision was final, he "could not but bow to their decision and regret his inability to be of further active assistance."¹¹⁴ It is apparent that Ibn Sa'ūd had no option of disputing the British decision, for several main reasons. First, the capture of Ḥail was the most important project for Ibn Sa'ūd, a project that would not only assist him to expand his territories but also to strengthen his status in central Arabia against Hussain. Second, when Philby sensed that Ibn Sa'ūd was depressed and dissatisfied and he might abandon the operations against Ḥail, which might contribute to or renew the conflict between Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd, he encouraged Ibn Sa'ūd to invade Ḥail. In his conversation with Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby replied to the latter in the following words:

¹¹² Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.163; Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390. In the meanwhile, Cox was transferred from Iraq to become the British Minister to Persia and Wilson replaced him as Acting Civil Commissioner. See, Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox*, pp.246-247; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.163.

¹¹³ In his article, 'The Philby Mission', p.279, Silverfarb asserts incorrectly that Philby met Ibn Sa'ūd in Riyadh but in fact they met in the desert and Philby then spent a couple of days discussing the issue before joining Ibn Sa'ūd in Riyadh. See: al- Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd], p.216; Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.163-166.

¹¹⁴ Philby to Loch, 20 April 1918, IOR, R/15/5/101; Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

“You know” I replied, “that Cox and I have done our utmost for you, but in the eyes of the British Government Hail is but a small pawn in the great war. For you it is a different thing; war conditions enable you, with British assistance in money and materials, to seize it and make yourself master of all Central Arabia, but if you miss the present opportunity and the war comes to an end with the Arabian situation unaltered, you will not be able to count on further British aid.”¹¹⁵

Another reason for Ibn Sa‘ūd to proceed with Philby’s proposal and to begin hostilities against Ibn Rashid was that Philby furnished the former with £20,000, which Philby had stored at Uqair on his first arrival, obviously to meet the contingency of Ibn Sa‘ūd’s forces attacking Hail.¹¹⁶ By providing this loan to Ibn Sa‘ūd, Silverfarb argues, Philby wanted to play a major role in the war and, to do so, distorted Cox’s instructions, in Silverfarb’s interpretation, to carry out one of the primary objectives of the mission. Philby is described by Silverfarb as being ambitious to play a leading role in his own person and inclined to emulate the figure of T. E. Lawrence, who had led Hussain’s forces in the Hejaz.¹¹⁷

It is perhaps true that personal ambition was not absent from Philby’s imagination and he may have wanted to see his name recorded among the famous British officials who achieved so much in the Middle East. However, it should be remembered that Cox too would have wanted to protect Ibn Sa‘ūd’s interests and to see him successful in his

¹¹⁵ Philby, *The Heart of Arabia*, pp.310-311; Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.58; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.261.

¹¹⁶ Philby, ‘Report on the Najd Mission,’ 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.261; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.137; Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.56. Monroe asserts that Ibn Sa‘ūd made the condition and asked for the money. See her book, *Philby of Arabia*, p.76.

¹¹⁷ Silverfarb, ‘The Philby Mission’, pp.272-273,280.

campaign against Ḥail. Although the British officials in Cairo and London were minded to reject the idea of capturing Ḥail and although Cox acquiesced in the Middle East Committee's decision not to provide Ibn Sa'ūd with financial and military aid, in the second part of his telegram he asserted that there was no objection to Ibn Sa'ūd's capturing Ḥail, but he should do so under his own steam. This muted approval obviously went against the Middle East Committee's decision and, therefore, it invalidates Silverfarb's assumption that Cox's approval was expressed merely "to avoid the impression that Britain no longer sought Ibn Sa'ūd's cooperation against the enemy".¹¹⁸ Cox stated:

As regards Ḥail I do not consider Ibn Sa'ūd is keen on taking it except in circumstances which make it apparent that he is doing so at our bidding and under our discretion. At the same time, should good opportunity arise for his doing so either by diplomacy or force with the above meagre assistance, I understand that there would no objection to it in principle either on the part of H.M.G. or the High Commissioner. If it comes to pass I think we should be prepared to double Ibn Saud's subsidy or give him a good lump sum.¹¹⁹

Consequently, regarding the controversy between Baghdad and Cairo, it seems that Cox never failed to put forward the view of the administration in Baghdad, which sought to strengthen Ibn Sa'ūd's position in Arabia; the latter could have had no hope of succeeding in his struggle without the loan from Philby. Furthermore, it can be noted that Cox's continued support of Ibn Sa'ūd would have meant that Cox, at this juncture,

¹¹⁸ Silverfarb, 'The Philby Mission', p. 280.

¹¹⁹ Cox to the Foreign Affairs Department of the Government of India and repeated to Philby, 9 March 1918, TNA, FO 882/9. Cox also informed Philby that if Ibn Sa'ūd was willing to undertake operations against Ḥail, he did not in principle object. See Cox's telegram to Kuwait, 12 May 1918, *Records of Kuwait*, vol.1, p.675.

wanted to preserve a dominant British presence in Iraq, believing that a strong position for Ibn Sa'ūd would be desirable to oppose the dream and ambition of Hussain to rule over all the Arab countries.¹²⁰ This meant that Hussain's ambition would have some effect on British interests in the region after the war. As a result, It seems that Cox's support for Ibn Sa'ūd and his disputes with the Cairo authorities increased the tension between Hejaz and Najd, the tension that culminated in a great battle between the two parties, the battle of Turabah, described below in Chapter Five. Cox's support for Ibn Sa'ūd ended when he left Iraq and was appointed Acting Minister to Persia (1918-1920). His main work there was to "negotiate the Anglo-Persian treaty"¹²¹ before returning to Iraq as High Commissioner and resuming his contact with Ibn Sa'ūd, meeting him in the end of November 1922 at the port of Uqair, in the east. There, Cox succeeded in improving the relations between Ibn Sa'ūd and Faiṣal and signed the al-Uqair treaty on 2 December 1922, to fix and demarcate the frontiers between Iraq and Najd as well as between Kuwait and Najd.¹²² As a result, it can be said that although the British Government adopted the Sharifian solution and placed Faiṣal on the throne of Iraq, and his brother Abdullah on that of Transjordan, Cox remained on good terms with Ibn Sa'ūd until he retired from the British service in May 1923.¹²³

In any rate, Ibn Sa'ūd accepted the offer of the money, of which he was in desperate need, and agreed to prepare a campaign against Ḥail within months, despite the

¹²⁰ Cox to GI, 23 December 1917, TNA, FO 882/8.

¹²¹ Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire*, p.117.

¹²² Dickson, *Kuwait and her neighbours*, pp.262-2278; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.179-180.

¹²³ Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire*, p.191.

considerable challenges posed by Hussain's claims to the Khurma oasis.¹²⁴ After spending a few days in Ibn Sa'ūd's camp, the time came for Philby to return to Riyadh, where he discovered that the promised attack on Ḥail had had to be delayed for a couple of months. However, in order to report to Baghdad, Philby insisted on a definite date from Ibn Sa'ūd for the start of the military campaign; Ibn Sa'ūd told him that the beginning of August would be the appropriate time.¹²⁵ Although Philby did not provide any reason for Ibn Sa'ūd's postponing the expedition, it might be asked why Ibn Sa'ūd had done so. It should first be mentioned that Philby met Ibn Sa'ūd in his camp on 21 April 1918¹²⁶ and found that the climatic conditions in Arabia at this time were suitable for a military expedition and there were two months to go before the fasting month of Ramadan. Hence, it seems that two vital factors had intervened and forced Ibn Sa'ūd to decide to wait. In the first place, Ibn Sa'ūd perhaps believed that the British Government might reconsider and reverse its decision not to furnish him with the financial aid and military equipment that Philby and Owen had previously proposed. Second, Ibn Sa'ūd probably needed such financial and military support not only for a combat to capture Ḥail, which was in a weak condition, but for a combat against Hussain, the most powerful figure in Arabia; without British support he may have felt unable to confront such a ruler.

¹²⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.81-82; Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.58.

¹²⁵ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.166-167.

¹²⁶ Kuwait to Bahrein, 23 April 1918, IOR, R/15/2/38.

Bearing in mind that four months were left for mounting an attack against Ḥail, Philby found himself with the prospect of spending the summer months in the Wahhabi capital, but instead he had another idea. This was to explore the unknown southern lands of Najd, Kharj, Aflaj, Sulayyil and Wdi al Dawaser, for which he obtained Ibn Sa'ūd's permission.¹²⁷ Once again, in his account of two months of exploration, May and June 1918, Philby presented a basic historical background of the Wahhabi sect and the present political history of the central region of Najd. He also provided a significant geographical survey of the districts where his route ran, as well as a description of the ancient route by which coffee was sent between Yemen and the interior of Arabia.¹²⁸ Hence, it is noteworthy that while Philby was following his favourite avocation in wandering all over the little-known districts, his reports can be seen not only as a valuable scientific survey but also as serving the authorities in Baghdad by conveying the political, economic and social conditions that he observed. The evidence that supports this assumption is that his account was first issued by the Arab Bureau for official use and it probably contributed to a knowledge of the general conditions in Najd and, more important, the nature of Najdi-Hejaz relations in Arabia.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.167,

¹²⁸ Regarding Philby's exploration to the southern territories of Najd, see Philby, 'Southern Najd', *The Geographical Journal*, vol.LV, no. 3 (March, 1920), pp.161-185. Then Philby included this journey in the second volume of his book *The Heart of Arabia*, chapters VII, IX and X.

¹²⁹ It was published under a different title. See Philby, *Journey to Kharj, Aflaj, Sulayyil and Wadi Dawasir* (Cairo: Government Press, 1919). It is preserved in IOR, L/PS/20/ C169.

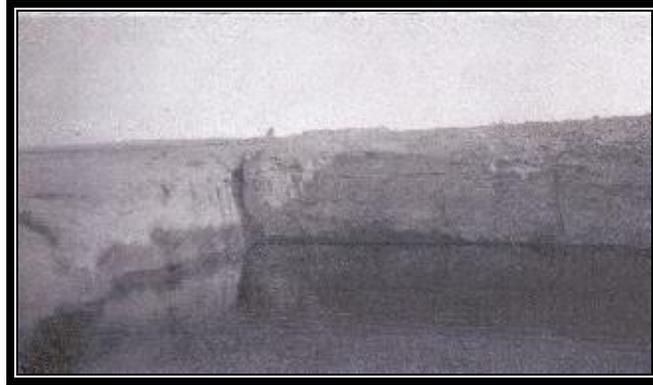


Figure 4. A desert spring seen during Philby's visit to Aflaj
Source: Philby, 'Southern Najd'.



Figure 5.
Photograph taken when Philby was in Sulayyil, the territory south of the Najd
Source: Philby, The Heart of Arabia.

In July 1918, Ibn Sa'ūd commanded Tūrki, his eldest son, to start an offensive against the Shammar tribes, who were led by the Amir of Ḥail. Then, at the beginning of

August, Ibn Sa'ūd, with Philby as escort, began the march. To begin with, he and his forces gathered in the district of Shqra, located in the north of Riyadh before reaching Buraida, the most important city in the Qasim territories and the advanced headquarters of Ibn Sa'ūd's campaign.¹³⁰ There, Philby was disappointed to hear Ibn Sa'ūd forbid him to take part in the battle; despite all his arguments, Ibn Sa'ūd insisted.¹³¹ It is apparent that Ibn Sa'ūd, apart from his sincere regard for Philby, did not want to lose him in the same way that Shakespear had been lost; it might have affected his relations with Britain. Whether or not this was the motivation, Philby was unwilling to stay where he was without anything to do and therefore indulged himself by writing a record of his journey from its beginning in Riyadh. He also took the opportunity to visit some places around Qasim, describing its geographical features and political and economic conditions. He also provided important accounts of the society of northern Najd.¹³² This excursion takes its place as his third one, after crossing Arabia from east to west and travelling to southern Najd.

¹³⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.170.

¹³¹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.81; Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tarikh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.67.

¹³² Philby published a report of his journey to the northern Najd in his second book, called *Arabia of the Wahhabis* (London: Frank Cass & CO Ltd., 1977). On this occasion, it should be mentioned that this book may be regarded as a third volume, since his previous book *The Heart of Arabia*, covered both parts of his mission to Najd.

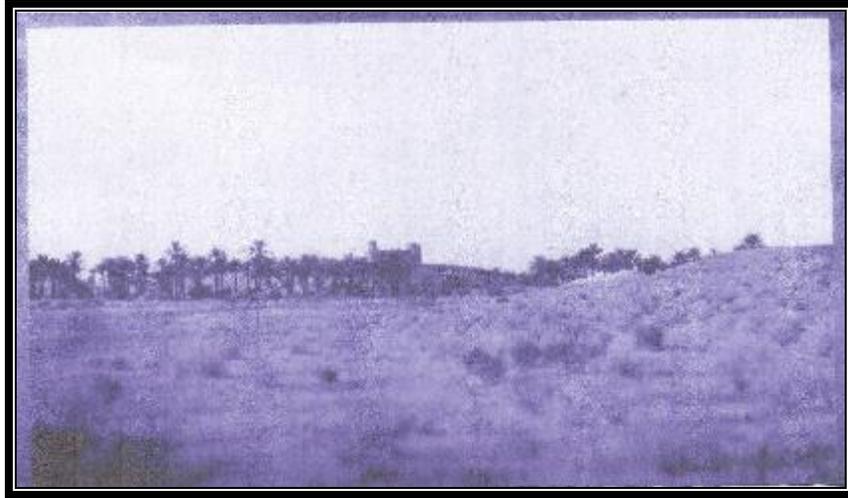


Figure 6.
Photograph taken by Philby in Qasim, northern Najd
Source: Philby: Arabia of the Wahhabis

Ten days after the start of military operations against Ibn Rashid, Philby received the good news that Ibn Sa'ūd had been victorious at the battle called Yatap and had then unsuccessfully chased Ibn Rashid, who had escaped to Ḥail, the capital of his Emirate. Ibn Sa'ūd launched a siege of Ḥail, but discovered that the walls of the city were very strongly defended, which made him withdraw to Qusaiba, a district to the north of Qasim, on 21 September.¹³³

¹³³ Regarding the battle of Yatap, see Baghdad to GI, 9 October 1918, TNA, FO 371/3390; Philby, *Arabia of the Wahhabis*, pp.298-299; Armstrong, *Lord of Arabia*, p.135.



Figure 7.
Ibn Sa'ūd's camp in Qusaiba after defeating Ibn Rashid
Source: Philby: Arabia of the Wahhabis.

Sabri al Hamdi presents two verdicts on the outcomes of Ibn Sa'ūd's expedition against Ḥail. The first is that the expedition did not achieve its desired result, in that Ibn Sa'ūd failed to capture the city. The second, which is not supported by any evidence, is that Ibn Sa'ūd defeated Ibn Rashid's forces.¹³⁴ However, Ibn Sa'ūd did indeed triumph and the primary Saudi source gives an account of Ibn Sa'ūd's victory which is compatible with Philby's.¹³⁵ Philby, who was close to the battlefield, narrates specifically that Ibn Sa'ūd's five thousand soldiers were able to beat Ibn Rashid who "not only suffered greater losses but had to decamp with all speed on receipt of the news of his enemy's

¹³⁴ Hamdi, *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia fi 'hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud* [Philby and Saudi Arabia in the ear of King Abdul Aziz], pp.70-71.

¹³⁵ Fouad Ḥamza, *Qalb jazīrat al-'Arab Qalb* [The Heart of Arabia] (Cairo: Nāsr Library, 1968), p.378; Ibn Eisā, *Tārīkh Ibn Eisā* [The History of Ibn Eisā], vol.2, p.300.

movement in the Ḥail district".¹³⁶ From the above, it can be inferred that Ibn Sa'ūd's engagement in the war strengthened the Allied forces in the north of Arabia, led by Lawrence and the sons of Hussain, and kept the enemy (Ibn Rashid) too busy to attack them. Furthermore, it can be noted that, with Philby's encouragement and his own considerable efforts, the campaign of Ibn Sa'ūd was able to quell Ibn Rashid and at least force him to supply nothing to the Ottoman forces, whether in Madina, the city in the north of Hejaz, or in Syria and Palestine. In this, it may be assumed that Philby played a positive role and the outcome contributed something to the British victory, as well as strengthening Ibn Sa'ūd's position in central Arabia.

While he was preparing for the next blow against Ḥail, Ibn Sa'ūd was disappointed to learn that the British Government wanted him to desist in the struggle against Ḥail due to a new development, the surrender of the Turks in Syria. The British Government no longer wished to keep its promise to send him the consignment of rifles and other military equipment and Wilson, who succeeded Cox in Iraq, informed Philby that Britain could supply Ibn Sa'ūd with only 1,000 Winchester guns.¹³⁷

The reaction of Ibn Sa'ūd to the change in British policy was remarkable. He was infuriated not only at the change of British policy toward him but also when he discovered that the consignment would consist of 1,000 rifles, calling them 'pop-guns',

¹³⁶ Philby, *Arabia of the Wahhabis*, pp, 296-298.

¹³⁷ Philby, 'Report on the Najd Mission,' 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Wilson to IO, 16 October 1918, TNA, FO 371/3390.

which he described as 'palmed off' on him.¹³⁸ In order to appease Ibn Sa'ūd's indignation and wrath, Philby volunteered to return to Kuwait and try to work out some way of mitigating the British decision. Ibn Sa'ūd warned him that if he did not succeed, Ibn Sa'ūd would no longer have any need of him. Philby set off, but by the time he reached Kuwait he knew that the war was over.¹³⁹

Overview

The chapter revealed that the cause of the Ajman revolt was economic; it took place because Ibn Sa'ūd captured Ḥasa and ended its privileged charging of tolls. In addition, the revolt of this tribe caused a crucial controversy between two allies of Britain, Najd and Kuwait, and this was why Britain sent Philby out: to reduce the tension between its allies and to join them all in the common cause of defeating the Ottoman Empire. Philby worked hard to settle the Ajman revolt and his importance can be seen in his contribution to the treaty with Britain which was signed by the leaders of the Ajman. It ended their raids on Ibn Sa'ūd's territories and also re-located them outside Arabia. It was clear that Philby's actions not only contributed to the common cause, but also strengthened Ibn Sa'ūd's power within Arabia.

The chapter demonstrated that there is little truth in the claims that Ibn Sa'ūd took a neutral position during the war and that he opposed the policy of the blockade, being under pressure from his people, who were incensed by the policy. However, the Anglo-

¹³⁸ Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.262; Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.170-171.

¹³⁹ Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.59.

Najdi treaty and the great effort of Ibn Sa'ūd to maintain the blockade invalidate such a claim. The chapter also illustrated that the blockade put Kuwaiti-Najdi relations under serious tension, which led to the loss of massive amounts of contraband to the enemy. It was obvious that the success in reducing the amount of smuggling owed much to Philby's efforts to organize soldiers to monitor the smuggling operations between Najd and Kuwait and that this system gave the Najdi people the chance to supply the same goods legally. Apparently, in leading the mission Philby played a prominent part in imposing the blockade by persuading some of the Arab Shaikhs who were hostile to the Amir of Ḥail to enter the struggle on the side of Britain.

This chapter revealed also that the accusation that Philby neglected Ḍāri by not paying him his monthly subsidy is unlikely to be justified. It seems obvious that the delay was due to Hussain, who prevented Philby from taking the short way back to Najd, which involved Philby in a long voyage of about four months before he could return to Arabia. In addition, documentary evidence by Ḍāri, written in Arabic, proves that he had indeed received his subsidy from Philby, which clears the latter of any accusation of negligence. Furthermore, the chapter concluded that one motive lay behind Ḍāri's move to Safwan. Cooperation in the imposition of the blockade was better for Ḍāri than entering a military confrontation against his relative, Ibn Rashid, the common enemy of the allies.

The chapter also illustrated that the fundamental role in the capitulation of the Turkish garrison in Madina was played by the forces of Hussain, but Philby's successful effort to set up the blockade seems also to have been a crucial factor in the collapse of the garrison and its final surrender.

The accusation that Philby was responsible for the failure of the invasion of Ḥail seems, as the chapter has showed, to be verging on fantasy, for two main reasons. First, at the time that Philby arrived in Arabia, Ibn Sa'ūd was not ready to take the offensive against Ḥail because he had not yet been furnished with the British arms and ammunition that Philby and Owen had suggested. Second, the change of British policy, due to the success of the British forces against the Turks in Palestine, was the major factor in the decision not to proceed with this initiative at a time when the British officials in Cairo were convinced that the Emirate of Ḥail should remain intact in order to maintain the balance between the Arab powers which would protect the British interests in the Arabian Peninsula.

The chapter asserted that Cox was probably not under Philby's influence. It appears that Philby was himself a tool with which to implement the policy of the authorities in Iraq to support Ibn Sa'ūd's position in central Arabia. This was against the policy of the British authorities in Cairo, who favoured Hussain's dominance in Arabia.

The claim that Cox reconsidered his support for Ibn Sa'ūd in order to prevent Hussain's sovereignty from extending over Ibn Sa'ūd's eastern territories seems not to be logical,

for one essential reason. This is that the treaty between Ibn Sa'ūd and Britain protected the former from any aggressive attack, including any from Hussain himself.

It is clear that the decision of the Middle East Committee to make it nearly impossible for Ibn Sa'ūd to invade Ḥail and to reduce the military assistance promised to him was taken under the influence of the British officials in Cairo and Cox's call for it to be reconsidered more than suggests his dissatisfaction with it. In addition, although he bowed to the inevitable decision, Cox seems never to have relinquished his support for Ibn Sa'ūd's resolve. Such support was evident in his informing Philby, who became an obstacle to the Middle East Committee, that there was no objection to Ibn Sa'ūd's proceeding with his operation against Ḥail, which obviously contradicted the decision of the Middle East Committee.

The chapter concluded that, judging by the reduction of British financial and military aid, Ibn Sa'ūd had no power to change the decision of the Middle East Committee and yet he proceeded in his plan to capture Ḥail. Among the reasons for his doing so, first, was that occupying Ḥail would increase his land and, more important, would enhance his position in central Arabia at the expense of his enemy, Hussain. Second, Philby encouraged Ibn Sa'ūd in this venture and provided him a loan of £20,000, which pleased the latter and persuaded him to continue. Philby's behaviour on this occasion cannot be interpreted merely as a further step in his quest to be counted among the

famous but was due to his desire to secure Ibn Sa'ūd's position, a desire that Cox shared and fought for.

The chapter revealed that Ibn Sa'ūd's delay in invading Ḥail was probably based on two main factors. First, Ibn Sa'ūd may have believed that the British Government might alter its previous decision not to support his venture. Second, since Ibn Sa'ūd was very anxious to obtain British support, he may have believed that the benefit of British rifles and ammunitions would not only be used against Ḥail but also against his long-standing enemy, Hussain.

The chapter illustrated that Philby, in his journey to the southern territories of Riyadh, was able to present significant accounts of the geographical, social, economic and historical condition of these lands. The speed with which the Arab Bureau published his reports is crucial evidence of the importance attributed to them, in understanding the situation of Najd as well as the relations between it and Hejaz.

The chapter demonstrated that Ibn Sa'ūd was very anxious for the safety of Philby. This is apparent from his forbidding Philby to take part in the battle against Ibn Rashid. He may perhaps have feared that Philby might meet the same fate as Shakespear's, who was killed in battle; besides, he may have feared that the loss of Philby might affect his position and relations with Britain. This action of Ibn Sa'ūd's, however, gave Philby the opportunity to explore the region of Qasim, providing another comprehensive account

of another part of Arabia, counting as his third trip since coming to the Arabian peninsula.

The claim that Ibn Sa'ūd's expedition against Ḥail came to an inconclusive end seems, according to this chapter's evidence, not to be quite accurate. The victory of Ibn Sa'ūd in the battle and the escape of Ibn Rashid are sufficient to show his overall triumph, as agreed by both contemporary Saudi sources and Philby himself, a close observer. More important, the success of the campaign is clearly observed from the fact that Ibn Sa'ūd pursued Ibn Rashid and cut the contact between the latter and the Ottoman forces in the north of Arabia. In addition, it can be assumed that Philby's effort to encourage the Ḥail expedition may be regarded as one of the factors that not only upheld Ibn Sa'ūd's position in central Arabia but also helped the common cause before the announcement of the Ottoman surrender to the Allies.

The next chapter illustrates Philby's role in the rivalry between Najd and Hejaz and the elimination of the Hejazi Kingdom by Sa'ūd.

CHAPTER FIVE

PHILBY AND THE RIVALRY BETWEEN NAJD AND HEJAZ AND THE ELIMINATION OF THE HEJAZI KINGDOM,1918-1925

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Philby's role in the conflict between Najd and Hejaz and the political competition between the two authorities in Baghdad and Cairo. It is also an attempt to address the main factors in Philby's decision to support Ibn Sa'ūd in his struggle to include the Khurmah oasis under Saudi sovereignty. In addition, it illustrates how Philby was able to protect Ibn Sa'ūd from the British officials in Cairo and London who wanted to make Hussain the dominant figure in Arabia, in return for his remarkable efforts against the Turkish forces during WWI. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to shed light on what made Philby's prediction come true regarding the decisive victory of Ibn Sa'ūd against Hussain in the battle of Truabah, proving that the policy-makers had mistaken the condition of affairs in Arabia . Moreover, the chapter focuses on the main factors that led Philby to mediate between Hejaz and Najd in their conflicts and asks whether, despite his resignation from the British Government, it was true that Philby was still working on the side of Britain as an undercover agent and was one of the crucial actors in the elimination of the Hejazi kingdom.

The Khurmah crisis

Khurmah represented a major point of contention between Ibn Sa'ūd and Hussain. This, as some historians have suggested, was due to its important location as well as the significance of its trade routes. It is situated in the west of Arabia on the frontier between Najd and Hejaz, about 142 miles north-east of Ṭaif, and it was seen as the

back-door to central Arabia.¹ Philby believed that most of the people in Khurmah were Wahhabi and that the district had belonged to Najd since the early decades of the 19th century.² Philby's claim was probably true. The historical accounts, during that period, indicated that the inhabitants of Khurmah were influenced by the Wahhabi movement when the First Saudi State took control of them.³

Hence, it is not surprising that the tendency of the population of Khurmah to support the Wahhabism continued to intensify in the following century, in particular after the great victories in central Arabia won by the Wahhabi soldiers and their leader, Ibn Sa'ūd. However, it was not only, as Silverfarb suggests, the religious aspect that was the main reason behind Ibn Sa'ūd's demand to include Khurmah under his sovereignty⁴ but also political reasons. Ibn Sa'ūd believed that the oasis was rightfully his because it had been ruled by his ancestors in the 19th century.

Khair al-Din al-Zereky, a contemporaneous historian, asserted that Hussain's claim to dominion over Khurmah was based on two factors. First, the nearness of the Khurmah

¹ Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.257; Daniel Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute', p.37; Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd*, p.89.

² Philby, 'The Triumph of the Wahhabis', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/9/3, p.10; Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390. See also interesting accounts written by Philby regarding Khurmah that can be found in a telegram sent by Baghdad to Simla, 9 July 1918, TNA, FO 882/9. Al-Zaydey agreed with Philby and suggested that the residents of Khurmah were fundamentally from the Subai, most of whom had settled in Najd. See his thesis: 'Saudi-British diplomatic relations', p.9.

³ Regarding the control of Khurmah by the First Saudi State and the Wahhabi influence during the 19th century, see Ibn Bisher, *'Unwān al- Majd fī Tārīkh Najd* [The Symbol of Glory in the History of Najd], vol.1, pp. 241- 244; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.131. For the loyalty of the Khurmah tribe to Ibn Sa'ūd, see a letter from Abdullah Ibn Hussain to Jabber Ibn Abdullah, 27 September 1917, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5. This file has not yet been archived with its new reference. Author's Interview with Debbie Usher, the Archivist, 20 June 2014, Oxford

⁴ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p.37.

district to his own kingdom and second, the presence in Khurmah of some members of his family, called al-Ashraf.⁵ However, besides these, there was a factor that impelled Hussain to take aggressive action regarding Khurmah. This was the risk that the Wahhabi influence would threaten his kingdom and spread the Wahhabi creed among the Hejazi tribes who, in consequence, might fear Hussain and transfer their allegiance to Ibn Sa'ūd.⁶

As a result, when Hussain became aware of the Wahhabi occupation of the Khurmah oasis,⁷ he endeavored first to close the Hejazi markets to Najd commerce⁸ and second to replace the Amir Khalid Ibn Luwai,⁹ the chief of Khurmah, who, in return, rebelled and proclaimed his allegiance to Ibn Sa'ūd, asking for his protection.¹⁰ Because of his ambition to become king of the Arabs, Hussain decided to crush the insubordination by despatching an expedition to take control of the Khurmah oasis but Khalid Ibn Luwai was able to defeat Hussain's force in early June 1918 without any support from Ibn

⁵ Khair- al-Din al-Zereky, *Shibh al-jazīrah fī 'ahd al-Malik Abdul Aziz* [Arabia in the ear of King Abdul Aziz (Beirut: Maṭābi' Dār al- Qalam, 1970), vol.1, pp.317-318.

⁶ Regarding Hussain's concern about the growing Wahhabi movement, see a telegram from Wingate to FO, 23 December 1917, TNA, FO 371/3056.

⁷ The tribes of Khurmah visited Riyadh and announced their loyalty to the ruler of Najd, Ibn Sa'ūd. See a telegram from Baghdad to Simla, 7 June 1918, TNA, 371/390; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p.257.

⁸ See the letter in Arabic from some Najdi traders to Ibn Sa'ūd, 24 March 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, 15/5.

⁹ Sharif Khalid Ibn Mansour Ibn Luwai was one of the greatest leaders who supported Ibn Sa'ūd and had a great impact on the unification of Saudi Arabia. He died in 1932 when he was leading Ibn Sa'ūd's forces to suppress the Idrisi revolt that occurred in the south west of Saudi Arabia. For more details see al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.2, pp.299-300.

¹⁰ Memorandum written by Captain Garland, 4 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/390. See the letters exchanged between Khalid Ibn Luwai, the Amir of Khurmah, and Ibn Sa'ūd in MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5; Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p.38.

Sa'ūd. In July, Hussain decided to despatch another expedition to Khurmah, but this met with the same fate as the previous military expeditions.¹¹

Philby's confrontation against the Cairo authorities

It is apparent that Ibn Sa'ūd realized that such a conflict with Hussain, the most important British ally against the Ottoman Empire, would place him in a state of dissension with Britain and might endanger the monthly subsidy that he was receiving from the British Government.¹² Therefore, on the advice of Philby, Ibn Sa'ūd notified the Amir Khalid that he would request Britain to prevent Hussain from mounting further offensives against Khurmah and at the same time Khalid himself must maintain in a defensive position and abstain from any further movement over the Hejaz.¹³ Moreover, Philby confirmed to the British authorities in Baghdad that he was "perfectly convinced that Ibn Sa'ūd has no aggressive designs of any part of Hijaz".¹⁴

Indeed, Philby's function at the time was to induce Ibn Sa'ūd to set up friendly relations with Hussain.¹⁵ However, Philby's advice and his satisfaction suggest that he realized that Hussain's contribution to the war against the Turks was more stable than Ibn Sa'ūd's. He therefore strongly urged Ibn Sa'ūd to maintain peace in the region in order not to lose in his claim over Khurmah. It is clear that Philby's advice did not meet with

¹¹ Baghdad to GI, 9 July 1918, TNA, FO 371/3390.

¹² See the 'Memorandum' written by Edward Wilson, the British Agent in Jeddah, to Wingate, 1 May 1918, TNA, FO, 371/3380.

¹³ Ibn Sa'ūd to Khalid Ibn Luwai, 27 June 1918, MECA. *Philby collection*, B.15/5; Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

¹⁴ Baghdad to Simla repeated to Arbur (Cairo), 9 July 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

¹⁵ Philby, 'The Triumph of the Wahhabis', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/9/3.

approval from the British authorities in Cairo who believed that Ibn Sa'ūd should withdraw from Khurmah and allow Hussain to exercise full sovereignty over the disputed province. Consequently, the British officials in Cairo brought out more and more arguments against Ibn Sa'ūd.¹⁶ For example, Major K. Cornwallis, the Director of the Arab Bureau in Egypt, firmly believed that Khurmah belonged to Hussain's territories and he supported the King in punishing the seditious elements among his people.¹⁷ Moreover, the British Residency, in Jeddah, showed its full support for Hussain's position regarding Khurmah as follows:

I have no doubt in my own mind that it is really necessary for Khurmah to be recaptured by the King and for Khalid [Ibn luwai] to be expelled from the neighborhood, not only for the King's prestige but equally, or more important, to prevent the activities of the Ikhwan from spreading further Westwards, which might have serious consequences.¹⁸

In addition, Reginald Wingate, the High Commissioner in Egypt, prophesied that the fall of Khurmah would affect Hussain's prestige especially when the latter was leading the Arab military against the Turks in Madina, the second holy city located in the north of Hejaz. He also requested that Philby should warn Ibn Sa'ūd against intervening in the affairs of Khurmah and should prevent him from any further attacks in the district.¹⁹ Philby, after investigating, retorted to Wingate that Ibn Sa'ūd had not provided any

¹⁶ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p.39.

¹⁷ Cornwallis's notes, 18 July 1918, TNA, FO 882/13.

¹⁸ Wilson to Wingate, 23 July 1918, TNA, FO 371/ 3381.

¹⁹ Wingate to FO, 31 July 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

support to the inhabitants of Khurmah and, moreover, he prevented them from retaliating against Hussain's forces.²⁰

To a great extent, it can be assumed that the controversy between Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd appeared recondite and complicated. This may have been due to the fact that much of Hussain's political ambition was in conflict with the ambition of Ibn Sa'ūd to establish his own kingdom. Cox confirmed this fact when he predicted that Ibn Sa'ūd would not be reconciled to being Hussain's subordinate and he doubted whether Hussain would crush Ibn Sa'ūd.²¹ Consequently, it is clear that Cox's support may be considered a vital element in intensifying Ibn Sa'ūd's power in his rivalry with Hussain and in opposing the policy toward Cairo. Therefore, one cannot be surprised that Philby, with his sympathy for Ibn Sa'ūd, should follow Cox's line, proceed with the British policy for Baghdad to boost Ibn Sa'ūd's position and warn Hussain that his attacks on Khurmah would contribute to an ominous result.

As Philby noted:

The Sharif [Hussain] has only himself to thank for the bitterness, which exists between himself and Ibn Saud. His attacks on Khurmah will long rankle in the breasts of the people of Najd.²²

It also seems that there was a further fundamental factor which helped Philby to strengthen the position of Ibn Sa'ūd. This was the policy of the Indian officials who

²⁰ Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390,

²¹ Graves, *The Life of Percy Cox*, p. 245.

²² Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

believed that supporting Hussain would encourage nationalism in the region. This might have an effect on Muslim opinion in India and they therefore suggested that Ibn Sa'ūd was seeking only to maintain his position.²³ As a result, it must be concluded that the policy of the India Office served to support the ambition of Ibn Sa'ūd, when he was simply seeking to establish his own independence, unlike Hussain, who was demanding after the war to rule part of the territory of the Ottoman Empire, which, indeed, contradicted the intention of the British imperial policy at the time.²⁴

In any case, after the clash between the two Arabian chiefs in June 1918, Khalid Ibn Luwai continued to send many messages to Ibn Sa'ūd to stiffen his rivalry with Hussain; however, Ibn Sa'ūd still exercised restraint. As he wrote to Khalid:

Mr. Philby visited us and we instructed him to inform the British Government that Hussain should stop his aggressive actions against you. Please do not take any aggressive action against Hussain and do not exceed your boundaries.²⁵

The question that arises is why Ibn Sa'ūd should want to pursue a policy of peace at this particular period. It is obvious that Ibn Sa'ūd was currently beset by a serious problem: the revolt of the Ajman tribe, who were still threatening his eastern territories.²⁶

As a result, Ibn Sa'ūd had no wish to multiply his hazards until he had dealt with this

²³ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p.41.

²⁴ Philby understood clearly that Ibn Sa'ūd's project was to establish his own complete independence. See Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p. 123; Hammād, *a'medat al-esti'mar fi al-'alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World], p.60.

²⁵ Ibn Sa'ūd's letter to Khalid Ibn Luwai, 27 June 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5. The letter is in Arabic and has been translated by author.

²⁶ Regarding the Ajman issue see Loch's memorandum, 7 May 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F1/4/1/2; a telegram from Cox GI, 20 August 1918, IOR, R/5/15/10.

revolt. In addition, as he realized that Hussain was Britain's most important ally in the region, Ibn Sa'ūd had no wish for political controversy with Britain and he may have wanted to prove to Britain that he had not initiated a war against Hussain.

In his ongoing support for Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby argued to Britain that the general feeling in Najd was indignant; the people were victims of religious oppression and Ibn Sa'ūd was unable to restrain the Wahhabi warriors from helping their brothers in Khurmah. Furthermore, in order to avoid conflict, Philby seems to have advised Ibn Sa'ūd that Britain would appoint an equitable British commission in order to draw the boundary between Hejaz and Najd.²⁷ Consequently, it can be assumed that Philby's recommendation of arbitration over the disputed territory may be considered the primary factor in enhancing the power of Ibn Sa'ūd and acquiring for him the legitimate right to rule the Khurmah oasis.

At this juncture, the British authorities in Baghdad endorsed Philby's opinion that Hussain should be restrained from any further attack against Khurmah. Acting on Philby's report, the authorities in Baghdad exonerated Ibn Sa'ūd from being responsible for hostile action and found it a good moment to increase the pressure on Hussain in order to preserve peace in the region. Hence, Philby proposed that an

²⁷ Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

appreciative message to support Ibn Sa'ūd should be sent from the Secretary of State for India.²⁸ Cox made the following comments on the basis of Philby's telegram:

This account seems to clear Ibn Sa'ūd of aggressive action. Suggest that pressure should now be brought on Sharif [Hussain] to maintain peace as conflict with Akhwan element would seriously compromise efforts against Turks. If you concur would argue appreciative message from [the] Secretary of State to Ibn Sa'ūd as Philby proposes.²⁹

In the view of the British officials in Cairo, it was clear that Hussain should be supported on the Khurmah issue and therefore it was decided that Philby should respond to Ibn Sa'ūd that it was impossible to arbitrate the frontier because Khurmah was considered purely a matter of internal administration in relation to Hussain and there was no intention of taking hostile action against Ibn Sa'ūd's territories.³⁰ Such instructions made it plain that Hussain had every right to repress Amir Khalid Ibn Luwai, the ruler of Khurmah, and that Ibn Sa'ūd was not entitled to demand control of Khurmah. It also appears that Hussain was now provided with a green light to control the area.³¹

In response, Ibn Sa'ūd virtually rejected the new British message that authorized Hussain to occupy Khurmah, complaining that the district did not belong to the Hejaz and informing Philby that the Najdi people would not accept the British decision. He

²⁸ Baghdad to GI, 9 July 1919, TNA, FO 317, 3390; Baghdad to Simla (India), repeated to Arbur (Cairo), 9 July 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

²⁹ Cox to Philby, 10 July 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

³⁰ Baghdad to Cairo, 23 July 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2, p.24; Eastern Committee, 26th meeting minutes, 15 August 1918, TNA, C 27/24.

³¹ See the report written by E. Wilson, 23 July 1918, TNA, FO 371/3381.

also expressed his full readiness to meet Hussain to resolve the fate of the disputed territory.³²

In July 1918, Hussain decided to discipline the insurgents and to drive Khalid Ibn Luwai out of Khurmah. He commanded Sharif Shakir Ibn Zaid³³ to occupy Khurmah, but his force was crushed for the third time by the Amir Khalid Ibn Luwai.³⁴ It was obvious after these triumphs that Ibn Sa'ūd's strength in Khurmah had increased rapidly, ignoring the British instructions that he must withdraw his supporters from the disputed region.

Such a victory by Ibn Sa'ūd's followers in Khurmah had a negative impact on the British officials in Cairo, who seemed in consequence to put more pressure on the authorities in Baghdad. Their efforts were particularly successful in the absence of Percy Cox, who tended to exercise an impartial policy in Arabia. Philby was distinctly instructed to deliver a message to Ibn Sa'ūd that he should renounce his claim of entitlement to Khurmah and should also put a stop to the extreme actions of his followers.³⁵

³² Ibn Sa'ūd to Philby, 30 August 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

³³ Sharif Shaker Ibn Zaid Ibn Fwāz (1885-1934) was born in Mecca. He was the cousin of King Hussain. At the outbreak of the war, he joined Hussain's revolution against the Turks. In 1920, he accompanied the Amir Abdullah to Transjordan. He ruled Transjordan from time to time in the absence of Amir Abdullah. For further information, see Mohammed al-'badi, *Amir Shaker Ibn Zaid 1885-1934* [The prince Shaker Ibn Zaid] (Amman: Werd Publication, 2014).

³⁴ Memorandum written by E. Wilson, 21 July 1918, TNA, FO 371/3381. Regarding the victory of Khalid Ibn Luwai against Sharif Shaker, see a telegram from Baghdad to GI, 26 July 1918, TNA, FO 371/3390; Khalid Ibn Luwai to Ibn Sa'ūd, 7 July 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5.

³⁵ Baghdad to GI, 8 August 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

However, Philby dismissed the idea of conveying this message to Ibn Sa'ūd, stating that it seemed equivocal and might let Ibn Sa'ūd believe that Britain tended to side with the position of King Hussain. He added, however, that he could persuade Ibn Sa'ūd to prevent his followers from taking action against Hussain's forces.³⁶ Philby's behaviour may appear inscrutable, but it may be inferred that it would be difficult for him to instruct Ibn Sa'ūd to withdraw from Khurmah while the latter was vehemently insisting that the district lay under his suzerainty. Furthermore, Philby may have believed that such a message would have a negative impact on the relations between Britain and Ibn Sa'ūd. As a result, whatever the cause of his omitting to send a message of this kind, it essentially indicates that Philby played a profound role in the conflict between the two authorities (Baghdad and Cairo) and enhanced or consolidated the decision of Ibn Sa'ūd to expand his territories by capturing Khurmah. Therefore, it seems that, given the right moment by Philby, Ibn Sa'ūd indicated that he would not abandon Khurmah, affirming that he would not leave Amir Khalid Ibn Luwai his agent in Khurmah if the latter were attacked by Hussain. This is clear from his order to despatch 450 warriors to the disputed province as reinforcements.³⁷ From these rapid developments on the ground, it appears that the British authorities in Cairo were forced to put further pressure on Ibn Sa'ūd by issuing a resolution from H.M.G. that Ibn Sa'ūd should be ordered to

³⁶ Memorandum written by Philby, 13 August 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.134.

³⁷ Wilson to Wingate, 24 November 1918, TNA, FO 686/40; Baghdad to Philby, 27 November 1918, IOR, R/15/2/34.

withdraw his followers from Khurmah province. The Political Agent in Jeddah, Edward Wilson, urged the following action:

H. M. G. must choose between [the] King [Hussain] and Ibn Saud, otherwise the Arabian barrier will probably become like Russia. I argue most strongly that the King be chosen and that peremptory message be sent immediately to Ibn Sa'ūd from H.M.G., ordering him to withdraw all [the] Akhwan from Khurmah district , and, failing compliance, H.M.G. will break off relations with him.³⁸

A few days later, Clayton supported Wilson's proposal and suggested that Ibn Sa'ūd should be informed without delay of the new instructions and if he refused to abandon Khurmah, all possibilities of pressure, not only diplomatic pressure, should be imposed on him in order to teach him that he could not be in the state of contradicting the policy of the British Government.³⁹ Acting on Wilson's report, Wingate informed the British Government that the spread of the Wahhabi would pose a great threat to the Islamic places in the Hejaz and that Ibn Sa'ūd should relinquish and withdraw from the whole neighbourhood of the Khurmah district. If he refused to comply, measures should be taken against him such as the stoppage of his subsidy and the blockade of his markets; and, more important, retaliatory military measures would be taken against him.⁴⁰

In order to relieve the pressure on Ibn Sa'ūd, Philby made it clear that all Hussain's actions against Ibn Sa'ūd would not change the attitude of the inhabitants of Khurmah

³⁸ Wilson to Arab Bureau, 3 December 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

³⁹ Clayton's notes, 10 December 1918, TNA, FO 882/9.

⁴⁰ Wingate to FO, 10 December 1918, IOR, R/15/2/34.

toward King Hussain and they would not accept his suzerainty over them. In addition, Philby endeavored to present the issue legally on the side of Ibn Sa'ūd. This can be observed when he indicated that, in the treaty which had been signed with Ibn Sa'ūd in 1915, the British Government acknowledged his independence. According to articles two and seven of the treaty, Britain was obliged to defend Ibn Sa'ūd from any aggression and to include a further detailed treaty to determine the boundaries of the territory.⁴¹

The treaty shows impartially, under examination, that article two promised that in the case of unprovoked aggression by any foreign powers, Britain would be prepared to defend and protect Ibn Sa'ūd to the extent and in the way that conditions might require. Furthermore, article six instructed Ibn Sa'ūd to abstain from all aggression in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the coast of Oman, which were under British protection, and in any territories that would be determined hereafter.⁴² However, while it was difficult to accept that article two did not apply to Hussain, who could be considered a 'foreign power', Philby was able to exploit these articles in order to modulate the treaty in accordance with Ibn Sa'ūd's interests and he was therefore luckily able to persuade his superiors to amend the treaty in favour of Ibn Sa'ūd. Regardless of whether or not

⁴¹ Philby, 'Report on Najd Mission', 12 November 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Baghdad to the Secretary of State, for India, 7 August 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2/1. Regarding the treaty that Britain had signed with Ibn Sa'ūd in 1915, see: *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, pp. 427-. 436; J.C. Hurewitz, ed, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record 1914-1956* (Princeton, 1956), pp. 17-18; Mūkhṭār, *Tārīkh al- Māmlākah al- arabīyah al-Sū'dīyah* [The History of Saudi Arabia], pp.174-176; Silverfarb, 'The Anglo-Najd Treaty of December 1915' , pp. 167-177; Jacob Goldberg, 'The Origins of British-Saūdi Relations: The 1915 Anglo-Saūdi Treaty Revisited,' *The Historical Journal*, pp. 693-703.

⁴² See the terms of the treaty between Ibn Sa'ūd and the British Government in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, pp.435-436.

the British Government recognized Philby's hard work, the following statement refers to the approval of the Baghdad authorities regarding Philby's action:

Bin Saud to be informed in writing that Article two of Treaty of December 26th 1915 applies equally to aggression by King Hussain and that a special Commissioner will be sent by H. M. G. as soon as conditions admit to determine the boundaries of the territories referred to in Article one of the treaty and to conclude the further agreement referred to in Article seven.⁴³

Needless to say, it was obvious that Philby played a prominent role in stabilizing the position of Ibn Sa'ūd and provided him with the legal right that he needed in Khurmah district. He also represented a stumbling-block to the efforts of the British officials in Cairo, who would never have given up their support for Hussain.

The British authorities in both India and Iraq were still favouring Ibn Sa'ūd. For instance, while Shuckburgh, a considerable figure at the India Office, accused Hussain of being to blame for the repercussions of the recent war in Khurmah, he described Ibn Sa'ūd as being right in his allegation that there was an alteration in the British policy toward him.⁴⁴ Sir Arthur Hirtzel⁴⁵ made some crucial points before the British officials in Cairo who wanted to set Hussain up as a prominent leader in the Arab world. First, he suggested that there was no Arab chief in Arabia and that Iraq would recognise

⁴³ Baghdad to the Secretary of State for India, 7 August 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/1/2.

⁴⁴ Memorandum written by Shuckburgh, 21 October 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁴⁵ Sir Frederic Arthur Hirtzel (1870-1937), was a British civil servant and a member of staff at the India Office, where he started his career in 1896. Between 1909 and 1917 he was Secretary of the Political Department before being appointed as Assistant Under-Secretary; he became Deputy Under-Secretary of State in 1917 and remained until 1924. From 1924 to 1930, he was the Permanent Under-Secretary of State and retired after spending more than 30 years in the Home Civil Service. See *The Times* (London), 'Sir Arthur Hirtzel (Obituary)', 4 January 1937.

Hussain's suzerainty over the whole of the Arab territories.⁴⁶ Second, and more importantly, he pointed out that the establishment of a strong Arab State would be a more serious threat than that of the Ottoman Empire, which would encourage the nationalists and be an incitement to millions of Muslims in India and Egypt who were under British rule.⁴⁷ In addition, in order to support Ibn Sa'ūd, Hirtzel claimed that Ibn Sa'ūd had been given little justice by the British authorities in Cairo and Wingate's proposal that Ibn Sa'ūd should be compelled to withdraw his followers from Khurmah was not practicable.⁴⁸

At any rate, with regard to the authorities in Baghdad, Cox accepted Philby's report that, although Ibn Sa'ūd had received substantial provocation from Hussain, he showed great endurance and restraint.⁴⁹ In addition, it was indicated that the insistence of Hussain over Khurmah would not only lead to increasing hostility but would also shake Ibn Sa'ūd's confidence in the sincerity of Britain's intentions toward him.⁵⁰

Influenced by Wilson's report, Wingate realized that Philby might be considered as a thorny obstacle to the success of the Cairo authority's policy in Arabia. Therefore, it was no surprise that Wingate requested, as replacement for Philby, the appointment of Lieut-Col. Leachman, who had a comprehensive knowledge of tribal affairs.⁵¹ However,

⁴⁶ Hirtzel, 'Notes on policy on Arabia', 20 November 1918, IOR, L/PS/18/B297.

⁴⁷ Hirtzel, 'Remarks on Foreign Office Memorandum', undated, FO 371/3386.

⁴⁸ Hirtzel to E. Crowe, 12 December 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁴⁹ Baghdad to Kuwait, 2 August 1918, MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/1/2.

⁵⁰ Baghdad to GI, 15 November 1918, IOR, R/15/2/34.

⁵¹ Notes written by Shuckburgh, 21 October 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

Wingate's proposal did not succeed because Philby had previously decided with Ibn Sa'ūd that he had to go to Kuwait and Baghdad in order to defend Ibn Sa'ūd.⁵²

Philby and the meeting of the Inter-Departmental Conference

It was plain that the contradictory policies from Cairo and Baghdad had turned Khurmah, a minor village, into a critical issue in the history of Arabia. This is evidenced by the decision that the Khurmah dispute should be handled by an Inter-Departmental Conference that replaced the Eastern Committee in 1919.⁵³ Silverfarb observed that Lord Curzon, the acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had a pivotal effect on British policy in the Arabian Peninsula and it seems that he showed sympathy with the Indian view of Ibn Sa'ūd. He was the most important opponent of the British officials' proposition that the British Government should provide Hussain with absolute leadership of the Arab peoples. However, although Curzon showed support for Ibn Sa'ūd he was forced to follow the British officials in Cairo; they were entirely upheld by the British government in supporting Hussain in the boundary dispute with Ibn Sa'ūd.⁵⁴

The meeting of the Inter-Departmental Conference was held on 14 January 1919. Curzon submitted that it would show wisdom to ignore the rivals as much as possible but he feared the damage that might be inflicted by Ibn Sa'ūd's forces in the Holy

⁵² Baghdad to GI, 16 October 1918, TNA, FO 371/3390.

⁵³ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.156, n.78.

⁵⁴ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', pp.44-45.

Places in Hejaz. This being the case Hussain should be provided only with the assistance of munitions. In general, for the moment, the meeting concluded that no necessary action need be taken by HMG⁵⁵

At this juncture, in January 1919, Philby returned to England to take some leave after more than ten years in the East. From his autobiography, it can be seen that, after working in Iraq and Arabia he had no desire to settle down in a career in the ICS.⁵⁶ The state of frustration that Philby experienced may have been linked to several factors. First, the state of manifest controversy and conflict between the two authorities in Cairo and Baghdad, who could not reach a satisfactory solution among the Arab rulers, affected him badly. Second, when the war against the Turks was over, Philby left Arabia for Iraq but found no supporter such as Percy Cox. He found instead Arnold Wilson, the Acting Civil Commissioner, who had had considerable disagreements with Philby owing to political competition.⁵⁷ In addition, during Philby's mission to Arabia, he was annoyed by the alteration of Wilson's attitude toward Ibn Sa'ūd and by the fact that Wilson had joined the Cairo officials who supported Hussain in the Khurmah dispute. As a result, in order to relieve the pressure upon him, Philby found that he had no better option than going on leave for a year.

⁵⁵ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle East affairs, 3rd meeting minutes, 14 January 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁵⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.175.

⁵⁷ Wilson's altered view of Ibn Sa'ūd is discussed below.

Before the Inter-Departmental Conference held its second meeting on 24 February 1919 to consider the disagreements between the two Arabian rulers, it seems that the supporters of Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd mobilized their staff in order to present their opinions. For example, while Curzon selected Philby to provide Baghdad's point of view, Wingate and Clayton backed Wilson to present Cairo's opinion.⁵⁸

At the Conference, Philby pointed to evidence that during his year in Arabia he had reported the aggressive moves of King Hussain's forces against the inhabitants of Khurmah, who had managed to defend themselves. As he confidently stated, the case was complicated because of the demands of King Hussain, who tended to resolve the boundary dispute in his own favour.⁵⁹ Philby again repeated his suggestion that a British mission should be sent to demarcate the boundary between Hejaz and Najd.⁶⁰

It seems that Philby believed that demarcation was an equitable solution for the two rivals; indeed, Ibn Sa'ūd had previously agreed to the idea of demarcation. Moreover, Philby suggested that having good relations with Ibn Sa'ūd, in particular since the war, was the most important consideration, because if Ibn Sa'ūd felt there was British animosity he might incline to France or Italy.⁶¹ In fact, it seems that Philby exaggerated Ibn Sa'ūd's willingness to approach France or Italy. At this stage, there seems no

⁵⁸ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.141.

⁵⁹ Philby, *Arabian Days*, 176.

⁶⁰ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle East affairs, 10th meeting minutes, 24 February 1919, IOR L/P&S/10/389; Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p.46.

⁶¹ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle East affairs, 10th minutes, 24 February 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p.46.

documentary evidence to substantiate Philby's view. The Saudi establishment of relations with France and Italy occurred after Ibn Sa'ūd's victory against Hussain and the elimination of the kingdom of Hejaz in 1925. Furthermore, at this juncture, it seems unlikely that Ibn Sa'ūd would have inclined to France or Italy when he had signed a treaty with Britain in December 1915 that put him under British protection and he was not allowed to deal with any foreign powers without informing Britain. At any rate, in the view of Philby, if the British Government let the two great Arabian leaders fight, there was the dire risk of an invasion of Mecca by Ibn Sa'ūd's forces.⁶² Monroe in her book claims that the conference marked Philby's opinion as not in accordance with the British policy.⁶³ However, it should be remembered that the conference was under the influence of the British officials in Cairo and the Foreign Office some of whose members were entirely on the side of King Hussain, as is shown below.

At all events, Wingate responded to Philby's submission opinion by saying that Khurmah was part of Hussain's kingdom and he firmly believed that Hussain could easily crush the latter.⁶⁴ He also rejected Philby's proposal for a boundary commission. However, in the interests of imposing a peaceful settlement in the region, Wingate proposed a solution which was immediately to stop Ibn Sa'ūd's monthly subsidy until Hussain restored his suzerainty over Khurmah and all movement by Najdi warriors toward the Hejaz had stopped. It was also suggested that if Ibn Sa'ūd did not acquiesce

⁶² Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle East affairs, 10th minutes, 24 February 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p.46.

⁶³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.89.

⁶⁴ Howarth, *The Desert King*, p.108.

in this arrangement the Anglo-Najdi treaty could be rescinded and his eastern ports could be besieged.⁶⁵

It was evident that, while Curzon agreed with Wingate's objection to Philby's suggestion of a boundary commission, he was not convinced by Wingate's proposal that the British government should exert more pressure on Ibn Sa'ūd to leave the Khurmah district. He concluded the conference by reaffirming the resolution made on 14 January 1919 that Britain should not intervene between the two contenders and informed the authorities in Cairo and Baghdad of this decision.⁶⁶

Daniel Silverfarb claims that such a decision did not meet the desire of the British authorities in Cairo or Baghdad. While it did not arrange the boundary commission that Philby desired, it still did not compel Ibn Sa'ūd to withdraw from Khurmah.⁶⁷ This claim seems to be valid and it should be borne in mind that Curzon's resolution was practically in favour of Ibn Sa'ūd. To tell the truth, it not only allowed Ibn Sa'ūd to keep control of Khurmah, but also, by failing to insist on his withdrawal from disputed territory, it could be seen as legitimizing his possession of Khurmah, which enhanced his overall power in the region.

With regard to the attitude of the British officials in Cairo, it appears that they rejected Curzon's decision. Clayton in Cairo, for example, stated that Britain should back Hussain

⁶⁵ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle East affairs, 10th meeting minutes, 24 February 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁶⁶ Ibid; IO to Baghdad, 26 February 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁶⁷ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p. 47.

against the Wahhabi infringement and thus show Ibn Sa'ūd that Britain held the power in the region.⁶⁸ However, the surprise came from Iraq, where the officials had always shown a tendency to support Ibn Sa'ūd. In opposition to the British officials in Iraq, Arnold Wilson changed his attitude to Ibn Sa'ūd and stated that Hussain should retrieve and restore his authority in Khurmah. He also suggested an immediate end of Ibn Sa'ūd's subsidy. He was anxious lest the Ikhwan movement should prove a threat to Mecca and the routes of Muslim pilgrimage.⁶⁹ This changed view was sustained for the next few months and he later still believed that Khurmah was part of the Hejazi district. He had written:

The Emir Ibn Saud claims that Khurmah is within the boundaries of his Emirate of Najd. As far as I am aware, practically no evidence has been produced by Ibn Saud to substantiate his claim. All evidence ... is unanimous on the point that [the] Khurmah district for generations has been under the jurisdiction of the Emirs of Mecca.⁷⁰

Silverfarb has examined the reasons behind Wilson's alteration toward Ibn Sa'ūd. First, he suggested that Wilson might have been under the influence of the British authorities in Cairo, given that Wilson had visited Cairo not long before. Second, Wilson seemed to be infuriated that he had not been consulted in the policy-making by the Inter-Departmental Conference.⁷¹ Silverfarb's suggestion appears to be logical but it should be noted that Monroe provided important accounts of Wilson's apparent

⁶⁸ Clayton to FO, 4 March 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/806.

⁶⁹ Wilson to IO 2 March 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/390. Also see M. Cheetham's telegram to Foreign Office, 7 March 1919, IOR, R/15/2/34.

⁷⁰ Wilson, 'Some Notes on the Ownership of Khurmah', 8 August 1919, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p.208.

⁷¹ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p. 48.

dissatisfaction with Philby's reports of Ibn Sa'ūd's affairs. He believed that Philby's enthusiasm for Ibn Sa'ūd was extravagant and his judgement of the ruler lacked objectivity, due to his long immersion in Arabian affairs during his tour of duty.⁷² Consequently, it may be assumed that their previous unpleasant relationship and the difference of political views between Philby and Wilson in 1917-1919 may have played a negative part in forming Wilson's attitude to the affair of Najd and Ibn Sa'ūd, its ruler.⁷³

Wilson's opinion was condemned by the India Office, which believed that such behaviour on his part would alienate Ibn Sa'ūd from the British cause.⁷⁴ However, it seems that the great impact of the British authorities in Cairo and now Baghdad were the fundamental reasons persuading Curzon to discuss the issue again at the Inter-Departmental Conference.⁷⁵

The meeting was held on 10 March 1919 and, to no-one's surprise, Wingate gave it his full support. He continued his advocacy of Hussain, repeating his suggestion that Ibn Sa'ūd's subsidy should be interrupted. He added that there was no advantage in having

⁷² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.87; al-Zaydey, 'Saudi – British diplomatic relations', p.170.

⁷³ Some years later, Wilson altered his political view regarding Philby and acknowledged that his services to Britain were mainly typified by integrity and sincerity. Wilson wrote to Philby in 1924, "Our national reputation for honesty and straightforwardness in affairs has been enhanced by your frank adherence to your creed". See, Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, 87.

⁷⁴ Notes by Shuckburgh, 7 March 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

⁷⁵ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p. 48.

a boundary commission and that Khurmah should be ceded to Hussain.⁷⁶ Al- Zaydey describes Wingate as ‘the enemy of arbitration’. He assumes that the prime reason behind Wingate’s rejection of it was that Wingate feared that it would allow Khurmah to be awarded to Ibn Sa’ūd because its residents were principally Wahhabi adherents.⁷⁷ Such a concern seems reasonable. However, it should not be forgotten that some sections of the inhabitants of Khurmah, called Subai, were located in Najd, and concentrated in Ramah, a village 74 miles to the north east of Riyadh.⁷⁸ Therefore, Wingate’s fear of arbitration may not have rested on religious reasons only, as stated above, but may have had a tribal element. This may have been another factor that would provide Ibn Sa’ūd with a strong argument in the case against Hussain if it came to arbitration.

In the event, the policy of the India Office at the conference was to remain in favour of Ibn Sa’ūd. Shuckburgh in particular asserted that the essential task was to restrain the Wahhabi from attacking the holy places in Hejaz. In addition, he argued that adopting Wingate’s proposal might exasperate the Wahhabi and, far from protecting the Holy Places, would increase the chances of their invading them.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Inter-Departmental Conference, 12th meeting minutes, 10 March 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389. In fact, Wingate had decided to oppose the arbitration policy in October 1918. See his telegram to FO, 24 October 1918, TNA, FO 371/3390.

⁷⁷ Al-Zaydey, ‘ Saudi – British diplomatic relations’, p.191.

⁷⁸ Regarding the Subai tribe who lived in Najd and had originally lived in Khurmah, see Khāhālīh, *Mu’jam qabil al- Arab* [Dictionary of Arab Tribe], vol.2, p.502; Wāhbāh, *Jazīrat al-‘Arab fī al-qarn al-‘ishriīn* [Arabia Peninsula in the 20th century] ,p.46.

⁷⁹ Inter-Departmental Conference, 12th minutes, 10 March 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

Once again, Curzon recalled Philby to attend the conference. It is noteworthy that Philby, aware of the conditions in Arabia, continued his defence of Ibn Sa'ūd, asserting that the ending of his monthly subsidy would not disturb him at a time when he was also being ordered to withdraw from Khurmah. Moreover, Philby was convinced that Ibn Sa'ūd was not able to abandon Khurmah easily. He repeated his argument that a British boundary commission should define the disputed frontier.⁸⁰

Ultimately, it seems that Philby for a while lost his battle, not only because of the domination of the British authorities in Cairo but because Curzon determined that Hussain should be authorized to seize Khurmah and that Ibn Sa'ūd should be informed of the new decision, with a warning that any attempt to reject it would lead to the unmitigated displeasure of the British Government.⁸¹ Ahmed AL. Faiy'a claimed that Curzon was entirely on the side of Hussain.⁸² However, the minutes of the Inter-Department show that Curzon refused to terminate Ibn Sa'ūd's subsidy, preferring to reduce it by half.⁸³ This suggests that although Curzon was influenced by the representatives of the Cairo officials, he was able to save Ibn Sa'ūd from having all his subsidy withdrawn, implying a policy of impartiality regarding the contending parties.

⁸⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p177; Inter-Departmental Conference, 12th meeting minutes, 10 March 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁸¹ Philby, *Arabia Days*, p.177.

⁸² Ahmed al-Faiy', *al-'lāqāt bina al-Malik Abdul Aziz wa- al- Malik Hussain wa- ḍam al-Hejaz* [The relations between King Abdul Aziz and King Hussain and the inclusion of Hejaz] (Riyadh: King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 2012), p.152.

⁸³ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.141.

Before the end of the conference, Curzon asked Philby to assess Ibn Sa'ūd's attitude and forecast what was likely to occur when the Najdi ruler received the decision. Philby replied as follows:

Well, Sir, I said, I have no doubt whatever that, when this message reaches Riyadh, Ibn Sa'ūd will immediately mobilize his forces and march down to the defence of Khurmah ... I have already told you my opinion of the probable result.⁸⁴

Hussain was delighted by the conference resolution and despatched a military force of about 5000 under the leadership of his son, the Amir Abdullah, in order to recapture Khurmah. He informed the Acting Political Agent in Jeddah that his son, Abdullah, had succeeded on 21 May 1919 in taking control of Turabah after a minor battle that had not lasted long and was now preparing to advance toward Khurmah.⁸⁵ At the same time, as Philby predicted, Ibn Sa'ūd began to counter Hussain's preparations. First, he despatched reinforcements for his followers in Khurmah under the leadership of Sultan Ibn Bejad⁸⁶ in order to defend and if possible consolidate his agent in Khurmah, Khalid Ibn Luwai. Second, Ibn Sa'ūd marched toward Khurmah with about 12,000 warriors and camped in Sakphah, 80 miles to the north-east of it.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Philby, *Arabia Days*, p.177.

⁸⁵ Hussain to G. Bassett, 23 May 1919, TNA, FO 686/17.

⁸⁶ Sultan Ibn Bejad al- Otybai was the chief of the most important tribe, the Otybah. After embracing the Wahhabi ideology, the Sultan, together with his tribe, made profound efforts to unify the Arabian Peninsula under the leadership of Ibn Sa'ūd . He participated in the collapse of Ḥail in 1921 as well as the expulsion of the Hashemite Emirate from Hejaz in 1924. For political and religious reasons, he proclaimed a revolt against Ibn Sa'ūd in 1928 and was defeated in the famous battle of al-Sbalah. Ibn Sa'ūd put him in prison, where he died in 1932. For more information, see, al-Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd], pp.228-231,294-299,301-302,324,331,355.

⁸⁷ Note by Captain H. Garland, 4 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.142.

It was clear that Ibn Sa'ūd would not break his promise to support his followers in Khurmah yet he remained up to the last moment concerned to avoid a war against Hussain. He warned the British Government of the military operations against his followers, reasserting his desire for arbitration and justifying his movement toward Khurmah with the claim that pressure of public opinion obliged him to counter Hussain's aggression. He promised that "If the King and [his son] Abdullah remain in their own place, I will remain in mine".⁸⁸ Such serious developments and the impending outbreak of warfare between the two Arabian chiefs obliged the Inter-Departmental Conference to hold another meeting on 28 May 1918 to debate the issue.⁸⁹ Previously, the conference had received a telegram from General Allenby, who had now become the Acting High Commissioner in Egypt; he recommended that immediate action had to be taken to prevent a fateful battle between the two conflicting parties. He also pointed out that if Ibn Sa'ūd defeated Hussain, the former would probably break into Mecca. He concluded his recommendations by stating that it was time for Britain to stand beside Hussain and support his demands against Ibn Sa'ūd, who, in turn, should be warned that he must withdraw his troops from Khurmah. If he failed, his British subsidy should be cut off and his relations with Britain would be in a state of severance.⁹⁰ In contrast, Philby firmly opposed Allenby's suggestions for fear that they might prove fruitless. Once again, Philby argued that a British warning of this kind to Ibn Sa'ūd would not force the latter to withdraw from Khurmah. Philby indicated that

⁸⁸ Allenby to FO, 27 and 28 May 1919, TNA, FO 608/80.; *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p.168.

⁸⁹ Inter-Departmental Conference, 20th minutes, 28 May 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁹⁰ Allenby to FO, 27 May 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; TNA, FO 686 /17.

Ibn Sa'ūd considered that such withdrawal would reflect on his local prestige in the eyes of the Najdi people.⁹¹

Despite being isolated at the conference and losing the support from Iraq, Philby remained steady in his extreme defence of Ibn Sa'ūd, although he received no corroboration from the representative of the India Office, who was totally silent throughout the conference.⁹² Even worse, Philby's opinion elicited sarcasm in particular from the representatives of the Cairo authorities. The conference was manifestly moving in favour of Hussain, most clearly when some members of the Foreign Office put forward a policy in his support and suggested that Ibn Sa'ūd's activities should be under a blockade while tanks should be despatched to Hussain in order to help him to victory.⁹³

However, none of these arrangements was accepted. Shuckburgh asserted that the policy of a blockade was arduous to implement in wartime. He also rejected the idea of sending tanks to Hussain because, as he stated, Hussain had no personnel who could use these machines effectively.⁹⁴ Eventually, Curzon ended the conference by stating that the British government was now in favour of Hussain and considered Ibn Sa'ūd's

⁹¹ Inter-Departmental Conference, 20th minutes, 28 May 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁹² Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p. 50.

⁹³ Inter-Departmental Conference, 20th meeting minutes, 28 May 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

action hostile to H.M.G. If he refused to withdraw from Khurmah, he might lose all the benefits of the treaty that he had signed with Britain in December 1915.⁹⁵

However, the conference had hitherto known nothing about the unpleasant nocturnal events of 25th-26th May 1919. Without the participation of Ibn Sa'ūd, the Ikhwan military under the leadership of Amir Khalid Ibn Luwai and Sultan Ibn Bejad substantially destroyed Abdullah's regular forces, seizing all his guns and machine guns. Miraculously, Abdullah himself survived and at once fled with nothing but his life.⁹⁶

Some historical outcomes stemmed from this. In the first place, Philby's experience enabled him to read the future confidently and he was entirely correct in forecasting that Ibn Sa'ūd would easily beat Hussain. His prediction may have been accurate for several reasons. His long period in Arabia had allowed him to get very close to Ibn Sa'ūd and comprehend the ruler's insistence on regenerating and re-establishing the Wahhabi state. In addition, his mission to Najd had also enabled Philby to recognize the power that Ibn Sa'ūd could depend on. It owed much to the high fighting capability of the Ikhwan. Second, Philby made the policy-makers who dealt with Arab affairs look blameworthy by obstinately refusing, in particular, to invite a British boundary commission which might have prevented a war between the two Arabian rulers. Third,

⁹⁵ Inter-Departmental Conference, 20th meeting minutes, 28 May 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

⁹⁶ Hussain to Bassett, 29 May 1919, TNA, FO 686/17; Notes by Captain H. Garland, 4 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/390; Gilbert Clayton, ' Arabia and the Arabs ', *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Jan, 1929), p.14. Philby in his autobiography (*Arabian Days*, p.178) asserted incorrectly that the battle occurred on 19 May 1919.

the outcome of the battle of Turabah not only led to greater power for Ibn Sa'ūd in Khurmah but also added Turabah to his suzerainty. Fourth, and most importantly, the battle of Turabah proved that the assumption of Wilson, Allenby and Wingate that Hussain would easily crush Ibn Sa'ūd was wholly inaccurate. Furthermore, the Hejazi cities were now open to let the Wahhabi fighters enter Mecca and a great many of the Hejazi people, in Turabah above all, preferred to be on the side of Ibn Sa'ūd, perhaps due to his increased power or to fear of the Wahhabi soldiers.

The impact of Hussain's defeat on the British officials in Cairo was tremendous. The Political Agent in Jeddah, Colonel Wilson, was frightened that Ibn Sa'ūd's troops would extend their control and overrun all the territories of Hejaz; he suggested an immediate action to remove the large number of British Indians who were already denizens of Mecca and Jeddah. More importantly, he asked Allenby to send some of the British warplanes to Hejaz in order to impede Ibn Sa'ūd's onward march if it continued towards Mecca.⁹⁷ However, the Government of India rejected Colonel Wilson's request, indicating that the despatch of the warplanes to Hejaz, where Mecca was, might be considered to be disrespectful of Islam and increase the feeling of resentment on the part of the British Indian soldiers.⁹⁸ Allenby ignored the Government of India's warning and sent six aeroplanes with pilots to Hejaz for use in times of need. In order

⁹⁷ See Wilson's report in Allenby's telegram to FO, 10 June 1919, TNA, FO 371/4146; Wilson to Allenby, 9 June 1919, TNA, FO 686/17.

⁹⁸ GI to Allenby, 11 June 1919, TNA, FO 686/17; IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

to justify his behaviour he indicated that this action was in compliance with Hussain's request to save Hejaz from the possible results of an incursion by the Wahhabi.⁹⁹

An Inter-Departmental Conference was held on 13 June to discuss these disturbing events in Arabia.¹⁰⁰ The conference debated the issue of deploying Indian Muslim troops to Hejaz. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, strongly denounced such an action:

The employment of Indian Mahomedan troops was the fear of unpleasant incidents, or even mutiny, amongst the Mahomedans of the Indian Army when they heard that Indian troops were being sent to support a Mahomedan chief [Hussain] who had rebelled against the Caliph.¹⁰¹

Allenby received a conciliatory message from Ibn Sa'ūd, avowing that he had no intention of invading Hejaz and hoping that British arbitration would resolve the issues of the disputed territory. He also stated that Ibn Sa'ūd had pledged to withdraw his forces to the internal lands of Najd if Britain assured him that Hussain's military would not march forward to Khurmah. Moreover, Allenby recommended the establishment of negotiations between Ibn Sa'ūd and the son of Hussain, Amir Abdullah.¹⁰²

It can be inferred from Allenby's words that he had become less threatening and cruel to Ibn Sa'ūd, perhaps because Allenby until then had not fully understood the power of

⁹⁹ Allenby to FO, 12 June 1919, TNA, FO 371/4146.

¹⁰⁰ *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p.173.

¹⁰¹ Inter-Departmental Conference, 21st meeting minutes, 13 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389; *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p.174; Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p. 52.

¹⁰² Allenby to FO, 14 June 1919, TNA, FO 608/80.

Ibn Sa'ūd's forces and the military tactics of the Ikhwan soldiers as Philby understood them. Consequently, it can be said that Ibn Sa'ūd and Philby together led Allenby to moderate his harsh language and made him realize that Ibn Sa'ūd's military resources were stronger than those of his own man, Hussain.

It seems that the recent developments in Arabia were not the main reason behind the Inter-Departmental Conference's meeting on 17 June 1919; it was necessary also to discuss Allenby's suggestion. However, the conference would not have taken place without the presence of Philby who was staying in Eastbourne at the time, writing his first travel book, *The Heart of Arabia*. He received an urgent message from the Foreign Office, asking him promptly to attend the conference.¹⁰³

Undoubtedly, Philby was now confident because his prediction of victory for Ibn Sa'ūd had been vindicated. Curzon opened the conference by outlining the outcomes of the battle of Turabah and the state of widespread panic among the Hejazi inhabitants and asking what could be done to deter the Wahhabis if they advanced toward Hejaz.¹⁰⁴ He requested Philby's assessment. First, Philby criticized Allenby's proposal, pointing out that his suggestion of a meeting between Ibn Sa'ūd and Abdullah with their forces might lead to increased bloodshed if they were armed.¹⁰⁵ This military reasoning seems to be valid, given the state of considerable enmity between the two sides. However, it

¹⁰³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.90; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.141.

¹⁰⁴ *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p.177; Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tarikh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.77.

¹⁰⁵ Inter-Departmental Conference, 21st meeting minutes, 13 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

could be added that political reasons might strengthen objections to such a meeting, since Hussain would not agree to any negotiation with Ibn Sa'ūd, whom he considered to be a subordinate.

As an expert in Arabian affairs, Philby endeavored to ease the state of consternation among the attendants by stating that Ibn Sa'ūd would not follow up his victory and move toward Hejaz; he had full ability to control his warriors and was too rational to place himself in the wrong with Britain by invading the Hejaz. In response to a question by Curzon about the measures that Britain might take to protect the Hejaz if the Wahhabi reached it, Philby suggested that first the Foreign Office should change the decision that had been made in the last meeting of the Inter-Departmental Conference, which was not at all in Ibn Sa'ūd's favour. Second, Philby proposed that Britain should accept Ibn Sa'ūd's tenure of Khurmah, but he should withdraw from Turabah, which was undoubtedly within the Hejazi boundary.¹⁰⁶

With these satisfactory solutions, as he saw them, combined with an invitation to the British boundary commission, Philby guaranteed that Ibn Sa'ūd would be satisfied. In order to implement such arrangements on the ground, Philby proposed the despatch

¹⁰⁶ *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p.178. In his autobiography (*Arabian Days*, p.180) Philby provided a different proposal regarding Khurmah and Turabah. He now wanted the two territories to be given to Ibn Sa'ūd. Such a wish indeed contradicts what is mentioned in the 22nd meeting minutes of the Inter-Departmental Conference, which seems to be more accurate than Philby's sketch. See the 22nd minutes, 17 June 1919 in IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

of a messenger to tell Ibn Sa'ūd the new proposals and also to encourage him to withdraw from the Hejaz region.¹⁰⁷ Philby proposed himself as this envoy.¹⁰⁸

In the event, the conference preferred Philby's recommendation to Allenby's. Philby was requested to inform Ibn Sa'ūd that if he halted his advance toward Turabah, then H.M.G. would arbitrate in the dispute between him and Hussain. Moreover, it was decided that Philby should fly to Cairo where he would temporarily be under Allenby's instructions for the objective of the mission before meeting Ibn Sa'ūd in Arabia.¹⁰⁹

From the resolution of the Interdepartmental Conference, Silverfarb observes that Britain abandoned its previous policy of supporting Hussain in his struggle to capture Khurmah. He also notes that Britain now preferred to negotiate with Ibn Sa'ūd and eliminate the verdict of the British commission regarding Khurmah, which was now agreed to be on the side of Ibn Sa'ūd. He concludes that such a change in the British policy toward Ibn Sa'ūd was due to concern to avoid any aggression that might occur in the future in the Holy Places of the Hejaz and also to impede any increase in the French influence in Arabia and the need of Ibn Sa'ūd's support for Britain in Iraq.¹¹⁰ However, what may be added in this case is that the British Government now realized the growth of Ibn Sa'ūd's power. Neither the cutting of his subsidy nor the threat of severing

¹⁰⁷ Philby, *Arabia Days*, pp.179-180.

¹⁰⁸ Inter-Departmental Conference, 22nd meeting minutes, 17 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389. Philby suggested that he was chosen by Curzon to be sent to Ibn Sa'ūd. See his autobiography, *Arabian Days*, p.180.

¹⁰⁹ *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p.177.

¹¹⁰ Silverfarb, 'The British Government and the Khurmah Dispute, 1918-1919', p. 54.

relations with Britain would have much of an effect on him. In addition, the nature of Ibn Sa'ūd's lands and their location might strengthen his position in central Arabia. Therefore, it seemed difficult, at this point, for the British army to involve itself in any military adventures in the Arabian Desert. Consequently, in order to avoid such hazards and the embarrassment that might ensue, Britain altered all its previously harsh view of Ibn Sa'ūd and found itself now in negotiations with the ruler of Najd, Ibn Sa'ūd.

As instructed, Philby prepared himself to meet Ibn Sa'ūd. On 21 June 1919 he was taken by aircraft to Cairo.¹¹¹ There he met Allenby who provided him with the further instruction that he must force Ibn Sa'ūd to implement the conference's decision and also persuade him not to perform the Pilgrimage this year because the emergence of the Wahhabi at Mecca would greatly exacerbate the issue. After three days of difficult weather, Philby arrived at Jeddah in early July 1919.¹¹²

However, Philby could not meet Ibn Sa'ūd because Hussain informed him that he was not permitted to proceed through the Hejazi provinces. Hussain also refused to debate the objectives of Philby's mission, rejecting arbitration and asserting that Khurmah was

¹¹¹ The Foreign Office took full responsibility for Philby's expenditure in this mission to the Middle East. See, a telegram from FO to Philby, 10 August 1920, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5.

¹¹² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.90; Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tarikh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History] p.79.

part of his territory.¹¹³ It was evident that he was not satisfied with the new British policy and would not negotiate while his antagonist was still in possession of Khurmah.

Monroe claimed that Hussain's refusal was the main factor in the disappointing end of Philby's mission to Arabia.¹¹⁴ Such a claim seems logical, in particular because Hussain gave a misleading impression of having solved the issue both to the British Government and Ibn Sa'ūd. It should be remembered, however, that while Philby was in Cairo, Ibn Sa'ūd ordered his troops to return to Riyadh, as the Inter-Departmental Conference had decided, and proclaimed that he would not perform the Pilgrimage this year.¹¹⁵ From this, one could have inferred that Philby's proposal had succeeded and Ibn Sa'ūd had met the desire of the British Government, at least when the danger of invasion by Ikhwan troops was ended by Ibn Sa'ūd's withdrawal.

Philby and the mediation of the Najdi-Hejazi conflict 1924-1925

Before dealing with Philby's mediation regarding the collapse of the Hejazi kingdom, a brief historical sketch of the political conditions after the battle of Turabah between Najd and Hejaz should be provided.

Britain did not lose hope of making peace between Najd, on the one hand, and the Hashemites in Hejaz, Iraq and Transjordan, on the other. It was decided in late 1922 to hold a conference in Kuwait to try to reach a satisfactory agreement between the

¹¹³ Allenby to FO, 25 June 1919, TNA, FO 371/4146.

¹¹⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p 91.

¹¹⁵ Allenby to FO, 25 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/390.

parties.¹¹⁶ After almost a year of discussions, Britain succeeded in persuading both sides to send delegates to the conference held on 17 December 1923, but Hussain refused to participate because he had not been consulted about these arrangements from the beginning. He sent his apologies for not attending the conference, under the pretext of lack of time.¹¹⁷

Previously, Philby had been approached for his comments “on the draft of the instructions proposed to be issued to the president-elect of the Conference to enable him to guide the deliberations and decisions of the delegates in the direction desired by the British Government”.¹¹⁸ Philby’s comments seem to have been highly critical, but this was not the only reason that the CO disregarded them. In fact, they were based on some unarguable facts. For instance, before holding the conference it had been decided that Ibn Sa’ūd should restore Khurmah to Hussain. However, this undertaking would not only be refused by Ibn Sa’ūd but it would also run counter to the British decision taken by the Inter-Departmental Conference on 17 June 1919, that Khurmah was to be on the side of Ibn Sa’ūd.¹¹⁹ Hence, once again, Philby’s prediction regarding the failure of the conference came true and the conference ended without

¹¹⁶ See the minutes of the Kuwait Conference in IOR, R/15//1/594 and R/15//1/595, December and January 1923-1924; Reader Bullard’s Report to Curzon, 29 November 1923, TNA, FO 371/ 8946; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 198-210.

¹¹⁷ Reader Bullard to Lieut.-Col. Arthur Trevor, 19 December 1923, IOR, R/15/1/594; Arthur Trevor to IO, 13 January 1924, *Ibid*; Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 198; al-Faiy ‘, *al-’lāqāt bina al-Malik Abdul Aziz wa-al- Malik Hussain* [The relations between King Abdul Aziz and King Hussain], p.215.

¹¹⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p. 229.

¹¹⁹ See the Inter-Departmental Conference, 22nd minutes, 17 June 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/389.

any suitable agreement between the parties. In addition, Philby forecast that such a failure would result in the invasion of Hejaz by the Wahhabis within six months.¹²⁰

Consequently, it appears that Philby realized the crux of the matter. The demands that Hussain imposed on his two sons, over whom he had great influence, implied the following: that Ibn Sa'ūd should abandon Khurmah and return Ḥail to its former ruler, Ibn Rashid; that Asir, the territory located in the south-west of Arabia, should be evacuated and restored to its original ruler; and that the Hejazi kingdom should receive compensation for the recent invasion of the Wahhabi.¹²¹ Indeed, Philby anticipated a great change in the map of Arabia because Ibn Sa'ūd was determined to extend his territories to the north of Arabia. At present, they touched the southern borders of the Hashemites in Iraq and Transjordan. The Hejazi kingdom of Hussain was itself surrounded on the north, south and east by Ibn Sa'ūd's lands and it was only a matter of time, as Philby suggested, before Ibn Sa'ūd included the Hejaz under his control before gaining control over the whole of Arabia.¹²² In addition, Philby clearly understood that Britain was beginning to lose patience with Hussain, who had become an obstacle; all attempts to induce him to accept the new general lines of British policy

¹²⁰ Philby to the High Commissioner of Palestine, 19 November 1923, TNA, CO 733/51; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p. 229; Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.72.

¹²¹ See Hussain's demand in Najī al- Aṣail I's letter to FO, 16 November 1923, IOR, R/15/1/594.

¹²² From the south west of Arabia, Ibn Sa'ūd controlled Asir in July 1920. See a letter from Ṣadik Ḥassān to Harold Dickson, the Political Agent in Bahrain, 31 July 1920, IOR, R /15/1/557; a report regarding the political conditions of Najd, written by Major H. Dickson, 12 August 1920, TNA, FO 371/5065; Hashem al-N'ū'mi, *Tārīkh 'sir* [The History of 'sir] (Riyadh: King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1999), pp. 351-358. Concerning the north of Najd, Ibn Sa'ūd included the Rashidi Emirate of Ḥail in November 1921. See the telegram of the Political Agent in Bahrain to Cox, 19 November 1921, IOR, R/15/5/25; Cox to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 December 1921, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, p. 407.

in the Middle East had failed lamentably. As a result, Britain seems to have thought it wise to abandon Hussain, not least because Hussain's sons, Abdullah and Faiṣal, showed full cooperation and consented to the British mandate in Transjordan and Iraq; Hussain himself was left to meet his fate with his sworn enemy, Ibn Sa'ūd.¹²³

Therefore, the road now lay open to Ibn Sa'ūd, whose followers entered Ṭaif on 6 September 1924 and in the following month he managed to capture Mecca.¹²⁴ Faced with this disaster, Hussain abdicated the throne in favour of his eldest son Ali, hoping that the latter could save the rest of the Hejazi kingdom. Hussain left Hejaz for Aqaba by British ship, but the British Government decided instead that he should be exiled to Cyprus in order to prevent any further conflicts between him and Ibn Sa'ūd.¹²⁵

The reasons for Philby's intervention

At this stage, in April 1924, Philby resigned from Government service, but he remained a British official until May 1925 when his resignation would take effect, preferring to

¹²³ Hussain would not accept the Mandate and refused to sign the Anglo-Hashemite alliance which indicated that he held sovereignty only over the Hejaz. See Lawrence to FO, 2 January 1921, TNA, FO 371/6242; Paris, *Britain, The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sherifian Solution*, pp.280-283. In addition, Hussain's declaration of a Caliphate in order to be its spiritual leader would be rejected not only by Britain but also by Ibn Sa'ūd. See Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p. 216; Hamdi, *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia fi 'hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz* [John Philby and Saudi Arabia in the era of King Abdul Aziz], p.49; Paris, Britain, *The Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sherifian Solution*, p.283.

¹²⁴ Regarding the capture of Ṭaif see Bullard's report to Ramsay MacDonald, 9 September 1924, TNA, FO 371/10014; Bullard's circular letters to his family, 14 September 1924, MECA, *Bullard collection*, F.1/1. For the collapse of Mecca see Bullard's telegram to FO, 15 October 1914, IOR, L/P& S/10/1124; al- Zerekly, *al-Wajīz fī sirat al-Malik Abdul Aziz* [The Biography of King Abdul Aziz], pp. 84-86.

¹²⁵ In fact, the Hejazi notables forced King Hussain to abdicate in favour of his son Amir Ali. See their telegram to Bullard, 3 October 1924, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol, 3, pp.644-645. Regarding the departure of King Hussain to his new place of exile, see Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia*, p.225; Joshua Teitelbaum, 'Sharif Husayn Ibn Ali and the Hashemite Vision of the Post-Ottoman Order: From Chieftaincy to Suzerainty', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Jan, 1998), p.118.

use “the long terminal leave owed him” to go to London.¹²⁶ While in London he learned that Ibn Sa‘ūd had driven Hussain out of Hejaz and was now preparing to besiege Jeddah, where Ali had organized the defences. Philby determined to enter Arabia in order to mediate between the conflicting parties.¹²⁷ In fact, there were a variety of reasons for Philby to want to mediate in any conflict between the Hejazi and the Najdi. While Monroe and Halperin believed that Philby had nothing to do with the case of espionage when he had resigned from government service,¹²⁸ Hammād claimed in his two books that Philby was still working as an undercover agent for his country and the real reason behind his desire to mediate was to eliminate the Hashimi presence in Hejaz.¹²⁹ Hammād seems in fact to have had a negative view of British colonialism: his writings are mainly under the influence of nationalism and therefore this assumption on his part was unwarranted. In her book, *Spies in Arabia*, Priya Satia believes that Philby, like any British official, was an intelligence officer or informal spy during WWI and in the post war period.¹³⁰ However, regarding Philby’s mediation, she indicates to the *Guardian* that Philby visited Arabia to mediate between King Ali and Ibn Sa‘ūd and that Philby acted as a government agent on that visit. She states:

¹²⁶ ‘The Cause of Mr. Philby’s Resignation’, 17 June 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/5/1; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.239; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.143; Meyer and Shareen, *Kingmakers: The invention of the Modern Middle East*, p.247.

¹²⁷ Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, p.74.

¹²⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.129-132.; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, pp.143-145.

¹²⁹ Hammād, *Philby: Ket’h min Tarikh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], p.156; Hammād, *a’medat al-esti’mar fi al-‘alam al- Arabi* [The Pillars of Colonialism in the Arab World], p.145.

¹³⁰ Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, pp.115,117,142,180.

Philby's shifting status posed an equal problem. When he attempted to go to Najd to mediate between Ibn Saud and Hussain¹³¹ as a *private individual* just after leaving government service in 1924, the Middle East Department could only futilely contradict the press statement that he was going as a government representative, for precisely such private and unofficial relationships had been the mainstay of official interactions with Arabian potentates in the past. Their démentis were considered newsworthy only in the *Guardian*.¹³²

From the above, although Satia does not explicitly state that Philby was a spy, she implies that there is certainly some ambiguity or even some suspicion about his relations with the Arabian delegates, especially when the public/press had already decided that Philby's visit was in an official capacity rather than a private one and the government could only futilely contradict the purpose of Philby's venture in a press statement. However, neither Satia nor the *Guardian* could provide documentary evidence to substantiate their claim that Philby was a spy, least of all when Philby had officially resigned. Therefore, it can be argued that, Philby was not in the end authorized by the British Government to mediate in this conflict but, as it happens, he would have been unwelcome there. The following statement reveals how the British Government prevented Philby from visiting Arabia:

I beg to inform you that His Majesty's Government, having heard of your proposal to come to Jeddah, have instructed me to inform you that in view of the unsettled state of central Arabia they cannot permit you to enter the interior.¹³³

¹³¹ In fact, Philby visited Arabia to mediate between Ibn Sa'ūd and Ali, the successor of Hussain, who had abdicated before Philby's arrival in Jeddah. Regarding Hussain's abdication see the Hejazi notables' telegram to Bullard, 3 October 1924, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 3, pp.644-645

¹³² Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, p.325.

¹³³ Bullard to Philby, 27 October 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5; Bullard's report to MacDonald, 30 October 1914, TNA, FO 371/10015. In his circular letters to his family, Bullard asserted that he had

It might be argued that the above telegram could have been sent if Britain had wanted Philby's spying kept secret, even if he had been an undercover agent. However, the author went to the National Archives and the British Library and also explored Philby's collection at St. Antony's College, Oxford University, and found that there was no indication of secret letters between Philby and his government to suggest that he was involved in espionage especially after Philby's request to resign from the service in April 1924. In addition, the above documentary evidence shows that Philby was not a British envoy and also indicates, at this juncture in particular, that he did not have any official mission since he had resigned from the British service five months before. However, the question that should be asked is, 'If Philby was so vehemently warned off by the British government, why did he venture to approach Naji al-Aşail,¹³⁴ King Ali's agent in London, to arrange a visit to Hejaz?' Perhaps there were both primary and secondary reasons for doing so. The essential reason pertains to the difficult conditions that Philby experienced after leaving the British service. He believed that the best way to get out of his economic predicament was to fall back on commerce. His letter to Ibn Sa'ūd illustrates Philby's desire to work in Arabia and, more importantly, it reveals that the letter was written before Ibn Sa'ūd's invasion of Hejaz. Philby stated:

Your Highness knows that I have resigned from all my official posts for the love of your people and on the basis that I do not agree with British foreign policy in your Arab

seen Philby and disapproved of his visit, which he thought would bring unmerited suspicion on the British Government. See Bullard's circular letters, 11 December 1924, MECA, *Bullard collection*, F.1/2.

¹³⁴ Naji al-Aşail (1897-1963) was from Iraq. He worked as a doctor in the Ottoman Army until King Hussain made him his personal representative in the Anglo-Hejazi negotiations in the period 1922- 1924. For more information see al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.7, p.344.

country ... Concerning these personal matters, you know that before the recent happenings in Hejaz I had written a letter informing you that I was coming to see you and I have proposed through Abdulatif al Mandil¹³⁵ some commercial ideas and my intention was to consult you about these matters.¹³⁶

Regarding the secondary reasons, it may be speculated that Philby was perhaps in a state of frustration, after his resignation in particular, when his views were not appreciated by the British officials. He may have believed that his mediation would prove his ability to create a mutually satisfactory settlement between the contending parties. In addition, the craving for celebrity and personal fame may have been another factor that led Philby to seek entry into Arabia. Before the invasion of Hejaz, Philby had consented to join Rosita Forbes,¹³⁷ in order to explore the Rub' al Khali (the Empty Quarter), the greatest desert in Arabia, and he probably thought that Forbes' proposal would revive his old project of gaining fame by exploring such a little-known area, which was beyond the experience of any Western traveller.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Abdulāṭif al- Mandil was Ibn Sa'ūd's political Agent in Basra. See some information about him in al-Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd], pp.170, 186,190-191,281.

¹³⁶ Philby to Ibn Sa'ūd, 9 December, 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5.

¹³⁷ Forbes, (Joan) Rosita (1890–1967) was a British traveller who had an excellent knowledge of Arab affairs. Her first exploration was in North Africa when she explored the Libyan Desert and wandered the oasis of Kufra. Her second journey was to Yemen in 1922 when she decided to visit Ethiopia. In 1930, another journey was made from Angorato Afghanistan and in the following year she did a tour of South America. In 1935, she travelled from Kabul to Samarkand. For additional information about her and her famous books see Dorothy Middleton, 'Forbes, (Joan) Rosita (1890–1967)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2011, accessed 4 Oct 2015.

¹³⁸ One of the main factors that encouraged Philby to accompany Forbes when he knew that the expedition of the Empty Quarter would be funded by *The Daily Telegraph*. See Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.129. Without any documentary evidence, Brown alleges that the journey of the Empty Quarter was just a cover to enable Philby to meet Ibn Sa'ūd and help him in his conflict against King Ali. See his book, *Treason in the Blood*, p.82

Whatever the motivation, Philby and Forbes decided to leave England secretly and separately and to meet in Bahrain and travel onwards in the hope of meeting Ibn Sa'ūd in central Arabia. However, when Forbes learned that Ibn Sa'ūd would be too busy to support their enterprise, she hesitated and then cancelled her plan, but Philby did not lose hope that Ibn Sa'ūd would support him in his project and therefore travelled on towards Arabia. In Egypt, he telegraphed Ali offering his assistance as mediator and was welcomed and received by the king in Jeddah on 24 October 1924.¹³⁹ It was evident that Philby's adventure had caused a great stir and put Britain in an awkward position, not least because Britain had taken a neutral position in the conflict between Hejaz and Najd. The following lines illustrate the further effort to warn Philby and prevent him from entering Arabia:

I am directed by His Majesty's Government to warn you that they cannot permit you to enter Central Arabia in view of the present conditions there. Any disobedience of these or any orders issued by His Majesty' Government will be viewed by them in a serious light.¹⁴⁰

In addition, Britain informed Ibn Sa'ūd and Ali that Philby had no official standing to negotiate with either of them.¹⁴¹ However, Philby ignored the British instruction and advised Ali that the only solution for him, bearing in mind the weakness of Jeddah's defence force, was to drive to Mecca and throw himself on the mercy of Ibn Sa'ūd; this

¹³⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.129; Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.241.

¹⁴⁰ From the Political Resident in Aden to Philby, 8 January 1925, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5. Philby's visit caused great excitement among the Hejazi inhabitants because they thought that the British Government had sent him. See Bullard's report to MacDonald, 20 October 1924, TNA, FO 371/10015.

¹⁴¹ A report written by Francis Prideaux to the Political Resident in the Gulf, 13 November 1924, IOR, L/P&S/10/977.

would be the only way of preventing bloodshed.¹⁴² In the meantime, Philby had to return to England. Monroe and other historians claim that the British Government warned Philby again and threatened that if he pursued his venture into the interior he might be exposing himself to the loss of his pension.¹⁴³ That the British threat ended the first part of Philby's adventure may be true. However, it seems that there were additional reasons for his return to England. First, after negotiating with Ali, Philby wrote to Ibn Sa'ūd, who was still travelling towards Mecca, asking to mediate between him and Ali, but Ibn Sa'ūd refused this offer, stating that the issue was an Islamic problem only. In a polite letter, Ibn Sa'ūd reminded him:

You mentioned that you came to us to discuss some personal matter – you hinted at the current problem. My dear sir, if you come to meet us and discuss some of the personal problems that concern us, you will be most welcome and we are ready to meet. But if you intend to interfere in the affairs of the Hejaz, I do not see that these discussions would be of any use ... My dear Philby, it is not in my personal interests nor in yours to make you a mediator in such an Islamic matter.¹⁴⁴

The second compelling reason for Philby to leave Hejaz was his exposure to the serious illness of dysentery, which rendered him helpless for a couple of days. He then decided, on 3 January 1925, to sail to Aden for expert treatment before returning to England.¹⁴⁵ However, after recovering and spending several months in England, Philby determined

¹⁴² Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.244; Philby to Ibn Sa'ūd, 1 December 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5.

¹⁴³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.130; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.144; Hamdi, *John Philby wa Saudi Arabia fi 'hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz* [John Philby and Saudi Arabia in the era of King Abdul Aziz], p 53. Regarding the British threat to Philby, see the telegram from the Aden Residency to Philby, 8 January 1925, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5.

¹⁴⁴ A letter (in Arabic) from Ibn Sa'ūd to Philby, 25 December 1924, MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5.

¹⁴⁵ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.131.

to return. Philby and Ibn Sa'ūd's discussed the siege of Jeddah and, more importantly, the establishment of the Sharqieh Company.¹⁴⁶ Brown at this point makes a serious accusation against Philby and portrays his meeting with Ibn Sa'ūd as an act of espionage in Ibn Sa'ūd's favour, in that Philby delivered some military information about Ali's forces, which were "in a military sense, quite incapable of putting up any serious opposition ... the great majority of the people would be only too glad to see an end put to their suffering and hopeless situation."¹⁴⁷

In response to this allegation, it may be noted that Brown is quoting here from Philby's autobiography but has manipulated the words in order to accuse Philby.¹⁴⁸ In addition, before the last visit of Philby to Jeddah, it was clear and well known, not only to Ibn Sa'ūd but also to Britain and public opinion in Hejaz, that the military position of Ali was very weak and it was merely a matter of time before the latter would surrender to Ibn Sa'ūd, after the collapse of all the cities of Hejaz and the secession of numerous Hejazi soldiers to Ibn Sa'ūd's forces.¹⁴⁹ It is plain, then, that Philby did not play a significant role in the elimination of the Hejazi state; the ultimate victory of Ibn Sa'ūd was a matter of course.

¹⁴⁶ Philby, *Arabian Days*, p.241. See also the exchange of letters between Philby and Ibn Sa'ūd in MECA, *Philby collection*, B.15/5.

¹⁴⁷ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, pp.89-90.

¹⁴⁸ See Philby's account (*Arabian Days*, pp. 249-250) compared with Brown's allegation.

¹⁴⁹ Regarding the difficulty of King Ali's position, see al-Rihani, *Tārīkh Najd al-ḥadīth* [The History of modern Najd], p.383; The report of Stanley Jordan, the Acting Consul in Jeddah, to Austen Chamberlain, 29 October 1925, TNA, FO 371/10810. . In fact, King Ali was in need of money and telegraphed his father and his brother, King Faiṣal, to say that if they did not support him financially he would leave Jeddah. See Jordan's telegram to the FO, 1 December 1925, IOR, L/P& S/10/1127.

At any rate, Philby decided to leave Jeddah to Port Sudan and await the final verdict on the destiny of Hejazi kingdom. Ali came to a decision to leave the throne on 17 December 1925 and Ibn Sa'ūd therefore entered Jeddah and dominated the greater part of the Arabian Peninsula. He was now ready to develop his country with the assistance of Philby, who decided, in return, to settle there.¹⁵⁰

Overview

The chapter showed that the religious factor was not the only reason behind Ibn Sa'ūd's claim to include Khurmah in his territory. Political and tribal aspects might be considered further factors. In addition, King Hussain's allegation about the ownership of Khurmah was based not only on its proximity to his kingdom or the fact that some of its inhabitants were members of his branch of the family, but also on his fear of the spread of Wahhabi influence that might menace the Hejazi tribes in his kingdom.

In order to maintain peace in Arabia between the British allies during the war against the Ottoman, the chapter concludes that Philby was able to persuade Ibn Sa'ūd to take up a defensive position. This was perhaps a crucial factor in his defence of Khurmah. However, the chapter has demonstrated that the conflict between King Hussain and Ibn Sa'ūd was more complicated than this, because of the collision of their rival political

¹⁵⁰ King Ali communicated with Britain via the Acting Consul in Jeddah, Jordan, when he wanted to surrender and signed the articles of conciliation with Ibn Sa'ūd . See King Ali to Jordan, 14 December 1925, IOR, L/P& S/10/1115; Ibn Sa'ūd to Jordan, 17 December 1925, *ibid.*

aspirations to rule the same territory and the controversy created by what is called “the crisis of Khurmah”.

Obviously Philby derived some benefits from defending Ibn Sa‘ūd’s case. First, Cox’s support may be considered crucial in enhancing Ibn Sa‘ūd’s attitude to Khurmah. Second, Ibn Sa‘ūd’s political project, which was to win independence, unlike that of King Hussain, who desired to take over the whole of the Ottoman Empire in the Near East, coincided with the policy of the India Office, who desired to keep the remnants of the Ottoman Empire under British occupation.

The chapter revealed why Ibn Sa‘ūd took no offensive action against King Hussain. First, he recognized that such action would place him in a difficult position with Britain, which was in urgent need of the services of King Hussain who had led the Arab revolt against the Turks. Second, during WWI, Ibn Sa‘ūd had suffered from the great threat to his region from the Ajman tribe. Third, on the advice of Philby, Ibn Sa‘ūd wanted to prove to Britain that he had not been the one to initiate the conflict between Hussain and himself.

Regarding Philby, it is plain that he played a vital role in the conflict. His proposal to send a British boundary commission may be seen an essential pillar to strengthen Ibn Sa‘ūd’s position in preserving the Khurmah oasis. In addition, Philby was perhaps right to ignore the message from the Cairo authorities to instruct Ibn Sa‘ūd to relinquish Khurmah, which would have resulted in great controversy between the ruler and

Britain. However, such negligence fuelled Ibn Sa'ūd's obstinacy and gave him more time by despatching reinforcements to Khurmah. Furthermore, Philby found himself in a serious dilemma when he confronted Wingate, Colonel Wilson and Allenby and demolished their plan to impose a pro-Hussain policy in Arabian affairs. In addition, by referring to the 26 December 1915 treaty, Philby was able to persuade the authorities in Baghdad to reconsider Ibn Sa'ūd's boundaries. It was helpful to Ibn Sa'ūd that he could consider King Hussain's aggression to be like any other assault by a foreign power, and therefore he felt legally entitled to seize the Khurmah oasis

It was clear that the unpleasant relations between Philby and Arnold Wilson exerted influence on the crisis in Khurmah, in which Wilson was persuaded to side with King Hussain. The chapter also reveals that Wingate's objection to the idea of arbitration was not only that he feared that the inhabitants of Khurmah were Wahhabi but also due to the fact that a great number of the Khurmah tribes were living in other parts of Ibn Sa'ūd's territory.

In the several meetings of the Inter-Departmental Committee, Philby's conception of Arabian affairs was more accurate than those of the other participants, who were mostly supporters of King Hussain. Philby's perception regarding Ibn Sa'ūd's victory was rational and realistic, perhaps owing to his long experience of local conditions, where he was able to absorb that Ibn Sa'ūd possessed the strong backing of the warriors of Ikhwan whose fighting ability was remarkable.

The chapter concluded that the battle of Turabah had several outcomes. In the first place, the battle proved that the British officials in Egypt were mistaken about the power of King Hussain's forces. Second, after capturing Turabah, the Wahhabi could use the roads to break into the Hejazi cities. Third, after the great victory of Ibn Sa'ūd's forces, some of the Hejazi tribe proclaimed themselves loyal to Ibn Sa'ūd, partly because he now had even greater power than before and partly out of fear of the Wahhabi soldiers. In addition, the battle forced Allenby to realize the power of Ibn Sa'ūd's forces. He was also obliged to moderate his harsh treatment and to be more temperate and quieter toward him.

Philby seems to have achieved his aim when the meeting of the Inter-Departmental Conference adopted his proposal that Khurmah should be ceded to Ibn Sa'ūd. Moreover, the conference rejected Allenby's proposal that a meeting should be held between the two rivals and agreed with Philby's objection that such a meeting would probably add to the bloodshed. In addition to the military reasons suggested by Philby, it can be inferred that political reasons may have discouraged the meeting, given that King Hussain would not agree to negotiate with someone whom he considered a subordinate.

The chapter illustrated that political and religious reasons, which were the need of Ibn Sa'ūd's support in Iraq and the fear of invasion of the holy places by the Wahhabi, were not only what forced Britain to change its attitude toward Ibn Sa'ūd but also the

military reason that it was difficult for Britain to entertain any military adventures in the desert of Ibn Sa'ūd.

The chapter revealed that Philby's comments regarding the Kuwait conference were rational and his perception that the conference would meet with failure turned out to be true. This was because of the alteration in the British policy towards Ibn Sa'ūd, to whom the Khurmah territory had been ceded, but now, according to the Protocols of the Kuwait Conference, it was suggested that it had taken the side of King Hussain.

It is plain that two major occurrences helped Philby to predict the invasion and the triumph of Ibn Sa'ūd over the Hejazi state. The first is related to Ibn Sa'ūd's increased power and ensured his complete control over most of Arabia. The second is connected to the change in the British policy toward Hussain, who refused to accept the British and French mandates and therefore to sign the Anglo-Hejazi treaty, which caused Britain to decide to take up a neutral position in the Najdi- Hejazi conflict.

The claim that Philby was a spy and was working in Britain's interests to destroy the Hejazi kingdom seems untenable. The documentary any evidence contradicts any such claim and demonstrates that the British Government was entirely opposed to Philby's visit and his mediation between the conflicting parties.

The chapter illustrated that there were both fundamental and secondary causes behind Philby's venture into Arabia. Documentary evidence suggests that economic factors were the most potent reasons for him to proceed, for after his resignation he suffered

from financial difficulties. It also shows that Philby communicated with Ibn Sa'ūd after his resignation, and, more to the point, before the invasion of Hejaz, proposing some ideas for economic projects. Political reasons may be considered in addition, but they are not as important. It is likely that Philby, after his resignation, thought that he should enjoy the same political glory as others and that his chance would lie in mediation, which would let him prove to his country that his abilities should not be ignored. Moreover, searching for fame and registering his name on the list of famous travellers may have been a further secondary factor, tempting him to explore *The Empty Quarter*, the great desert to the south of Arabia.

The chapter also concluded that the British threat against Philby was not the only reason for which he returned to England. There were also Ibn Sa'ūd's rejection of Philby's offer to mediate and the severe attack of dysentery, both of which may have been further reasons for his going back to Britain. In addition, the chapter has established that Philby had no decisive influence on the collapse of the Hejazi state, which was at its last gasp in any case.

The next chapter considers Philby's political contribution to the work of the Saudi Government.

CHAPTER SIX

PHILBY'S POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORK OF THE SAUDI

GOVERNMENT, 1932-1953

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Philby's efforts with regard to the government of Saudi Arabia. It examines how Philby helped to bring American recognition to Saudi Arabia. It seeks to recognize the methods that Philby used to fulfil this purpose. It will discuss the accusation that he betrayed his country by securing the oil concession for the US instead of Britain and looks for evidence that would exonerate him. The chapter also deals with Philby's actions in the Idrisi' revolt against King Ibn Sa'ūd and asks what methods Philby suggested to help the king settle political conditions for his people. It endeavours to understand what prompted Philby's mission to the southern boundaries of the kingdom and what made him visit Yemen. Finally it focuses on his contribution in the Buraimi crisis between Britain and Saudi Arabia and shows the arguments by which Philby strengthened the Saudi opposition to Britain's demands and the main reasons that lay behind what Philby saw as the Saudi claim to Buraimi.

Philby and the American recognition of Saudi Arabia

In 1927, after the unification of most of the regions of Arabia, Ibn Sa'ūd decided to change the title of his lands and seek recognition as the Kingdom of Najd and Hejaz, giving him the official title of 'King of Hejaz, Najd and its Dependencies'.¹ It must be admitted that the fundamental extension of Arabia increased the domain of its king

¹ MECA, *Philby collection*, 'The Recognition of the Kingdom of Najd and Hejaz', B.16/4. This Box has not yet been archived with its new reference. Author's interview with Debbie Usher, the Archivist, 17 May 2014, Oxford.

and his status generally rose, in particular after the capture of the two holy cities, Mecca and Madina. But Saudi Arabia could have no relations with any foreign country unless the king abandoned the British-Najdi treaty of 1915, which had forbidden all contact with foreign powers.² Therefore, in 1927, after a series of conversations, Britain sent its representative, Gilbert Clayton,³ to negotiate with King Ibn Sa'ūd; he managed to conclude an agreement, called the Treaty of Jeddah, which provided Ibn Sa'ūd with British recognition for his sovereignty, extending from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf.⁴ The Treaty of Jeddah paved the way for King Ibn Sa'ūd to enjoy freedom of communication with every foreign state and then to establish European legations in his kingdom.

Although Britain, France, the Netherlands and the Soviet Union had recognized Ibn Sa'ūd's authority, the US hesitated at first to follow suit. The first contact between them occurred on 28 September 1928, when Fouad Ḥamza,⁵ the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, contacted the American Legation in Cairo, asking for diplomatic recognition of the new kingdom in Arabia. Ultimately, the Department of State refused,

² See the Anglo- Najdi treaty in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 2, pp. 427- 436.

³ See his biography in p.6. n.7.

⁴ Sir Gilbert Clayton concluded the Treaty of Jeddah on 20 May 1927 with Amir Faiṣal, the second son of Ibn Sa'ūd. See the treaty in IOR, L/P&S/10/1166.

⁵ Fouad Ḥamza (1899-1951) was a Saudi diplomat who came originally from Lebanon. First, he worked as a translator and then Ibn Sa'ūd assigned him the post of Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs before he was appointed as Minister in Paris. In the last years of his life, he devoted himself to writing several volumes on the history of Saudi Arabia. See his biography in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.5, p.159.

commenting that it was not suitable, at the present, to set up diplomatic relations but that the request would be taken into consideration in the future.⁶

However, after his resignation from the British service when he had started to receive his pension in 1925 and after his failure to mediate between Ibn Sa'ūd and King Ali, as discussed in Chapter Five, Philby, after discussing commercial matters with Ibn Sa'ūd, who agreed to invest in Arabia at Philby's instigation, left Arabia for London.⁷ In London, Philby met some English entrepreneurs who negotiated an investment in Arabia. It was decided to establish the Sharqieh Company Ltd. on 20 November 1925 and to appoint Philby as Resident Director of the company in Jeddah. Philby left London for Jeddah in October 1926.⁸ Between 1926 and 1929, he ventured into such businesses as selling soap, searching for a gold mine, transportation and the minting of coins.⁹ However, even while becoming a businessman, politically he also became an unofficial adviser to Ibn Sa'ūd who used him to implement political projects, as is shown below.

In Arabia, Philby took full responsibility and put every effort into developing relations between Ibn Sa'ūd and the Americans. Philby quite reasonably surmised that relations between them would not develop unless they had a commercial basis. Therefore, as

⁶ Samirah Sunbul, *al-elaqāt Sū'dīyah-al-amrikiyah Nashatūha wa-tṭwrūha*[Saudi-American relations: its evolution and establishment] (Riyadh: King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 2009), p.107.

⁷ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.145.

⁸ Regarding the establishment of Sharqieh Company, see 'Note of search of file of Sharqieh Limited', 16 August 1933, TNA, FO 967/59; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.132-136

⁹ Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.146.

the director of the Sharqieh Company Ltd. in Jeddah, Philby began a full correspondence with the American Legation in Aden. This correspondence, which is held in the Middle East Centre in Oxford, illustrates how Philby sought to attract American companies to invest in the new kingdom by telling them of the stability of Ibn Sa'ūd's regime and the major strides it had made and assuring them that American companies would have great opportunities to share privileges.¹⁰

However, while Philby was offering interesting commercial projects, he never forgot to repeat the Saudi request for American recognition. In a letter to the American Vice-Consul in Aden, Philby wrote:

Since those days the Hejaz under its new regime has made great strides in a progressive direction and only quite recently it has forwarded an official letter to the United States Government asking for its formal recognition. It would be a very good thing if you could do anything to help in that direction as your country is easily first in the commercial fields in these parts thanks to your motor-car factories with which none can compete.¹¹

It is evident that Philby made further major efforts in order to obtain American recognition for the new regime. Examples of this are his expanded communications with Americans and his visit to the American Legation in Cairo, meeting with the American Consul and requesting to open relations. Clearly the most important

¹⁰ Philby to James Park, the American Vice Consul, 24 September 1928, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/7/1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

achievement would be the American recognition of the Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd.¹² In addition, on 29 December 1929, Philby sent a letter to George Wadsworth,¹³ the American Minister in Cairo, indicating some crucial occurrences which might help to justify the resumption of Saudi-American negotiations. In the first place, Philby asserted that the US had declared that the first of its concerns was to have world peace, which ought to encourage the establishment of cordial relations with all countries. The second occurrence was the British Government's decision which changed the status of its former diplomatic Agency in the kingdom of Hejaz and Najd to the full status of a legation; such diplomatic promotion distinctly indicated the British recognition of King Ibn Sa'ūd's authority.¹⁴ The third piece of evidence that Philby pointed out to Wadsworth was that some countries such as France and Persia had raised their diplomatic representation to a Legation and soon the primary powers in Jeddah would have their own legations as well. Last, in his letter, Philby expressed his surprise that, while trade between the two countries had increased in the last few years, there was, in fact, no American legation in the kingdom of Hejaz and Najd.¹⁵

¹² Odah Sultan Odah, 'Saudi-American relations 1968-78: a study in Ambiguity' (Manchester: PhD thesis, University of Salford, 1988), p.55.

¹³ George Wadsworth (1893 -1958) was an American diplomat who entered the Foreign Office in 1917, spending most of his career in the Middle East. For additional accounts see *The Washington Post* 'Wadsworth, Ex- Envoy, Dies', 6 Mar 1957; 'Obituaries', *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Chicago, Ill, 7 Mar 1958.

¹⁴ Philby to Wadsworth, 29 December 1929, Ibrahim al-Rashid (ed.), *Documents on the History of Saudi Arabia* (Salisbury: Documentary Publication, 1976), vol.3, pp. 67-68. Regarding the British decision to change its Agency in Jeddah to a legation, see a memorandum by William Bond, the Political Agent, to the Saudi Foreign Secretary, 21 December 1929, TNA, FO 371/14468; William Bond to the members of the British Agency, 22 December 1929, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/7/2.

¹⁵ Philby to Wadsworth, 29 December 1929, *Documents on the History of Saudi Arabia*, vol.3, pp. 67-68.

Evidently Philby put forward some persuasive arguments for America to recognise Ibn Sa'ūd's kingdom. The first sign of success came when the American Consul in Cairo advised the Department of State, in January 1930, that it was necessary for the US to acknowledge the sovereignty of the kingdom of Hejaz and Najd and establish diplomatic relations with it. In addition, according to Philby's account, the American Consul had a growing conviction of the permanency of King Ibn Sa'ūd's government, suggesting that a simple treaty of friendship should be signed between the two countries which would provide "the possibility of an exchange of diplomatic and consular representatives".¹⁶ However, on 23 February 1930, the American Minister of Foreign Affairs replied that relations between the two countries would be limited to the economic field only.¹⁷

It appears that Philby never gave up the quest to obtain American recognition. As the representative of the Ford Company in Jeddah, he may have advised King Ibn Sa'ūd to stop importing motor-cars from this company; such pressure may have made the US reconsider the issue of recognition. At all events, as some historians have suggested, the State Department informed Ibn Sa'ūd's minister in London, Hafiz Wāhbāh,¹⁸ that

¹⁶ Philby to Wadsworth, 29 December 1929, *Documents on the History of Saudi Arabia*, vol.3, pp., pp.63-66.

¹⁷ Sunbul, *al-elaqāt al-Sū'dīyah-al-amrikiyah* [Saudi-American relations], p.107.

¹⁸ Hafiz Wāhbāh (1889-1967) was a politician, historian and Saudi ambassador. He came originally from Egypt where he studied at AL Azhar University. He moved to India for a while and then departed to Kuwait before joining Ibn Sa'ūd in 1923. He and others were crucial to the implementation of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. See his autobiography, *Khamsūna 'āman fī jazīrat al-'Arab* [Fifty years in the Arabian Peninsula], pp.1-21; al-Zerekly, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.2, p.160.

the US was willing to enhance its diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia.¹⁹ From the above, it can be assumed that, although the US, at this juncture, had not opened its legation in Jeddah, Philby's intense efforts – communicating with American diplomats, supplying them with information about the stability of King Ibn Sa'ūd's regime and enticing American companies to invest in the kingdom by means of commercial projects – were making the first steps towards American recognition for the country.

Clearly, Philby realized that the world-wide economic depression, which began in 1929, had reached the Saudi kingdom. The income from the Hajj had declined dramatically, affecting in turn the customs dues and putting the country into debt to other countries and companies.²⁰ As the depression increased, Philby met King Ibn Sa'ūd and reminded him that his country was, in fact, full of buried riches, resources such as oil and minerals.²¹ Ibn Sa'ūd's severe economic position immediately led him to provide exclusive concessions to any international oil company that would give him a million pounds in advance because he had to secure the welfare of his country. He therefore had no chance to put all his trust in Philby to tackle the issue.²² As a result, Philby entered into a lengthy correspondence with a very important American figure, a former

¹⁹ Odah, ' Saudi-American relations ', p.56; Sunbul, *al-elaqāt al-Sū'diah-al-amrikiah* [Saudi-American relations], p.107. p.112.

²⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, pp.290-291.

²¹ Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tarikh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], pp.208-209; al-Naqbi, 'Oil Concession Agreement', pp.225-226.

²² Philby, *Arabian Oil Venture* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle Est Institute, 1964), p.74; Harit Intakanok, 'The Emergence of Private Authority in the Oil Industry', p.104.

diplomat, now businessman, Charles Crane,²³ informing him that King Ibn Sa'ūd was now receiving formal recognition from several countries but sadly had not yet entered full diplomatic relations with the US. Philby asked Crane to use his influence in resuming the negotiations regarding American recognition. He also invited Crane to visit him in his private house in Hejaz and informed him that King Ibn Sa'ūd would be in Jeddah during February 1930. This would be a great opportunity to discuss with the monarch all the economic issues that concerned the country.²⁴ Crane accepted the invitation, stating that he was very pleased to learn what Philby had told him; he wanted to see the kingdom of King Ibn Sa'ūd in a good position for development.²⁵

On reaching Jeddah, Crane discussed economic points of interest with the king and agreed to send an eligible mining engineer to investigate the country's mineral resources but stipulated that the king should provide all the requisite transport and other means to facilitate the work. It was also agreed at this meeting that Crane would place K.S. Twitchell,²⁶ the American mining engineer, at the king's disposal. He was to

²³ Charles Richard Crane (1858–1939) was a philanthropist and American millionaire. His relations with American politicians helped him to contribute to the development of countries all around the world, in particular Yemen and Saudi Arabia. See his autobiography in Norman Saul, *The life and Times of Charles R. Crane, 1857-1939: American Businessman, Philanthropist, and a Founder of Russian Studies in America* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

²⁴ Philby to Crane, 27 December 1929, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/6/1. See also Philby's letter to Crane, 11 March 1930, *ibid*.

²⁵ Crane to Philby, 29 January 1930, *Philby collection*, *ibid*.

²⁶ Karl Twitchell was a mining engineer who worked for Charles Crane, surveying for artesian wells in Yemen. His efforts to bring the American oil Company to Saudi Arabia were remarkable and changed the history of the country. See his book, *Saudi Arabia with an account of the development of its natural resources* (New jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), chapters I and III.

report on the mineral prospects and other potential assets for development in Arabia.²⁷ Within only a few weeks, Twitchell arrived in the kingdom on 15 April 1931, and just after a week from his arrival he started his wanderings in the company of Khalid al Qarqani,²⁸ King Ibn Sa'ūd's adviser, searching for a water supply to Jeddah and other natural resources in the north west of the kingdom. Unfortunately, Twitchell's disappointing report indicated that this area had no geological proof that artesian wells might be found.²⁹ However, the turning point came in December 1931 when he met King Ibn Sa'ūd in his camp, together with Philby and the finance minister, Abdullah Al Suleiman.³⁰ In their discussion it was agreed that Twitchell should carry out a survey of the natural resources in the east part of the kingdom. Philby accompanied Twitchell as far as the region of al- Hafuf, where they separated. He then went on to achieve his dream of exploring the Empty Quarter.³¹

By the time Twitchell reached Ḥasa, in January 1932, some historians claim that he had discovered geological indications that oil deposits in commercial quantities were there

²⁷ Thomas Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East: 1784-1975: A survey* (The United States of America: Metuchen, NJ., 1977), p.94; Harit Intakanok, 'The Emergence of Private Authority in the Oil Industry', p.105.

²⁸ Khalid Ibn al- Qarqani was originally a Libyan citizen who joined King Ibn Sa'ūd after the Italian conquest of the Ottoman forces in Libya. He was one of King Ibn Sa'ūd's advisers who dealt with such political issues as a mission to the south west of Saudi Arabia. He died in 1971. See his biography in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.2, pp. 294-295.

²⁹ Twitchell, *Saudi Arabia*, pp.140-141.

³⁰ Abdullah Ibn Suleiman al- Ḥamdān (1887-1965) was one of King Ibn Sa'ūd's important ministers and was one of the people who helped to establish Saudi Arabia. In his youth, he had studied in India and then been a trader. He returned to Arabia and became a member of Ibn Sa'ūd's council in 1919 before being assigned the post in 1926 of first minister in the Ministry of Finance, where he remained until his resignation in 1953 after the death of King Ibn Sa'ūd. See some historical accounts on him in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.4, pp. 91-92.

³¹ Philby, *Arabian oil Ventures*, pp.76-77.

to be exploited.³² However, the fact is that Twitchell did not find any obvious traces of oil in Ḥasa but concluded in his report that Ḥasa was similar to Bahrain in its geological formation. Therefore, the main reason behind his departure to the US was the request of King Ibn Sa'ūd, who asked him to find an American company that would explore the country.³³

In any case, after his arrival in the US, Twitchell first communicated with the Texas Oil Company; its officials suggested that he should contact the Near East Developing Corporation as well as Standard Oil of California (SOCAL). While the first company was not willing to take up the offer due to being forbidden by the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) from competing in their territories, SOCAL showed some interest in taking on the oil concessions.³⁴ However, it seems quite possible that the main reason behind SOCAL's decision was that the company already had a concession in Bahrain and, as Benjamin Shwadran and other historians point out, the discovery of oil in Bahrain encouraged SOCAL and other international oil companies, such as the IPC, to negotiate another comprehensive concession in King Ibn Sa'ūd's kingdom, which now came to be known as Saudi Arabia.³⁵

³² Ibid, p.88; Odah, 'Saudi-American relation', p.57; Al-Naqbi, 'Oil Concession Agreement', p.226.

³³ As is obvious, Twitchell did not reveal in his book that he had discovered oil in Ḥasa. See his book, *Saudi Arabia*, pp.145-148. Also see Irvine H. Anderson, *Aramco: The United States and Saudi Arabia: A study of Dynamics of foreign oil policy 1933-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.24.

³⁴ Steven H. Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its discovery and Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.107.

³⁵ Benjamin Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), p.303; Al-Naqbi, 'Oil Concession Agreement', p.227. King Ibn Sa'ūd changed the name of the

Philby and the oil concession

Before dealing with Philby's role and his contact with the American officials to arrange the first steps of the concession agreement, light should be shed on Twitchell's opinion regarding Philby and his role. In his book, Twitchell not only totally ignored the major role that Philby played during the negotiations for an oil concession but also disregarded the communication between Philby and Crane, ignoring the fact that Philby should have received credit for bringing Twitchell himself to Saudi Arabia, since he was there only because Philby had been the first to bring Crane in without whom Twitchell would not have been sent for.³⁶ Therefore, it is probable that Twitchell was not objective in presenting historical facts and his inadvertent undermining of Philby's efforts cannot be explained except by his habit of ascribing more merit to himself than anyone else. Evidence to substantiate this can be observed in Twitchell's book. In the seven pages that he devotes to Philby he does not mention Philby's efforts to bring the US in, nor his considerable part in the oil negotiations. In return, Philby pointed out his impartiality toward Twitchell in the following words:

kingdom of Hejaz and Najd in 22 September 1932. See a telegram from Cecil Hope Gill, the Acting Consul in Jeddah, to the FO, 22 September 1932, TNA, FO 371/16025.

³⁶ See Twitchell's book, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 3,16,53,97,110,145,158.

In the autumn ... Twitchell arrived at the king's camp near Riyadh, where I accompanied him to the Ḥasa coast, where we parted in pursuit of our respective objectives: I to explore the Empty Quarter... and Twitchell to discover the oil of Arabia at Dhahran. To him without question belongs the credit of the discovery; to Crane that of having placed his services at the disposal of the Government; and to me, I can fairly claim, that of having been principally instrumental in bringing Crane to Arabia at critical stage of its fortunes.³⁷

Whatever Twitchell's shortcomings, the American officials obviously realized how influential Philby was in King Ibn Sa'ūd's Council and it seems that they recognized the nature of the friendship and confidence between him and the king. Therefore, it is not surprising that the American diplomats sought to make contact with Philby. The American Consul General in London despatched a letter to Philby on 26 May 1932; he was at this time in London lecturing about his expedition to the Empty Quarter. The Consul requested Philby to meet Francis Loomis,³⁸ the former Acting Secretary of State and now an adviser for the Standard Oil Company. In their meeting, Philby revealed, Loomis confessed that he wished to own the oil concession in Saudi Arabia and was willing to have the cooperation of Philby in this project.³⁹ As Philby was aware of the difficult economic situation of King Ibn Sa'ūd, he responded that such a concession

³⁷ Philby, *Forty years in the wilderness* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1957) p.163.

³⁸ Francis Butler Loomis (1861-1948) was an American diplomat who served in Venezuela and Portugal as an Ambassador until he became the Acting State Secretary in 1905. He was sent then as a special envoy to several countries. Before WWI, he joined the Standard Oil Company, working as an adviser until his retirement. See his biography in Stanford University's *Francis Butler Loomis and the Panama Crisis: Published on the occasion of an exhibition of his Papers* (Stanford University Library, 1965); Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers*, pp.303-304.

³⁹ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.191; Hammād, *Philby: Ket'h min Tarikh al-Arab* [Philby: A Piece of Arab History], P.210-211; Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, pp.110-111.

required satisfactory arrangements and he would be very pleased to help in any projects that contributed to the prosperity of Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰

After much correspondence, Loomis informed Philby that SOCAL was about to submit a formal request for the permission of the Saudi Government to conduct a geological survey in the east part of the kingdom.⁴¹ It seems that Philby was anxious to preserve the Saudi interest and willing to help his personal friend, King Ibn Sa'ūd, in his current economic crisis by informing Loomis that some considerable conditions would have to be met in order to obtain exclusive rights to the oil concession in Saudi Arabia. The most important condition that would lead to an agreement was an immediate payment of £100,000 in gold.⁴² In January 1933, the officials of SOCAL decided to despatch a representative, Lloyd Hamilton,⁴³ to undertake negotiations regarding the agreement; they also sent Twitchell as technical advisor.⁴⁴

However, before the arrival of the Americans, Philby seems to have used his profound skills to increase the competition between the oil companies and to make the concession more profitable to the Saudi Government. For example, he leaked the new developments regarding the Saudi oil to the British Minister in Jeddah as well as to a

⁴⁰ Philby, *Arabian Oil Venture*, p.78.

⁴¹ Al-Naqbi, 'Oil Concession Agreement', pp.227-228.

⁴² Philby, *Arabian Oil Venture*, p.80. King Ibn Sa'ūd's trust in Philby reached its apex when the king asserted that the only man who could keep him awake was Philby. See Philby, 'The golden Jubilee in Saudi Arabia', *Royal Central Asian Society*, vol. XXXVII, (1950), p.113.

⁴³ Hamilton was a lawyer for the Standard Oil Company of California. See some accounts of him in Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers*, pp.303, 306,316-317; Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, pp.154-155.

⁴⁴ Twitchell, *Saudi Arabia*, p.150; Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers*, p.303; Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, p.116.

friend of his who was working for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, reporting that the Americans had designs on the Saudi oil and suggesting that the British companies should participate in the competition.⁴⁵

Consequently, when the news of the Saudi oil concession reached the British companies they immediately despatched their representatives to Saudi Arabia. In fact, it was not only the IPC, which despatched Steven Longrigg,⁴⁶ as its representative, but also the Eastern General Syndicate which sent Major Frank Holmes⁴⁷ to participate in the discussions.⁴⁸ The actual negotiations began with the arrival of SOCAL's representatives, Hamilton and Twitchell, to Jeddah, on 15 February 1933, to meet Abdullah Al Suleiman, the finance minister sent by King Ibn Sa'ūd as the representative of the Saudi Government and Philby, as administrator.⁴⁹ Philby may have been right in claiming that Major Holmes, the representative of the Eastern General Syndicate, had been unwilling to enter into a serious negotiation, perhaps because the Saudi Government had insisted that each competitor should advance £100,000 in cash; he

⁴⁵ Andrew Ryan to FO, 22 February 1933, TNA, FO 371/16870; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.191.

⁴⁶ Stephen Hemsley Longrigg (1893–1979) was a military governor and petroleum company director. He worked in military service before joining the British administration in Iraq until 1931, when he started work with the Iraq Petroleum Company as a senior executive; he obtained the first oil concession on the Trucial Coast. During WWII, he was appointed a brigadier, serving in the Army headquarters in Cairo before working as Chief Administrator in Eretria. For more accounts, see Edward Ullendorff, 'Longrigg, Stephen Hemsley (1893–1979)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 7 Dec 2015.

⁴⁷ Major Frank Holmes (1874–1947) was a geologist and mining engineer from New Zealand who made considerable efforts to establish the Eastern General Syndicate Ltd in London in order to discover oil deposits in the Middle East. His activities were suspected by Sir Percy Cox, who warned Ibn Sa'ūd not to sign any agreement with Holmes, but the advice went unheeded and a short-lived agreement was signed. For more information, see A.H.T. Chisholm, 'Obituary of Frank Holmes', *The Times* (London) 5 February 1947, p.7; Dickson, *Kuwait and her neighbours*, pp.268-271,277-278.

⁴⁸ Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East*, p.107; Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers*, p.302-304.

⁴⁹ Philby, *Arabian oil Ventures*, pp.87, 89; Anderson, *Aramco: The United States and Saudi Arabia*, p.24.

therefore withdrew and left Jeddah after only two days.⁵⁰ However, there was another reason for the withdrawal of Holmes. He may have been reminded, whether by Philby or King Ibn Sa'ūd's representatives, of the £6000 in arrears of his annual rental that he owed the King from the period 1923-1927, when he had made an earlier oil agreement with him; his company, however, failed to find any traces of oil.⁵¹

Hence, two competitors remained on the scene, IPC, represented by Longrigg and SOCAL, represented by Hamilton and Twitchell. It was probably on the advice of Philby that King Ibn Sa'ūd informed his representatives that each competitor should make their tenders in writing. The IPC in the end refused to increase its bid of \$5000, leaving the victory to SOCAL.⁵²

While King Ibn Sa'ūd rejected the American offer and stood out for £100,000, Hamilton, in return, refused the figure of that payment but Philby was able to offer a successful compromise to the two parties. It was that Hamilton would raise the bid to £50,000 in gold, which the King accepted.⁵³ On behalf of King Ibn Sa'ūd, his finance minister, Abdullah Suleiman, concluded the agreement with Hamilton on 29 May 1933; this agreement was to last for sixty years.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p.331.

⁵¹ Philby, 'Middle East oil', MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/9/3.

⁵² Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers*, p.304.

⁵³ Philby, *Arabian Oil Ventures*, p.90; Philby, 'Middle East oil', MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/9/3.

⁵⁴ Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relation with the Middle East*, p.111; Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East*, p.108; Anderson, *Aramco: The United States and Saudi Arabia*, p.25.

It is worth examining Brown's portrayal of Philby as a traitor to his country who was to blame for the failure of the British companies in regard to the oil concession. He also asserts that one of the main reasons the British company missed out on a concession was that Philby tended to believe that the US was an anti-imperialist country interested in nothing but business, unlike the British Government which was anxious to take charge of the region in order to invest in its natural resources.⁵⁵

However, Brown's claim seems to have been far from just and lacked impartiality for a number of reasons. In the first place, the directors of the IPC showed no serious motivation or determination to obtain an oil concession. This can be observed in the frank admission of Longrigg, the representative of the IPC, that the company was too slow and insistent on its original offer, refusing to raise its bid. As he stated:

The Iraq Petroleum Company has this time decided to contest the issue. Their representative (the present writer) arrived at Jeddah to find negotiation in progress between Hamilton and the Saudi Minister and was invited to make his own offer. Both negotiators interviewed the King, both advanced their proposal, each was assured that his Company and nationality would, all thing being equal, be the more acceptable to the Saudi King. But the IPC directors were slow and cautious in their offers and would speak only of rupees when gold was demanded. Their negotiator, so handicapped, could do little; and [an] arrangement was reached without difficulty between Hamilton and Shaikh Abdullah Suleiman.⁵⁶

From the above, it is plain that Longrigg's reason for his company's losing the concession was that the company was unwilling to pay more than its first offer.

However, there may have been another reason: that the bad experience of the failure

⁵⁵ Brown, *Treason in the Blood*, pp.148-157.

⁵⁶ Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East*, pp.107-108.

of the Eastern and General Syndicate to find oil, as stated above, inclined the IPC to believe that there was no oil in King Ibn Sa'ūd's territories. Hence the IPC would not launch any venture in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, there was the difficult condition of paying £10,000 cash in advance. Furthermore, it may have been true that the company thought that the oil reserves in Iraq, where it had a concession, were enough for its profitability; this made any new concession, including one in Saudi Arabia, unnecessary. Another reason is that Philby may have been on the Americans' side during the negotiations (seeing them from the King's point of view) because the American offer was higher than the British; he was guided by his conscience and the King's trust that he would put Saudi interests first in order to develop the Saudi economy.⁵⁷ Consequently, Philby could only have been accused of betrayal if he had still been working officially with the British Government; or, following his resignation, if Britain had made him its official representative during the negotiations; but neither of these hypotheses is valid.

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that Philby had considerable impact on Saudi foreign policy and his advice and efforts were of great importance in bringing American recognition to Saudi Arabia. In addition, his successful efforts over the oil agreement hastened the US' opening of diplomatic negotiations with King Ibn Sa'ūd,

⁵⁷ Philby, 'Middle East oil', MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/9/3.

setting up a legation in Jeddah and securing its oil interests, when it realized that Saudi Arabia had so much oil to extract.⁵⁸

Philby and the stability of Saudi Arabia

By extrapolation from the historical events, it can be seen that Philby played a most important part in stabilizing the security of the Saudi kingdom, for instance, in the rebellion of 1932. Before examining Philby's role, it may be useful to sketch in the background to this insurgence and see how far Philby's cardinal contribution helped King Ibn Sa'ūd to suppress the rebel leaders.

The Idrisi' revolt

In 1908, Mohammad al- Idrisi⁵⁹ proclaimed a revolt against the Ottoman Empire and when WWI broke out he was able to dominate all the region that extended from al-Qunfidah, the city located in the south of Hejaz, to Jizan, together with large areas of the Asir in the south-west of Arabia and the city of Midi, a port in the north-west of Yemen.⁶⁰ Because Britain was at war against the Ottoman forces, Mohammad al- Idrisi joined the Arab rulers who signed treaties in 1915 and 1917, with a view to waging a relentless war against the same enemy in Yemen. Britain, in return, committed itself to

⁵⁸ The US opened its legation in Saudi Arabia in May 1942. See, Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East*, p.113.

⁵⁹ Mohammad Ibn Ali al- Idrisi (1876-1923) was the founder of Idrisi' state in Jizan, Asir and the west coast of Yemen. Before the establishment of this state, his father sent him to Cairo where he graduated from AL Azhar University. See his autobiography in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.6, p.303; al-Rihani, *Moūlk al- Arabs* [Kings of Arabs], pp.315-392; al-Rihani, *Around the coast of Arabia*, chapter II, pp.122-225.

⁶⁰ Al-Rihani, *Around the coast of Arabia* pp.316-317.

giving him full independence, a monthly financial subsidy of £2000 and equipping his fighters with arms and ammunition.⁶¹

In 1919, after the Ottoman capitulation, Muhammad al- Idrisi extended his regime and for his alliance and war efforts he was awarded Hodeidah city, the major Yemeni port on the Red Sea. Because both King Hussain and Imam Yahya considered Idrisi' territory to be part of their regions, Mohammad al- Idrisi approached King Ibn Sa'ūd and signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation in which he was supported by the latter until his death in March 1923.⁶² Idrisi's son, whose name was Ali,⁶³ succeeded him but after two years of his sovereignty, his father's brother, al-Ḥasan,⁶⁴ showed a determination to rule the territory. Under pressure from some notables of Jizan, Ali finally agreed to abdicate and was replaced in 1925 by his uncle.⁶⁵ The main reason behind the abdication, as John Baldry has suggested, was the threat from Imam Yahya, who wished to restore the glory of Imamic authority after the defeat of the Ottoman rulers. He defeated the Idrisi family and captured Hodeidah in 1925. As Baldry asserts, Britain

⁶¹ See the Anglo-Idrisi' treaties in Anne Bang, *The Idrisi State in Asir, 1904-1934: politics, religion and personal prestige as statebuilding factors in the early twentieth century* (Bergen: Centre for Middle East and Islamic Studies, 1996), pp.105-106.

⁶² Aden to Colonial Office, 28 March 1923, TNA, FO 371/8953; al- Zerekly, *al- Wajīz fī sīrat al-Malik Abdul Aziz* [The Biography of King Abdul Aziz], pp. 153-154.

⁶³ Imam Ali was the eldest son of Imam Mohammad al- Idrisi. Born in Sudan in 1905, at the age of 12 he was sent to Jizan to join his father. For further details, see, Rihani, *Moūlk a-l Arab* [Kings of Arabs], pp.319-320.

⁶⁴ Ḥasan Ibn Ali al- Idrisi was the third and the last ruler of the Idrisi' state. He was described as a strong religious man. After his revolt against King Ibn Sa'ūd he lived in Mecca until his death in 1945. See, Mohammad al- Aqili, *Tārīkh al- Mikhlaf al- Suleimani* [The history of al- Mikhlaf al-Suleimani] (Jizan: al- Aqili Publication, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 856-860,897,901-904.; an interview with Osama al-Idrisi, Jeddah, 12 December 2014.

⁶⁵ Aden to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 December 1925, TNA, FO 371/11434; al-Zerekly, *al- Wajīz fī sīrat al- Malik Abdul Aziz* [The Biography of King Abdul Aziz], p.154.

found itself in an awkward position regarding the Idrisi'-Yemeni conflict. Although the Idrisi were its allies during the war, Britain now desired to reach a peace settlement with Imam Yahya, no ally of Britain, whose forces were successfully attacking parts of the Aden Protectorate, a settlement which seemed unattainable without abandoning Ḥasan al-Idrisi, who was still controlling some cities in the Yemen.⁶⁶

Consequently, in his search for a power to protect his territory, al-Ḥasan contacted King Ibn Sa'ūd and put the region under his protection in a treaty that was signed in January 1927 (the Mecca agreement). The most important term of this agreement was that al-Ḥasan became an internal ruler leaving foreign affairs to King Ibn Sa'ūd; the former was forbidden to contact any foreign powers or to provide commercial concessions without King Ibn Sa'ūd's approval. Soon the king had organized an indirect administration and sent some of his official personnel to help al-Ḥasan rule the territory.⁶⁷ However, in November 1930, King Ibn Sa'ūd decided to sign another treaty with al-Ḥasan that allowed the former to include the entire Idrisi' region under his domination, turning al-Ḥasan al- Idrisi into a mere local governor in a Saudi protectorate. In these circumstances King Ibn Sa'ūd decided to assign to a representative the task of administering issues of finance.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ John Baldry, 'Anglo-Italian rivalry in Yemen and Asir 1904-1934', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol.17 (1st Jan, 1976), p.156.

⁶⁷ See the 'Mecca agreement in British Legation' report to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 7 January 1927, TNA, FO 371/12250; 'Text of the Treaty between the King of the Hedjaz and the of Asir ', 28 January 1927, *Bulletin of International News*, vol. 3, no. 5 (7 Mar. 1927), pp.10-11.

⁶⁸ Fouad Ḥamza's memoranda to Hope Gill, 15 November 1930, IOR, L/P&S/12/2064; Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, p.157.

Within two years, Ḥasan al- Idrisi rebelled against the king; his forces not only succeeded in recapturing most of the cities of the territory but also destroyed the Saudi military garrison.⁶⁹ Historians have conjectured reasons for the revolt. The first is that the Saudi governor exceeded his authority and prevented al-Ḥasan from meeting his notables of the territory. The second reason is that al-Ḥasan was influenced and supported by Imam Yahya and the notables of Hejaz, who established an opposition party of exiles called *al- Ahrar*; they had never forgotten the Saudi termination of the Hashemite family in Hejaz.⁷⁰ Whatever the reasons behind the revolt, the main questions are how King Ibn Sa'ūd succeeded in suppressing the rebellion and how far Philby supported the Saudi government afterwards in spreading peace in the kingdom. Before any military action, the king despatched a mission to explore the Idrisi' demands and if possible to reach a peaceful settlement instead of offensive action; but Ḥasan al- Idrisi ignored King Ibn Sa'ūd's emissary, determining to regain his former independence. This refusal compelled the king to send a large force to Jizan to throw off the threat from al- Ḥasan al- Idrisi; the latter then fled to Yemen.⁷¹

Indeed, the military resources of King Ibn Sa'ūd were greatly superior to the Idrisi' forces but the primary factor in the Saudi triumph was probably Philby's contribution.

In 1931, after the unification of the Saudi kingdom, King Ibn Sa'ūd's resolve to bring his

⁶⁹ British Legation in Jeddah, to Aden Residency, 8 November 1932, IOR, L/P&S/12/2064; Aden Residency to CO, 22 November 1932, TNA, FO 371/16028.

⁷⁰ Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia*, pp.158-159; Clive Leatherdale, *Britain and Saudi Arabia 1925-1939: The imperial Oasis* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), p.150.

⁷¹ Major M. A. Young to Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, 17 November 1932, TNA, CO 831/17/12; Hope-Gill to Prince Faiṣal, the son of Ibn Sa'ūd , 25 November 1932, TNA, FO 371/16028.

country into the civilized world became obvious. He strongly believed that modern inventions offered the best means of developing and administering his country's affairs.⁷² This desire of his coincided with Philby's ambition to make a turning point for his Sharqieh Company. To do this, Philby asked the Marconi Company to supply King Ibn Sa'ūd with 15 wireless stations and a complete system of telegraphic communication to be erected in different towns in the kingdom. In addition, two large stations were to be set up in Riyadh and Mecca, to which the King would be able to broadcast by special microphone connections.⁷³ Furthermore, four Marconi sets were installed in lorries as general mobile telegraph stations to enable him to keep touch with the local governor during his many desert journeys.⁷⁴

The spread of the wireless stations and microphones resulted in a change in the war strategy of the Idrisi' campaign. With this technology, King Ibn Sa'ūd could very quickly send instructions to the leaders of his forces to move troops to Idrisi' territory. For instance, Mohammad al- Aqili,⁷⁵ the famous historian of the south west of Saudi Arabia who witnessed the Saudi-Idrisi' war, provided significant historical narratives on the subject. He revealed that when Idrisi' forces ambushed one troop of King Ibn Sa'ūd's forces, its leader telegraphed the government in Riyadh. Without checking, al-Aqili

⁷²Ali al- Nāj'i,*al-Qwah al- Thaletha* [The Third Power](Riyadh: Unknown publisher, 1997), p.79.

⁷³ Andrew Ryan to FO, 25 May 1931, TNA, FO 371/15291; *Morning Post*, ' Telephones in Mecca and Wireless in the Desert ', 7 January 1931, King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, file no. 101, document no. 2754.

⁷⁴ Ryan to FO, 8 June 1931, TNA, FO 371/ 15291.

⁷⁵ Mohammad Ahmad al- Aqili (1916-2002) was a famous historian and poet. Most of his massive books are based on the literature, history and geography of the region of Jizan. See his biography in Abdullah al- Ḥumaid, ' Obituary, Mohammad al- Aqili ', *al- Jazirah Newspaper*, 10 April 2002.

briefly mentioned in his book the story that Khalid Ibn Luwai,⁷⁶ the Saudi commander, was informed by a wireless message from the king of the recent developments in Jizan.⁷⁷ These two examples show that one of the factors that made the campaign successful was wireless communication. Consequently, it cannot be denied that Philby played a major role by ensuring that the government of Saudi Arabia had such resources, above all at the time. Wireless not only made it easier to administer the kingdom in peace-time but also fulfilled a military purpose leading to its stabilization and the preservation of its civil conditions.

However, directly after the suppression of the Idrisi revolt in 1933, war broke out between King Ibn Sa'ūd and Imam Yahya, who captured some territory in the former Idrisi' state. It ended with victory for King Ibn Sa'ūd and Imam Yahya's consenting to sign a peace treaty, on 20 May 1934, called the Ṭaif treaty, defining the boundaries between the two kingdoms.⁷⁸ Hence, King Ibn Sa'ūd, in urgent need of someone who could map the boundary on the southern frontier with Yemen, offered the task to Philby.⁷⁹ Philby's journey is examined in detail below.

Philby's mission to the southern frontier of Saudi Arabia in 1936

⁷⁶ See his biography in p.301, n.9.

⁷⁷ Al- Aqili, *Tārīkh al- Mikhlaf al- Suleimani* [The History of al- Mikhlaf al- Suleimani], vol. 2, pp. 1019-1020.

⁷⁸ Ryan's report regarding the war and the Saudi-Yemeni treaty, 14 and 20 May 1934, IOR, R/15/2/638.

⁷⁹ Philby, ' Shabwa: The lost Arabian city: A mission for a King ', *The Times*, 18 January 1937, p.13; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.176.

At the beginning of May 1936, Philby went to a camp in the west of the kingdom to meet King Ibn Sa'ūd, who gave orders to the Finance Ministry to supply Philby with funds for his official mission. In addition, King Ibn Sa'ūd furnished Philby with some equipment, as well as men to guard his safety, throughout the expedition.⁸⁰ Undoubtedly, this official mission coincided with Philby's ambition to wander and explore the unknown internal area in the south of Arabia, such as Hadhramaut and Shabwa,⁸¹ the territories that, as Percy Cox⁸² remarked, were the only places in the Arabian Peninsula that had not yet been explored.⁸³ As a result, the mission began to have two main purposes for Philby. The first was politically to serve his personal friend, King Ibn Sa'ūd, by mapping the southern boundaries of the kingdom and the second was to find celebrity by becoming the first Western explorer to venture into the unknown regions of the Yemen.

Before starting the mission, Abdullah Al Suleiman, the Finance Minister, provided Philby with a lorry carrying enough petrol for the expedition, which would not otherwise be available. In addition, to facilitate Philby's journey the king wrote to several local governors on Philby's route to the south, instructing them to do whatever was needed for Philby's convenience.⁸⁴ On 21 May 1936, Philby set out on a secret

⁸⁰ Philby, *Sheba's daughters*, pp.7-8.

⁸¹ Shabwa is not the biblical Sheba, but a place further to the east of Yemen. However, Philby wrote another book about Sheba. See his book: *The Queen of Sheba*.

⁸² See his biography in p.1, n.1.

⁸³ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.177. Aso Bullard stated that, apart from Philby, Shabwa has not duly been studied by a European. See his Circular letters, 26 October 1936, MECA, *Bullard collection*, F.2/1

⁸⁴ Philby, *Sheba's daughters*, p.7.

journey,⁸⁵ one that may be regarded as the longest of his explorations of the Arabian Peninsula. Passing by the desert through Khurmah, Rayna, he reached Bisha, the last region of the Najd territory, and then started climbing the mountains until he arrived in Abha, the capital of Asir.⁸⁶ There, Philby chose a guide with experience, who knew the roads of the district and, shortly afterwards, Philby left for Najran, the city that lay on the border with Yemen. He was received by its local governor who was highly educated and shared Philby's desire to find ancient inscriptions. He accompanied Philby in all his excursions around Najran.⁸⁷ The local governor can be credited with teaching Philby to recognize the new borderlands and his company is possibly the main factor in the success of the mission to the Najran territories.

⁸⁵ The reason behind Philby's secret visit to the south of Arabia is revealed below. It was not based only on the demarcation of the frontier between Saudi Arabi and Yemen but also had its political dimension.

⁸⁶ Philby, ' Shabwa: The lost Arabian city ', p.13; Philby, *Arabian Highland* (New York: Ithaca, 1952), Chapters II and III, pp.87-296.

⁸⁷ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.178-179.



Figure 8.
Photograph taken by Philby in Najran, mapping the Saudi - Yemeni boundary
Source: Philby, *Arabian Highlands*.

After noting the various points of the new borderlands of the Saudi kingdom, Philby decided to enter Yemen to fulfil his dream of visiting Shabwa. With three vehicles, he left the border region in late July and en route discovered the old pilgrimage route and new places which Western travellers had never explored.⁸⁸ Philby arrived at Shabwa to the delight of its inhabitants, who thought that Philby had been sent to them on behalf of King Ibn Sa'ūd in order to include them under the authority of Saudi Arabia.⁸⁹

It has been claimed that Philby, while still in Najran, had feared that the king would prevent him from visiting Yemen but the local Saudi governor of Najran approved of his

⁸⁸ FO to British Legation in Jeddah, 9 December 1936, TNA, CO 725/39/16; Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.179-180; Philby, 'Shabwa Ruins in the sand', *The Times*, 19 January 1937.

⁸⁹ Philby; *Sheba's daughters*, p.82.

plan.⁹⁰ However, such a claim seems illogical in view of the historical events. Philby's mission was clearly under the auspices of King Ibn Sa'ūd; from this it may be inferred that the mission had a third purpose: to formally include the tribes that were located in the north of the Aden Protectorate and under King Ibn Sa'ūd's authority. In fact, there is some evidence that may support this inference. In the first place, before Philby's mission, the king had been engaged in full negotiations with Britain regarding these disputed areas. His claim was based on the historical fact that his ancestors had ruled it and levied taxes on the people in the 19th century. Therefore, King Ibn Sa'ūd was determined to control these tribes not only as a basic tactic but also to assert his historical rights.⁹¹

To support the political motivation of Philby's visit, Bullard the British Minister in Jeddah, suggested the following statement:

Reports from Hadhramaut say that Philby did a good deal of propaganda in favour of Ibn Saud. He is a great admirer of Ibn Saud and does a good deal of log-rolling for him...He will no doubt back Ibn Saud against H.M.G., though he would never admit that he is always agin the Government.⁹²

⁹⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.177.

⁹¹ Regarding the southern disputed boundary between Britain and Saudi Arabia see, IO to FO, 12 January 1935, IOR R/15/1/604; John Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers: the story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p.189; Hussain al-Zahrani, 'Peaceful Modes of Defining International Boundary Disputes with Particular Reference to the Practice of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its Neighbouring States Regarding the Settlement of their Land Boundary Disputes' (Hull: PhD thesis, University of Hull, 2002), p.171.

⁹² Bullard, 'Circular letters', 26 October 1936, MECA, *Bullard collection*, F.2/1.

Consequently, it seems that arranging Philby's visit to Yemen was a ploy by King Ibn Sa'ūd to put more pressure on Britain in the hope of fulfilling some political purpose in the disputed areas.

The second piece of evidence is that the governor of Najran would never have dared to support Philby's entry into Yemen unless he had had some signal from the king permitting his incursion. However, he provided Philby with all the necessary baggage camels, as well as a small detachment of soldiers. In addition, original sources of the time suggest that King Ibn Sa'ūd's relations with the local governor were tranquil; there is no sign that his conduct led to any official punishment, which must mean that he had been instructed to support Philby on this visit. Third, the conversations between Philby and R. Bullard, the British minister in Jeddah, indicate that King Ibn Sa'ūd was altogether delighted by Philby's entry into Yemen, which would suggest that Philby's mission had some political target.⁹³

The fourth piece of evidence can be found in Philby's accounts. The news of his mission had reached the inhabitants of Shabwa before he arrived; they were unquestionably looking to King Ibn Sa'ūd to protect their lives and security and calm the unsettled conditions that prevailed in their region. Philby commented:

At Shabwa ... the news of our coming had long preceded us and the people had had plenty of time to decide whether they desired closer relation with Ibn Sa'ūd ... Of Ibn

⁹³ The conversations between Philby and Bullard took place in Jeddah. See Bullard's telegram to FO, 31 March 1939, TNA, CO 725/42/8.

Sa'ūd they spoke with unfeigned admiration and cordiality. They wanted letters from Ibn Sa'ūd guaranteeing their security from attack.⁹⁴

A further element that indicates the presence of a political factor is that when the British condemned his mission, Philby renewed his criticism of the British Government's case. He stated that Shabwa was outside the scope of British influence and declared to all readers that Britain had a tendency to exaggerate its colonial influence. In addition to his disapproval of British foreign policy, Philby pointed out that the only objective that he was seeking was the independence of the Arabic peoples and the chance to help rescue them from foreign powers.⁹⁵ It may be noted that Philby's critique, together with that of King Ibn Sa'ūd, who was ambitious to take control over the north of Yemen, serves to indicate the political coordination between the two, and even suggests that Philby was simply implementing a policy that furthered the foreign ambitions of Saudi Arabia. The final evidence is obvious from Philby's propaganda, designed to advocate and enhance King Ibn Sa'ūd's sovereignty in the north of Yemen. For example, he suggested to the people of Shabwa that they should despatch some representatives on their behalf to meet King Ibn Sa'ūd and negotiate the issue with him. Philby also noted that these representatives could act as his escorts when he returned to Saudi Arabia.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Philby, *Sheba's daughters*, p.82.

⁹⁵ Bullard to FO, 18 February 1937, IOR, R/15/1/607.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Bullard suggested that there was a political dimension to Philby's mission. See his annual report in TNA, 28 February 1937, FO 371/20843.



Figure 9.
Philby with inhabitants of Shabwa
Source: Philby, *Sheba's Daughters*

Despite all his advantages, after many incursions Philby's mission to the north of the Aden Protectorate failed because British officials were disturbed by Philby's entering it without permission. Bullard, the British minister to the Saudi kingdom, stated:

Philby was accompanied on his incursion into Aden Protectorate by armed Saudi forces which might well have led Protectorate tribes to assume that he was travelling on Saudi mission. Object [sc. of ensuring the mission's failure] would be to show Saudi Government that His Majesty's Government are maintaining their position regarding Protectorate frontier and do not acquiesce in any Saudi encroachment in this area.⁹⁷

Consequently, Philby was warned by Britain to evacuate the Aden Protectorate and was forbidden to venture further.⁹⁸ However, it should be noted that, while Philby failed to expand the Saudi influence in the area of northern Yemen, he was still the first man to have crossed the Empty Quarter by motor-car from the north to the Indian

⁹⁷ Bullard to FO, 5 December 1936, TNA, CO 725/39/16.

⁹⁸ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.183.

Ocean in the south and also the first explorer to have reached Hadhramaut from the north, another milestone in his career as one of the greatest explorers in the history of Arabia.⁹⁹

After the British warning, Philby returned to Najran, in Saudi territory, for there were several lands still to be mapped in the southwestern part of the Saudi kingdom. He examined the landmarks and added some information to his maps.¹⁰⁰ That the mission was not easy is evident from the rocky ground, the slopes, plateaus, foothills and mountains, which made the mission so intractable. However, Philby, who was now in his fifties, was determined to succeed for the king's sake. He completed the survey of boundary markers in Najran and then had to cross hundreds of miles to Asir and Jizan, located in the east of Najran on the borders of Yemen. These territories consist of a coastal plain and high mountain. He had to deal with the varied geography, spending more than seven months on it, before returning to King Ibn Sa'ūd with every sign of success.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Regarding Philby's exploration in Yemen, see Philby, *Sheba's daughters*, p.3 et seq.

¹⁰⁰ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.184.

¹⁰¹ See the mapping of Asir and Jizan in Philby, *Arabian Highlands*, Chapters V and VI, pp.437-708.



Figure 10.
Philby in Jizan, mapping the mountain between Saudi Arabia and Yemen

Source: Philby, *Arabian Highlands*.



Figure 11.
Philby in Jizan, mapping the lowlands between Saudi Arabia and Yemen

Source: Philby, *Arabian Highlands*.



Map 2. Philby's map of Saudi Arabia

Source: Philby, *Saudi Arabia*

After completing this mission, however, another political challenge awaited him: the Buraimi crisis, which will be further examined below.

Philby and the Buraimi dispute

According to *The Times*, Buraimi is an oasis that consists of eight villages located in the south-eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula. Six of the villages belonged to the ruler of Abu Dhabi and the other two were under the sovereignty of the Sultan of Muscat; both rulers were under British protection.¹⁰²

In the early 1950s, the area witnessed much tension in the international confrontation between Saudi Arabia and the British Protected Trucial Shaikhdoms. The oasis had approximately six to ten thousand inhabitants and was famous for its plentiful water and fertile soil, which gave the citizens a variety of fruit and other crops, as well as grazing for their cattle. However, the most important aspect of this Buraimi oasis is its geographical location, which grants control over Muscat and Trucial Shaikhdoms.¹⁰³

The first Saudi conquest of the Buraimi oasis dates back to 1800 and resulted from the first great growth of Wahhabism which ultimately brought most of Arabia's territories under the control of Imam Abdul-Aziz Ibn Mohammad al-Sa'ūd,¹⁰⁴ the second ruler of the first Saudi State.¹⁰⁵ It has been said that religious fervour was the main motivation for this first Saudi expansion; it was, indeed, influenced by the teaching of one of the

¹⁰² *The Times*, 'Saudi Arabian Dispute', 6 March 1953.

¹⁰³ Tore Petersen, 'Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Struggle for the Buraimi Oasis, 1952-1957', *The International History Review*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Feb, 1992), p.71.

¹⁰⁴ Abdul Aziz Ibn Mohammad al- Sa'ūd (1720-1803) was one of the most considerable rulers of the first Saudi State. The most important event in his era was the huge expansion of his territory from coastal Yemen and Oman in the south and southeast of Arabia to the borders of the Euphrates in the north and from the Persian Gulf in the east to the Red Sea in the west. He was assassinated in 1803. See his autobiography in al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.2, p.27.

¹⁰⁵ *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 1, p.245.

most important Islamic reformers, Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wāhāb,¹⁰⁶ who proclaimed Wahhabism in the 18th century.¹⁰⁷

It may be difficult to believe that the Saudi expansion over Arabia, including Buraimi, was based on the religious factor alone. As noted above, Buraimi represented an economic treasure to enhance the Wahhabi possessions and strengthen its source of income. In addition to the economic factor, political vision may have been a further reason for the Wahhabi expansion, in a search to transform the divided territories in Arabia into a single unified political entity.

Whatever the motivation, Buraimi became a Saudi fulcrum of the Wahhabi expansion directed against Oman and the Trucial Shaikhdoms in the Gulf, until the expedition of Muhammad Ali,¹⁰⁸ Pasha of Egypt, who conquered and fatally weakened the first Saudi State in 1818.¹⁰⁹ However, within a few years of these events, a new Wahhabi Amir emerged, who could restore the regime of the Saudi dynasty in central Arabia. He was

¹⁰⁶ Mohammad Ibn Abdul wāhāb al- Tamimi (1703-1792) was the leader of what is known the Wahhabi movement. He was educated in Najd before his trips for religious research to Hejaz, Iraq and Syria. His endeavours to reform the religion of Arabia were not successful until he allied himself with Mohammad Ibn Sa'ūd, the founder of the first Saudi State in 1744. See more accounts in Hussain Ibn Ghannām, *Tārīkh Ibn Ghannām* [The History of Ibn Ghanām] (Beirut: Dar AL Shroq, 1994), pp.79-205; al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.6, p.257.

¹⁰⁷ J. B. Kelly, ' The Buraimi Oasis Dispute ', *Royal Institute of International Affairs* (1944-), vol. 32, no. 3 (Jul, 1956), p.320.

¹⁰⁸ Mohammad Ali Ibn Ibrahim Pasha (1770-1849) was the founder of the last kingdom in Egypt. He was regarded as a figure who modernized life in Egypt by his considerable reforms in educational, economic and military terms. See some accounts of him in al- Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.6, pp.298-299; Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha' men: Mehamed Ali, his army and making of modern Egypt* (Cairo: American University Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁹ Regarding the collapse of the first Saudi State, see Captain G. Sadlier, ' A journey across Arabia ', *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 1, pp.325-342.

the Imam Tūrki Ibn Abdullah al-Sa'ūd,¹¹⁰ the great grandfather of King Ibn Sa'ūd, who recaptured most of the lands that had been lost in 1818, including the Buraimi oasis; he sent one of his commanders in 1833 to requisition the district.¹¹¹ In the era of his successor – his son, Imam Faiṣal,¹¹² the grandfather of Ibn Sa'ūd – the Saudi expansion increased rapidly through a military campaign in 1852 led by Amir Abdullah,¹¹³ Imam Faiṣal's son. This extended the boundaries in the south east of Arabia, notably around Oman and the Trucial Shaikhdoms.¹¹⁴ However, after the death of Imam Faiṣal in 1865, the Wahhabi State entered into a civil war, the outcome of which led not only to the loss of the Buraimi oasis by the Sultan of Oman, but also to the elimination of the second Saudi State by another Najdi family dynasty, the al- Rashidi, in 1891.¹¹⁵

After the emergence of King Ibn Sa'ūd in the 20th century and the unification of most parts of Arabia, the king began in the 1930s to claim the Buraimi oasis as part of the kingdom that had been ruled by his ancestors in the 18th century.¹¹⁶ However, some

¹¹⁰ Tūrki Ibn Abdullah Ibn Mohammad al-Sa'ūd (1755-1834) was the founder of the second Saudi State. He succeeded in driving out the Egyptian forces. He was assassinated by his cousin in 1834. See al-Zereky, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.2, p.84.

¹¹¹ Ibn Bisher, *'Unwān al- Majd fī Tārīkh Najd* [The Symbol of Glory in the History of Najd], vol.2,p.86; Bushire Residency to the Government of Bombay,22 April 1833, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 1, pp.345-350.

¹¹² See his biography in p.175, n.3.

¹¹³ See his biography in p.177, n.10.

¹¹⁴ William G. Palgrave, *Narrative of a year's journey through Central and Eastern Arabia* (London: Macmillan Press, 1865), p.112.

¹¹⁵ E.C. Ross, the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, to the Secretary of the Government of India, 12 January 1891, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. 1, pp.325-342; Ibn Eisā, *Tārīkh Ibn Eisā*, [The History of Ibn Eisā], pp.185-221.

¹¹⁶ Minutes entitled ' Frontier dispute with Saudi Arabia, ' presented by the Eastern Department, dated as 1953, TNA, FO 371/104295; al-Zereky, *Wajīz fī sīrat al- Malik Abdul Aziz* ,[The Biography of King Abdul Aziz], p.309.

historians suggest that the regime of King Ibn Sa'ūd's ancestors over Buraimi was not precisely what encouraged him to demand control of the Buraimi oasis, so much as the discovery of oil in the Arabian Peninsula in 1932.¹¹⁷ Such a claim seems reasonable and it may be added that King Ibn Sa'ūd's demands collided with British interests, in particular when Britain gained the oil concessions from the Trucial Coast and Oman; it always wished to keep its last bastion in the Gulf against the loss of its economic interests.¹¹⁸

At any rate, in order to settle the issue, King Ibn Sa'ūd proposed a definition of the southern and eastern boundaries of his kingdom with Shaikh Abu Dhabi and the Sultan of Oman, asserting that his frontiers extended to about 15 miles within the Buraimi oasis and also extended for 25 miles along the coast at Khor-al Odaid, running southwest. To discuss his demands, several meetings between Saudi Arabia and Britain were held during the 1930s in London and in many Saudi cities such as Taif and Riyadh, but without reaching agreement. In these meetings, King Ibn Sa'ūd refused a British offer of further land in the east and southeast of Arabia because it cut off any access to the sea; he stated that in the 19th century the whole coast had belonged to his family.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ J. B. Kelly, 'The Buraimi Oasis Dispute,' p.324; Michael Morton, 'The Buraimi affair: oil prospecting and drawing the frontiers of Saudi Arabia,' *Asian Affairs*, 46:1(Feb, 2015), pp.1-3.

¹¹⁸ The IPC was granted concessions in Dhabi and Sharjah in 1937, Abu Dhabi in 1939 and Oman in 1936. See J.H. Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.272.

¹¹⁹ Ryan, *The last of the Dragomans*, pp.288-289,302; *The Eastern Department Minutes*, 'Frontier dispute with Saudi Arabia' dated as 1953, TNA, FO 371/104295.

The situation began to get worse when some engineers of SOCAL (now called Aramco)¹²⁰ entered Abu Dhabi territory through its western region in March 1949. Al-Zerekly suggested that the American engineers were instructed by King Ibn Sa'ūd to explore the oil prospects in Buraimi.¹²¹ Indeed, these instructions would have helped Aramco, which made great efforts to expand its commercial profits in Saudi Arabia. But the main question to ask here is whether Philby had any dealings with Aramco, especially after the visit of its American engineers to Buraimi. In fact, as Philby was mainly responsible for bringing the Americans to Saudi Arabia and their signing the oil concession, SOCAL hired him in order to benefit from his services, offering him an annual retainer of £1,000.¹²² Therefore, it is not surprising that Aramco used Philby's account and explorations of Saudi Arabia to acquaint themselves with its geographical features, using his maps to trace oil wells in the east part of the country.¹²³ As a result, from the close relations between Philby and Aramco, it can be assumed that Philby may have encouraged Aramco staff to visit the western region of the Abu Dhabi territory especially when Monroe suggested that Philby was in Saudi Arabia between September 1948 and mid-August 1949.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ The SOCAL Company changed its name to the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) in 1944. See Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East*, p.111.

¹²¹ Al-Zerekly, *Wajīz fī sirat al- Malik Abdul Aziz* [The Biography of King Abdul Aziz], p.309.

¹²² Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, p.193; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, p.151.

¹²³ Hamdi, *John Philby wa- Saudi Arabia fi 'hd al -Malik Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ūd* [John Philby and Saudi Arabia in the Era of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ūd],p133.

¹²⁴ Monroe, *Philby of Arabia*, pp.234-237.

At any rate, the British Political Officer protested against this incursion and requested the American party to withdraw from the region, asserting that these territories were not yet defined and were pending a settlement. In reply, King Ibn Sa'ūd concurred with the British objection and ordered the Aramco staff to withdraw until the settlement of the boundary issue.¹²⁵ Again, negotiations between the two countries took place in Britain and Saudi Arabia during the years 1951 and 1952, but the talks had reached a state of deadlock in the matter of the boundaries.¹²⁶ It was evident that King Ibn Sa'ūd would never abandon his demand for Buraimi. This intransigence explains his decision in August 1952 to despatch Tūrki Ibn AL Utaishan,¹²⁷ with an escort of 40 armed men, to be the local governor and thus to establish Saudi administration in the village of Hamasa in Buraimi.¹²⁸

Therefore, Britain fought to publish the matter in all the British newspapers and it was not surprising to find a Foreign Office spokesman providing an account of the history of the oasis. He claimed that for almost a century there was no Saudi influence in the region and that British officers had for many years visited the oasis without any

¹²⁵ William Rupert Hay's report, 18 March 1949, IOR R/15/2/465; The Eastern Department Minutes, 'Frontier dispute with Saudi Arabia', dated as 1953, TNA, FO 371/104295; al-Zerekly, *Wajīz fī sīrat al-Malik Abdul Aziz* [The Biography of King Abdul Aziz], p.309.

¹²⁶ Alan C. Trott's telegram to FO, 28 February 1951, TNA, FO 371/91764; R. J. Bowker's memorandum, 28 August 1951, *ibid*; al-Zerekly, *Wajīz fī sīrat al-Malik Abdul Aziz* [The Biography of King Abdul Aziz], p.309.

¹²⁷ Tūrki Ibn Abdullah al-'Utaishan (1912-1985) was one of the most important Saudi Governors under the rule of King Ibn Sa'ūd. In 1948, he was appointed the local governor of Ras Tanorah and then became the Acting governor of the Eastern region. He was described as 'the man for the impossible mission'. See 'Muqabālh mā'Musaid al- Utaishan' [An interview with Musaid al- Utaishan], *al-Yom Newspaper*, 9 February 2007.

¹²⁸ Letter from the Sultan of Oman to the British Consul in Muscat, 4 September 1951, TNA, FO 1016/209.

objection from the Saudi Government. He also presented another argument: that while the Saudi Government in recent years had started to allege its ownership of the oasis, the oasis itself was situated far outside Saudi territory. In addition, he pointed out that the Government of Saudi Arabia had made its first objection to a routine visit by a British officer to the oasis in 1952. Furthermore when King Ibn Sa'ūd sent armed forces to the Hamasa' village in Buraimi, the Foreign Office spokesman accused the Saudi Government of escalating the situation.¹²⁹ In reply, the spokesman of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted that his country would raise the issue of Buraimi, claiming that the continuation of the dispute would threaten international peace and security.¹³⁰

In the considerable controversy between the two parties, the US intervened to mediate and a Standstill Agreement was reached on 26 October 1952 in Jeddah. This agreement allowed both Saudi officials and British forces to remain in Hamasa, the essential village in Buraimi, and stipulated that both governments should abide by their respective positions and not menace each other or do anything that might endanger a future resolution on the suzerainty of the Buraimi oasis.¹³¹

¹²⁹ *The Times*, ' Saudi Arabian Dispute ', 6 March 1953.

¹³⁰ British memorandum to the Saudi Government, 2 April 1953, TNA, FO 1016/303; *The Times*, ' Saudi Arabian Announcement, ' 9 March 1953.

¹³¹ *The Eastern Department Minutes*, ' Frontier dispute with Saudi Arabia ', dated as 1953, TNA, FO 371/104295; Michael Quentin Morton, *Buraimi: The Struggle for Power, Influence and Oil in Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p.104.

In addition, in order to reach a final peaceful settlement, Sir Anthony Eden,¹³² the Foreign Secretary, proposed asking an international tribunal to arbitrate.¹³³ However, in December 1952, the Saudi Government replied that King Ibn Sa'ūd consented to arbitration if it defined only the boundaries with Abu Dhabi and Qatar, but wanted the Buraimi district to be excluded from the arbitration because, in reality, it was under Saudi sovereignty and, therefore, was indisputable.¹³⁴

At this period, the era of the British Empire was obviously in decline, in particular after WWII. At this time the US, the new superpower, entered the Middle East, threatening the British interests in the region. In addition, King Ibn Sa'ūd believed that the permanence of friendship with the US was the essential consideration of the Saudi policy and vital for its economy. Eden stated:

Ibn Saud was once utterly dependent on us for money, arms and international protection. Today he obtains all these benefits from his new friends in the United

¹³² Robert Anthony Eden (1897-1977) was a British politician who worked for long periods as Foreign Secretary and then for a short time as Prime Minister between 1955 and 1957. For more information see his autobiography entitled *The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Sir Anthony Eden: Full circle* (London: Cassell, 1960); Personal and political papers of Anthony Eden, 1st Earl of Avon, University of Birmingham, *Cadbury Research Library Special collection* Re. AP; Sidney Aster, *Anthony Eden* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); Robert James, *Anthony Eden* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986); Anthony Ronald, *Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office* (Aldershot: Gower, 1986); Alan Lawrence, *Anthony Eden, 1897-1977: a bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1995); Victor Rothwell, *Anthony Eden: a political biography 1931-1957* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1992); D.R. Thorpe, *Eden: the life and times of Anthony Eden: first Earl of Avon* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003) and 'Eden, (Robert) Anthony, first earl of Avon (1897-1977)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 27 Dec 2015.

¹³³ Philby, 'Britain and Saudi Arabia', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 April 1953.

¹³⁴ King Ibn Sa'ūd's letter to the British legation in Jeddah, 8 December 1952, TNA, FO 1016/269; FO to the British legation in Bahrain, 8 December 1952, TNA, *ibid*; *The Eastern Department's Minutes*, 'Frontier dispute with Saudi Arabia', dated as 1953, TNA, FO 371/104295.

States. Ibn Saud is in no way beholden to us, and it is our influence alone that stands in the way of his absorption of his less powerful neighbours.¹³⁵

Consequently, in order to preserve British prestige, and indeed its oil interests in the Gulf, Eden proposed, in March 1953, to escalate the tension by despatching British armoured cars and military aeroplanes to Sharjah, a district not far from the oasis of Buraimi.¹³⁶ In reply to the British action, King Ibn Sa'ūd sent a telegram to the Saudi Embassy in London to inform Eden as follows:

I'm depressed that our relations have worsened to such a degree, threatening us by military aeroplanes. I cannot imagine this incident would happen in a government headed by Churchill and his Deputy Eden, the Foreign Secretary. I hope that the British Government will stop its aggression, otherwise we will be obliged to raise a complaint with the United Nations in order to defend our historical rights.¹³⁷

Soon after, Eden replied that he was desirous to maintain friendly relations between the two countries, hoping to resolve the issue in a cordial and friendly atmosphere. He informed King Ibn Sa'ūd that he understood the Saudi objection regarding Buraimi and said that it would be wise for Britain and Saudi Arabia, for the time being, to stay away from recriminations, repeating and recommending the proposal of arbitration. Eden added that he was obliged to mention the Saudi local governor in Buraimi who, by spreading Saudi propaganda, had been responsible for the chaos in the district. He had

¹³⁵ Eden's proposal regarding the Buraimi district, 19 December 1952, TNA, CAB 129/57.

¹³⁶ Philby, 'The Buraimi Oasis', typescript, *Philby collection*, F.16/6.

¹³⁷ Al-Zereky, *Wajīz fī sirat al-Malik Abdul Aziz* [The Biography of King Abdul Aziz] p.310.

tried to subvert the loyalty of the inhabitants and distort it by paying them from Saudi funds, which was incompatible with the British-Saudi agreement.¹³⁸

To strengthen the Saudi objection to arbitration and to the British operation in Buraimi, the Saudi government began a press campaign against the British. However, the question that should be asked is who could present the Saudi demands to the world's public opinion and at the same time belong to the Western world? The only answer was Philby, the ally of King Ibn Sa'ūd and his closest friend, who had always stood as an obstacle to British imperialism but without hostility, as he always claimed.¹³⁹ Philby devoted himself to a campaign which he led in favour of Saudi Arabia, raising the issue in several articles in the press and also in his published and unpublished books. Before engaging in the Saudi-British controversy, it appears that Philby equipped himself by learning about Buraimi's historical background. From unrevealed documents in his collection at St. Antony's College, it is evident that he made profound efforts to read and translate the Saudi sources that examined the history of Buraimi and Oman during the 19th century. For example, he read the main source of information on the Second Saudi State, called *Unwān al- Majd fī Tārīkh Najd* [The symbol of glory in the history of Najd], written by Othman Ibn Bisher, a Najdi scholar.¹⁴⁰ This historical source narrates

¹³⁸ British legation in Jeddah to King Ibn Sa'ūd, 29 November 1952, TNA, FO 1016/269.

¹³⁹ Philby presented a number of issues on which he did not agree with British policy in the Middle East, but he believed that his controversial outlook did not include any trace of antipathy toward his country. See Philby, *More Arabian Days*, unpublished book, original copy preserved by Michael Engelbach, Philby's grandson, London, pp.1-10.

¹⁴⁰ Othmān Ibn Abdullah Ibn Bisher (1795-1873) was a Najdi historian whose writings always in favoured the Wahhabi State. He died at the age of 80. See, Abdullah al- Bassam, *Oluma Najd kelal thamanite*

that, the Imam Tūrki al- Saud, the great grandfather of King Ibn Sa'ūd, received some chiefs of Oman in Riyadh in 1828, who asked him to despatch a Qadhi (judge) to spread the Wahhabi teachings and also asked for a military detachment to support them against their adversaries. The Imam sent them a Qadhi and a commander with a force; when they arrived in Oman, the inhabitants of al-Dhahira and al- Batina proclaimed their obedience and it was agreed to assign them a Saudi governor who would live in Buraimi.¹⁴¹

In addition, because Ibn Bisher ended his historical annals in the year 1850, Philby tried to find another Saudi account of the relevant events in the second half of the 19th century. He found a source entitled *Tārīkh Ibn Eisā* (The History of Ibn Eisā), written by Ibrahim Ibn Eisā¹⁴² and translated some pages of it. These pages indicate that the Imam Faiṣal Ibn Tūrki, the grandfather of King Ibn Sa'ūd, prepared an expedition against the Nu'im tribe and Oman. After defeating them, he was approached by the chiefs of the villages, who offered peace and agreed to pay taxes to the Saudi ruler in Riyadh.¹⁴³

From the above some important explanatory points emerge:

qrones [Najdi Scholars through eight centuries] (Riyadh: Dar al- Asimah, 1999), vol.5, pp.115-120; al-Zerekly, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.4, p.209.

¹⁴¹ Philby translated pages of Ibn Bisher's history, *Philby collection*, no. 16/6. To compare Philby's translation with the Saudi Arabic source, see Ibn Bisher, *'Unwān al- Majd fī Tārīkh Najd* [The Symbol of Glory in the History of Najd], p.65.

¹⁴² Ibrahim Ibn Saleh Ibn Eisā (1854-1925) was a Najdi scholar who specialised in the history of the Saudi State in the late 19th century and first quarter of the 20th. See his biography in Abdullah al-Bassam, *'Oluma Najd khelal thamanite qrones* [Najdi Scholars through eight centuries], vol.1, pp.318-331.

¹⁴³ Philby, translated pages of Ibn Eisā's history, *MECA, Philby collection*, F.16/6. In comparison, see Ibn Eisā, *Tārīkh Ibn Eisā* [The History of Ibn Eisā], p.138.

- 1- Because of his reasonable arguments, Philby may have given the Saudi Government access to the Saudi historical sources in order to illustrate and endorse the legitimate right of King Ibn Sa'ūd to preserve the oasis from British demands.
- 2- In the view of Philby, Buraimi was part of the Wahhabi State; the ancestors of King Ibn Sa'ūd had exercised suzerainty over the disputed territory for the greater part of the 19th century.
- 3- For many years, some tribes of the Buraimi oasis had readily accepted Saudi sovereignty by their tax payments, or what is called in the Islamic heritage their Zakat.
- 4- Many tribes in Buraimi had adopted the Wahhabi precepts and endorsed the spiritual authority of the Wahhabi rulers.

As a result, after mastering the required historical background of Buraimi, Philby set up a campaign in favour of the Saudi government. From his private papers at Oxford, it seems that he was anxious to follow what had been written in the British press, whether by the British spokesman of the Foreign Office or in articles written by diplomatic correspondents. He first approached *The Times* but the editor refused to publish his article without omitting its last paragraph. He feared that the implications of

the paragraph were a little dangerous.¹⁴⁴ The last paragraph as Philby wrote it ran as follows:

It is to be hoped that the British Government will think again, and realize the absurdity of its position as champion of the Middle East Defence pact when in fact its military activities in Egypt, in the Subaihi territory of the Yemen border and now at Buraimi expose it to the suspicion that it is actually the only source from which the Arabs need fear 'aggression'.¹⁴⁵

From the above quotation, it may be inferred that Philby sought to put the British Government in an awkward position for all to see, in particular when he asserted the failure of the British policy not only as regards the Buraimi crisis but also with respect to the political conditions in Egypt and the Aden Protectorate. This, of course, put more pressure on Britain to change its uncompromising stance in the negotiations with the Saudi government.

Moreover, to the statement of the Foreign Office spokesman who had given the short history of Buraimi cited above (p.30), Philby replied that the last years of the 19th Century illustrated the full Wahhabi revival over Buraimi, which was a centre of resistance against Oman. In addition, Philby presented a strong argument against the statement of the Foreign Office spokesman, when he suggested that during the period of Imam Faişal (1838-1865), the grandfather of King Ibn Sa'ūd, Buraimi was actively

¹⁴⁴ *The Times* to Philby, 27 Mach 1953, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.16/6.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

ruled by one of the most important Saudi governors, Ahmad al- Sudairi,¹⁴⁶ and his successors, and that the status of Buraimi was recognised by Colonel Lewis Pelly,¹⁴⁷ the British Resident in the Persian Gulf, who had visited the Imam Faişal in 1865.¹⁴⁸

The above suggests that Philby's account of the Wahhabi claim to the Buraimi oasis was probably true, at least in the era of Imam Faişal. However, Pelly's recognition of the legitimate Wahhabi rule of Buraimi, as Philby believed, seems less than incontrovertible. As mentioned in Chapter 3, above, the main reason behind Pelly's mission to the Wahhabi state was to bring to an end the state of hostility between Britain and the Wahhabis and therefore there was no negotiation between the two parties about boundaries.¹⁴⁹ As a result, because Pelly did not mention the boundary, or the Buraimi oasis, Philby thought that the former merely implied the legitimacy of Wahhabi rule over Buraimi. Hence, whether or not there was an agreement between the parties, Philby was simply attempting to defend the Saudi's right to rule the Buraimi oasis and also to respond to or rebut the apparent reluctance of the press and other public channels to do the same, instead of supporting the Government line.

It also appears that Philby never ceased to work on consolidating King Ibn Sa'ūd's position and at the same time to undermine the British demands over Buraimi. This is

¹⁴⁶ Ahmad al- Sudairi was one of the significant commanders of the second Saudi State. He ruled such territories as AL Gnat, Ḥasa and Buraimi. He died in 1860. For additional accounts see Abdulrahman al-Dhahiri, ' Ahmad al- Sudairi ', *al-Dir'iyah*, vol.1, no.1 (May. 1998), pp.47-123.

¹⁴⁷ See his biography in p.174, n.1.

¹⁴⁸ Philby to the Editor of *The Times*, 18 March 1953, MECA, *Philby collection*, F.16/6; Philby, 'The Buraimi Oasis ', *Philby collection*, *ibid*; Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, pp.197-198.

¹⁴⁹ Regarding Pelly's visit see Chapter Three, pp.137-139.

exemplified by his assertion that during the era of King Ibn Sa'ūd, the Buraimi had been ruled as part of Ḥasa, the Saudi territory, by another strong sovereign, Abdullah Ibn Jiluwi,¹⁵⁰ the cousin of King Ibn Sa'ūd; after the death of Ibn Jiluwi, the administration of Buraimi passed to his successor in the region.¹⁵¹

Another interesting piece of evidence of Philby's to strengthen the Saudi government's position was that the inhabitants of Buraimi refused in 1927 to receive Bertram Thomas,¹⁵² the British civil servant who was working as the Finance Minister for the Sultanate of Muscat. They warned him not to enter their district because they owed loyalty to Riyadh and his reception and admission would upset King Ibn Sa'ūd.¹⁵³ Moreover, in his subsequent exploration of the *Rub al Khali* (the Empty Quarter) in 1932, Philby stated that his escort had just come back to Ḥasa from Buraimi to collect taxes from the inhabitants of the south-east, who lived along the boundary of Oman. In addition, the escort informed him that some of his tribe, AL Manasir, had settled in Buraimi under the Wahhabi rule.¹⁵⁴ By presenting these historical arguments, Philby seems to have sought to indicate that the Buraimi district was not outside the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, thus casting doubt on the British allegations.

¹⁵⁰ See his biography in p.204, n.108.

¹⁵¹ Philby, 'Truce in danger', *The Times*, 18 March 1953; Philby, 'The Buraimi Oasis', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.16/6.

¹⁵² Bertram Sidney Thomas (1892-1950) was a British civil servant and Arabist. He worked in different posts such as the Assistant Political Officer in Iraq, Assistant Chief Representative in Transjordan and Finance Minister for the Sultan of Muscat in Oman. He was considered the first European to penetrate the Empty Quarter from the south to the north between 1930 and 1931. See his book: *Arabia Felix: across the empty quarter of Arabia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932); John Ure, 'Thomas, Bertram Sidney (1892-1950)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 27 Dec 2015.

¹⁵³ Philby, 'Britain and Saudi Arabia', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 April 1953.

¹⁵⁴ Philby, *The Empty Quarter* (London: Century Hutchinson, 1986), pp.28, 77.

Another argument that Philby made against the British action over Buraimi is that he was willing to show the world that Britain was still pursuing its imperial policy, which contradicted the principles of justice and humanity. His argument is seen in his assertion that Britain had nothing to do with the Middle East and there was no controversy over Buraimi between King Ibn Sa'ūd and either the ruler of Abu Dhabi or the Sultan of Oman. Britain wanted to make use of them to cloak its purpose of expanding its recent interest in oil from the Trucial Coast and Oman.¹⁵⁵

It seems fairly clear that Philby believed that the military confrontation with Britain was not sufficient, in view of British military superiority. Therefore, in an article in *The Manchester Guardian*, Philby suggested that, after the signature of the standstill agreement, the Saudi Government had tried to resolve the Buraimi issue amicably by diplomatic means and that King Ibn Sa'ūd had showed an honest determination to avoid any accidental show of animosity against Britain. He concluded that the issue could be settled by a plebiscite of the inhabitants of Buraimi oasis rather than arbitration.¹⁵⁶

However, the British Press set up a counter-campaign against Philby's articles. Previous British officials, Bullard, for example, had voiced strong opposition to the historical rights argument by which Philby sought to strengthen the Saudi case over the Buraimi district. It was said that if the Saudi claims had been based on historical fact, as Philby

¹⁵⁵ Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p.357

¹⁵⁶ Philby, ' Britain and Saudi Arabia ', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 April 1953.

suggested, it would have given the Saudi Government strong leverage if it came to arbitration, but the previous government had unfortunately rejected the British proposal to have a tribunal.¹⁵⁷ In any case, the controversy took a new turn when King Ibn Sa'ūd died on 9 November 1953 and his eldest son, King Saud,¹⁵⁸ succeeded to the throne of Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁹

In the time of King Saud, it had been agreed that the dispute over boundaries should be resolved by an international arbitration tribunal. The hearing took place in Geneva, in September 1955 and after some difficult negotiations, the arbitration failed when Bullard, the British representative, withdrew, claiming that the Saudi delegation had been representing its government instead of being unbiased.¹⁶⁰ It is likely that the reason behind the retreat of Bullard was his feeling that the tribunal's decision would be in favour of the Saudi government. Whatever the reason was, it seems that Britain had no wish to lose its last interests in the Middle East and for this reason the British Government made the decision to support the Sultan of Muscat and Shaikh Abu Dhabi and occupy the Buraimi district at the end of October 1955.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ R. Bullard, ' Saudi Arabia ', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 June 1952.

¹⁵⁸ King Sa'ūd Ibn Abdul Aziz al- Sa'ūd (1902-1969) was the second king of modern Saudi Arabia. He joined his father in some battles such Hail and the Saudi-Yemeni war. In 1964, he was forced to abdicate the throne in favour of his brother, Prince Faiṣal. For more accounts see al-Zerekly, *al-a'lām* [Biographical Dictionary], vol.3, p.190.

¹⁵⁹ Regarding the death of King Ibn Sa'ūd , see the Sa'ūdi announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 November 1953, TNA, FO 371/104885; Philby , *Forty years in the wilderness*,p.4

¹⁶⁰ *The Times*, 17 September 1955.

¹⁶¹ Umm al- Qura, 4 October 1955, no.1589.

Philby was depressed not only by the death of his friend, King Ibn Sa'ūd, but also by the British occupation of the Buraimi oasis. He asserted that the failure of the Saudi policy was due to the difference of character between the late King Ibn Sa'ūd and his son King Saud. He believed that the father had been an intelligent person and had had a lifetime's experience to secure the interests of his kingdom by presenting reasoned and friendly arguments. In addition, while the essential Saudi advisers had caught the ear of King Saud, the son, they had never had any influence on King Ibn Sa'ūd, the father, with whom they were not allowed to argue with in public. All discussion had taken place in the privacy of his council. In this way the father had been able to get to know them and their ideas intimately and it would have been impossible for them to exceed his orders. However, there was no doubt, as Philby suggested, that the successor, King Saud, did not have the background of his father and was under the influence of his father's ministers and advisers, who encouraged the political propaganda that tended always to be anti-West in general.¹⁶²

Philby's claim was probably logical, notably when it touched on the Arab nationalist movement led at the time by the Egyptian authorities; but it should never be forgotten, as noted above, that the oil interests in the Trucial coast and Oman were the vital factor that was leading to the British occupation of Saudi land. In addition, it can be assumed that the high status of King Ibn Sa'ūd, and his long friendship with Britain,

¹⁶² Philby, ' Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia ', MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 1/4/9/3.

together with Philby's efforts to support the King over the disputed boundary, may be considered the main reason for the delay over the British occupation of Buraimi.

Whatever their rights and wrongs, Philby's efforts in the Buraimi dispute were the last political contribution that he made before King Saud, the son who had succeeded his father King Ibn Sa'ūd, came to the decision that Philby must leave Saudi Arabia, owing to Philby's considerable criticisms of the son and his rule as well as his personal advisers and Ministers.¹⁶³ As Philby was devoted to life in the Middle East, he chose Lebanon for his exile, concentrating on his writings and attending Orientalists' conferences until he died in Beirut on Friday 30th September 1960, at the age of seventy-five.¹⁶⁴

Overview

The chapter demonstrated that the considerable expansion of King Ibn Sa'ūd's kingdom may have been the main reason behind the treaty of Jeddah, which was signed in 1927, and provided full independence for King Ibn Sa'ūd, releasing him from British protection and giving him the chance to contact any foreign powers he chose for the purpose of establishing diplomatic relations.

¹⁶³ Philby's criticisms of King Sa'ūd and his government can be found by following the sources of his historical writings: *Arabian Jubilee*, pp.1-20; 226-246; 'The Scandal of Arabia', *Sunday Times*, 23th and 30th 1955; 'Why I go Home', MECA, *Philby collection*, F.1/4/9/3.

¹⁶⁴ In their article: 'Obituary: H. St. John B. Philby, 1885-1960', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 126 no. 4 (Dec, 1960), pp. 563-566, Wilfred Thesiger suggest that Philby's death occurred on 1 October 1960 but in fact it was on 29th September, as Eleanor Philby indicates. She and Kim were with Philby in the last two days of his life and buried him according to Muslim custom. See, Eleanor Philby, *Kim Philby The spy I loved* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), pp, 46-48.

The chapter suggested that Philby played a major role; he took the first steps toward American recognition of Saudi Arabia. This is testified by his continual contacts with American officials, using such persuasive arguments as the need for stable political conditions in the Saudi kingdom and using the tool of commercial profit to persuade American companies to promote their products in the Saudi markets. In addition, it is probably clear that Twitchell tried to ignore Philby's efforts not only to bring Crane to Saudi Arabia but also to secure contact with American officials, who would be swayed by the great influence Philby had in the negotiations for oil concessions from Saudi Arabia to the US. In contrast, Philby seems to have avoided bias in declaring that Twitchell had worked hard to discover oil in the east of Saudi Arabia only after the American companies had been persuaded to look for oil there in the first place.

This chapter revealed that the high position of Philby and his close relationship with King Ibn Sa'ūd may have been the main reason behind the American officials' contact with Philby; they had made it to further their ambition to gain the oil concession. Furthermore, before the actual negotiations and during the correspondence between Philby and the American officials, it appears that Philby was anxious to keep the Saudi interests foremost in order to help his friend, King Ibn Sa'ūd, whose country was suffering from economic difficulties before the discovery of oil. Moreover, before the arrival of the American representatives in Saudi Arabia, Philby showed his great loyalty to King Ibn Sa'ūd by spreading the news of the oil concession to other rival oil

companies so that many would participate in the negotiations; he had done so principally to make the concession more advantageous for the Saudi government.

The chapter concluded that the accusation of treason against Philby – that he deceived his country by securing the oil concession for the Americans instead of a British company- is for a number of reasons probably neither objective nor thorough. First, the explicit confession of Longrigg, the representative of the IPC, that his directors had not shown any interest or made any serious endeavour to obtain the concession and they had refused to pay more than the American bid. Second, the hesitation of the IPC may have been because its directors thought that there would be no oil in Saudi Arabia, after the bad experience of the Eastern and General Syndicate which had spent about five years without managing to find any indication of oil in the east of Saudi Arabia. For the IPC to have paid £100, 0000 in cash would have been a serious venture of the company's funds. Third, the directors of the IPC may have believed that there was no requirement to gain any more concessions when the company already had adequate oil reserves in Iraq and was making such good profits. Fourth, as Philby had been asked by King Ibn Sa'ūd to put Saudi interests as his primary consideration, he was simply following his conscience and justifying the king's trust to implement the Saudi policy. Moreover, Philby could only have been a traitor if he had still been working for the British service or even been a representative for the IPC, a British company.

The chapter demonstrated that Philby had great influence on Saudi foreign policy; he made a cardinal contribution in the American diplomatic recognition of Saudi Arabia, resulting in the opening of the American Legation in Jeddah after the US became aware of the considerable oil reserves in Saudi Arabia.

The chapter showed that Philby played a major role by providing the Saudi Government with wireless, which not only helped to run the kingdom more easily in peace-time but also could be in military targeting in times of war, notably when the Idrisi revolt broke out against Ibn Sa'ūd's regime; thanks to this, Philby may be regarded as supplying a vital factor in preserving the internal security of Saudi Arabia.

Regarding Philby's mission to the southern territories of Saudi Arabia, the chapter concluded that the main reasons behind the mission were not only to map the southern boundaries between Saudi Arabia and Yemen or Philby's desire for fame by exploring the unknown areas in Yemen, but also the political factor that sought to incorporate into Saudi lands the territory located in the north of Aden. This reason is supported by some important pieces of evidence. The first one was before Philby's mission and can be seen in the political correspondence between Britain and King Ibn Sa'ūd, who claimed that the tribes located in the north of Yemen had been governed by his ancestors during the 19th century and for this reason they should be included under his authority. The second piece of evidence is related to the assistance of the local governor of Najran, who provided Philby with all the equipment and soldiers he needed

to enter Yemen; he would not have done so without King Ibn Sa'ūd's approval, which could be taken seriously. Another piece of evidence is connected with a report by Bullard, the British Minister in Jeddah, who remarked, after conversations with Philby, that King Ibn Sa'ūd was pleased by Philby's entry to Yemen. The fourth piece of evidence is related to Philby's propaganda, which was designed to eulogize King Ibn Sa'ūd among the tribes in the north of Yemen. The final piece of evidence can be found in Philby's strictures against his own country, stating that while the areas of the north of Yemen were outside British protection, the British Government was continuing its usual imperialistic policy of including these. Such criticism coincided with the desire of King Ibn Sa'ūd to control the north of Yemen, which turned Philby into a political tool implementing the expansion policy of Saudi Arabia.

The chapter found that, despite the difficult nature of the geography in the south of Saudi Arabia, Philby successfully completed his mission to map the national boundaries for the Saudi Government and he also achieved another goal: to explore the unknown lands in the south of Arabia. However, Philby was not fortunate enough to bring the north of Yemen under Saudi sovereignty, owing to the fact that Britain considered these territories part of the Aden Protectorate.

The chapter illustrated that religious reasons may not have been the essential factor behind the expansion of the first Saudi State in Arabia. The economic reason may have played some part, in particular in the case of Buraimi which had the economic capacity

to enrich the Wahhabi treasury. Furthermore, the political factor may have provided an additional reason for this expansion, in which the Wahhabi rulers sought to integrate the discrete Emirates under their regime.

Evidence was brought up that King Ibn Sa'ūd's demand for Buraimi was based not only on historical facts that his ancestors had ruled it but also on the discovery of oil in the Gulf, which conflicted with the British economic interest and the fact that Britain would never abandon its position in particular after obtaining oil concessions in the Trucial Coast and Oman and after the threat by the US to British interests in the Gulf region.

The chapter suggested that the Saudi Government could not have found anyone better than Philby to express the Saudi demands before Western public opinion. Here, Philby succeeded in putting pressure on the British Government to alter its political attitude to Buraimi. It also concluded that, before starting to pressurise Britain, Philby had had access to Saudi archives to learn about the historical background of Buraimi. In this he made considerable efforts, reading and translating some pages of the historical sources in Saudi Arabia that date back to the 19th century, in order to make a strong case against Britain's demands. These arguments were based on several indications that during the 19th century Buraimi was ruled by the first and second Saudi States and for many years its inhabitants were paying taxes to the Saudi authorities, as well as embracing Wahhabi concepts. Starting his campaign, Philby showed strong determination to support the Saudi foreign policy whereby he could embarrass the

British Government and assert that its policy had not only gone awry in Buraimi but also in many places in the Middle East such as Egypt and Aden.

The chapter illustrated that Philby's allegation that Pelly had acknowledged the allegiance of Buraimi to the Wahhabi State in the 19th century was probably unfounded. Such a claim seems to be disingenuous and was merely an attempt by Philby to strengthen the Saudi attitude over Buraimi in the face of British demands or a reaction against the British press, which was supporting the British Government. In addition, during King Ibn Sa'ūd's reign, Philby went on to present further arguments to support him. The first one was that Buraimi was part of Ḥasa province, whose local governors administered the affairs of Buraimi for many years. The second argument was that the inhabitants of Buraimi refused to receive Bertram Thomas, the British official in Oman, which obviously indicates their allegiance to King Ibn Sa'ūd before any other powers. The third was that Philby was an eye-witness that the Saudi Government was still levying taxes on the inhabitants of Buraimi and there actually was a Najdi tribe who had settled in that district. The result of these arguments was that the district was, indeed, within the framework of Saudi sovereignty and therefore the British claim was questionable. Moreover, Philby suggested another argument: that the British defence of Shaikh Abu Dhabi and the Sultan of Oman was a flimsy allegation that was used by Britain to hide its colonial and economic ambition to capture the oil reserves in the Gulf.

Regarding the British occupation, it seems that Philby blamed the king's heir, King Saud, for being less experienced than his father and being influenced by his advisers who were under the sway of Arab nationalist movements and tended to oppose any deal with the West. These criticisms may have been justified but it should never be forgotten that the oil interest for Britain was a national security interest which had no desire to lose the Gulf. In addition, the chapter asserted that the close relationship between King Ibn Sa'ūd and Britain combined with Philby's contribution in support of the Saudi position in Buraimi were probably enough to deter Britain from taking any offensive action to occupy the Buraimi district until the reign of King Ibn Sa'ūd's son, King Saud.

CONCLUSION

Findings

This thesis, having answered its series of research questions, found that Philby began to be politically active in India; there, despite being under the influence of socialist ideology, he loyally served the Empire in the ICS. His political ideals, formed when still an undergraduate in Cambridge, eventually made him embrace libertarian principles both in India and the Middle East.

This study found clear evidence that Philby succeeded in the Indian mission not only because he was a competent negotiator with the officials of the Government of India but also because the fundamental controversy between the Government of India and Whitehall regarding the future of Iraq may be considered the essential factor in facilitating Philby's mission to provide Iraq's administration with great financial authority.

This greatly contributed to Cox's authority and independence as Chief Political Officer in Iraq. The exchequer of Iraq was equally in debt to Philby's capable planning which culminated in reclaiming the agricultural lands and thereby improving the country's finances. In addition, the thesis finds that, while Cox's part in the establishment of modern Iraq was substantial, beyond doubt Philby played an equally valuable part by

establishing the democratic framework in legal terms and should be credited with an electoral law for Iraq on which its future democratic status could be based.

The evidence in this thesis supports the view that the British officials, who could see no flaw in British Government policy and who painted such a negative image of Philby, may not have done so because of his personality and those views of his that so uncompromisingly opposed the policy, but simply because Philby's opinions were so unlike theirs, in particular his support for the spirit of the independence and liberation movements.

It is plain that Philby played a considerable role, with Cox and Bell, in consolidating the political conditions in Iraq, especially after the creation of the 'Iraq Assembly' that allowed Iraqi people to rule themselves. But he was frustrated by the change of British policy when the Iraqi people were forced to accept Faişal as their king.

Philby was made the British Chief Representative in Transjordan, an appointment which he took very seriously; in fact his arguments were so persuasive that they greatly contributed to the recognition of Transjordan by the League of Nations and possibly was one of the first moves that led to the country becoming independent in the 1940s. Its ruler, Amir Abdullah, who was at first deeply under the influence of Arabs from elsewhere whom he did not want to send away, was in power when Philby was appointed; he would have resented and feared a constitutional government and its representative assembly.

Philby seems to have resigned from the British service for three main reasons, according to the findings of the present thesis. The first reason had to do with the political situation, and foremost the disagreement between Philby and Abdullah, coupled with Philby's conviction, thanks to his standing with the British authorities in Palestine and the CO, that he could never become one of the most celebrated British officers, because the officers of these bodies did not value his views. The second reason is tied up with financial factors – his salary was now substantially reduced. Finally, his love of exploring the Arab territories and the cordiality of Ibn Sa'ūd towards him count as the third and positive reason for his resigning. He may have seen Ibn Sa'ūd as offering both financial support and encouragement for his urge to explore.

The thesis found that Philby did well in the first part of his mission to Najd, not only because Ibn Sa'ūd apparently trusted in the strength of Britain above all, but also because of his own gifts and sincere wish to be less of an outsider. Moreover, he represented Britain as wholly aligned to Najdi interests throughout the war. Furthermore, the thesis sees as less than convincing any accusation that Philby did not clear the tension between Hejaz and Najd but instead, by misrepresenting Cox's instructions, interpreted the invasion of Ḥail as the most important step. Ibn Sa'ūd promised that he would not attack Hussain and thus averted open hostility between Hejaz and Najd while the war lasted. Philby's defence was that the invasion of Ḥail would divert Ibn Sa'ūd's attention from attacking Hussain and ultimately bring about a reconciliation between Hejaz and Najd.

However, Philby went to Hejaz, according to the findings of this thesis, not only en route to exploring the eastern region of Arabia to the west, but in pursuit of a political purpose. He was trying to protect Arab affairs, mainly in the east, which Cox administered, from as much interference on the part of the Cairo officials as possible. It must be concluded that Philby in the Jeddah negotiations was in full possession of the facts about the Hejaz-Najd dispute and persuaded Hussain that Ibn Sa'ūd was not working with anyone to subvert the interests of the Allies.

Some historians have sought to link the unbroken tension between Husain and Ibn Sa'ūd to Philby's visit or his conduct in the negotiations, but this is mistaken. What is mostly to blame for this tension is the century and more of hostility between their two tribes. The negotiations may have failed because Hussain would not tolerate anything less than acknowledgment as king of the Arab countries, disregarding the claims of other Arab leaders. Other elements that significantly inflamed the conflict and consequently intensified the antagonism between Hejaz and Najd were the differences of opinion in designing policy for Arabia and the rivalry between the British authorities in Cairo.

Other purposes behind Philby's mission to Najd, which the thesis showed are ignored or inadequately explored by some historians, and which he certainly managed to grapple with, are the settling of the Ajman revolt and the arrangements for the blockade. His importance can be seen, regarding the former, in his help in setting up a

treaty with the leaders of the Ajman to stop them raiding Ibn Sa'ūd's territories and keep them outside Arabia. This achievement protected Ibn Sa'ūd from disturbance by such raids and involved him in the common cause. The latter too was high among the purposes of the Najdi mission. Philby managed to reduce the level of smuggling and allowed the Najdi to supply the same goods legitimately by dispersing troops between Najd and Kuwait to keep watch for smuggled goods. He strengthened the blockade by co-ordinating the enemies of the Amir of Ḥail on Britain's side. Even the collapse and final surrender of the Ottoman garrison in Madina can be seen as due to Philby's efforts.

Another finding is that Philby persuaded Ibn Sa'ūd to prepare a military expedition against Ibn Rashid, the Amir of Ḥail, even when the king's supply of British arms and his own subsidy were cut. This gave Sa'ūd complete victory and also allowed him to prevent Ibn Rashid from contacting the Ottoman forces to the north. In this way, by supporting the Ḥail expedition he supported Ibn Sa'ūd's international standing and authority and strengthened the common cause against the Ottoman Empire.

The thesis found that Philby managed to persuade Ibn Sa'ūd to moderate his aggressiveness, despite his long-standing hostility against Hussain over the Khurmah oasis and their rivalry over power in Arabia. Distinguishing himself, Philby, in the interests of peace, proposed a British boundary commission between the two rivals, but officials in Cairo preferred to impose a pro-Hussain policy in Arabian affairs, which

called for help to control the oasis. Ibn Sa'ūd's boundaries, however, were unfailingly protected by Philby, who recalled to Cairo that under the treaty of 26 December 1915, Britain would protect Sa'ūd from any assault, even Hussain's. The Inter-Departmental Committee held several meetings, at which Philby showed a better grasp of Arabian affairs than Wingate or Allenby, who generally took Hussain's side. Perhaps it was Philby's accurate perception of Ibn Sa'ūd's victory, based on his protracted acquaintance with conditions in Arabia, that taught him how securely Ibn Sa'ūd was protected by the famed warriors of Ikhwan. Philby was able to forecast that Ibn Sa'ūd would be victorious against Hussain in the battle of Turabah and this may have persuaded the Inter-Departmental Conference to let Khurmah be ceded to Ibn Sa'ūd.

Following the end of WWI, the thesis vindicates Philby; after the failure of the Kuwait conference, prepared by the British Government to make a peace settlement between Hejaz and Najd, Philby's well-founded comments on it were once again justified and his forecasts about it came true. The reason for the failure was that, under the protocols of the Kuwait Conference, from endorsing Ibn Sa'ūd, to whom the Khurmah territory had been ceded, British policy was now taking the side of King Hussain.

Moreover, the thesis can rebut the claim that Philby was a spy and was working in Britain's interests to destroy the Hejazi kingdom. It refers to documents showing that the British Government totally opposed Philby's visit and his mediation attempts. Philby's intervention merely suggests that he wanted to share the same limelight as

other political actors and to convince his country that he was as gifted as they were; in any case, it had no particular effect on the Hejazi state, which would have fallen apart with or without it.

Unlike other studies, this thesis emphasizes how important and how influential Philby, the trusted friend of Ibn Sa'ūd, was on the Saudi Government when he decided to help the king's political decisions. Most importantly, his were the first steps to make sure that the US would recognize Saudi Arabia, as it can be seen from his constant meetings and correspondence with American officials; he reminded them that the kingdom was in a stable political condition, while also tempting American companies by the thought of Saudi markets to pursue profitable deals in. In the event, his efforts succeeded in bringing the US to negotiate for oil concessions and eventually, when they appreciated the size of the kingdom's oil reserves, to open the American Legation in Jeddah. Hence, it can be said that by spurning Philby, the British government perhaps missed a chance to forge a special relationship with a country which would become the world's largest oil producer. Instead, it was the Americans who stepped in and developed close ties with Saudi Arabia.

This thesis also brings to light the new finding that Philby was foremost in bringing wireless to the Saudis. He convinced the Saudi government that this facilitated administration and communication in times of both peace and war. It hastened the

advent of stability and renewed civil order, notably after the revolution against Ibn Sa'ūd by the Ḥasan al-Idrisi movement.

Another finding that has emerged in the course of the research is that Philby went to the southern territories of Saudi Arabia not merely to map the southern boundary with Yemen or to gain fame by exploring the unknown parts of the latter but also for political reasons. He was trying to extend the Saudi influence in the north of Aden and incorporate Shabwa and Hadhramaut, which were outside British protection, into Saudi territory. However, Britain rejected this attempt and included Shabwa and Hadhramaut straightaway within the Protectorate of Aden.

The thesis explored Philby's political action in withstanding British pressure against the firm position taken by the Saudi government over the oasis of Buraimi. He chose to express the Saudi demands and bring international public opinion to bear on this issue. Evidence exists to show that the Saudi Government opened its archives to Philby so that he could make out the case for Saudi Arabia's possession of Buraimi and against British demands, based on historical events. Philby's campaign brought the British government into disrepute in the press by claiming that British imperial policy was not holding up in Buraimi any more than it was in many situations in Egypt, Aden and elsewhere in the Middle East.

The thesis asserted Britain was probably persuaded not to occupy Buraimi and its surroundings by its close relationship with King Ibn Sa'ūd, combined with Philby's

support of the Saudi claim to Buraimi. However, King Ibn Sa'ūd's son and heir, King Saud was less experienced than his father and more under the influence of his anti-Western nationalist advisers, who wanted no allegiance with Britain and opposed British control of the Buraimi oasis. These criticisms may be justified but it should never be forgotten that the oil interest for Britain was a matter of national security. It never wanted to lose its influence in the Gulf.

In terms of the imperial policy of Britain, Philby believed that some members of the Middle East Department at the Colonial Office did not understand the social and political transformation of the Arabs and still espoused a retrograde policy. As a British official from the imperial system, Philby remarked that there were systemic faults in the British system of governance when these members of the Middle East Department were exercising an executive capacity without the specific authority of the Secretary of State; they were only semi-experts or self-deceived about their own ability. Philby criticised the mandate system and gradually understood that that it was merely an episode of imperialism. He judged that his efforts to establish constitutional government and a representative assembly, in Transjordan, had been disrupted by the authorities both in Palestine and in the Colonial Office in order to prevent any meaningful recognition of Transjordan. As a result, Philby cannot be compared with Sykes or Lawrence, who undoubtedly shaped the map of the Middle East. Furthermore, Philby, with his strong desire to give the Arabs independence, cannot be seen as a typical imperial official either and history may judge him as someone who did not play

any role in terms of imperial expansion, for two main reasons. First, he embraced the liberal spirit that allowed nations to become independent, which was not in line with the imperial policy of Britain. Second, after the end of the Great War, Philby remained in Iraq only for a few months before leaving his post as a British Advisor to the Minister of the Interior. Much the same may be said of his post in Transjordan, where he spent less than three years before resigning from the British foreign service.

After leaving the service, Philby endeavoured, in the 1930s, to be a messenger of peace and to solve the critical issues between the Arabs and the Jews. In 1937, he enthusiastically supported the Peel Commission's recommendation of partition and encouraged the Arabs to accept it; the Arabs, however, rejected it and also rejected the White Paper of 1939 that limited the size of the Jewish population in Palestine and the recognition of the right of Jews to settle there. Philby gave reasons for the Arabs' refusal: being driven by their obstinacy and optimism and making a political blunder, which, in Philby's view, led to the loss of Palestine itself.

Philby never ceased to support the nations who were under British occupation. In the 1940s, he was aware of the growth and strength of nationalist movements in the colonies. For instance, he advised the British Government that there was nothing better than letting the Indian people have complete independence. Because he had lived and worked in India as an Indian civil servant for several years, he was convinced that India could never be a single political entity since it consisted of so many different

racism and religions. He, therefore, became an advocate of the separation of India, suggesting that the Pakistan ideal would be inevitable as the way to solve the Indian problem, a prophecy which came true when India and Pakistan gained their independence in 1947.

Britain, anxious after the war to safeguard its assets, especially the prospect of substantial oil supplies and revenues, and to strengthen stability in the Middle East, soon realized that it could no longer depend on direct rule. From 1919, moreover, Britain made it clear that it did not want to remain in a tutelary role once its dependencies could look after themselves. Here Britain failed to adjust to the *pace* of history rather than to change in the functions open to it. Western democracy in practice was the most notable omission from Britain's legacy to its former possessions — which may be put down to yet one more instance of European arrogance. This thesis should acknowledge, at least at this point, that Britain did achieve some substantial good, with goodwill, in many areas during its term of sovereignty over the Empire, but it created much else besides, leading to some instability in the region.

Recommendations for future research

A number of scientific fields for future research can be identified regarding Philby, as this thesis has noted. The findings propose the need for future work to examine the relations between Philby and the imperial policy of Britain. The thesis suggests that Philby formed a different perspective and opposed the British policy, which gave him a

false reputation for being unpatriotic to some historians. In addition, it seems that it is not appropriate to accuse him of espionage because he was an important opponent of Britain's policy or merely because his son, Kim, deceived and betrayed Britain. Eleanor Philby, Kim's ex-wife, said that she was delighted that Kim's father died before he could learn of Kim's defection. She also mentioned that her father-in-law had led a campaign against his country in India and the Middle East, but on his own terms he was loyal to its best interests.¹ More importantly, although Philby was detained by the Home Office in August 1940, the Advisory Committee that investigated his case found that he had no intention of escaping to the US for the purpose of conducting anti-British propaganda and therefore decided to release him.² Hence, it is crucial to revise or recommend a reconsideration of Philby's character and views before accepting a negative image of him.

Among Philby's collection of papers at St. Antony's College, there is a great deal of material relating to Philby and his economic role in Saudi Arabia. It consists of 51 boxes dealing with Sharqieh Ltd., which was established on 20th November 1925 in Jeddah, where Philby was appointed its Resident Director.³ It is clear that King Ibn Sa'ūd cooperated with Philby to bring his country to the civilized world and to import modern

¹ See her book, *Kim Philby: The Spy I loved*, pp.48-49

² Minute by the the Advisory Committee, 14 February 1941, TNA, HO/45/23780.

³ In fact, the name of the company when first established was The Explorers and Merchants in the Middle East Ltd but it was agreed to change its name to Sharqieh Ltd. See ' Note of search of file of Sharqieh Limited', 16 August 1933, TNA, FO 967/59. On this occasion, it should be noted that the Passport and Permit Office granted an exit permit for Philby to return to Saudi Arabia. See a telegram from F. Newsam to N.M. Butler, 27 December 1944, TNA, FO 371/45522.

inventions, as the best solution for developing and administering the affairs of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it is worth examining Philby's work in this regard, especially when these materials suggest that he was the man who brought in wireless, provided the country with water and electricity supplies, planned a railway and an oil pipeline, arranged for the import of luxury goods and worked out several construction projects which benefited not only Saudi Arabia but also the British companies engaged in them. They conducted a number of trade agreements with the Saudi government, which allowed commercial tenders and projects to go forward, making considerable profits combined with those from the exporting of British products to the kingdom.⁴

In his enormous number of books and articles, considerable materials may be found relating to the welfare and social life of the inhabitants of Saudi Arabia. Philby was generous in providing specific information on the culture, customs and traditions of his adoptive country. He lived in Saudi Arabia for a very long time and future research will find how he examined the transformation in people's lives, especially the significant changes after the discovery of oil, which influenced all aspects of existence; these materials undoubtedly deserve to be examined and consulted.

⁴ The materials to reconstruct Philby's economic role and Sharqieh Ltd can be found in MECA, *Philby collection*, F. 5/1-3.

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