

يوم التأسيس  
Saudi Founding Day  
— ١١٣٩هـ / ١٧٢٧م —



وزارة الثقافة  
Ministry of Culture





# OUR STORY





# The Day We Began

Three Centuries On

















# The Royal Decree

January 27, 2022

We, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,  
King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

Upon perusal of the Basic Law of Governance issued by Royal Decree Number (A/90) dated March 1, 1992;

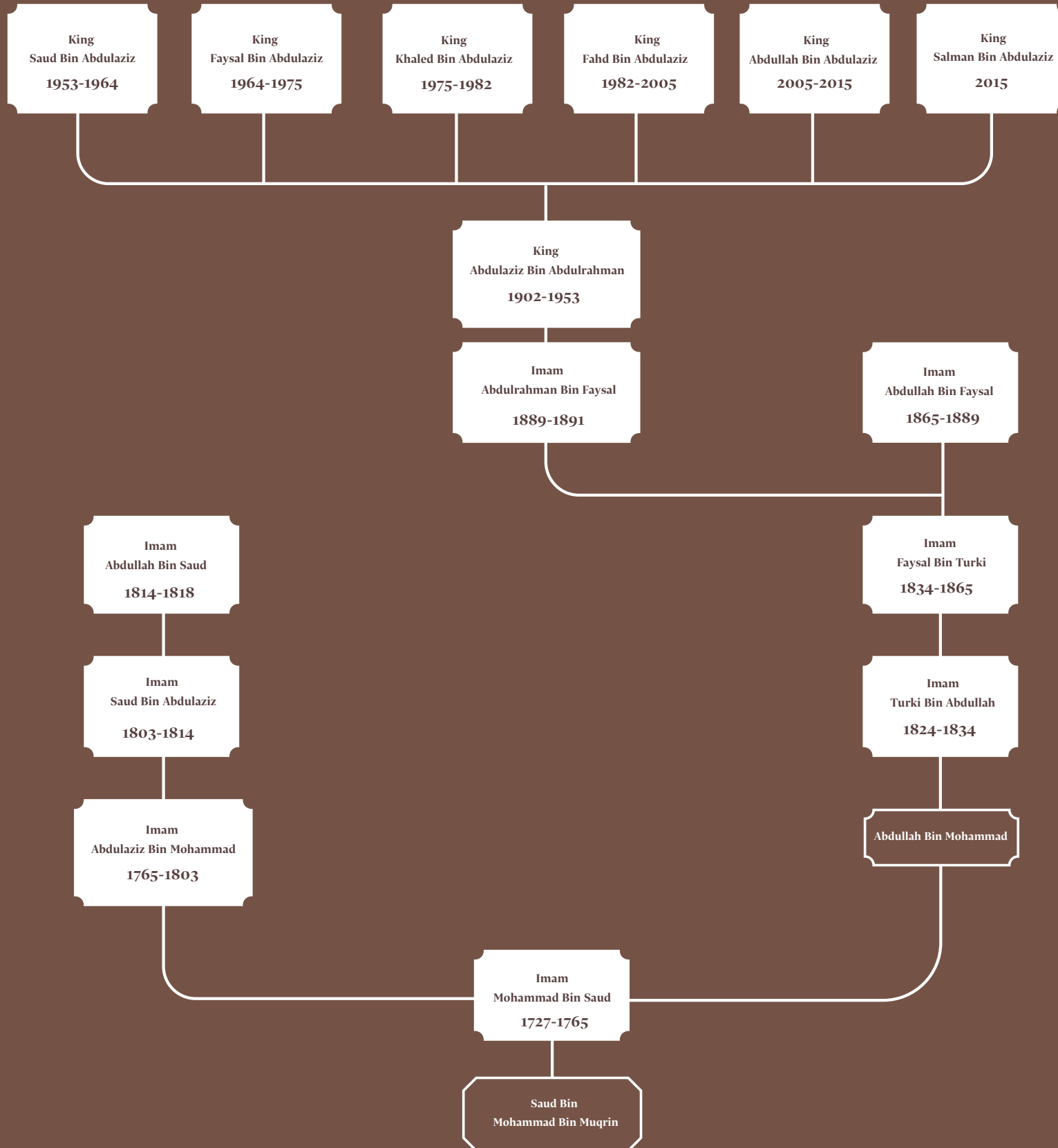
Taking great pride in the deep roots of this blessed state and its citizens' close ties with its leaders which began three centuries ago with the reign of Imam Muhammad bin Saud when he founded the First Saudi State in early 1727, which lasted until 1818, with Diriyah as its capital and the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) as its constitution, and which provided unity and security in the Arabian Peninsula following centuries of fragmentation, dissension and instability, and survived attempts of elimination; seven years after its demise, Imam Turki bin Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Saud succeeded in 1824 in restoring it, establishing the Second Saudi State which lasted until 1891; ten years later, King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Faisal Al Saud succeeded in 1902 in establishing the Third Saudi State and uniting it under the name of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; and his sons, the kings, followed in his footsteps in strengthening and developing this country; and taking into account that the middle of the year 1139H, corresponding to the month of February of the year 1727, signals the commencement of the reign of Imam Muhammad bin Saud, marking his founding of the First Saudi State; Have decreed the following:

First: The 22nd day of the month of February of every year shall be designated to mark the commemoration of the founding of the Saudi state under the name "Founding Day", and shall be an official holiday.

Second: This Decree shall be communicated to the relevant entities for adoption and implementation.

Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

# Imams and kings of the Saudi state





## The Rulers of the First Saudi State

IMAM

MUHAMMED BIN SAUD

1727-1765



IMAM

ABDULAZIZ BIN MUHAMMED BIN SAUD

1765 -1803



IMAM

SAUD BIN ABDULAZIZ BIN MUHAMMED

1803 -1814



IMAM

ABDULLAH BIN SAUD BIN ABDULAZIZ

1814 -1818

# Founding Day



Founding Day marks the commemoration of the founding of the Saudi State by Imam Muhammad bin Saud more than three centuries ago. A national occasion, it celebrates the nation's peace, stability, and justice, which continue to this day.



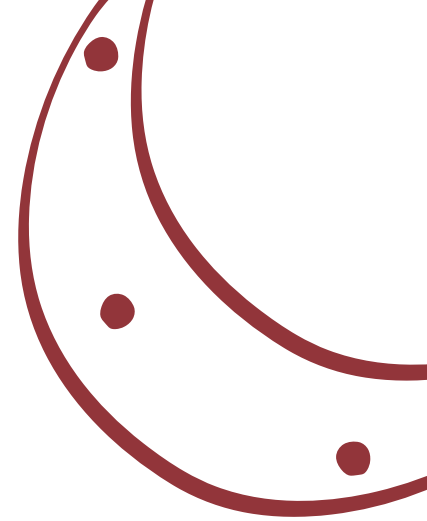
Diriyah, the capital of the Saudi State, became a flourishing center for commerce, culture and knowledge.



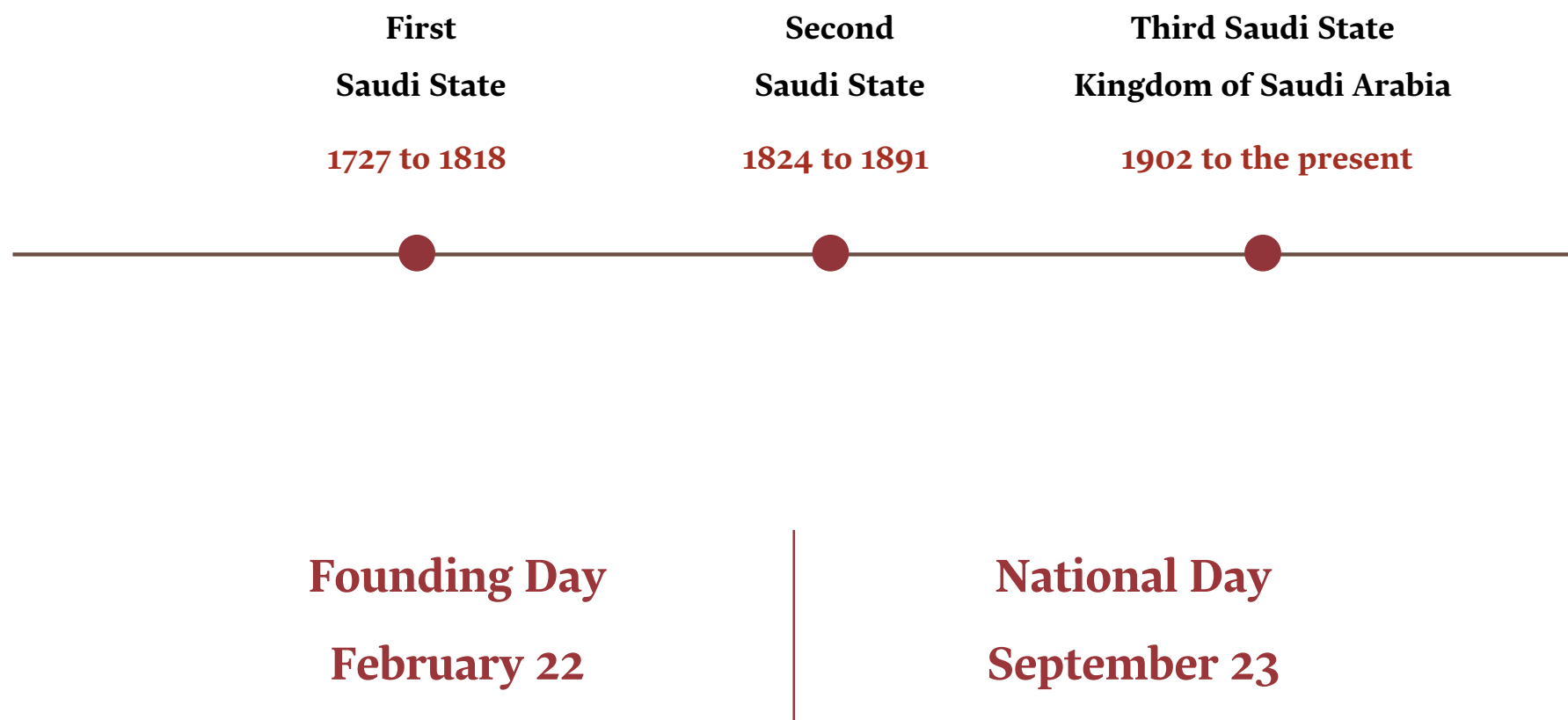


# February 22

The day on which the reign of Imam Muhammad bin Saud ascended to power in Diriyah.  
The First Saudi State was founded in 1727.



## History of the Saudi State



# Founding Day Logo

**Symbol:** The Saudi flag, the palm tree, the falcon, the Arabian horse, and the souq; these five essential elements reflect a vital heritage and persistent cultural themes. These are the symbols of Founding Day.

**The Arabic Font:** The logo's font was inspired by the font used in historical manuscripts that recount the events of the First Saudi State.



**The Palm Tree**



**The Saudi Flag**



**The Falcon**



**The Arabian Horse**



**The Souq**



## The Palm Tree

When the Arabian Peninsula appears to you for the first time and you see those palm trees standing tall upon the earth, you will know for sure that you haven't lost your way. The palm trees has struck its roots firmly into the land of the Saudi State, and has occupied a prestigious place as an essential part of Saudi identity, culture, and heritage, as well as a source of life through the different types of dates that it produces.

Not only did the palm tree give of its fruit, the date, to help our ancestors and forefathers make ends meet, but it also provided them with its leaves, branches, and trunks so that they could fashion all of life's necessities. These items included mats, fans, dining mats, food cooling items, baskets, gates, latches, locks, and many other things. That's the palm tree for you: super tall, broad in stature, and rooted in the depths of the generous earth.

Dates are the fruit of the palm tree, the jewel of the dining table, and the key ingredient of hospitality in a Saudi home. There isn't a house in all the Peninsula, from north to south, east to west, or even in the center, without this dignified fruit, the symbol of generosity. However, depending on the region, one may find different types of dates produced. Northern palm trees produce dates that are different from the eastern palm trees, and central palm trees bear dates that are different from those in western palm trees. In this way, the palm tree is a generous plant that finds new ways of giving the most delicious dates wherever it grows.

In Diriyah, the capital of the First Saudi State and the symbol of its successive future glories, the palm tree's dignity, charity, and diversity of forms are acknowledged. Here we find Khudari, Makfazi, and Nabtat Sayf dates. If we go northwest from Diriyah toward Al-Qassim, we find the generous palm trees showering us with all kinds of delicious fruits, such as Rashoudi and Qattaar dates, famous for their sweetness and tastiness. Qattaar dates even received an ingenious tribute by a famous 12th-century poet in the following:

“I greet the rain from a cloud, high like a mountain's peak Bringing the sweetest, moistest dates (Qattaar) to rival the best of harvests.”

As for the eastern part of the Kingdom, Al-Ahsa graces us with leafy palm trees full of appetizing dates. The most famous dates from the region are the Khalas Dates, which remain the symbol for the area to this day. As we head north, we come upon Al-Jawf in all of its beauty, as sung and lauded by poets and travelers alike throughout history. One such poet extolled the region, saying:

“To those who come to you seeking entertainment, offer Al-Jawf's Hilwa (sweet dates) For Al-Jawf's Hilwa grows abundant and lavish, A feast for the eye on their high branches, Sweeter than the purest honey, Just a taste of them makes hunger vanish.”

Heading to the west, toward Madinah, the city of the Prophet (PBUH), we find lofty palm trees that could tell myriad tales of the passing of time and history and yield for us the Holy Prophet's favorite date, the Ajwa Date.

Stories tell that the date harvest at that time was connected to what is called *mawsim al-qaydh* or *midsummer season*, which is extremely hot. It is from this word that we derive the term *al-maqyaadh* (the blazing heat), the season known for harvesting dates from the palms. This is also a time for harvesting many other agricultural crops in the Najd region, but dates are the most important of them all. This season is also associated with social interaction and tireless economic activity. This time of year was named *al-qaydh* for the hottest days of the season, from August 1 to September 15. The month of July is known as the “date cooker” or “color cooker,” as the dates will turn either yellow or red, depending on the type, due to the extreme heat.





## The Arabian Horse



rooted in the ancient past. Modern archeological discoveries south of Riyadh made in the Kingdom have identified the earliest horse stable in the Arabian Peninsula, showing us that horses were domesticated for the first time in the history of the world on its lands 9,000 years ago. The first pre-Islamic Arab to mount a horse was the Prophet Ismael bin Ibrahim (PBUH). After the coming of Islam, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) spoke highly of the horse's status among the Arabs: "Goodness is attached to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection. Their owners care for them greatly. He who spends to purchase a horse is like one who extends his hand in charity without restraint" (Sahih Al-Bukhari, 2852). The relationship between Arabs and horses grew so strong that the Prophet (PBUH) recommended that a horse's owner takes great care in picking its oats!

Horsemanship and chivalry are woven into the history of the Arabian Peninsula. Historians and poets have immortalized the names, lineage, riders, descriptions, and deeds of famous horses, from the founding of the First Saudi State onward. Today, imams (Saudi leaders) chomp at the bit to acquire the finest horse breeds and develop certain types, increasing their material value and moral significance. Othman bin Bishr noted that "Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz used to own 1,400 horses in his garrison, not to mention those owned by his sons and followers."

The imams of the First Saudi State were always concerned about and cared for their stables and authentic Arabian horses, even to the extent of rescuing and finding homes for them around the region. The major tribes and urban families also had stables throughout the Saudi state to help improve and protect pure Arabian horse breeds in the Arabian Peninsula.

Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz took great interest in horse pedigrees and owned some of the best Arabian mares. Of his 1,400 steeds, he allowed 600 to be ridden by tribesmen he hand-selected for their bravery. He spent generously on valuable horses, most of which he bought at high prices. It was said that he paid the equivalent of £550 or £600 gold pounds for a single horse. He kept 300 or 400 of them in Diriyah, while the rest were kept in Al-Ahsa, where they would have suitable food. He always rode his favorite horse, named "Kari'a," during his military campaigns, and it became famous throughout the entire Arabian Peninsula. Imam Saud also permitted each of his sons to choose a retinue of 150 horses. His son Abdullah maintained nearly 300 horses of his own during his father's lifetime.





## The Falcon



The sport of falconry is one of the most famous pastimes in the Arabian Peninsula. It is classified as a branch of veterinary science called al-baizara. In this sport, a human trains predatory birds for the purpose of hunting. This is done for two main reasons: sustenance and recreation. Hunting has been a part of Arab culture since ancient times. Falconry used to be seen as a sport for kings, leaders, and nobles. Foreign travelers to the Arabian Peninsula would comment on this distinctive sport. The best and most popular types of falcons are the saker, peregrine, and lanner falcons. All kinds of falcons either migrated to the Arabian Peninsula, where they were hunted, or were brought into the region by its early inhabitants. The peregrine and lanner falcons are native to the Arabian Peninsula. During the era of the First Saudi State, falcons were given as gifts among tribal elders to symbolize reconciliation over any disagreement that may have occurred between them. Some tribes were also famous for falconry; sources speak of their great interest and passion for this sport in hunting houbara bustards. The bustard is a migratory bird that comes to the Arabian Gulf from Central Asia, often congregating in the northeastern and eastern parts of the Arabian Peninsula, even reaching the outskirts of the Empty Quarter.



## The Souq



The souq is a place wherein goods can be displayed, consisting of little stands and products laid out on the ground. These sorts of markets still exist to this day in villages and the countryside. Some are held on a weekly basis, while others are only held once a month, year, or every several years. During its development, the First Saudi State saw great waves of geopolitical expansion and reached the height of its glory and power. In doing so, it diversified its revenue streams and resources for the residents of its capital in Diriyah, a fact reflected in the trading markets, residential palaces, and vast agricultural expanses. Experienced traders and craftsmen within the State and abroad came to Diriyah, and the people of Diriyah thus enjoyed a good economic life.

Many citizens of the First Saudi State worked as traders, acting as essential suppliers to the country's townspeople, alongside the farmers. Markets in the First Saudi State took the form of shops lining the wide roads around the palace and mosque, wide enough for shoppers, their goods, and pack animals loaded with goods for transport or to be offered for sale. These markets were called mawsim, which in the local dialect means "place for buying and selling," and does not refer to temporal seasons for selling. Rather, these were permanent markets full of goods and crowded with shoppers and passersby. The First Saudi State was famous for its massive souqs in Najd, Hejaz, and Tihamah.



## The Saudi Flag



The flag is a symbol of unity, belonging, and national cohesion. Flags are raised during battle to raise warriors' patriotic spirits. They are also raised at government buildings and on special occasions.

The current Saudi flag is an extension of the flag of the First Saudi State, which passed through several phases before arriving at its current form. The first of those phases was during the reign of the Founder, Imam Muhammad bin Saud. It was then a green banner made of muslin and silk, with the part nearest to the bearer being white. The green color symbolizes growth, giving, and prosperity. In the middle of the flag were the words "There is no god but God, and Muhammed is the Messenger of God." This version of the flag lasted until the Second Saudi State. During the reign of King Abdulaziz, the flag of the First Saudi State had a sword added to it under the slogan. This new flag consisted of a green flag with the words of the shahadah written in white in the middle of the flag and the drawn sword under it, symbolizing the power of monotheism.



# The Land of the Founding's Capital









**Diriyah**, the capital of the First Saudi State, lies in the center of the Arabian Peninsula, specifically in the region of Al-Yamamah. This region occupies a large area of the Peninsula, stretching more than 1,000 km from north to south and 500 km from east to west. It sits in the middle of the famous Tuwaiq Mountain Range, frequently lauded by poets.

Al-Yamamah includes several smaller regions, including Al-Arid, Al-Washm, Sudayr, Al-Fara'a, Al-Aflaj, Wadi Al-Dawasir, and dozens of other valleys that dot its plains and mountains. It also contains several famous springs, such as Al-Khadra and Heet. Al-Yamamah is known as Al-Khadra, “The Green,” due to its fertile soil and many trees.







• • • Diriyah • •



location in Al-Yamamah. As such, this valley represented an attractive area for human settlement and an important waystation in the middle of the Peninsula for Hajj caravans and commerce during various historical periods.

Diriyah is located on the banks of Wadi Hanifa, which was long known as “Wadi Al-Ird.” Al-Asmai once said, “Al-Ird is most fertile, and so is its city and villages that lie within its valleys.” To that, Abu Ubayd Al-Sakouni added, “The valley of Al-Yamamah takes its position downwind from the windy side of the north and is clear from the winds of the south, following the qibla. It is located within a gate of stone and is surrounded by villages called sufuh, “slopes.” Al-Ird belongs to the Banu Hanifa tribe, with some of it belonging to the Banu Al-A’raj of the people of Saad bin Zayd Manat bin Tamim.”

The poet Yahya bin Talib Al-Hanafi, who died in 796, also said: “A longing sweeps over me as I climb, and my heart is frightened of a southern wind, Oh, Lord, let my worry flow away from me, for I am but a sad stranger, Who cannot feel at home except in my tribe’s valley.”

During the days of the Tasm and Jadis tribes and the early Islamic period, Wadi Hanifa was characterized as lush and flourishing, with many streams from rainfall, rivers, and springs. In this context, Ibn Khaldoun said that “Tasm and Jadis were among the inhabitants of Al-Yamamah, one of the oldest and most fertile countries. It is one of the most bountiful, fruitful places, full of gardens and palaces.” He also said, “Yet after the age of Tasm, Al-Yamamah was left in ruins. Only carrion birds and predatory beasts could eat its fruit until the Banu Hanifa settled there” (Tarikh ibn Khaldoun, v. 4, p. 287).







• • • Wadi Hanifa



The Tuwaiq Mountains, known as “Jabal Tuwaiq,” “Jibal Al-'Arid,” or “Arid Al-Yamamah,” were an important geographical landmark in the Al-Yamamah region. This mountain range consists of a narrow plateau located in the heart of Najd. The Tuwaiq Mountains stretch over a distance of 1,100 km, starting at the Nufud Tweirat Desert in the Al-Qassim region, passing through Wadi Al-Dawasir, and ending at the outskirts of the Empty Quarter Desert. The mountain range’s name, “Tuwaiq,” is the diminutive form of Tawq (ring), as its heights resemble little rings. Human settlements that go back to prehistoric times are spread out along its flanks. A cobblestone road runs through the range, used by ancient caravans for pilgrimage and commerce.

The Tuwaiq Mountains have figured prominently in the classical poetry and in contemporary art. During his speech at the Future Investment Initiative Conference in Riyadh in 2018, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman referenced the mountain range, saying, “Saudi ambition is like the Tuwaiq Mountains.”

The Tuwaiq Mountains are the official icon of the Qiddiya City Project, one of the largest entertainment, athletic, and cultural projects of Vision 2030. One of the Tuwaiq slopes is located only 50 km from the capital city of Riyadh, where the Qiddiya City Project center is headquartered; the mountain rises 600 km above the project area.







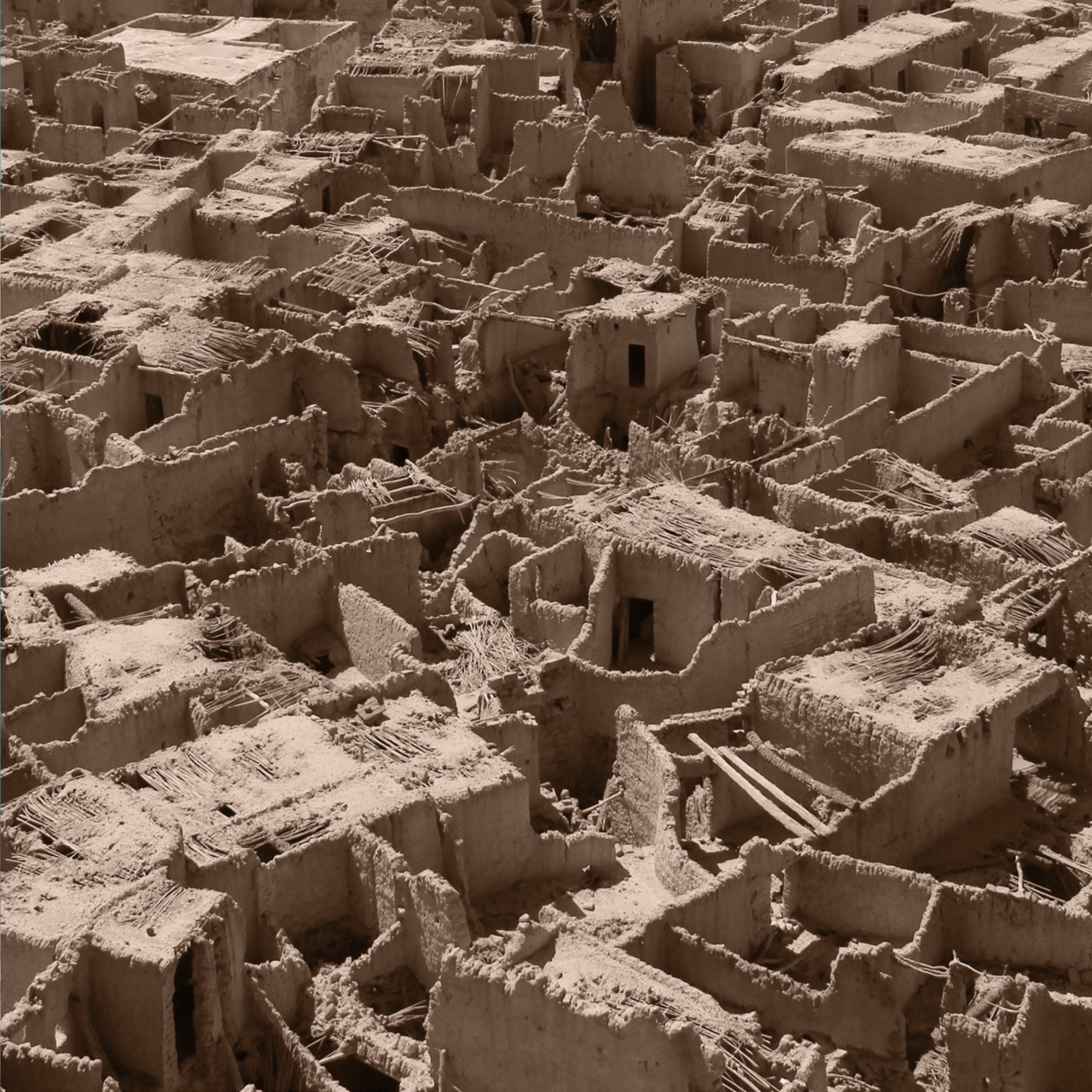
Tuwaiq Mountain



**Roots of  
the State's  
Foundation**









## Banu Hanifa's Move to Al-Yamamah

One of the first Members of Banu Hanifa to come to Al-Yamamah was 'Ubayd bin Tha'alaba bin Yarbou' bin Tha'alaba bin Al-Dul bin Hanifa. He traveled with his family and fortune from the Hejaz, settling in a place called Qarat, near Hajar Al-Yamamah, "Riyadh" As they resided there for a few days, one of 'Ubayd's shepherds went walking and came upon a rock. Seeing palaces and palms, he knew that this was a fortunate land. He returned to 'Ubayd and told him, "I saw tall houses and beautiful trees!" In his hand, the shepherd held a date he had found strewn about under a palm tree. 'Ubayd ate it and said, "By God, this is some food!" He then rose and said to his people and those with him, "Be on guard until we return!"

He mounted his horse, spear in hand, and his retainers followed behind him until they all reached a rock. When he saw it, he knew that this was the land they had been seeking. He thrust his spear into the ground, then pushed his horse forward and claimed more than thirty homes and gardens. His dwelling was called Hajar (" designated ownership"),



••• Banu Hanifa's move to Al-Yamamah

the Hajar of Al-Yamamah. He then expressed himself in a poem, saying:

“We settled in a home that once had owners  
They had left and abandoned its fortified structure  
They become strangers wandering in the wilderness  
Decaying, while we became the inhabitants of the house  
Others will come after us and settle in it as we did  
Living as a replacement on its rough lands and meadows.”

Yaqout Al Hamawi, *Muajam Al Buldan*, vol. 1, pp. 83–85.

Having thus claimed the land, 'Ubayd returned to his family to bring them to their new home. He and his son settled in the heart of Arabia.

Due to the waters of Wadi Hanifa and its fertile land, groups of people had settled there and formed villages, some of which the geographer Al-Hamdani had described as communities with average and extraordinary palms and fortifications. Among the poetic verses that describe Al-Yamamah, one of the most beautiful comes from the poet Amr bin Kalthum in his famous *mu'allaqa* poem:

“Al-Yamamah appeared defiant, like unsheathed swords raised by fighters  
When it reached the forts of Jawo and its people,  
It stopped and the journey ended there at your yard.”

There are still traces of those homes and fortifications, dating back long before the revelation of Islam. You can see the ruins of homes, water wells, agriculture, and farms as well as forts in Malham, which the Banu Yashkur had occupied.

### **Stability**

The Banu Hanifa established themselves in several locations stretching along the banks of the Wadi Al-Ird, which later would become Wadi Hanifa as Al-Yamamah came under the control of the Banu Hanifa. During the early years of Islam, there was a king of Al-Yamamah named Thumamah bin Uthaal Al-Hanafi who had a famous encounter with the Prophet (PBUH). This incident shows the extent of the stability and strength of this region.

### **Instability**

Under the Umayyad and Abbasid Dynasties, when the capital of the Islamic Caliphal state was moved from Madinah to outside of the Arabian Peninsula, the Al-Yamamah region became neglected. The region lived within the folds of obscurity for more than a thousand years. The Banu Ukhaidhir established a state in the middle of ninth century and made Al-Khidhrimah (now the city of Al-Kharj) its capital. This is what was reported in the city of Hajar, which had been a large city comparable to Kufa or Basra in size and planning. The Ukhaidhir took control over the region and adhered to harsh policies that, in addition to the drought that had afflicted the region, led some residents to migrate.





• ● • Wadi Hanifa





# Diriyah









**The Al-Marada clan of Al-Duru', members of the Banu Hanifa, founded a city in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula on the coast of the Arabian Gulf. They named the city "Diriyah" after their clan of the tribe, which had moved eastward from the center of the Peninsula during the tenth century due to the unstable conditions at that time. When the Banu Hanifa tribes returned to Hajar in Al-Yamamah, so too did stability in the rest of the region.**

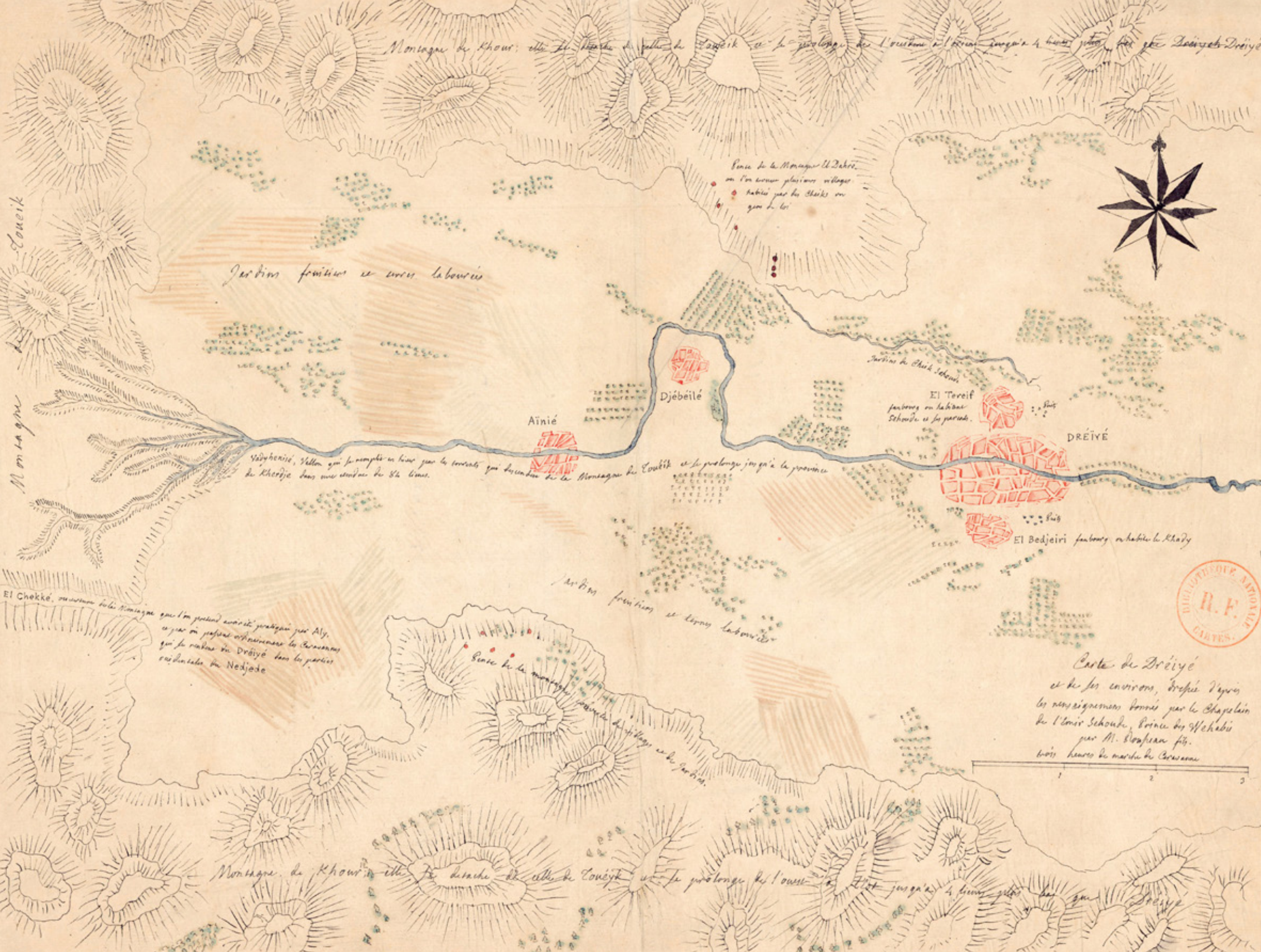
Mani' ibn Rabi'a Al-Muraydi Al-Hanafi, in his hometown of Diriyah in the eastern part of the Peninsula, received an invitation from his cousin, Ibn Dira', the ruler of Hajar in Al-Yamamah, to come with his clan and settle in the region of his ancestors and forefathers. Mani' ibn Rabi'a Al-Muraydi Al-Hanafi and the members of his tribe then moved from Diriyah in the east to the center of the Peninsula to found the new city of Diriyah in 1446. During his journey from the eastern part of the Peninsula, he crossed over the barren sands of the Dahana Desert. Confident in his independent personality, he was willing to establish a vast state that would achieve security and stability in the land. In the end, this is exactly the legacy he left to his descendants.

Ibn Dira' welcomed his cousin and his tribe to Wadi Hanifa and set aside two plots of land for him, Ghasayba and Al-Mulaybeed, northwest from the city of Hajar. Mani' then made Ghasayba his headquarters for his rule and built a wall around it, while he set aside Al-Mulaybeed for agriculture.

This moment represents one of the most important events in the modern history of the Arabian Peninsula, as Mani's arrival was the first brick in the foundation for the greatest state to arise in the region, after the Prophet's State and the Rightly Guided Caliphate. The dream of building a state in the Arabian Peninsula had occupied the minds of several intelligent people. At that time, it appeared an unlikely proposition at best, considering the ruined state of neglect that this geographic region had fallen into over the course of several centuries. This ruin was also the cause of outsider rule over Arab lands, peoples, and resources.

In studying the founding of Diriyah by Mani' Al-Muraydi in the middle of the 15th century, and everything that followed in its wake, it is clear from much of the data that he founded Diriyah to be the capital of a state capable of expansion on a continuous basis. We can see from the positions of Diriyah's emirs, from Amir Mani' onward, that there was a set of principles based on dynastic rule, focused on the ideas of a state and Arab elements. This latter aspect helped the city to transcend its local nature to establish an Arab state.





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- ● • **Map of Diriyah 1808 by the Frenchman J. Rousseau**
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When we consider Diriyah's geographical position, it becomes clear that it was strategically chosen to become a large state capital. One of its key advantages was its location on one of the most important river valleys in Najd, Wadi Hanifa, as well as on one of the most important ancient trade routes. Diriyah lay at the heart of that route, which came from the south of the Arabian Peninsula, passed through Najran, then headed north to Al-Yamamah, where it passed through Diriyah on its way to Dumat Al-Jandal to the north. The path then forked, leading east toward Iraq and west, toward Hejaz. This path was also the old pilgrimage path from Persia, Iraq, and Central Asia. As such, caravans would pass through Diriyah on their way to Makkah. After Mani' Al-Muraydi founded Diriyah, this path grew in importance, as Mani', his children, and his grandchildren all sought to secure and serve the path and its travelers. By the time Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud founded the First Saudi State, this path had become one of the most prominent paths that trading and pilgrimage caravans would pass through. This was due to the Imam's policy of securing this path, establishing relations with the tribes passing through its regions, making security arrangements and agreements with them, and offering the necessary services to those using it.

It was common for the towns of the region to be established by a single family. After the passage of several decades, this family would allow specific individuals or families to move to their town based on an agreement between them. However, we do not see this trend taking place in Diriyah. Since the time of its founding, it was a refuge for many other Arabs who migrated from all over the Arabian Peninsula and abroad and then resided or visited there.

Those studying the city-state of Diriyah will notice that it expanded and contracted according to the political stability therein. Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud understood all of these fluctuations, and issues that had risen over time, and thanks to God and his own genius, he transitioned the city-state of Diriyah into a fully-fledged state, which historians now call the First Saudi State. From its founding to this day, the Saudi State is and has always been an authentic Arab state in terms of its leadership and people.





# DIRIYAH FOUNDED IN 1446

## Founded

by Emir Mani bin Rabia Al-Muraydi, the grandfather of King Abdulaziz by twelve generations.

## It originally

consisted of Ghasayba and Al-Mulaybeed neighborhoods.

## Its districts

expanded along the banks of the Wadi Hanifa.

## It safeguarded

the Hajj route for pilgrims as they came from the east and northeast.

## It was designed

to be a center for learning, knowledge, and cultural diversity

## Its urban center

included a large number of residents.

## It had many reasons

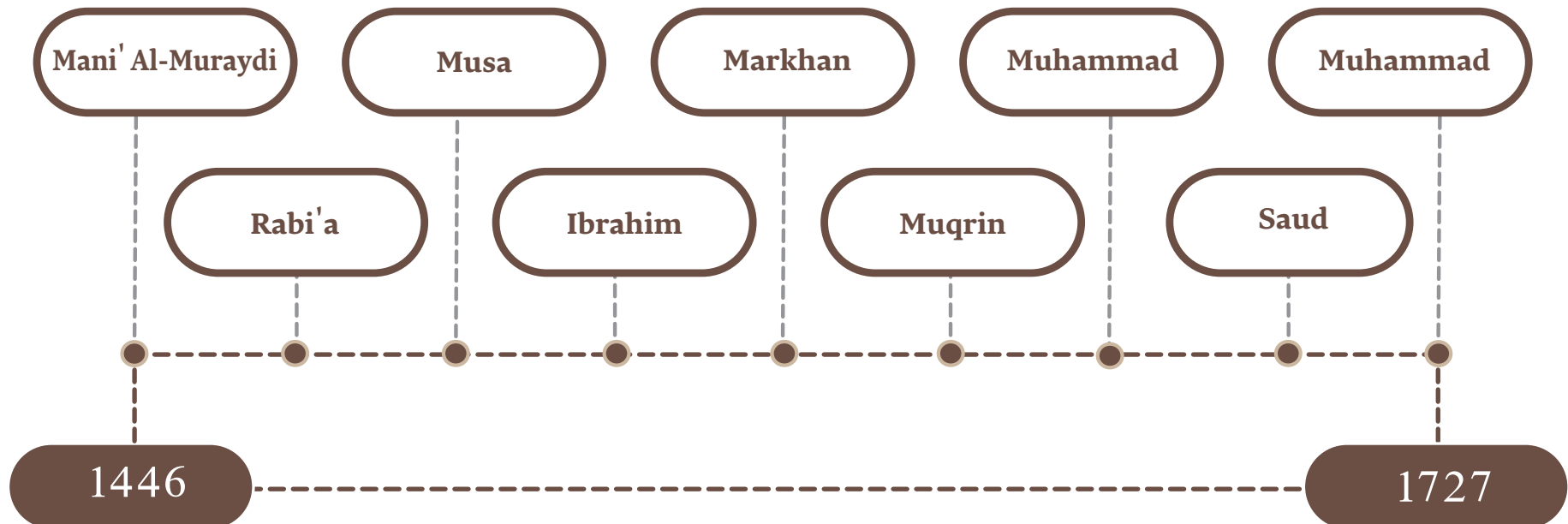
for protecting and practicing trade, safeguarding the trade routes, and securing stability.

## It included an

agricultural zone, due to its location on the fertile Wadi Hanifa, from which it was able to export excess agricultural goods to neighboring cities and regions.

# Most Important Emirs of Diriyah

1446-1727











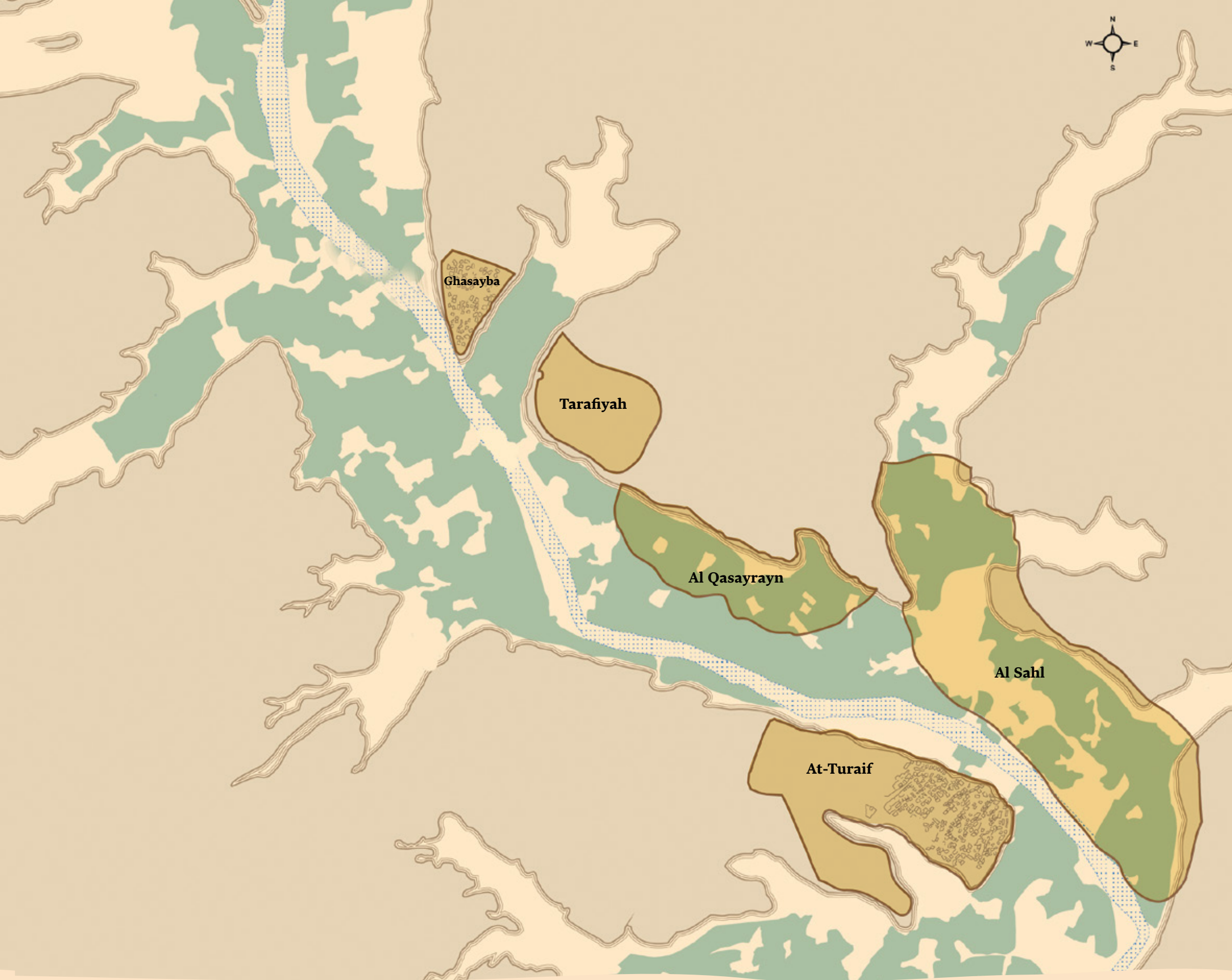


**A mounted warrior of the First Saudi State as drawn by a French artist**



- ● • Salwa Palace in At Turaif in Diriyah





• ● • Historic areas of Diriyah in the 18th century

المؤسس الإمام  
محمد بن سعود







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Imam Muhammad bin Saud as envisaged  
by Manga Production in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

## The Founder

### Imam Muhammad bin Saud

Imam Muhammed bin Saud bin Muhammad bin Muqrin was born in the year 1679. He was raised in Diriyah and benefited from working alongside his father from a young age, arranging the affairs of the Emirate and gaining complete knowledge over all its affairs. The Imam participated in the defense of Diriyah when Saadoun bin Muhammad, leader of the Banu Khaled in Al-Ahsa, invaded the city. Diriyah was able to hold out and defeat the enemy army.

Imam Muhammad bin Saud ascended to power under exceptional circumstances in February 1727. Before he took over, Diriyah was suffering from weakness and division for a variety of reasons: internal conflict over the Diriyah Emirate between his uncle, Amir Muqrin bin Muhammad, and Amir Zayd bin Markhan; Diriyah's campaign against the village of Al-Uyayna; the killing of Zayd bin Markhan; and the spread of the plague throughout the Arabian Peninsula, which caused the death of many people. In spite of all these challenges, the Imam was able to unify Diriyah, helping to stabilize the Al-Arid region.

Imam Muhammad bin Saud had learned politics and methods for dealing with neighboring emirates and itinerant tribes and he had a great impact on maintaining conditions within the emirate before he assumed command. At the same time, the Imam was blessed with perspicacity and insight. He studied the situation that his and other emirates had gone through, especially those emirates around him, but also the emirates of the Central Arabian Peninsula in general. From the day of his ascension, he began planning to change the prevailing status quo laying down a new path in the region's history toward unity, education, the spread of culture, enhanced communication between members of society, and enduring security.

He had four sons: Abdulaziz, Abdullah, Saud, and Faisal. Various sources account that Imam Muhammad bin Saud was a kind and good man, brave and capable, who yet loved solitude and contemplation. Both his father Saud and his grandfather Muhammad were Emirs of Diriyah, and they were the greatest among their people. His grandfather Muhammad was generous, well-off, and owned many palm trees and fields. It was said of the Imam's largesse that once a man had come to him from the country asking him for many things to pay off a debt, knowing that he would be more than willing to give it to him. The man of Buraidah came to him in Deriyah, his name was Nasser bin Ibrahim, and he was a trader who had gone broke after using some of the people's money and spending it on his own affairs. As such, he was in debt, to the value of 4,000 pieces of gold. When he arrived in Diriyah, he spoke to Muhammed bin Saud, who promptly gave him 4,000 pieces of gold. All of his children, except for Abdulaziz, asked him, "Did you just give a man you know only by name that much money?" The Imam replied, "Yes. My sons, the world was made for the dignity of all the sons of Adam, and the most charitable among them are also the most honorable. If a man is humiliated, then you should help him so that the lowly may not disrespect him any longer. You all have heard that Nasser bin Ibrahim was a man who had money and honor, but he fell on hard times. It is incumbent upon the generous to express charity toward people such as him."

If Imam Muhammad bin Saud saw a young single man from among the people of his town and retinue, he would inquire about the young man's circumstances. If he was told, "That man does not have the necessary things for marriage," the Imam would provide whatever was necessary for the young man and order him to marry. If a father refused to give his daughter to someone engaged to her, even though he was capable of supporting her, the Imam would go directly to him to discuss the matter and



discipline him if necessary. At times he would stipulate that a man marry a particular woman, providing anything needed in terms of clothing, furniture, or housing. He would act thus whenever such circumstances arose, out of the goodness of his heart and conscience, and out of his desire to help his community and multiply their blessings through procreation and mutual assistance. Nevertheless, he also loved solitude. It was said that he would come home, sit by himself, and not want any of his children or wives to disturb him. He never urged battle as a first step, even if he was expected to do so, always commanding his people to settle any and all disputes instead.

Imam Muhammad bin Saud passed away in the year 1765 after forty years of leadership and the foundation of the State.

### **Greatest Achievements of Imam Muhammad bin Saud**

The First Saudi State was founded, united, and consolidated during the reign of Imam Muhammad bin Saud in two phases.

The first phase was during the period between 1727 and 1745. The following are some of the most important developments during that time:

- ❖ Uniting the two parts of Diriyah and bringing them under single rule after having been divided between two centers.
- ❖ Involving himself in internal affairs, strengthening Diriyah's society, and uniting its people.
- ❖ Regulating the State's economic affairs.
- ❖ Building a new district in Samhan (Tarafiyah) and moving his headquarters there after the Ghasayba district had been the center of power for many years.
- ❖ Stabilizing the State in various fields.
- ❖ Achieving political independence from any other power, whereas some other towns of Najd continued to owe loyalty to some other regional leaders.
- ❖ Sending his brother, Amir Mashari, to Riyadh to return Duham bin Dawwas to the emirate after some of his men had rebelled against him based on Duham's request for aid from the First Saudi State.
- ❖ Supporting the reformist doctrines preached by Sheikh Muhammad bin Abd Al-Wahhab, who chose Diriyah due to its power and ability to protect him.
- ❖ Communicating with other towns to incorporate them into the Saudi State. The Imam had great skill in containing other leaders and forcing them to declare their allegiance and unity with the State.
- ❖ Building up the walls of Diriyah against attack from the eastern regions of the Arabian Peninsula.

The second phase of the founding took place during the period 1746–1765. The following are some of the most important developments during that time:

- ❖ Initiating unification campaigns under his leadership.
- ❖ Uniting the greater part of the Najd region and spreading the news of the State to most parts of the Arabian Peninsula.
- ❖ Securing the Hajj and trade routes, thereby making Najd a safe region.
- ❖ Successfully countering campaigns that aimed to eliminate the State from the start.



# Greatest Achievements of Imam Muhammad bin Saud



## The First Saudi State was Foundation



Uniting Diriyah under his rule and helping to secure stability.



Securing political independence and non-allegiance to any other power or influence.



Building up the walls of Diriyah to confront attacks.



Developing the At Turfiya district next to Ghasayba.



Regulating the State's resources.



Securing Hajj and trade routes.



Involving himself in internal affairs and strengthening Diriyah's social and cultural institutions.



Supporting and protecting the reformist doctrine.



Initiating unification campaigns.



Fostering regional stability.



Uniting most regions of Najd.

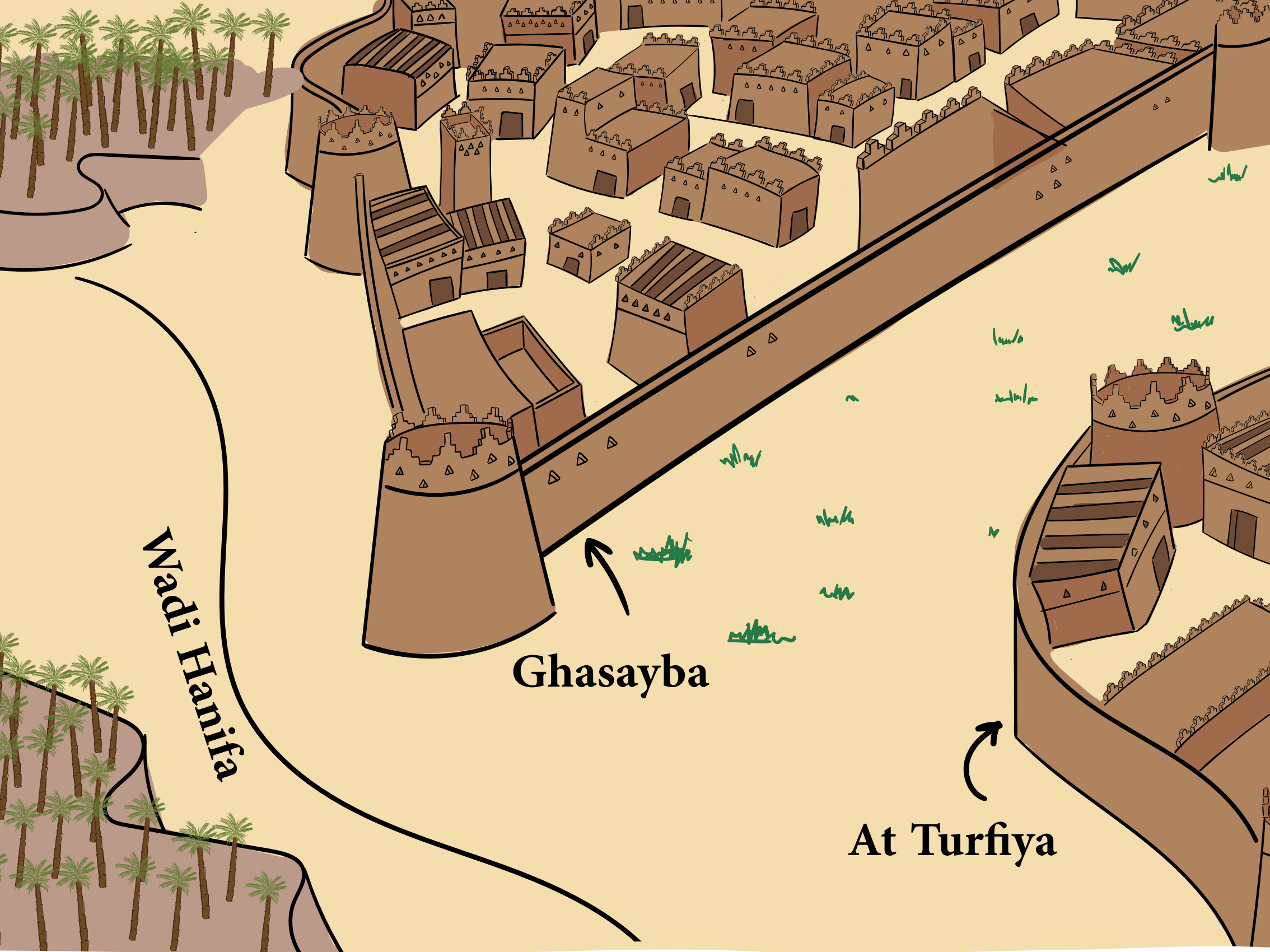


Inviting other towns to join the Saudi State.



Countering several campaigns against the State.





Wadi Hanifa

Ghasayba

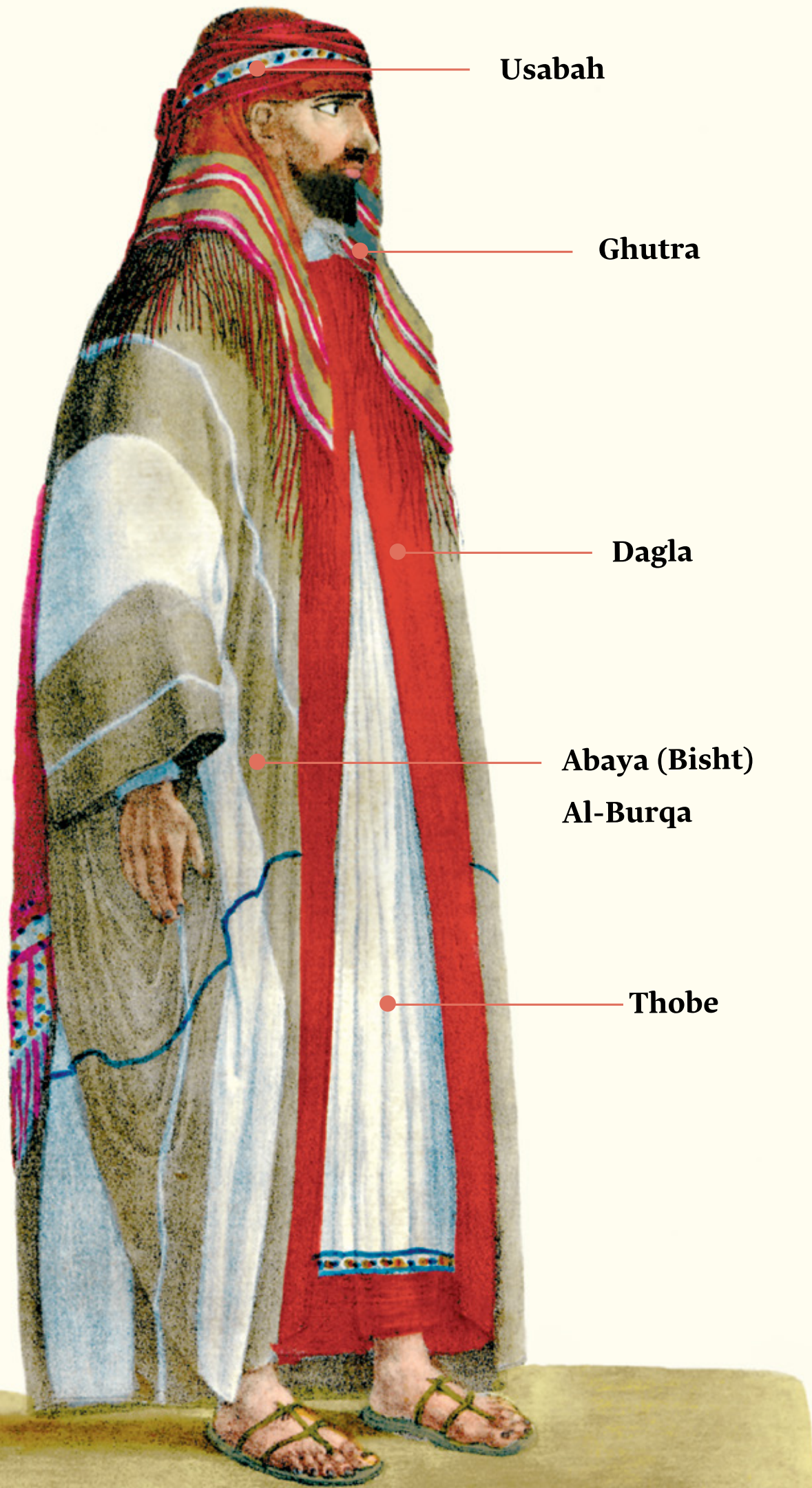
At Turfiya

The Ghasayba and At Turfiya areas of Diriyah



Imam Abdullah bin Saud, in  
Histoire de l'Egypte,  
by Félix Mengin 1823





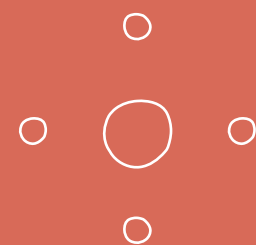
**Usabah**

**Ghutra**

**Dagla**

**Abaya (Bisht)  
Al-Burqa**

**Thobe**



**Description of the  
costume of Imam  
Abdullah bin Saud**



*Galerie Napoléon.*



عبدالله ابن سعود

(ABDALLAH-EEN-SOUHOUD, CHEF DES WAHABITES.)

BÉNARD, ÉDITEUR, GALERIE VIVIENNE, N. 49.

Portrait of Imam  
Abdullah bin Saud  
as published in the  
Galerie Napoléon,  
France in 1839





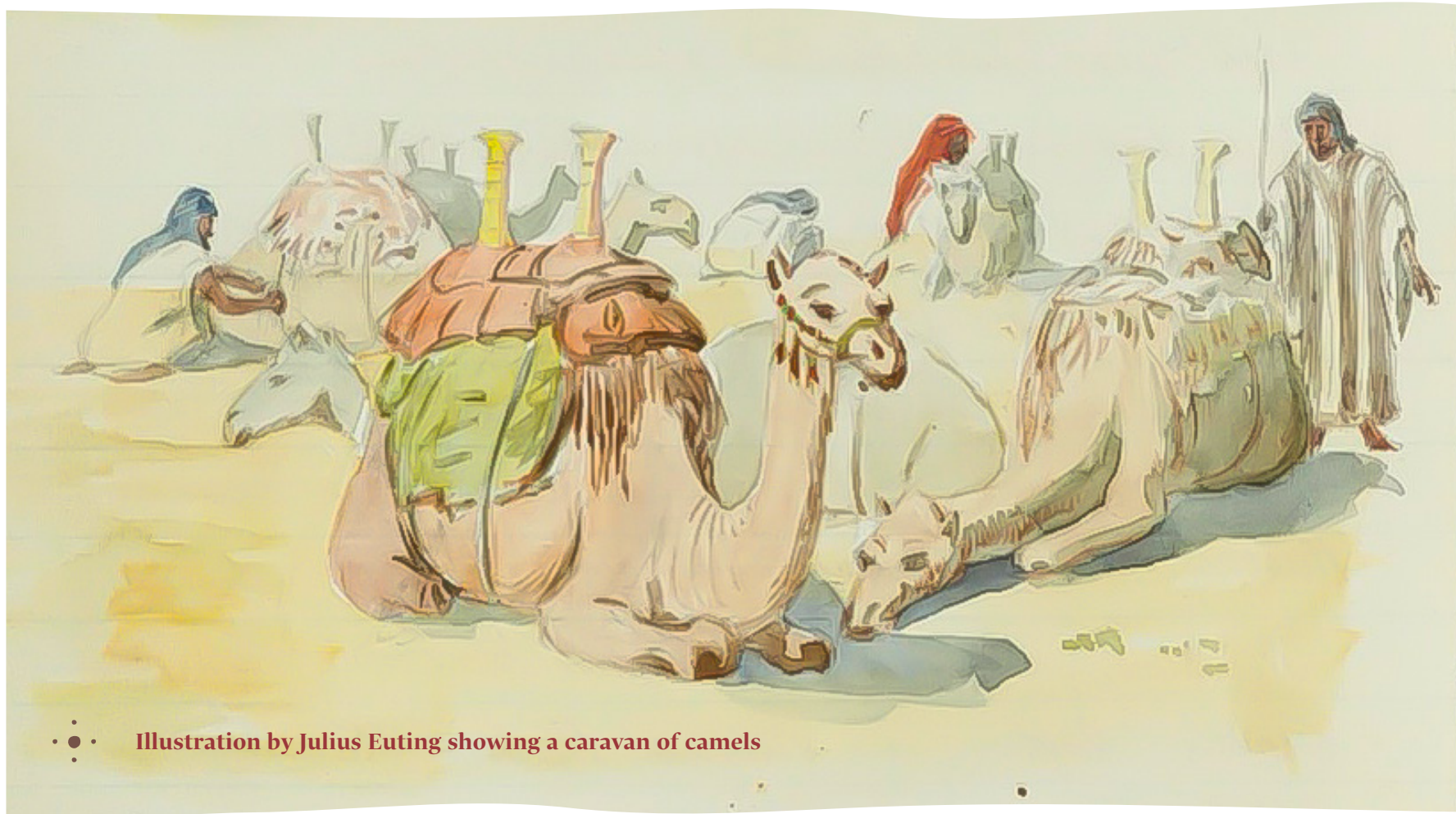
# Society











• • • Illustration by Julius Euting showing a caravan of camels

### **Relationship Between the Imams and Society**

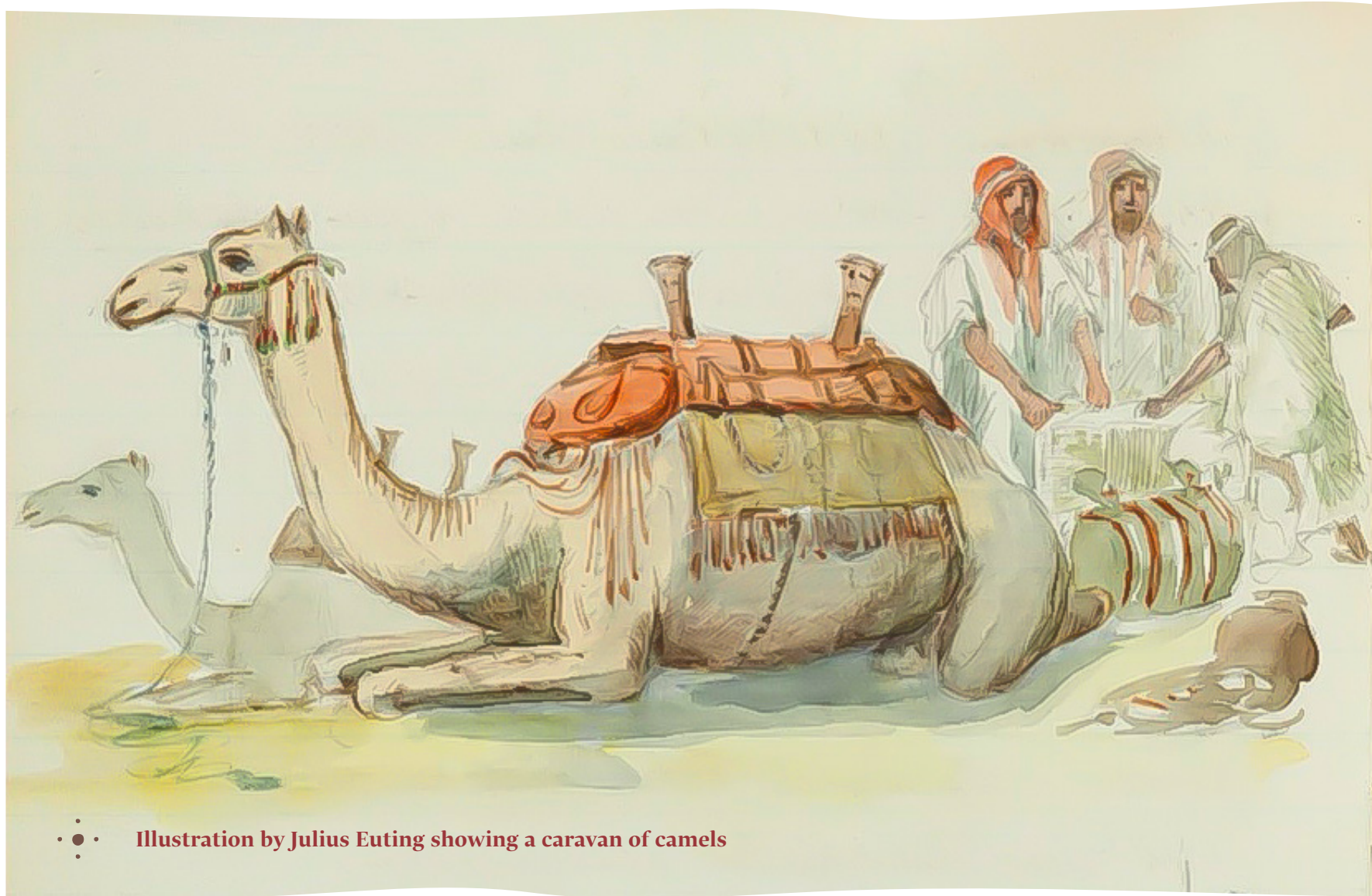
The Imams of the First Saudi State were reportedly generous, gallant, brave, faithful, and mild-mannered. The Imam's majlis, or council, was open to receive citizens on a daily basis. The Imams were very generous toward those in need, newcomers, teachers and students, Quran scholars, and imams (prayer leaders) at mosques. They would send coffee to eligible people during Ramadan. Schoolboys would go up to them with their boards and pens and show them their handwriting. Whoever had the best handwriting would be rewarded. The Imams' generosity towards the weak and vulnerable was also admirable.

Ibn Bishr once said the following about Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz:

“People with errands, complaints, or even those from the countryside all stood before him. He kept his notebook at his left, adjudicating each case and writing down the complaints and the reasons prompting the opponents to come for adjudication. The Imam would sit like that for two hours until he had settled most of the matters, then rose to stand and return to the palace. He would then settle in his chambers, examine the notebook, and write answers to the matters brought before him in the majlis until afternoon, at which time he would rise for prayer.



Every day the Imam would give each of his guests 500 portions (saa') of wheat and rice. His attendants, who were in charge of hospitality, would also invite his guests to an afternoon supper, and even to dinner. As for lunch, they enjoyed their meal even as the sun rose to its highest and hottest place during the day. During Ramadan, the poor people of Najd would come to Diriyah. Saud would welcome them to break fast with him in the palace each night, all together, and he would give each man a jadida (the local currency at that time). During the final ten days of Ramadan, he would provide clothing to all the poor, giving each person a cloak, handkerchief, and jadida. The number of household members, staff, and strangers that would come in and out of the Imam's house varied between 400-500 people daily, and they were all given rice, mutton, wheat, and dates to eat.



• • • Illustration by Julius Euting showing a caravan of camels



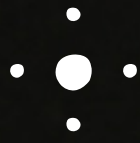
• • • Illustration by Julius Euting showing three men eating a traditional northern meal



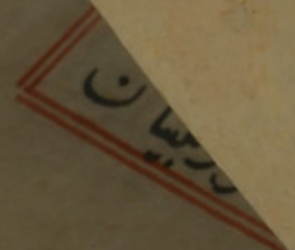
## Knowledge and Education

The Imams of Diriyah cared deeply about supporting education and learning. They even attended scholarly gatherings in their free time. These gatherings started at sunrise, and the people of Diriyah and others would sit together for the lesson in the mawsim (the place in the souq at the heart of Wadi Hanifa). During the summer, they would gather around the eastern shops; during the winter they would gather at the western shops. This group was often so large that a few businessmen would be squeezed out from the souq. When the lesson cleared out, the Imam would rise, return to the palace, and sit in one of the many sitting areas near the people, who would raise their concerns to him until late in the day. At this point, the Imam would return to his home to take a nap. If the people were praying evening prayer, he would invite them to carry on the lesson with him at the palace in the courtyard between the inner and outer gates. With fifty columns, his staff would arrange his sitting areas into three stories, one on top of another. Whoever wanted to sit at the top, in the middle, under him or above the ground, room was made for them. They would come with their brothers, sons, uncles, kin, and friends to the lesson, all sitting together. The teacher during these sessions was the imam of the At-Turaif Mosque, Abdullah bin Hamad, and sometimes it was Judge Abdulrahman bin Khamis, imam of the palace mosque. The two would then read from the Interpretation of Ibn Kathir or The Meadows of the Righteous. If it was after night prayer, the people would gather for a lesson with the Imam inside the palace or on the roof of the aforementioned At-Turaif Mosque, and bring along their brothers, kin, and friends. Only a few people were not fortunate enough to find space on those three sitting areas. Many of the people of Diriyah would gather,





Diriyah was a beacon of science and culture,  
A school of calligraphy and copying appeared.  
A number of copyists and calligraphers emerged  
whose lines were distinguished by beauty  
And a special style.

















# Culture









## The pride of Al-Auja

is the pride of the Saudi State, a call that engenders enthusiasm, pride, and a spirit of patriotism across all levels of society. These feelings are expressed through national songs. Al-Auja (meaning “bend” or “curve”) is another name for Diriyah, which sits along a winding stretch of the Wadi Hanifa.

The poet Modi Al-Dahlawia said about Al-Auja:

“Make Al-Auja the destination of your trip, Reach the Sheikh’s home and greet him heartily  
We are the people of Al-Auja, we defeat the enemy, And our victory is well-deserved”  
(Al-Auja refers to Diriyah, while the sheikh refers to Imam Abdullah bin Saud).

## The Saudi Ardah

The ardah is a dance that began long ago, with its unique performance characteristics and methods. The original aim was to strike fear into the enemy through a display of warrior numbers, as well as through the sound of the drums, well-honed enthusiasm, and the warriors’ valor. All of this served to raise the morale of those participating through repeating chants and rousing poems.

In the year 1765, during the reign of Imam Muhammad bin Saud, there was an attack on Diriyah waged by 'Uray'ur bin Dujayn, leader of Al-Ahsa, and Duham bin Dawwas, Amir of Riyadh. The situation grew very serious for the forces of the Saudi State; however, the men braved this tribulation with conviction and perseverance. Determined to raise the morale of his troops, Amir Abdulaziz bin Muhammad bin Saud commanded that they perform an ardah outside the city walls at daybreak. This inspired enthusiasm and bravery within the hearts of the soldiers, turning the tides of the battle in their favor. In the end, victory was theirs, while the enemies suffered the ignominy of defeat.

The ardah was performed before heading to the battlefield, at the gathering point where the soldiers met with their leader so that he could review, inspect, and confirm that they were ready to do battle, as well as ignite a spirit of pride and zeal within them. After that, the ardah was performed in lines, producing an impressive, intimidating performance that hardened the soldiers’ resolve, invigorating their souls with feelings of bravery and devotion. After the battle was won, the soldiers returned home and performed another ardah in celebration of their victory.

Thus, the ardah originally started as a war dance to stir the warriors’ determination. It remains a model of social cohesion between the leader and his people. The warriors perform the dance before their leader to demonstrate their love for their land, and the extent of their patriotism and pride in it, as well as their loyalty and dedication to their leader. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the ardah includes heroic poems that boast of the leaders’ glories and achievements, the sacrifices and heroism of their forefathers, their courage in defending their lands, and victory chants.





• ● • King Abdulaziz Al-Saud participating in the Ardah



“People of Auja, I greet you, especially Abu Turki, the defender of the weak, Oh Sheikh! Protector of the land, provider to the poor! The long wait is making us impatient, Strike hard and neglect small talk. Greatness is in true courage and wise orders, If you had listened to what others said, you would not have protected the land and defended the weak.”

Mounted warriors used to participate in the performance of the ardah on horseback, which is called the “Heda” (chanting). During the Horseshoe, a lone rider starts the ardah while spurring his steed onward, from his saddle, with the aim of proudly and enthusiastically introducing himself in response to the voices of the other riders. He starts off alone, then joins the ranks of the ardah. This is also known as the “horse ardah.”

The ardah begins with the Hawrabah, which is a call to start the ardah. This call is also known as the bayshna or the shubash. The person who makes the call (known as the Mahawreb) leads the ardah with a loud voice and is carried on the shoulders of other men so that his voice reaches the ears of all and encourages them to chant a verse or two. There should be no more than three verses of spirited poetry to encourage and inform those in attendance that the ardah is about to begin.

The Hawrabah thus raises the call and heralds the beginning of the ardah. The participants then arrange themselves into two lines facing each other. The average size of these lines is 4050- people. The line is balanced, and nothing can break through the riders holding each other’s hands and doing the naz, which is leaning and swaying left to right. This goes on until the Mahawreb descends from the other men’s shoulders and delivers the first half of the verse, which the line of men behind him then repeats, alternating with the other line. Then the Mahawreb delivers the second half of the verse, which is repeated in a unified group chant, continuing in the same fashion. At this point, the rhythmic drums begin and the lines dance with one another by bending their knees to the right and left while holding and swaying their swords. When the verse mentions pride or excitement, the people in the lines raise their swords above their heads, while also raising their voices as loud as they can. Sometimes they put the swords on their shoulders, with complete group coordination.

Then the flagbearer passes between the lines, which is a symbol and sign of the fighters’ fortitude and cohesiveness during the battle. The flagbearer (also known as the bannerman) is specially designated to carry the flag. This role usually is reserved for the physically strongest men during battles and wars. The banner is still an important element in the formation of the army, especially in the ardah. Most chants sung during the dance mention the flag and the pride of standing in its shadow. Brave warriors carry the banner, and this honor is usually passed down from father to son over generations. The bannerman enjoys a great deal of honor, pride, and rank. The flag itself also has certain specifications that it must satisfy. For example, the flag must be two-thirds as wide as it is long, and the spear that holds the flag must be topped with a pommel and adorned with chains.

The ardah concludes with the zamiya, where those performing the ardah head toward the leader while raising their swords and repeating verses of loyalty and support for him. Over time, and after the various parts of the Arabian Peninsula were united in 1932 under the rule of King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud, peace and security were established under the banner of unity. However, the ardah has not disappeared; it remains as vibrant as ever. Instead of just heralding the declaration of war and celebrating victory, the ardah is performed at various events, such as festivals, welcoming the king and heads of state, national events, and formal and popular celebrations. In this way, the ardah remains a symbol of bravery and courage and has retained its military character, based on heroic, bellicose poetry full of enthusiasm for the glories, sacrifices, and heroism of the kingdom’s leaders, ancestors, and forefathers.





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King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, with King Faisal, King Khalid, King Fahd and King Abdullah participating in the Saudi Ardah, in which poems related to the pride of the homeland and the achievements of its founders are recited









# Founding Stories









# Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad Saud

Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, second Imam of the First Saudi State, lived from 1721 to 1803; his rule lasted for around 40 years, during which he embarked, with the sincerity and determination of his unique personality, on building and unifying the First Saudi State, culturally and politically.

His father, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud, came to power in 1727; at that time, Abdulaziz was six years old, and his childhood and youth in the bosom of the ruling family had a profound effect on his personality and the course of his life.

Imam Muhammad ibn Saud had his son Abdulaziz help him in administering the state and its public and private affairs, consulting and collaborating with him on the defense of the state against its enemies from an early age, before he was 20. In his personality, Imam Abdulaziz combined many excellent qualities: he was not merely a ruler, but also a superb leader and pious scholar. In addition to these was his greatness as a man, which can be seen clearly in his generous nature and his concern for scholars and students, his kindness to the poor, his assistance to the needy, his hatred of oppressors, and his severity with lawbreakers, as well as his modesty, simple lifestyle, justice, and determination.

Because Ad-Diriyah was—during the reign of Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad—the capital of the First Saudi State, it was visited periodically by delegations of scholars, notables, intellectuals from various regions, and students. Some of these visitors were poor, working hard at night to attend lectures by day; however, as Ad-Diriyah developed economically, it became the educational, intellectual, religious, and military center of Najd, and the intellectual movement gathered pace and strength. To support students and intellectuals, the state allocated them salaries and subsidies from the treasury, especially those who studied regularly. Outstanding scholars were awarded additional money and clothing. This was not limited to natives of Ad-Diriyah: those who lived in other cities and villages and in the countryside were encouraged and financially supported to engage in studies.

Imam Abdulaziz also encouraged children's education: the young people of Diriyah, when they left their teacher's house, would go to Imam Abdulaziz in his residence and present their tablets to him. Those who wrote well would be given a valuable gift, while the others would be given less, to motivate them to compete in their studies. Alongside his encouragement of education, he also made contributions to writing and book production.



Imam Abdulaziz showed great interest in his subjects and their affairs; there is no better proof of this than his concern for widows and orphans. If a man died in any part of Najd, his children would come to Imam Abdulaziz, who would bestow gifts on them. He would also ask about the needy and orphans of the city, among others, and ordered that they be taken care of, distributing alms among the towns and allocating a certain sum to each district to be handed out during Ramadan. His modesty and simple lifestyle were evident in his clothing, possessions, and food and drink. He preferred to sit modestly on the ground, and his clothing and weapons were simple and unadorned. More than once, he gave his own share of battle-spoils, and those of his men, to migrants and refugees in Ad-Diriyah.

Alongside Imam Abdulaziz's concern and sympathy for his people, he was known for his justice, firmness, and severity with criminals, oppressors, and those who disrupted security and order. This policy led to peace and stability throughout the Arabian Peninsula; the state itself acquired prestige, and during his reign the country and its subjects enjoyed unprecedented security and reassurance. Many examples can be given; Ibn Bishr says: "Caravans in his time were secure: a person might travel to any place he wished with goods of great value, in winter or summer, fearing none but God, neither thief nor bandit. In the springtime, the people of the regions would leave all their livestock in the prairies and pastures—camels, horses, cows and sheep—unshepherded until the end of spring; only horses had someone to take care of them. All of this was by the grace of God, then by the blessings of God upon his subjects; he pardons and enforces God's limits."

As part of Imam Abdulaziz's efforts to spread justice and security, he chose and allocated judges to each region; they were selected on the basis of intellectual competence and moral integrity, and they were paid salaries from the treasury to prevent them from taking money from litigants. This made it easy for them to be impartial in their judgments.

Imam Abdulaziz also sought to secure the roads used by caravans in the Arabian Peninsula, especially the pilgrimage routes: he forbade the Bedouins from extracting taxes from pilgrims and travelers.

Alongside Imam Abdulaziz's wisdom and experience, he was also skilled in military leadership, courageous, and daring in his battles on behalf of Islam. Examples of this include his introduction of new methods and tactics of warfare; if his army was unable to conquer a particular region and the war was prolonged, he built a palace near the town to serve as a fortress in which followers of Ad-Diriyah would reside. These palaces included the one known as Qasr al-Ghadhwana near Riyadh.

In November 1803, Imam Abdulaziz died after being treacherously stabbed by a migrant to Ad-Diriyah while he was praying the afternoon prayer at the At-Turaif Mosque. Having been born in 1721, his age at the time of his death would have been 85, of which he had spent about 61 years building the first Saudi state, which lasted 94 years. He was, therefore, the greatest of the Saudi State's rulers in terms of his contributions and achievements in its construction, and subsequently the expansion and consolidation of its territory.

# Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz

On the banks of wadi hanifa stands a fortified city, with its lofty palm trees and glorious history: Ad-Diriyah, founded by the ruling house of Saud centuries ago, the starting point for their unification of the entire Arabian Peninsula. One outstanding personality from the house of Saud was Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, the third imam of the First Saudi state, who was born in Ad-Diriyah in 1748.

The imam grew up in a house of knowledge, religion, leadership, wisdom, and learning. He was intelligent, with a good memory and a quick wit. Physically, the imam was handsome and elegant, with graceful features. He also had a thick beard and mustaches; for this reason the people of Ad-Diriyah dubbed him Abu Shawarib (Mr Mustaches). He was also known for his elegant dress and love of perfume, as he used to wear robes, cloaks and turbans scented with civet perfume, the best perfume of the time. Imam Saud was a wise planner and skilled problem-solver, and a scholar and a jurist of the sharia. He was just and rigorous in all matters, and he was unafraid to praise or speak truthfully of his enemies. The traits that he hated the most were lying, manipulation and deceit.

Imam Saud was a great statesman and military leader, and he was undefeated in his leadership of the army during his father's reign and his own. He was such a brilliant planner that some soldiers likened him to Napoleon in his military tactics. Among Imam Saud's tactics in battle was his reliance on the element of surprise and misdirection; he would trick his enemies into thinking he was heading north, when in fact he was heading south. The purpose of the wars he fought was invariably to spread security and unify the country. Thanks to his courage and determination, he was able to extend the influence of the Saudi State from the shores of the Euphrates and the Levant Valley in the north to the fringes of Oman and Yemen in the south, and from the Arabian Gulf in the east to the Red Sea in the west.

Saud had a number of sons, of whom perhaps the most famous was Abdullah, who succeeded him as ruler. The imam was very fond of his family: it is said that when he was a pilgrim one year in Makkah, he was sitting under the door of the Ka'ba while his followers were covering it with a new cloth when he heard a voice calling him. He did not send the person away: it turned out to be the wife of his son Fahd, carrying one of his young grandchildren whom he had never seen before. He rushed to her, took the child from her, and embraced him affectionately and tenderly for a short while amid the large crowds of pilgrims. This is an example of the great love and affection he felt for his family.



Imam Saud's majalis were frequented by many guests, as he was known for his generosity and hospitality. Much of his spending went on his guests, as almost every visitor to Ad-Diriyah was given dinner or a cup of coffee in his palace, as well as free daily meals for their camels and horses. A majlis was held every day after the evening prayer, attended by Imam Saud, his sons, and distinguished religious scholars, as well as any member of the public who wished to meet him. This meeting was informal and unpretentious: the public would address the imam by name ("Ya Saud" or "Abu Abdullah"), and he in turn would politely ask the attendees about their health and affairs. He did not insist that people stand for him, whether in his palace or outside. At his majlis, intellectual subjects and jurisprudential debates were studied; everyone agreed on the imam's knowledge and eloquence, comparable or even superior to the knowledge of any religious scholar. The imam spoke eloquently and clearly, and it was said of him that "all his words reach the heart."

An example of Imam Saud's generosity is that he was not satisfied with merely feeding his guests: he also used to give them 1500 kg of wheat and rice. He also gave money and provisions to everyone who worked in his entourage and private guard.

A Saudi soldier's ration consisted of 100 pounds of flour, 60 pounds of dates, one bag of barley and another of wheat, and a bottle of water.

The rest of Imam Saud's spending was on buying distinguished horses; he was passionate about purebred Arabian horses to the point of owning 2,000 horses, 400 of them kept in Ad-Diriyah and the rest in the city of Al-Ahsa, where there was excellent fodder. This shows his keen interest even in their feeding. He did not hesitate to pay large amounts of money in order to own horses that he liked and was passionate about: for one horse, he paid the equivalent of 550 or 600 pounds sterling—a high price at that time for a horse, but one he was happy to pay in exchange for his coveted acquisition.

Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz died during the night of Monday, April 27, 1814, after a life filled with achievement and challenges in the course of unifying the country and spreading peace and security.

# Imam Abdullah ibn Saud

Imam Abdullah ibn Saud ibn Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud al Saud, the fourth imam of the First Saudi State, was born in Ad-Diriyah around 1771. He was famous for his courage, and mastered equestrianism at a young age, able to tame and ride a horse when he was only five years old. He studied at the hands of many sheikhs until he himself became one of the most famous and wisest of scholars.

He was a statesman during his father's reign, and led many campaigns and armies. He was also famous among the Arabs for his unparalleled courage, and it was his custom to go down onto the battlefield himself. He was one of his father's advisors, as Imam Saud used to consult him on many military and political matters, so that he would be qualified to govern the state after him.

Imam Abdullah ibn Saud was described by many historians as having a strong, distinctive style of expression that reflected his educational background. The Swiss traveler Burckhardt said of him: "I now have in my possession a number of Abdullah's original letters, most of which display the frankness and boldness of language at which he has always excelled, all written under direct dictation by Abdullah himself, expressing his sincere feelings in that moment."

Militarily, he took part in the battle of Al-Hilla at the beginning of 1811, and he had a role in unifying the northern parts of the First Saudi State.

He also had a major role in deterring the attacking Ottoman armies and defeating them at the Battle of Wadi al-Safra in 1811. He directed the battle and devised a precise military strategy that ensured victory for the Saudi army.

He assumed power after the death of his father, Imam Saud, during the battles between the Saudi state and the invading Ottoman forces. He was able to resist the Ottomans and prove himself as a leader and imam of the state in light of the critical conditions it was experiencing. In his book *Unwan al-Majd*, Ibn Bishr describes Imam Abdullah's courage and wise administration: "He led wisely in his campaigns and was steadfast in his encounters with the enemy, even more than his father. His conduct in his campaigns, in Ad-Diriyah, at study sessions, and in fulfilling the people's needs, among other things, was after the model of his father Saud; so there is no need to repeat what we have already described."



He was a distinguished preacher who instilled enthusiasm in the Saudi armies; his speeches had a significant effect on the determination and fighting spirit of the Saudis on several occasions, including his historic speech to his soldiers and his people in 1816 during his war with the Ottomans, in which he said: “We are determined to fight them and to preserve our religion, our country and our people who believe in the oneness of God; God will grant us victory.” His speech aroused the people’s enthusiasm, and they shouted with one voice: “We will act, and we will fight for our religion and our land.” He led the battle to defend Ad-Diriyah for six months. Fearing for its people under the oppression of the Ottoman aggressors, he announced his surrender in return for their safety, but the Ottomans did not keep their word. He was killed in 1819 in Istanbul, having sacrificed himself for his people and his homeland, leaving us the story of a great hero and leader that will be circulated by generations to come.

# Mudi bint Sultan ibn Abi Wahtan

Mudi bint Sultan ibn Abi Wahtan al-Kathiri, wife of Imam Muhammad ibn Saud, founder of the First Saudi State and mother of his sons Abdulaziz, Saud, Abdullah, and Faysal.

Mudi ibn Abi Wahtan was interested in learning and charity. She made a famous endowment (waqf) in the At-Turaif neighborhood, Sabalat Mudi; a sabala is a charitable endowment for a community. Sabalat Mudi had two floors serving as free accommodation, in which merchants and visitors to the city of Ad-Diriyah, the needy, and students could stay. It contained rooms for teaching, sleeping, eating, and storage; stables to house the animals of merchant caravans; and a mosque. Sabalat Mudi is located east of the Salwa Palace, on the southeastern edge of the At-Turaif neighborhood, south of Bayt Al-Mal and overlooking the main road leading to it. This sabala was established by Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, who named it after his mother Mudi.

Attached to its southern side is the Sabalat Mudi Mosque, which contains a number of prayer-rooms used for teaching and learning.

Mudi was an advisor to her husband, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud; this shows that the Imam had a broad mind, listened to the opinions of others and understood the state's interests.



# Storytellers in the First Saudi State

The profession of storyteller [rawi] is deeply entwined with the history and culture of the Arabian Peninsula, as it has preserved for us a cultural treasure-trove of stories, history, and characters through the years—not written down, but transmitted orally by generations of storytellers.

The storyteller was also one of the most important forms of entertainment for the society of the time: with his verbal ability, stock of elegant expressions, and wide-ranging imagination, the storyteller could hold the audience's attention not only by making them listen with their ears, but by letting their minds drift into a world of dreams and fantasies that turned their reactions to the details of a story into another story of their own. He achieved this through the use of words and sentences that created an atmosphere of emotional connection between the storyteller and his audience. The connection between the storyteller and the oral text gave the stories a different flavor, his enthusiastic tone of voice producing a sensory effect.

The storyteller's influence on the village or tribal community at the time was similar to that of a media outlet or television channel today. His work began in the evening, when people returned from their various jobs in search of a means to escape from the hardships and difficulties of real life to a realm of imagination and dreams in which they could move between different worlds. The storyteller displayed his narrative and storytelling prowess, delivering a captivating narrative in varied tones that could make them laugh or cry according to the context of the story. The storytelling session was like a forum attended by many individuals who listened to and were affected by what the storyteller was saying. Any of them would have been free to interject a spontaneous question about a character or an event that captured his curiosity while listening to the story.

Some experienced storytellers would use hand movements, gestures, and facial expressions to add suspense and enthusiasm to the story, imparting a different flavor and demonstrating the emotional connection between the storyteller, the story, and his audience. The storyteller might also introduce poetry into his story, whether from ancient or modern sources. His method of reciting this poetry gave the story an attraction of another kind: reciting a poem and explaining its meanings and connotations became a story within the story, making the storyteller's profession a continuous process, like daily episodes to which his listeners eagerly looked forward.

Among the most prominent features of the storyteller's work was his ability to delve into details and explanations that would enhance the story rather than hinder it, and make the telling an interesting and exciting process that helped the audience to listen and imagine more clearly. For example, he might narrate a folktale, and then pause to give details relating to the location of the story, its protagonists, or ancient traditions that had disappeared, in order to help the listener imagine the setting of the story and immerse his mind in it, giving it greater intellectual richness.

Another of the storyteller's techniques that showed the extent of his abilities was his use of imagination, especially when narrating myths or stories about other worlds, or about creatures unknown to the audience. In the local vernacular, such stories were known as sabHuna. They relied mainly on the imagination, which the storyteller, thanks to his narrative genius, could employ to give his plots a mythical twist, enriching the narrative and imparting a special luster to it. Moreover, it could be used to correct unwanted behaviors in society or encourage good ones.

The story itself, the salifa or sabHuna, might consist only of scattered details and incomplete information, but the storyteller, using his ability and skill, could make of it a complete picture using his own style, narrative skills, gestures, and tones of voice, according to each story.

Other techniques used by storytellers to win over their listeners were repetition and various rhetorical devices. These also gave the story an aesthetic dimension and distinguished the teller from his competitors. Continuity and uninterrupted narration were among the basic skills of the storyteller, as they produced a harmony between the listener and the storyteller himself. The storyteller's use of stock phrases such as "may you live long," "may God bless you," "may God protect you," and others could draw the listeners' attention.

He would also use phrases familiar to the audience and vernacular expressions from the local environment, drawn from his previous knowledge and experience. In this way, he could easily convey the story in a colloquial style that was appropriate to their culture. The use of gestures and movements appropriate to the plot of the story made the performance interesting for the audience. In a story about the "Rusted Sword," for example, the storyteller might move his hand as if he were carrying a sword, or even use a real sword to stir the audience's imagination and help them to connect with what he was saying. He might also use phrases such as "And he gives it to you," "And he brandishes it..."

The storyteller would speak in a style that produced suspense and excitement in the audience, as if he had personally witnessed the events he was narrating. He might say: "By God, my people, I was never told it, but rather I saw it with my own eyes, by God, good people, I heard with my own ears, that colossal man..." Likewise, a skilled storyteller who could link imagination with reality might use a member of the audience as an example in telling his story, saying for example: "This is how the newborn grew up." He would also use appropriate phrases for his audience, and if forced to use unpleasant words, he would follow them by saying "may God bless you," "may God keep us from evil and enormities," "in the name of God, the greatness of his name upon us and upon you."

The storyteller's use of repetition had a special significance; with this technique, he could reinforce the story in the audience's minds and increase the suspense. In one phrase he would repeat the same information; this was not boring repetition, but complemented the story. For example: "While going around him, around his uncle, hitting him, hitting his son, by God, I did not slay him, but he, he has a spear..." The storyteller would also frequently use the imperative form when telling a story: for example, "Get up and strike so-and-so—and you, O so-and-so, stand up and slaughter the camel."

As for the general atmosphere and context of the storytelling session, it usually took place in the private majlis of the ruler or other notable person, or in a public square, whether in the middle of the town or in the desert. The storyteller would be positioned in the middle, where the audience could hear him, and the people would gather around him in a circle or stand in a single row. It might also happen in the desert, usually in the tent of a sheikh or other leader, which tended to be large, or even



in the middle of the desert itself under the moonlight and by the flames of a fire. Women's storytelling sessions would take place in the home, often in the private interior space of the house (i.e. the courtyard), in farmyards, or in the open desert.

The narrator drew his stories and narratives from his environment and its social, economic and political conditions, as well as the stories circulating around him. With his experience and skill, he polished them and gave them the suspense required to compel the listener's attention until the end without getting tired or bored, as well as giving the story a moral, making it not only an entertainment, but a lesson that would endure for the rest of time.

Among the stories of the eastern Saudi territory is that of the naval commander under the First Saudi State, ArHama ibn Jabir al-Jalhami, who was the first to wear an eyepatch, as he lost one of his eyes in a war. The English resident in the Bushehr region in 1816 said of him: "ArHama will inevitably control the Gulf if he does not stop at the frontier." In one battle, he was extremely brave and showed unparalleled courage. When he saw that defeat was inevitable, he embraced his son and threw fire on the boxes of gunpowder in his ship, the GhaTrusha; it exploded, and the hero died a legendary death, refusing to surrender or submit to his enemies. History has recorded his story for us and immortalized it in books. The historian Ibn Bishr said of him: "The brave warrior died at sea, the finest of his era in strength, power and courage. ArHama was well acquainted with poetry, especially the rousing poetry of the Arabs, and he had love for the people of this religion, showing his sincere faith." In the west of the Saudi territory, the story of one of the heroes of the First Saudi State and its most famous leader under Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz looms on the horizon. This was the military commander MasUd ibn Mudyan, who resisted the Ottoman enemy in defense of Madinah and tried to obstruct their progress towards Ad-Diriyah. Unfortunately, he ended up exiled to Istanbul, where he was executed in 1812, becoming a glorious symbol of sacrifice and altruism.

In the south of the Saudi state, dominated by the towering mountains of Asir, we find the stories of those who performed historic deeds in defense of the faith and the homeland. Most notable among them is Bakhrush ibn Alas al-Zahrani, a commander under the First Saudi State, who bravely challenged his enemies and hindered their progress in the Hijaz and Asir. However, he was unable to overcome the enemy's superior armaments; besieged in his homeland of Zahran, he was arrested, but was able to escape once, killing a number of guards and soldiers. However, they managed to arrest him again; when he was asked why he killed the soldiers, he answered with all the pride and dignity of Saudi: "When I am not bound, I will act as I wish." The biography of this hero ends with his martyrdom at the hands of the aggressors, who tortured him and cut him to pieces with their swords in the hope that his death would dampen the courage in the hearts of the people. They did not know that their act would soon instill courage and daring in the hearts of the Saudis and increase their desire to unite and expel the invader from the Arabian Peninsula.

In the north of the Saudi state, known for the generosity, fraternity, and honor of its people, we find the story of the horseman Khalaf ibn Da'ija. One of the tribal sheikhs saw Ibn Da'ija as a rival. Ibn Da'ija had settled on a barren piece of land with no firewood, water or even stones, and the sheikh intended to visit him in order to embarrass him, as Ibn Da'ija would not be able to honor him without firewood. The sheikh came to him one day with his entire army, but this was no impediment to the generosity and chivalry of Ibn Da'ija, who promptly rose and slaughtered a number of sheep, kindled fires from whatever dry grass and sycamore plants he could find lying around, and succeeded in offering food to his guests, doing them a great honor. Truly, God helps those who are generous and brave.

A painting by Julius Euting showing two people doing business on the fringes of a majlis

# Art in the era of the First Saudi State

Art is a means by which humans can express their emotions, needs, hopes, and sorrows. It is a shared language, understood by all mankind—not merely a spoken language, but one with its own melody.

Since ancient times, humans have used instruments that they found and prepared from materials in their surrounding environment, including bones, sticks, dried gourds, and hollow tree trunks. They stretched animal skins on them to make drums, then decorated them with delicate colors and engravings.

Singers and poets began to appear, composing poems that expressed the joys and sadnesses of their society, and men lined up to recite and sing them while swaying their bodies. Poetry and music began their shared journey, expressing the happiness and sorrow of the people.

People in the Arabian Peninsula produced art and music from an early date, using instruments made from materials available from the surrounding natural environment, which they adapted to suit their desires and whims. They composed poetry as a way of dealing with the conditions in which they lived, expressing their joy, their sadness and their inner feelings.

Each region of the vast Arabian Peninsula had its own distinctive instruments and folk artforms, resulting in a diversity of customs and traditions.

## **Art in the north of the Saudi State**

The rababa was the favorite instrument among the peoples of the northern Saudi state. It had one string made of tanned deer or wolf skin, which was moistened and then wound over a wooden soundbox.

The rababa produces the charming music of the desert, and every gathering among the peoples of the northern Peninsula would feature its sound: poets recited their poems to the audience, whether in praise of a prominent figure or of a distinguished warrior, or expressing the happiness of a particular occasion, accompanied by the beautiful sound of the rababa, intensifying the audience's emotions, lightening their thoughts, and gladdening their spirits.

A number of men were famous for their melodious voices; some of them took advantage of this to earn money. They would be hosted by tribal sheikhs or senior figures, and would play and sing choice verses in exchange for financial reward.

The poet might employ his talent in pursuit of his goals. For example, a man sent his camels to graze with another tribe, despite the advice of his sheikh not to send them. The camels subsequently died, and the owner of the camels wrote verses and sang them to the accompaniment of the rababa, so the sheikh compensated him for his loss and gave him other camels.

Women had their own rituals and celebrations. They would gather in the evening on occasions such as feasts and weddings in a nearby place behind their tents, and divide themselves into groups of six, eight or ten, in preparation for singing. The first group



would start singing, repeating the first verse five times. The others would then repeat what the first group had sung, and the second verse would be sung in the same way. The third verse usually contained the name of a distinguished warrior, and this verse too would be repeated several times.

### **Art in the west of the Saudi State**

The people of Hijaz too have known art and music since ancient times: they had their own musical instruments and dances that they performed and watched at weddings and special occasions.

One of the most notable of their musical instruments was the Tanbur, a stringed instrument of African origin, as well as the samsamiyya, an instrument that originally had five strings, which were later increased to 20 strings.

Another of their instruments was the mizmar, a wooden wind instrument and one of the oldest manmade instruments. The people of Hijaz also used drums in their music.

The French traveler Charles Didier mentions in his book *Séjour chez le Grand-Chérif de la Mekke* that, when he visited Yanbu' in 1854, he found children beating a drum and dancing: "In Yanbu', I saw a troubling scene. A group of children... of whom the eldest was no more than four years old, were holding a celebration that my presence did not interrupt. One of the boys was beating double blows on a darbuka larger than himself, and the others were dancing and whirling in the dust."

In the same work, Didier describes the darbuka as: "a hollow frame, more oval than circular, made of coarse clay, over which a scrap of leather has been spread."

Children had another instrument, the Hawama, a whistle made from the stem of a plant.

### **Art in the center of the Saudi State**

The people of Najd also used drums in war and in their dances, such as the Arda and the samri. Drums, formerly known as dammam, are mentioned in a poem by Ibn Labun:

O drummer, say the name of God, for by you is a boy who will go where real men are made

Peace be upon the companion who offers me his cloak

There were two types of drum: The first is large, made from wood and covered in leather; it is known as takhmir, and is used in war. It is beaten using the palm of the hand. The second type is small, and known as tathlith. It is used at celebrations such as weddings.

### **Art in the east of the Saudi State**

The people of the coastal areas, such as sailors, fishermen, and pearl divers in the waters of eastern Arabia, sang marine songs that made use of a sailor's singing abilities; they would sing during the raising and lowering of the sail.

The peoples of this region used musical instruments such as the samsamiyya, which they played on board their sanabik (sailboats); this type of song accompanied work at sea, with their favorite musical instruments. Seamen became proficient in this music, as it made their work more enjoyable and dispelled boredom. Sometimes sailors would use drums or clap with their hands while working at sea.

### **Art in the desert:**

The melodies of men and women of different ages. The most famous tune that was sung on the backs of camels in this period to relieve the hardships of travel was that known as the hujayni. People would express their love, things they had experienced, or

their own situation, not only on the backs of camels: poets and singers would perform them at private gatherings; shepherds in the wilderness would lament their solitude, and travelers would sing on their camels. Peasants, too, would sing as they drove their plough-animals to urge them on.

The nomadic Bedouins who rode their camels from one place to another in the Arabian Peninsula in search of water and grazing land played a role in spreading the hujayni form. This type of singing grew in the bosom of the desert on the tongues of shepherds; although unaccompanied by musical instruments, it is nevertheless a beautiful artform, and it sounds sweet in the dreamy desert night. One such poem runs:

O people mounted on camels, take your belongings and march the whole day and night; be in the right place at the right time; urge your camels, not to trot, but to gallop

Another runs:

O camels, with embroidered saddles, carry us and our belongings

March the whole night, to the spring of water where no one else is

Some women became famous for their poetry and for singing their poems aloud, or hujayni as it was formerly known. On one occasion, a poetess was singing to her children and friends; people heard her, and they got angry and complained about her. An official called Salama came, and he rebuked her and forbade her from singing. Later, this poetess saw a dove and heard its cooing, so she recited verses addressing the dove, warning it and advising it not to sing out of fear for its safety.

Expressing her inner feelings, she said:

O pigeon on the green fronds, enjoy cooing at your ease

Feast your eyes, for if Salama finds out about you, he will make you weep like me

If it is cooing that spurs your kindness, then away with you to Al-FarA, the land of the Wadda<sup>6</sup> in

Another popular form in which musical instruments were not used was the Hady, which people sang as they drew water from wells with their camels. Along with the Hady al-mawrid (watering-place Hady), Hady al-khayl (horse Hady), and Hady al-ibl (camel Hady), it constitutes one of the forms of folk singing.



# The Majlis in the First Saudi State

“When they sat, they sat in the place of honor; and when they rode, they rode at the head of the procession.”

Sadr al-majlis, the place of honor, enjoys a high position in the Saudi mind and in popular belief, due to its relationship to prestige and social status. Certain people require social recognition of their status by two groups: the senior figures who lead the majlis, and the people at large, which grant hidden approval through its admiration for the individual, or the withholding thereof. Competition in the majlis is a microcosm of competition in the political, social, and other spheres of life.

The Saudi people have a long tradition of the majlis; it has ancient cultural connotations, and in general represents harmony and rapprochement among members of society. It was one of the main venues for teaching customs and traditions, a place for great expressing respect and good hospitality, and a platform to discuss new developments and current affairs. It has become a part of their daily lives, and a manifestation of their society and culture. Majalis vary according to the social status and rank of their attendees, and are known by different names; however, these names are nothing but descriptions that determined the topics of conversation.

The culture of the majlis has deep roots in Saudi history going back to the era of the First Saudi State and its expansion during the reign of Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz. His majlis was attended by almost all the senior princes and tribal sheikhs, as well as the delegations that came to Ad-Diriyah. Imam Saud convened three receptions at three different times each day: in the early morning, in the afternoon, and at night. They were a space for discussions of cultural, intellectual, social, and economic issues. There was also a private majlis at which he met his children after dinner, but it too was sometimes attended by guests. These majalis had a special program that began with a reading from the Holy Qur’an, the Prophet’s hadiths and the commentaries, during which scholars might give lectures or lessons. Then there would be discussions and debates, in which Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz would participate; these continued for an hour, then the members of the public would leave, while those who had some matter to put before the imam—whether political, commercial, or on another subject—would stay behind. Imam Saud’s majlis also hosted poets, who would recite their poems, and he in turn would honor them. In addition to this “great” majlis, there might be a “short” majlis when the imam wanted to talk to someone privately; this was often to the side of the main majlis.

Public majalis often revolved around important life events and economic, political and social occasions. Poetry, literature, stories and anecdotes occupied the major part of these gatherings.

As for the desert majalis in “hair tents” (buyut al-shar), which were usually made of coarse black sheep’s wool, the men’s section

was known as the maqAd (“seat”); here they would exchange opinions about public affairs and their policy towards the surrounding tribes, and everyone who had heard anything about the enemy’s movements would make it known. From time to time, they discussed news about the water resources and pastures found by shepherds. Members of the tribe would bring their issues to the gathering, and they would be decided by representatives of the two parties after much debate, discussion, and compromise. There was also a general majlis for drinking coffee, usually in the private tent of one of the tribal elders. The majlis determined the tribe’s next movements, which they would discuss amongst themselves at what they called the shura; the decisions of the majlis al-shura would be reported to their allies. Formerly, the Bedouins used to make a kind of fire, or shabba, at which they would offer coffee and all kinds of food, as a destination for relatives, friends, and other travelers and passers-by, who would come and find shelter and sustenance. This custom was a demonstration of generosity, and the shabba was also a place for members of a single tribe or community to gather. When you “kindle a fire” (tashubb al-nar), you make an open invitation to anyone who sees it to attend your majlis and receive their share of hospitality.

The majlis shows similar features in the various regions of the Saudi state: it is spacious in order to accommodate large numbers of guests, and it has a stove or wizar for preparing coffee and tea. This varies in size according to the status of the owner. The larger the wizar, the higher its owner’s status, due to the large number of his guests and visitors. The wizar is a hollow circular or square opening in which a fire is lit, in order to reduce smoke. It has been used since ancient times, especially in the buyut al-shar of the Bedouins, as well as in the mud buildings in settled areas, where they would construct a hearth (mashabb) to host guests and prepare Arabic coffee. Inside the mashabb was a clay jar and shelves to carry coffee utensils. The accessories for the hearth were kept in a kimar, a place for the coffee-pots, ewers, and the dates served to the guests. In addition, there were small compartments in which cardamom, sugar, tea, incense, saffron, and the like were kept. The task of preparing coffee for guests was usually undertaken by men.

Hospitality is associated with the majlis, as it is a tradition known to the Saudis since the era of the First State. On this subject, Ibn Bishr says of Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud: “As for his conduct towards guests, it was mentioned to me that his treasurer gave his guests 500 sa‘ of wheat and rice every day, and the host assigned to the guest hosted them to dinner from the afternoon until after the last meal.” Some sources refer to the general method of hosting guests during the era of the first Saudi state based on what is recorded of Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad ibn Muqrin. He used to provide meals consisting mainly of meat and rice to the great sheikhs and princes, and hospitality to the general public in the form of bulgur and dates. Guests were hosted in a room dedicated to receiving and welcoming them; this was the majlis. When guests were invited to eat, special care was taken, as is the case in all regions of the Saudi state. Older and more learned men were honored and respected, so they were placed at the forefront of the majlis; they were the first to be served coffee and tea, and when the food was ready, the guests were invited to eat, beginning with the oldest and most learned. Due to the lack of indoor plumbing at the time, or because it was limited to the inside of the house, one of the host’s sons would carry water in his right hand and a small Tasht (circular copper vessel) in his left, and would pass along the guests in the majlis, starting with the person in the seat of honor.

As for the majalis held by jurists, they dealt with matters of shari’a law. Some of the imams of the First Saudi State performed a judicial role in that era, and they did not have courts in the modern sense of the word. The nature of jurists’ majalis in that period was very similar in all the regions of the First Saudi State, as most judges and



scholars were sent out from Ad-Diriyah or studied there. Typically, in these majalis the judge would sit for the two opponents in the mosque or in his house, listen to the arguments of both the plaintiff and the defendant, and then rule on the matter. Among the most famous judges in this period were the sons of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab, Abdulaziz ibn Abdullah al-Husayn, Sheikh AHmad ibn Hasan ibn Rashid (a jurist of Madinah), and Sheikh Uthman ibn Shabana in Asir.

There were also intellectual majalis convened by groups of scholars in the evening to study shari'a disciplines such as Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir). Sheikh Abdullah ibn Fayiz Abu al-Khayl used to read up to ten parts of the Holy Qur'an with his group, during which he reviewed exegeses such as the tafsir of Al-Baydawi and of Al-Baghawi. Sometimes lessons were read on religious duties, or the biography of the Prophet after the evening prayer; anyone wishing to listen could attend, such as Uthman ibn AbdulmuHsin Abu al-Husayn, who was sent into the countryside to teach the people there, and Husayn ibn Ghanam, who held an intellectual majlis after each prayer in the Great Mosque. This type of majlis was not restricted to senior scholars: their pupils and students also held majalis at someone's home, with coffee, tea, dates, and cheese, at which there were discussions and lectures. The scholars of Al-Ahsa would regularly stroll among the palm trees, as most of them owned farms outside the town. When they had prayed the afternoon prayer, they would gather at a farm until the sunset prayer, enjoying the water and greenery and discussing literature and intellectual topics; they would also exchange conversation and recite poems.

Majalis were not limited to men during the era of the First Saudi State: there was Ghaliya al-Baqmiyya, whose majlis was a sanctuary for struggle and a platform for national pride and resistance. Her husband, Sheikh Hamad ibn Abdullah ibn MuHiy, was the First Saudi State's governor in the city of Turbat al-Baqum. After his death, she began to meet with tribal leaders and discussed the movement of army and garrison commanders with them in the majlis in her husband's palace. She was able to rouse the determination of her people and her fellow townsmen to defeat the forces that Muhammad Ali Pasha had sent to eliminate the First Saudi State.

# The Kiswa of the Ka'ba

The Ka'ba is the house of God and the object toward which Muslims pray. The covering of the Ka'ba, or kiswa, has been of great importance to Muslims throughout the years; from the earliest Islamic times, the covering of the Holy Ka'ba was an important element of the Hajj season, and it varied in shape and color. The Prophet (PBUH) covered it with Yemeni robes striped in white and red.

The kiswa would be changed during the Hajj season. There were openings in it for the Black Stone and the Yemeni Corner, as well as a sort of curtain for the door of the Ka'ba.

The kiswa of the Ka'ba was made in Egypt; it was black, and bore inscriptions in gold thread, and was embellished with silver. During the era of the First Saudi State, when Makkah was brought under Saudi rule in the reign of Imam Saud the Great, he ordered that the kiswa be made within the nation, and it was duly sewn here.

Imam Saud performed the Hajj in 1806, and for the first time during the era of the Saudi State, the Ka'ba was covered with a luxurious red silk cloth; it was later covered with black brocade and qilan, and its door with silk embroidered with gold and silver. In every year that he made the Hajj, Imam Saud would cover the Holy Ka'ba with a new kiswa.

From 1807 until 1812, the kiswa for the Ka'ba was made in Al-Ahsa and then sent to the Hijaz, as its people were famed for their mastery of the art of weaving, and the kiswa was known to be the best and finest. Ibn JaHaf al-Yamani described the Ka'ba's kiswa: "When Saud went down to the House, he ordered that its kiswa be removed, and the Ka'ba was clothed with a qilan robe of Al-Ahsa, among the finest they had made."

The covering of the Ka'ba with the kiswa continued during the reign of King Abdulaziz, who notably ordered that a factory be built in Makkah to produce the covering; to this day, it still produces the kiswa for the Holy Ka'ba.



# The Munqiya during the First Saudi State

Abu Abdullah would hold a short session every Tuesday evening at which he would tell his children stories related to the history of their country. In this way, he could improve their understanding of national culture and at the same time indulge in his favorite hobby of telling stories.

One week, he was reading a book when he stumbled over a phrase on one of the pages: “From among the bravest and most famous warriors, Saud formed a private guard known as the Munqiya...”

Abu Abdullah was surprised by this information: despite his extensive knowledge of the history of the First Saudi State, he had only just heard of this Munqiya. He decided to search in the sources for more information about it and the reason for its name, the principles according to which its members were chosen, and the imam’s purpose in creating it. One source contained the answers to his questions and provided him with all the information about this Munqiya. Impressed by what he had read, he thought of turning it into a story he could tell his children.

On the Tuesday evening, his sons gathered around their father, eager to hear one of his new stories. He asked them: Which of you knows the meaning of the word munqiya?

One of them answered: It means “carefully chosen.”

Their father said: Well done, my son! Our story tonight will be about a military unit whose members were chosen by Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz according to certain conditions; that is why it was known among the people as the Munqiyya.

The eldest son said: We are all ears, father!

Their father shifted in his seat, then said:

Life in our village was beautiful, and everyone lived in prosperity and security under the imams of the Saudi State. Since Imam Muhammad ibn Saud sought to unite the country, spread security and overcome divisions, we had been enjoying the benefits. After his death, his son Imam Abdulaziz followed in his footsteps to unify the other regions. Then came the rule of Imam Saud, under whom we now live.

One day, I was on my farm, riding my horses and practicing fencing with my cousin. We competed over a target, trying to hit it with our guns; after we got tired, we sat under a palm tree, enjoying its shade and eating its dates, when my cousin said to me:

I see you are good at hitting the target, and good at riding horses!

I said to him: You surely know, cousin, that I fought with the soldiers of the State against its enemies and those who would try to disturb its security.

My cousin fell silent, then said: I have heard that Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz is planning to form a military squad composed of the bravest fighters and guerrillas, and that he plans to settle them in Ad-Diriyah to be close to him. I would not rule out the idea that you will be among his chosen men, because of the courage and strength for which you are known.

My cousin's prediction came true: a week later, an envoy from the Imam came to me and invited me to his palace in Ad-Diriyah. I accepted the invitation, and I and the other horsemen who were invited attended before him; we numbered about 300. He said to us: I have chosen you for a special guard and reserve force that I will send to the armies to support them in their hour of need in wartime. Whoever of you accepts, I will take care of the needs of his family, and I will provide him with the best horses and weapons.

I and the majority of those who were with me assented to his command, and we returned to our homes to bring our families. When we came back to Ad-Diriyah, the imam provided each of us with accommodation and gave him and his family provisions for a whole year: wheat, dates and ghee, which at that time was a blessing more valuable than the mere price. He told us that he had ordered his employees to pay it to us annually. He also gave each of us a thoroughbred mare, and dressed it in a garment made of stuffed wool. so that swords and spears would not penetrate its skin. Finally, he equipped us with the finest weapons available at that time: swords, guns and some daggers.

We fought alongside the Imam in all the campaigns that he himself led, and won many victories. Our fame spread throughout the neighboring countries, and the mention of our name struck fear into our enemies.

Accompanying the imam was not the only task assigned to us. We were also given other duties: for example, in 1805, under the leadership of Amir Mansur ibn Thamir and Ghasab al-Utaybi, the bravest and most steadfast of us, a small company of us was sent to monitor bandits who planned to raid the border regions of the country. Later, Imam Abdullah ibn Saud sent 20 of us horsemen, led by Ghasab al-Utaybi, to fight the invading Ottomans and the deserters in Turba. We fought them for a year, and finally we defended Ad-Diriyah with all our strength during the siege launched by the Ottoman forces against its walls.

The name Munqiya remains prominent in the military history of the Saudi State, and demonstrates its careful organization and assiduity in protecting its territory and citizens.





**Women  
during the  
founding era**









Illustration by Julius Euting  
Women in the northern Arabian  
Peninsula

In talking about the First Saudi State (1727–1818) and the establishment of this political entity that changed the course of history, it is the heroic events and incidents that come to mind, so the reader focuses on the historical and political figures who had such an impact in laying the foundation for the future Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, if men had a starring role on the battlefields outside the walls, it was women who played the greatest role in building society within them.

#### **The role of women in society**

Among those women whom historians mention for their piety and learning was Mudi bint Sultan Abu Wahtan of the Al Kathir of Banu Lam, the wife of Imam Muhammad ibn Saud.

She was born in the early 18th century.

In addition to her insight and wisdom, Mudi bint Abu Wahtan was pious, and loved giving charity to the benefit of the poor and of all Muslims. Perhaps when Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad built Sabalat Mudi and its mosque in the At-Turaif neighborhood, he was recalling Mudi's great works and wanted them to continue. This endowment was dedicated to the service of various types of visitors, such as students, merchants, and others from outside the city; it was equipped to host guests and scholars of the time.

Among the women who played a leading role in the society of the First Saudi State was Ghaliya bint Abdulrahman, of the Baqum tribe that lived in Turba, in the desert between the Hijaz and Najd. Johann Ludwig Burckhardt records in his memoirs that she was the widow of a leader of the Baqum tribe, and it is likely that she was born in the last quarter of the 18th century. Burckhardt mentions that she was known



for her sound opinions and accurate knowledge of military matters and the affairs of the surrounding countryside.

Ghaliya al-Baqmiyya was a supporter of the First Saudi State, and she devoted her wealth and property to serving the defenders of the homeland and resisting the campaigns of the Ottoman invaders. She was also known for her generosity, and her house was a shelter for the poor and needy and a refuge for the loyal followers of the First Saudi State.

As soon as the First Saudi State succeeded in incorporating the western part of the Arabian Peninsula within its borders, the Ottoman invaders sent military expeditions in 1811 and 1813. The region's tribes, leaders, and dignitaries were able to resist them, and Ghalia played a role in supporting these efforts.

There are also examples of social customs and traditions concerning women in Ad-Diriyah, as women had a prominent social role in bearing many of the burdens of life.

The First Saudi State took care to support women, as Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad was keen that women's needs and issues, especially those of widows, were brought before him. If prices rose, he would pay them a stipend so that they could meet their daily needs. If a man died, his sons would come to Imam Abdulaziz, and he would give them large gifts, and sometimes would grant them a financial allowance to be paid out to them regularly.

### **Some common names in Ad-Diriyah**

Common names for girls at the time included: Al-Jawhara, Al-Anud, LaTifa, Haya, Ghaliya, Hayfa, Al-Bandari, Ruqyah, Tarfa, Mudi, Hayla, Nura, Hessa, Sara, and Ghuzayyil. In Najd, diminutive names were popular, such as FuTayma and FaTum for FaTima, Nuwayr and Al-Nuri for Nura, Asha and Uwaysha for Aisha, Husaysa for Hassa, Munayyir for Munira, and Khaduj for Khadija.

### **Courage**

Women were brought up in Ad-Diriyah, and they in turn raised their children, to value courage, which was a source of pride for them. The historical sources indicate that women joined or competed with men in offering hospitality to those in need; this custom was known in Najd as dakhala: the woman would protect the newly-arrived stranger (dakhil), whether they came to her in the home or in her pastures.

### **Generosity, patience, and sound management**

One of the most notable customs and traditions among women was generosity. A prominent example of a woman who was famous for her generosity and sheltering travelers was Jalila, daughter of Amir AbdulmuHsin ibn Saa'id al-Dirai, who set up resthouses and inns for pilgrims passing through Al-Yamama to rest from the hardships of travel and to take food and drink. Not content with spending her life providing hospitality to travelers in Al-Yamama, she wanted her work to continue after her death. She therefore turned the khans that she had established into an endowment for God Almighty in 1561. This endowment was known as Khan Jalila; its name changed over time to Khan Shalila, and finally Khanshalila. It is the area located east of ManfuHa.

## **Housing**

It was normally the wife who was in charge of household affairs. The housing situation was based on the husband's financial condition. In terms of housework, the women of Ad-Diriyah would clean and tidy the house, wash and sew clothes, raise the livestock and poultry, feed young livestock, and collect and chop firewood for cooking.

## **Food in Ad-Diriyah**

The women of Ad-Diriyah prepared food as part of their household duties and to support their husband and family. The main foodstuffs consumed in Ad-Diriyah and Najd were the following:

- **Wheat:** The principal meal, it was crushed or ground, then cooked in the same way as rice, and perhaps topped with fat. Porridge (tharid) was made from bread, and meat, ghee, or something else would be added to it. Al-Riki mentions that it was the preferred dish of Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad.
- **Jarisha:** A popular food prepared by grinding wheat grains with a stone tool called a mijrasha, similar to a millstone, but lighter, as it was only intended to crush the grains.
- **Rice:** Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz preferred this to wheat, and it was the food eaten by himself and his sons. He brought cooks to his house from Al-Ahsa and Al-Qatif to prepare other types of foods, such as: fried meats, stuffed poultry, and sweets baked with sugar.

Bread, porridge and meat of all kinds were among the most important foods in Najd in general, whether boiled, grilled or roasted. Other foods included ghee, cheese, dates, and spices such as pepper, which were dried then ground and mixed with dried lemon to add flavor to various foods. One well-known custom in Najd was that women did not eat with men, but waited until they had finished eating. The girls and boys who had not yet reached puberty usually ate with them.

## **Women's clothing in Ad-Diriyah**

In Ad-Diriyah, cotton fabrics were used to make clothing, as handicrafts were still in their primitive stages. The women of Ad-Diriyah usually wore two types of clothing: The first was a dress or shirt called the karbas, which was made of cotton, preferably in green or black. These were brought from the regions of Al-Ahsa, Al-Qatif, Bahrain, and parts of Yemen. The second was a dress made of high-quality silk in many colors. Al-Riki mentions in his book *Lam' al-shihab* that Imam Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad would dress his wives in a black karbas, and they also wore red scarves brought from the outskirts of Aleppo and Baghdad.

Another item of clothing worn by the women of Ad-Diriyah was the qaylani abaya, which was usually worn when going out or when hosting a guest. A limited number were made in Ad-Diriyah and Al-Ahsa, but they were mostly brought from Iraq. They also wore colorful Indian silk, sometimes worth 20 riyals.

The wives of Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz wore Indian silk in all colors. In the winter they wore bazz, one of the finest types of silk



brought from the Levant, and in the summer they wore bazz.

The women of Najd were often adorned with jewelry encrusted with precious stones such as pearls, sapphires, and turquoise. The wives of Imam Abdullah ibn Saud wore sapphires and pearls, but rarely gold. Women also wore anklets (khalakhil) on their feet. Among the cosmetics worn by women were kohl and henna, with which they dyed their nails and hands. They tied their hair in braids decorated with pearls and other jewels, and they wore perfumes made of musk and amber.

### **The cultural role of women**

Ad-Diriyah, as the capital of the state, held political, intellectual, economic and other attractions that led to an increase in its population. Its intellectual life was one of its most attractive aspects and contributed to the creation of an educational system there.

Some sources and references refer to the education of women in Ad-Diriyah, showing the imams' interest in schooling them and teaching them the fundamentals of religion. Imam Muhammad ibn Saud built a large mosque in Ad-Diriyah in which he taught men and women in the morning and evening. The imams after Imam Muhammad ibn Saud continued to educate the public, especially women. Imam Abdulaziz built a complex around the Al-Bujayri Mosque, in which he set aside a section for women, where jurists could teach.

Some of the women of Ad-Diriyah learned to read and write, became prominent in intellectual fields, and mastered calligraphy.

### **Women and poetry**

Women in that era experienced decisive political and social changes that stirred the emotions of female poets; with their rhetoric they stood with their menfolk, who hurled themselves into the thick of battle. Perhaps one of the most prominent female poets whose poems of enthusiasm and pride in the nation's warriors have been preserved is Mudi bint Saad ibn Abdullah al-Dahlawi. With her stirring poetry, she helped to motivate and spur on the defenders in the face of the invading Ottoman forces at the siege of Al-Rass; her poem was as follows.

Oh rider of the red-backed camel! The lofty hump that disturbs the masses  
Make your way to Al-Awja where the imam resides, and greet him  
O you people of resolve, O spring of support If the Pasha brings you ill  
Call on God, and on no other Know that you must never expect peace from a corpse  
that we will discard like one destroyed by rain  
For me, in death there is a comfort like in sleep  
In our hands are sharp swords to cut necks and break bones  
The Franks, with their swift ammunition are sheared like the legs of ostriches

### **The economic role of women**

The economic situation of women in Ad-Diriyah centered around meeting their family's needs and providing necessities, although there were industries and occupations performed by men, and agricultural products, that contributed to economic and commercial prosperity locally and abroad, such as producing guns and other weapons embellished with gold and silver, and the sale in the market of dates, milk, handicrafts, leather, cotton and woollen textiles and clothes, among others. The market in Ad-Diriyah was a "seasonal market" (suq al-mawsim) consisting of shops or small stalls. Ibn Bishr refers in his book *Unwan al-majd fi tarikh Najd* [The History of Najd] to the flourishing of trade and commerce in Ad-Diriyah during the reign of Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz, mentioning that there was a time for women and a time for men at the market.

Some women also set up small shops in their homes to sell everyday necessities, while others carried their goods on their heads and passed around the homes of well-to-do people to sell their products. These wandering saleswomen were known as dallala or jallaba. Among the economic activities practiced by women was agriculture, but only to a limited extent, because some tasks, such as plowing, watering, and so on, were the preserve of men. Women in Ad-Diriyah also produced clothes from cotton and woollen fabrics imported from nearby commercial centers. Women also used palm wicker, collecting palm leaves then cutting them and spreading them on the ground to dry, in producing basic items such as baskets, fans, brooms, and so on. Another source of income for women was gathering, chopping, and selling firewood. They also sold spices such as pepper, which they dried, then ground up and mixed with dried lemon.





**Architectural styles  
in the different  
regions of the First  
Saudi State**









The society of the Arabian Peninsula was characterized by strong familial and social ties, as supported by the shari'a and upheld by Muslims due to a belief in the spirit of brotherhood and community. This was reflected in the architectural designs of the First Saudi State, which were intended to preserve decency and privacy; this element is apparent in all parts of a traditional building, starting from the entrance to the house and its covered windows.

Each region differed in its architectural designs, based on its environment. People living in the Arabian Peninsula took account of the environment in which they lived, so the majority of houses during the era of the First Saudi State were built of clay due to its abundance in the area, clay being a commonly used material in Arabic construction. In addition, they made use of whatever rocks and plants were available in the surrounding environment.

In construction, it was customary for the owner to make a contract with professional traditional builders. The contract between them was verbal and based on trust, or on cooperation among neighbors.

The professional builder was called *ustad*, derived from the word *ustadh* (professor). Each builder had a different title according to his work: there were the *ustad al-bina'* (construction master), *ustad al-nuqush* (carving master), and *ustad al-jass* (plastering master). There were also people who specialized in clay, who were responsible for mixing the clay or moving it from one place to another, in addition to the professional assistants.

The construction of buildings in the central region relied on mud, adobe, straw, stone, wood, tamarisk, and palm trunks.

House owners preferred that their windows opened towards the north, so that the cold air would blow in, or towards the east, so that the sunlight and breeze could enter. When building large castles and forts, foundations were required.

Settlement in the central region was also characterized by homogeneity, to a greater degree than in the urban settlements of any other region in the Arabian Peninsula. This type of construction is distinguished by the separation of the family rooms from the guest reception rooms.

The British traveler Sadleir visited and traveled around the Arabian Peninsula, reaching its center in Najd. He visited ManfuHa and described the houses of the region: "The houses here are well built; the people use stones and mud in their construction, and some of them have two floors. The town is surrounded by a wall and a ditch." Despite the simplicity of the mud and adobe structures, the people of the region also managed to build many high towers and castles, as described by Sadleir: " We reached a lake called Al-Khubra or Al-Ghubra. This lake is surrounded by three towers that were previously used as housing for peasants in this area"—an example of the famous mud towers in Najd is the Al-Shanana Tower, which was built in 1699.



Ad-Diriyah was famous in the central region for its palaces and mosques, such as the Salwa Palace (a symbol of heroism), and the Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Mosque. These buildings were distinguished by the beauty of their Najdi architecture and their strong construction, and poets of the time wrote verses commemorating them. Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad Abu Nahiyah, a resident of Ad-Diriyah, wrote a poem in which he lamented the city's fall in 1818. In one verse, he describes the Salwa Palace and the mosque:

No longer is it the seat of a reign, nor a lofty, imposing palace  
Riders do not depart it for another place, nor did herds kneel there  
No schools are there for learning, nor a great mosque to its north

Professional builders excelled in creating external aesthetic elements for buildings, such as the eaves (Hadayir): raised, triangular decorative lines that surrounded the facade of the house, one of the functions of which was to protect the wall from rainwater. There were also triangular holes in the wall, called luhuj in the local Najdi dialect (singular lahaj). These were used to look out of, to ventilate the room, and to provide light. Haqaf were a form of decoration located above the eaves (Hadayir), while zaraniq were the upper columns of the house, and the sharaf was a roof decoration.

As for architectural styles in the Hijaz, the style of building in Makkah was similar to that of Jeddah. The houses of Makkah were built of stone, in luxurious designs. Some of them had three floors; some were decorated with white paint, while others preferred dark stone colors. The dwellings were distinguished by their many windows and prominent rawashin overlooking the streets; many of these rawashin or enclosed balconies were adorned with carved motifs and painted in attractive colors. In Jeddah, there was no single dominant style: some houses were built by their owners from large, square stones, and others from left-over stone. The surface was smooth on the outside, but on the inside it was made of mud. Sometimes the walls were built of stone, and some people put layers of wood panelling on the wall instead of covering it with plaster, leaving the wood in its natural color.

The houses in Jeddah consisted of two floors, and had many small windows, as in Makkah. People placed hand-made wooden decorations on the windows, giving them an attractive appearance. At the entrance of each house was a spacious hall in which guests were received. The rooms on the ground floor were higher than ground level; the majority of Hijazi houses were therefore hot, with the exception of the hall. People beautified their homes with latticework or low windows; the windows were decorated with bright colors inside and out. All this made Sadleir express his admiration for the buildings of Jeddah when he visited: "Jeddah, with its huge and splendid buildings, could not accommodate this enormous number of pilgrims."

In the outer suburbs of Jeddah, they were huts built by their owners from reeds, jungle wood, and arak branches;



• • • Palace of Prince Omar bin Saud (Maqsouret Omar)



these huts that surround the city from the inside were built of stone.

There were many varied housing styles in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, including dome huts, or huts with oval stone bases, roofed with tree trunks and branches, and covered with tanned leather or with tents secured with ropes.

Another type of construction involved laying a stone foundation, then covering it with wheat straw; the house might reach five floors. In some regions of the south, the dwellings were built directly on the rocky surface; due to the abundance of mountain rocks, rocky walls were exploited to complement the constructed masonry walls, or rocky surfaces were used to build stone dwellings.

Some roofs were built of wood and mud; tamarisk, acacia, or juniper wood might be used according to what was available in the surrounding environment. These pieces of wood were placed opposite each other, then bundles of alfalfa were stacked on top, and tree gum was spread on them. The method of roof construction was the same for all types of buildings: people built using stones that had been brought from the mountains and polished; these stones were then fixed on top of each other with mud. For the outer walls of dwellings, meanwhile, there were different types of construction: some were made only of stone, others only of mud, and still others of stone and mud together.

An example of this type of stone building is the Tabab Mosque, which Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad had built in 1805-1806 in the village of Tabab. This village was notable for its attractive architecture, with beautiful stone dwellings. The mosque was built of stone and wood, while its roof was made of wood. It had a number of internal and external arches. The mosque still stands today, and as the village has become an attraction for tourists in the south of Saudi Arabia, this historic legacy has been restored in accordance with its magnificent original design.

The architectural style and construction methods of the north of the Arabian Peninsula are similar to those of the central region: the houses were built of mud, and some had upper floors. Many of these houses resembled towers, forts, and palaces, such as Al-Jawf Castle, the city's main fort, which was built on high ground in the form of a square with high walls and walls with balconies, surrounded by circular and square towers that had no windows other than holes for launching projectiles.

The region's surrounding natural environment reflected the architectural style of the eastern region, in addition to the influence of the climate on the architectural style; the materials used therefore differed between the coast and the interior. In coastal cities, builders made use of marine rocks, while inland cities far from the sea relied on limestone quarried from the ground, as well as rocks brought from hills and highlands to use as foundations. Due to its abundance, plaster was also widely used to coat mud walls on the inside and outside, on account of its ability to absorb atmospheric moisture. In building windows, locals employed two styles of architecture. The first style was



• • • One of the historical houses of Jeddah





• • • Tabb Mosque

compatible with the very humid coastal climate and involved a multiplicity of external windows and openings for air to enter and circulate. The second method was suited to the dry interior regions far from the coast; here fewer windows were used, and their placement took account of the wind direction.

One prominent palace that reflects the quality of construction in this period in the eastern region, testifying to the ancient architecture of Al-Ahsa, is the MuHayris Palace, built by Imam Saud ibn Abdulaziz ibn Muhammad as a military fortress protecting the people of Al-Ahsa. The palaces and forts in the eastern region were similar to the architectural designs of Najd: they were built using bricks and adobe, with large quantities of stone, while wood was used to create domes, arches, hollow walls, and mashrabiya. These palaces and forts used architectural forms that were both very large and simple, and their general appearance was appropriate to the prevailing local climate and conditions. As for furniture, the people of the First Saudi State made use of the surrounding environment, whether in the south, the Hijaz, or the central and eastern regions. In the past, people



exploited whatever they could take from readily available materials, such as the skins of livestock, or various types of trees and palms. For example, the doors and windows of their homes were usually made from natural materials like acacia and juniper wood, formed into panels and then carved and decorated, as well as mattresses for sleeping.



**Muhairis Palace in Al-Ahsa**





**The Foundation in  
the Words of the  
Leadership**











## **King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud**

“I have ruled this country, which is under my command, by God’s will, and by the Arab character. Every one of my people is a soldier. I walk among them as a single individual. I do not privilege myself over them, nor do I rule over them, except by what is right and just for them according to the words of God in His Holy Quran and the Sunnah of His Prophet (PBUH).”



## **King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**

“We have assumed the office of King of Saudi Arabia, proud of this glorious heritage that generation upon generation has bequeathed to us, founded upon piety and obedience to God, His constitution, the Holy Quran, and His reflection in the Sunnah of Muhammed (PBUH). Upon these foundations, we persist.”





## **King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**

“The faith of this people in God, their cohesiveness, and their dedication to serving their nation and fighting for the sake of their independence and freedom are the reasons this people and this great nation have come so far.”



## **King Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**

“By the grace of God, King Abdulaziz was able to found this grand entity, to return security through standards that he encouraged others to attain, and to achieve the best standards of stable and luxurious living for his people, so that our country has become a role model of pride, dignity, progress, and flourishing.”



## King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

“The First Saudi State was founded more than two and a half centuries ago, based on Islam, a clear path for politics, governance, doctrine, and society.”



## King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

“Thanks be to God that our country has witnessed, ever since its founding by the Unifying King Abdulaziz, a comprehensive civilizational renaissance that is geared toward Saudi citizens in terms of their life, work, security, health, and education.”





## **Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**

“This state, which was founded nearly three centuries or more ago, is a state of unity, firmly rooted on the Quran and the Sunnah.”

“It was the unification of this vast kingdom into a single entity, where equality, justice, and faith prevail, that represented the first model of a stable nation in the modern era of our region.”



## **His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz**

“We have very important historical roots, since time immemorial, that converge with many civilizations. Many think that the history of the Arabian Peninsula only goes back a short time. However, we know that the opposite is true, that we are a nation since time immemorial.”

