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Tribes, Memory and Politics in Iraq

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ABSTRACT

Tribal history has played a key role in shaping the social and political landscape of Iraq today. This research examines how the tribal system has maintained its political interests by engaging with three agents those being, the central political government, religion, namely Islam, and Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyah* as a sociocultural bond of cohesion amongst members of a group-forming community. Thus, the research question is as follows, does tribal heritage play a role in Iraq's politics today? This will require answering, what tribal heritage is, and what the structure and role of the tribal system in Iraq consists of. The hypothesis of the research suggests that *asabiyah* as a social bond embedded in tribal heritage, plays a role in shaping political dynamics in Iraq.

By researching the history of tribal formation and how it has played a part in religion and religious institutions as well as the Iraqi government, one can understand how and to what extent the tribal system maintains its relations and interests with formal institutions. This includes how it shapes goal-formation processes of political leaderships, framing spaces of political communications which are seen as legitimate, or validating specific spokespersons from constituencies. Therefore, the research will lead to an understanding of how the tribal system as an informal legitimacy and un-institutionalized political entity can be considered as a significant and key shaper of politics in Iraq. Moreover, this thesis explores how the tribal system can define and maintain its own informal spaces of legitimacy by intersecting with religion, the central government and *asabiyah.*

In the future, this research project can help approach the context of Iraqi politics through the lens of the tribal system and therefore contribute to conflict transformation processes and dialogues by integrating a wider net of legitimate actors such as the tribes.

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DEDICATION

To my father, for revealing to me the beauty of the mind.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Identity is a multi-layered phenomenon associated with everything that is innate and everything that one's social environment causes to affect one's social behavioral patterns. Identity looks to explain the meaning and interdependence that people associate with their individual behavior, thought processes and their emotional connections to society more widely (Burke & Stets, 2009). One way of looking at Arab social structures can be through different inter-individual and intergroup patterns determined by historical lineages, beliefs and actions and is the result of a fusion of these constructed narratives. According to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), identity can be considered firstly as a basis for social or political action. It is utilized to emphasize the way in which action, whether individual or collective, may be directed by *particulturistic self-understanding* in relation to such markers as race, ethnicity or gender. Secondly, identity can be considered as a collective phenomenon which denotes a degree of sameness manifesting in a form of solidarity.

This research contributes to an examination of the how the history of tribal heritage may play a role in the political dynamics of Iraq. The research will refer to the historical context of the region's Arab and Islamic history as a framework to understand how tribal heritage plays a role in politics leading up to the Baathist period from 1968 to 2003. To undergo this research, an examination of tribal history, its formation, and the role it has played on a social, religious, and governmental levels and examine how the tribal structure carries its

own systems of law, self-governance and political dynamics. The research's added value lies in understanding the intersection between the formal and informal systems of governance in Iraq. To do this, the thesis will focus on tribal heritage and *asabiyah* since it is an important element in preserving the tribal system, as well as Iraq's official central political authority. To determine the validity of the hypothesis which suggests that *asabiyah* plays a role in shaping political outcomes in Iraq, the research will examine these intersections across several periods of Iraq's history rather than one isolated political or historical event. Hence, the research contribution will emphasize the shaping factors of tribal heritage and the tribal system, and the ways in which it may shape or take part in political outcomes.

Historically, the region of Mesopotamia extends towards parts of Syria where its identity is shaped by sociological variables which are seen to play a crucial function in determining the political dynamics of the Iraq today. This is marked by the presence of an influential tribal system with roots extending across the geography. When referring to historical indications regarding Iraq, it is challenging to distinguish parts of the larger Arab region based on nationalistic classifications known to the Arab world today. The area shares a vast history of common ancestry, sociological differences, politics, and interwoven narratives of tribal encounters. Moreover, it was not until the 20th century after Arab countries gained their independence that a new wave of political routes emerged locally, launching into somewhat self-determining political developments. After examining the significance of tribal heritage and the elements which have shaped it, the research will then focus on the Baathist period from 1968 to 2003 to test the hypothesis.

Tribal identity has numerous implications for the understanding of national identity in Iraq. This topic will be explored through the examination of how tribes[1] derived and sustained their early sovereignty on an informal level through their values. Tribal sovereignty is not merely a constitutional or territorial matter, but rather a kind of lifeblood justified through a political continuum of self-rule (Kalt & Singer, 2003). If the state is a structural command imposed on the community as an attempt to rule, the sovereignty of the tribes can be construed as a form of moral system based on the rules and customs of a society (Hinsley, 1986). In this respect, this research will define sovereignty as the capacity to 'self-rule'; thus, sovereignty functions as a *de facto* political understanding*,* which is also associated with the social landscape rather than only the state law. This form of socially sanctioned sovereignty testifies to "a struggle between the principle of the community and the principle of dominance, between the persistence of the old methods and customs of society claims the kind of government" (Hinsley, 1986, p16). In other words, sovereignty is about legitimate political structures recognized by most of their citizens as the core monopoly and highest form of authority. Such authority structures eventually became formalized into the concept of a nation-state beginning with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 (Jackson, 2003).

Prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq in 1932, numerous tribes in Mesopotamia were entitled to be described as social bodies which possessed complete power to govern themselves for centuries. Once the creation of Iraq took place in the 20th century, this research will also consider how might have the sovereignty of the official political system

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[1] A tribe is referred to as a social group which shares common genealogical links and secured membership loyalty within a group. Historically, they are considered as 'units of subsistence' that control some areas with other nomads or settled people by sharing a network of institutionalized relationships (Marx, 1977).

been confronted by the pre-existing tribal system with what this project will refer to as the social sovereignty of the tribes. "Sovereignty is nothing, but a set of rules and resources embedded in a collectively held legal understanding in the state system" (Bartelson, 1995, p. 16). The problematization of the term "sovereignty" is contradictory as the idea itself includes, firstly, the condition of constitutional independence and, secondly, the idea that there is some degree of absolute political power within the community. Such manifestations characterize the older or traditional period with the modern period of Iraq (Hinsley, 1986). Hence, sovereignty seems constitutively to imply a unified political condition within this dual definition.

Tribes have traditionally followed customary laws in which with the emergence of Islam, tribal politics became linked with the prophet and subsequent events which the research will study to help contextualize tribal heritage. Afterwards the research may revisit whether tribal politics continued to play a role across history into what is difference political experiences. This link may have prompted social groups to strengthen their networks by establishing groups under the slogans of religious sects or political parties. By maintaining credibility in respective society or communities which often calls to reinforce a specific religious identity, such social mobilization based on group solidarity may act as a response to maintain its power and survivability in the presence of state legitimacy.

Today the model of social organization can be seen differently from previous times, so that, when asking about the elements consisting of tribal political culture, the understanding of interim periods in which major changes occurred are critical. Multiple states and governments developed after tribes first coalesced into tribal confederations, which in turn fused into chiefdoms carrying a dominant leader. This resulted in a lengthy and unsteady

period in which nomadic hunters and gatherers evolved into sedentary hunters and gatherers, after which those groups changed into farming tribes and chieftains, eventually forming into states based on the needs and technological advancements of each period.

1.2 RESEARCH TOPIC

This research undertaking explores the nature of Arab cultural connections with history and tribal politics by examining the extent of influence of Arab tribal identity and the notion of 'collective belonging' and values on the development of political culture in Iraq. By referring to encounters of culture and heritage provided by primary data from Iraqi informants as a framework for the research, it will advance the understanding of how such cultural nuances may influence political dynamics of Iraq. This research seeks to examine how the tribal system plays a part in defining certain areas of political outcomes in Iraq. By researching the history of tribal formation and how it links to religion or religious institutions as well as the Iraqi government, one can understand to what extent the tribal system may play a role in shaping the issues of dispute. Such influence includes shaping goal-formation processes of political leaderships, mobilisation patterns, framing spaces of negotiation which are seen as legitimate, or validating specific spokespersons from constituencies The project therefore challenges the assumption that formal legitimacies are static where they are considered to be the main shapers of political decisions, and instead explores how the tribal system defines and maintains its own informal spaces of legitimacy which can play a role in the larger political dynamics of the country. In the future this can contribute to understanding if and in what ways could tribes adopt political relations through government, religious authorities, or political parties and movements.

The process of this research underlines whether there exists a strong sense of belonging that Arab Iraqis carry towards their collective heritage and tribal origins, with which they may identify with despite other affiliations. This research considers that his belonging can contribute to shaping political dynamics in Iraq since the tribal system carries a high degree of social sovereignty. This may be connected to a degree of peripheral nationalism in the modern political context prior to the organization of the state (Seiler, 1989). This sense of identity, of which this research will consider and argue originates from tribal populations whereby creating loyalties and customs this system has maintained a sociopolitical make-up which has survived today. This thesis will study how and if the tribal system has maintained itself through agencies, those include the religious and government as institutionalized structures, and *asabiyah* which this research will refer to Ibn Khaldun's definition as a sociocultural bond of cohesion amongst members of a group-forming community (2005).

Based on Giddens' theory of structuration, agency is argued to be a set of actions that is shaped by specific social structures in which the actions themselves serve to reinforce or reconfigure outcomes (Jaspers et al, 2010). The agents will examine first the tribes' relationship with religion namely Islam, the tribe's relationship with the central government, and lastly, tribal expression through *asabiyah*. For this reason, political culture will be a prominent theme throughout this research as well as its basis in the varying dimensions of power, legitimation and the power of coercion (Goldfarb, 2013). Political culture will be examined further in chapter 5 and 7 to help study the differences between political outcomes and processes. The power of culture in this research lies in the system applied to communicate customs, beliefs, values, language and practices that produce a set of

recognized social structural norms, this and the following concepts will be examined throughout the research.

Emerging from the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula, constantly migrating, and raiding in search of fertile lands suitable for grazing and herding cattle such as camels to be used for warring and milk produce, the Arab community has grown to be durable because of their environmental conditions. They were bonded by *asabiyah*, a term denoting group solidarity with respect to one's common ancestry, loyalty and creed (Khaldun, 2005) as well as the ethnically pure Arab-valued bonds of kinship. Being loyal to one's tribe is a fundamental duty and an essential commitment of the individual. The emergence of Islam continued to strengthen these kinship bonds, so that a parallel emerged between the background of the people living in this region and the context of the new religion. Since the tribes were part of the sociological make-up of the Arabian Peninsula, Islam adapted part of the preexisting social make up consistent of tribal dynamics. The establishment of the caliphate was seen to have provided a renewed social structure with the caliph being identified as the head of the state and successor to Muhammad. The caliph-maintained authority over the tribal and sedentary people through Islam by compelling believers to abide by his rule.

Thus, Islam can be considered to have a political aspect to it since its emergence, and Muhammad's rise to power in Medina in the year 622 CE was established after the mobilization of the tribes. For it to survive and lay the foundations for its durability, the leaders of Islam included the societal and communal power dynamics of the tribes in order to ensure that the active and resilient tribal norms and customs are being considered. The Quraysh tribe, the prophet Muhammad's tribe, attempted to do so by aligning the message of Islam and the politics its necessitated with the existing sociopolitical dynamics of the

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nomads. The power of faith proved key in touching nomadic societies on an individual level, showing through persuasion that Allah's will is supreme and that, through him, one will attain ascendency, as many tribes came to believe.

Moreover, as the research will also discuss, what followed was a disagreement over the caliph's succession which led to the Sunni-Shia divide which then furthered Islam's politicization, in these times as the thesis will argue, such dynamics were nourished through *asabiyah* since the tribes were the vehicle responsible for spreading the message of Islam. In parallel, as a formalize structure, Islam may have also challenged the power and authority of the tribes themselves as an informal system. For this reason, the tribal system today could be seen to challenge the central government in Iraq and its legitimacy due to the strength of these communal divisions. This is largely due to the resilience of tradition in the Arab world which correlates with the dichotomy of traditional and modern forms of political culture (Price, 1999). As Fandy (1994) writes, the power of the tribe became undermined when non-Arabs such as the Mamluks, Turks or later, Western colonial powers including Britain and France disrupted the dynamics of Arab politics and introduced unfamiliar and imposed concepts and arrangements for governing society. Today, religion continues to play a role in Iraq's politics through sectarian identities. While specific and accurate statistics on Iraq's population are not found there is a general consensus to the distribution of sect and ethnic groups that is generally agreed upon amongst Iraqis. According to discussions with Iraqi participants who were interviewed for this thesis (2021), Iraq today consists of approximately 75-80% Arab and 15-20% Kurds, while other minorities such as the Turkmens and the Assyrians consist of the last 5% of the population. With Islam as the primary official religion of Iraq, it consists of 60% Shiites and 35% Sunnis. Therefore, this research will also

contribute by explaining how the tribal system may intersect with Islam as Iraq's largest population, which may provide another perspective to understanding sectarian politics today.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

As this study will discuss, rules of engagement amongst tribes are associated with values and meanings that are linked with the tribal customary codes and its members' sense of belonging. This gives rise to a culture of mythopoetic archetypes which in existing literature have often been reduced to a phenomenon of the past that cannot coexist with definitions and paradigms of 'modernity'. Yet rather than focusing on the process of western understandings to political development, this research will highlight the strength of the tribal system in conducting and maintaining its political role in tandem with the official political system of Iraq and institutionalized religious authorities. This research will accordingly discuss the various levels of allegiances and loyalties in Arab Iraqi identity by examining the common threads found in Iraq's historical narratives as context for answering the research question. The importance and impact of tribal political culture in politics will highlight the intersecting forms of authorities that may coincide and shape the politics of Iraq.

While analyzing political culture and values one must consider in the context of the country's social and communal divisions. Giddens' theory of structuration can help to investigate these aspects by connecting human action with structural explanation. In other words, the production and reproduction of social systems form a deeply layered structured totality (Riley, 1983). Correspondingly, the durability of social political order is associated with political satisfaction, interpersonal trust amongst groups, and support for the existing social

order (Inglehart, 1988). However, according to Ross (2000), culture complicates this discussion as it disrupts the understanding of methodological individualism. In the case of traditional tribal system and its devising of a hierarchal order refers to the interdependence of members who are individually bound by social roles and collectively joined together through solidarity. For instance, by empowering individuals who are recognized for having better skills and talents than others, the sheikhs, communal or sectarian leaders develop an engrained relationship between the authority and the recipient.

Since tribes and clans represent an integral component of the social fabric of the region, their role therefore can possibly indirectly or directly influence the political undercurrents in Iraq in various ways. In this connection, this study argues that the inviolable creed that continually strengthens Arabs' sense of belonging hence supporting the solidarity of tribal members is nourished and maintained by *asabiyah* which can be seen through their role in politics, social dynamics, and often encompasses unspoken ways of expressing culture.

The aim of examining tribes is to clarify the degree in which governments are influenced by the informal or public sphere, exemplifying how the construction of a dominant identity may be influential on both social groups and states. Therefore, one can posit that there exists a unique historical makeup in the Arab world, in which society and government are two interwoven elements that offer a further definition of 'Arab' identity. This form of political culture can be defined as a pattern of distribution of different members' orientation within a political community towards politics (Pateman, 1971). In recent history, authoritarian regimes in Iraq ruled by a longstanding minority or military group have become increasingly challenged due to the absence of public support, resulting, for example, in the Arab Spring of 2011 or more recent uprisings in Lebanon and Sudan since 2019. The lack of a legitimate

political order in the region therefor has prompted questions around the elements which influence the state and its political outcomes, as this research will examine. Thus, an investigation of the sociological makeup of the region will inevitably refer to the cultural, geographical, and environmental characteristics related to the origin of Arabs which will be briefly covered in the research to help contextualize and layer the understanding of tribal origins of Mesopotamia, their heritage, ancestry and modes of survival as social units.

This research will then examine the interconnected aspects of identity that are linked to the constructs and narratives of tribal identity to determine how identity may be projected onto the social and political realms of the region. It will help understand how Iraq's collective history and its memory may still play an influential role in politics and decision-making process today. Sectarian identities hence will be examined to test whether some aspects of tribal values or customs play a role in determining the exchanges and ways that members of a sect or leaders may exercise sectarian politics. The hypothesis of this research suggests that *asabiyah* which is known as a bond of cohesion amongst members of a group-forming community is embedded in heritage, values and culture within tribal history and may play a role in the political dynamics of Iraq today. This this will also help understand the degree of social sovereignty assumed and sustained by various tribes as a longstanding and dominant power in Iraq's sociopolitical landscape. This notion becomes more complex as the individuals represented in government are also representatives of this social landscape and in many cases are seen to carry the similar creed, underlining the complex dynamics between the society and the government even further.

Finally, the use of the term tribal system in this thesis refers to a group of people comprising of a social network where customs and beliefs are practiced on a collective basis, while

relations within a group are performed and negotiated in micro social structures. In various occasions these elements can be seen to operate independent from the official political structure, in other cases they intersect with the formalized political institutions. This role-based identity is based not on the degree to which group members bear a similarity with one another but on the similarity of their roles (Burke & Stets, 2009). Other arguments state that activation of group identity relies on salience, which denotes an identity which functions psychologically in order to increase the influence of one's membership within the group on perception and behavior (Oaks & Turner, 1986). The research will therefore cover a historical part, for the contextualization of tribes and a contemporary part which will test the hypothesis. In this way the tribal system will be discussed and outlined throughout to study how it can intersect with three agencies to balance and maintain its political interests and influence.

1.4 THESIS CONTRIBUTION

Tribal identity will be considered as a layer that of which Iraqis identify with and will be discussed further during the conducted interviews, albeit one which is habitually disguised by other ideologies, movements, or political adherences. This study aims to delve deeper into how the strength of ancient ancestral expressions and attributions of identity have outlived history. This extension plays a part in the present sociopolitical dynamics, leading to the creation of a tribal political culture. This culture is associated with operating in collective units, which is a habit and custom transmitted and inherited across generations from their tribal history and ancestors and which still today defines and engulfs parts of the political culture of Arab Iraqis. The reason that this study is significant is that it will act as a foundation

for understanding the politics of the region today and why Iraqi politics takes shape in the way it does. The reason to that lies in the tribal identity and the communications that continue to shape the sociopolitical development of today. Therefore, rather than only focusing on formalised political state institutions, or religious institutions as the main drivers of Iraqi politics, this research argues that the with the influence of the sociocultural corporate bond of cohesion known as *asabiyah*, this unspoken element bonding Iraqis on a social level also can be perceived to extend its influence on formal institutions including the government hence by shaping the political dynamics of the country.

However, it is important to mention that it is not only 'direct' and 'indirect' engagement of collective groups in the political sphere, such as tribal, communal, or sectarian groups that shape the political outcomes in Iraq, there are undoubtedly many other responsible factors as well. Those include the region's history of colonialism and the Ottoman Empire's rule that stretched across the Arab world. However, this research will focus on the strong and often unspoken bond embedded in heritage, values and culture within tribal history plays a role in the political dynamics of Iraq today.

In the future this understanding can help conflict transformation processes and dialogues by integrated a wider net of legitimate actors such as the non-state tribes. In the future this can contribute to understanding what interface strategies tribes adopt through government, religious authorities, or political parties and movements. This research can also pave the way for entry points for tribal inclusion by attempting to understand to what extent the authority of the tribal system could constitute an entry

point or pathway towards dialogue or political negotiation given their links to different formal institutions.

This aspect highlights the purpose of studying group identities based on social identity theory as a paramount element in Arab tribes and clans. This thesis contributes to this methodological tribes and their role in official political structures. According to Brubaker (2000), groups are imagined based on such factors as nationhood, ethnicity, or citizenship. However, as Jenkins (2014) argues, although group identity may be imagined, it is not imaginary insofar as many aspects are observed in everyday life in which members form constructive attachments such as religious schools or congregations. Expressions of tribal group identity take place internally through the individual's cultural and mythological beliefs as well as externally such as through institutions of religion. Through examining the relevant phenomena, this research will result in three identifying agents. They will help to establish the underlying structure in which Arab tribes process and construct their values and identities. In this way, this thesis will help to create a valid measurement to increase the reliability of the argument and build an objective means for understanding how such underlying structures are manifested and nurtured, enabling them to survive until today. The approach to this research includes examining not only political aspects as a fundamental basis to the research argument but also political events as embedded in an ethical dimension which appreciates how the social identity of tribes is constructed and maintained. This will be clarified through the narratives found in various historical periods.

In order to narrow down the scope of this project, Iraq has been chosen as a reference due to its significant tribal and political history, as it will be discussed in subsequent chapters. The research will examine the characteristics of tribal agnatic societies and how they could be transferred into politics as a way for the clans or tribes to maintain their sociopolitical power through enabling agencies: *asabiyah,* religion and the official political system. In particular, the impact and potential intersection of Arab tribal beliefs and ways in politics will be examined, as well as the inception of tribal engagement with religion and their initial involvement with the official political system.

This research does not aim to provide solutions or assumptions to conflicts in Iraq such as understanding religion's role in politics or questioning the authoritarian nature of the Baathist regimes; however, it will diagnose the key underlying influences that impact the outcomes of politics in the country which has not been sufficiently researched to date. It aims to shift the perspective to the region's politics by referring to a tribal *asabiyah* lens. It will not only examine historical events but also attempt to interpret Arab tribal identity, such as beliefs, values, and their meanings. In this way, political developments, conflict, and conflict resolution can be approached and analyzed with the nuances that tribal angle lays forth. Alongside the analyzed secondary data, the framework, content and research question will be in large informed by the interviewed Iraqi participants. Their input will be examined closely in chapter 5 of which the collected primary data has allowed for a reframing of the original assumptions that this research has drawn in its earlier drafts.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

The main research question of this research is as follows, does the role of tribal heritage play a role in Iraq's politics today? This question will lead to examine what the structure and role of the tribal system is in Iraq, it will also address how narratives of tribal history may shape or support political dynamics. In this regards the extent to which the identity and political culture between the Iraqi political system and the tribal element may become apparent. Throughout the research, Mesopotamia is especially signified since it is a historical geographical region which has undergone a rich series of relevant political progressions, while 'Iraq' is referred to as a 20th-century political creation.

The main hypothesis of this research suggests that there is a sense of *asabiyah* which continues to play an influential role in Iraqi politics by supporting collective identities. The concept of political culture assumes the existence of sentiments, attitudes and cognitive dispositions that inform and govern the political behavior of a society according to a set of consistent patterns that reinforce one another (Pye & Verba, 1965). This impacts on Iraq's identities on a socio-political level as it is continually re-expressed and reconfigured to ensure a degree of sociopolitical sovereignty known amongst people. Subsequently, this may have influenced Iraq's political culture through traditional tribes, familial bonds and collective groups that have later developed due to modernization in agriculture, technological and industrial changes. The lack of political development can be attributed to the degree of social change which a society undergoes. As Radcliffe-Brown argues, the social system includes laws, education, religion, morals and government that allow a social structure exist and persist (Mitchel, 1959).

This investigation will therefore require a study of potential agencies to test how tribes exercise, balance and maintain their sociopolitical power, and which will be understood, first,

through the tribal system's links with Islam, second the system's relationship with the central government as a separate and autonomous entity separate (Abrams, 1988), thirdly the tribal system's expression through *asabiyah* (the creed). This thesis considers the structure of the political system from the organizational properties it provides which will be referred to as the government level. This includes its formalization, institutionalization of leadership roles and formal and informal structural balance as Philip Abrams describes. The consistent have remained within the social context are, hence, echoed or reproduced indirectly in the political context, such as through modern-day inter-sectarian dynamics or the regime nature in Iraq. This research, however, will not investigate one specific event in history, but will refer to several events in different historical periods in order to test whether signs of tribal heritage are present in political dynamics.

Identification as a basic cognitive mechanism matters as it helps individuals and groups to resolve their differences, although it does not determine behavior (Jenkins, 2014). Yet, behavioral outcomes can be partly linked with values since they provide a foundation for identity itself. Identification with the tribe or group brings forth the notion of sociopolitical power since it consists of its own organization, leadership, informal judicial system seen through methods of conflict resolution and others which will be discussed. The study of will act as a precursor to help answer the research question and provide insights into how *asabiyah* can be considered to play a role in politics.

1.6 PARALLELS WITH MOHAMMED ABED AL-JABIRI'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Mohammed Abed Al Jabiri's influential contribution to the debates covered across this thesis speaks to the foundational understanding of how tribal heritage plays a direct and indirect role in shaping the political realities in Iraq today. The author stresses on the significance of considering the continuity of the past to analyze the links and evolution of *asabiyah* within social solidarities. While the author's work requires a much deeper and expanded analysis given his fundamental work on many pertinent topics, this section draws on concepts discussed in Al Jabiri's *Critique of Arab Political Reason* (2013) and *The Formation of Arab Reason* (2011) where he deliberates on the motives that ensue Arab political reason, they are tribalism, religious affiliations, and the economy. This is particularly relevant to this research as the author's seminal work deconstructs the political and social realities of the Arab world to reach a reflection and re-examination of social relationships within a tribe. He argues that it is the tribes that constitute the political realities of the region, and the political is then nested in the ideological, and only then are religious affiliations and doctrines formed.

As this research will cover sociological elements that play a part in shaping the political consciousness of the case groups studied, for Al-Jabiri mastering tradition is valuable as it refers to knowing how its various components are adapted relative to a specific time. When examining traditional tribal systems of the Arab world and their functions today, deconstructing elements of tradition across different periods, enables this research to measure the adaptive qualities of the tribal system, its heritage, and its members. Even more so, which of these qualities are adaptive to the survival of the tribal system and which tend to adapt based on the political and ideological changes of a specific time. In this, political reasoning as suggested in practice and ideology tends to find its reference in social imagination. For example, Arab countries' imagination linked with heroic figures can be seen in this research to be largely influenced by

structures of tribal hierarchies, prompting no break between the 'state' and the 'ruler' as he describes. Another example points to how varying degrees of *asbabiyah* can nurture an aspect of tradition that transcends social organization in structural way but can also speak to the sense of cohesion that maintains group spirit. Hence studying conditions behind the closeness of characteristics and traits between a leading Muslim scholar and a state figure, or between a tribal sheikh and his 'membership' or affiliation to the tribe appears to stem from a similar point despite their apparent role differences. In other words, the performative character of a tribal leader is intertwined with his loyalty and degree of *asabiyah* towards the tribe which is held by tradition.

Moreover, Al-Jabiri emphasizes Ibn Khaldun's writings on kinship relations and religious propagation when examining political behavior. Al-Jabiri builds on the concept of *asabiyah* by describing the relevance of creed or *aqidah* of a group, or tribes in the case of this research, and how it manifests itself through theological teachings or schools of thought. Here, the creed does not necessarily function as a producer of knowledge, rather as an agency to mobilize communities and groups. This mobilization then can be extended or manifested through an affiliation to a specific homeland, culture, ethnicity or group, and more so political practices as he describes. Such associations are linked to the history of tribal networks who maintain their power through *asabiyah.* This acts as the metaphorical motor embedded in tribal heritage and only then appears in political dynamics. Al-Jabiri claims that economic systems or religion then can be seen as means for justifying such existing political realities which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Yet, if some aspects of tradition are partly responsible for imparting certain relational dynamics onto the present, how can one free themselves of a constraining past? In the case of the Bedouins

who roamed the deserts freely establishing a mode of self-governance in exchange for tribal loyalty. Consequently, it appears as if they would have two opposing sets of needs to serve individual freedom, and group adherence. The author here links both aspects together by regarding freedom and differences between individuals at the heart of social self-organization. Al-Jabiri explains that such differences are the very basis that create a society. Therefore, his argument contributes to this thesis by reflecting on how 'differences' between groups or individuals inform their motives behind their social, political, and economic interests, in this case differences on how an Arab tribal creed or worldview shapes their legitimacy and socio-political dynamics.

Al-Jabiri's deliberations include his writings on understanding modernity and political development in the Arab world, yet one of his overarching arguments that speaks to the larger framework of this thesis is his discourse on the formation of Arab thought and Arab reasoning. For him Arab political reasoning historically formed through theoretical debate over politics, acts as references to political expressions and are seen to take shape through ideologies in the political sphere. The term Arab for example may be defined by conceptions and theories that reflect a precise manifestation of Arab reality due to a specific way of thinking; since Arab tribes continue to refer to a customary rule this will reflect a type of cultural identity.

However, Al-Jabiri argues that culture can only be attributed with an intellectual aspect if an individual is thinking within the very culture itself. Furthermore, thinking within tribal culture does not imply thinking about its issues but rather by means of them, which this research attempts to do. For instance, it requires not thinking of the tribal system's mode of conflict resolution or its structure as an informal legitimacy only when placed in face of a formal judicial system deemed legitimate by its constitution. Rather this thesis integrates Al-Jabiri's argument

that one must think by means of culture, such as understanding tribal customs not as a separate entity but to realize the mind that shapes behaviors or attitudes around values of communal bonding and loyalty as a way to preserve kinship ties. Here, the environmental, social orbits of the social groups are important in questioning the role that tribal heritage plays today and how it has adapted itself throughout history while maintaining a common thread.

Yet, while conducting such research, the author warns of viewing culture as a historical product carrying a set of views, beliefs, systems of thinking or ways of reasoning since it can risk essentializing a topic or stereotyping it. Accordingly, Al-Jabiri addresses such an issue by recommending to section specificities into elements which can then allow 'thinking through a cultural medium' to have a referential system formed by essential nodes of the respective culture. Correspondingly, this research follows the author's work with dividing the subject by looking at the cultural heritage of Arab Iraqi tribes, origins of their social environment and then the research attempts to envisage a more current perception of tribes' role in politics today. This includes their own self-perception and attitude in the changing political scene in Iraq as components of a broader Iraqi culture. Here it is important to be studying political and social narratives to uncover the nuances of cultural origins beyond apparent political identities.

While this research does not cover Al-Jabiri's work more substantively, in the period after this research is completed, it will attempt to build further on the author's foundational work that is necessary in understanding the foundations that constitute much of the political realities linked to tribal heritage in the Arab world. The multidisciplinary work of Al-Jabiri lends itself to a large part of today's research given its weight in the current political climate and its connections with the past. It will also help in the next steps of this thesis, as it will provide a framework to address a more practical approach directed to future developments in the Arab world while

addressing the region's pertinent questions.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section will describe the methodology of this research. The analysis of the study will consist of a qualitative method since the examination of social and historical subjects necessitates a scientific framework to assess and interpret the information. The qualitative approach and the principal source of data for the contextualization of the topic will include reference to literature through secondary academic sources in the fields of history, sociology, anthropology, and politics, which will be assessed by using inductive reasoning. Qualitative research (QR) methods help identify what already exists in the social world, and further establishes an understanding on how it manifests itself (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). In such a way, QR methods can guide a researcher on how to better frame a social phenomenon from the perspective of all related stakeholders (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Evidence produced by QR methods can guide a researcher to better identify and define different typologies such as various characteristics of social groups, how social groups position themselves, or how certain social groups experience exclusion produced by fragmenting barriers for example. This helps deconstruct and achieve an in-depth understanding of people's various worldviews (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003).

Furthermore, semi-structured conducted interviews will be incorporated as a source of primary data. I conducted interviews with 27 Iraqis partly online and partly by phone as well as 7 Lebanese, Omani and Syrian participants to include a wider perspective on the topic. The interviews were semi-structured, which entailed a set of prepared questions while still

allowing for open discussion on issues that may be relevant to tribal history its culture and values, the system's relations with the government and religion[2]. Aside from COVID 19 travel restrictions and complications, one of the major research limitations is that access to Iraq was prohibited due to security and safety concerns and has been rated at 'extreme risk' to travel to by the relevant European security and insurance reports. Despite my inability to travel to Iraq for this research, the interviews do help in understand the intersection of the political and cultural elements associated with the people living in the region as it highlights responses from their immediate environment.

Moreover, the reference to grey literature will be incorporated, as this will broaden the understanding of the historical position of the tribes in the region. The purpose and benefit of a multi-strategy approach in social research lie in the advantage of employing a wider use of techniques throughout the investigation. At the same time, this methodology is designed to increase the validity and credibility of the study, as well as to reduce the limitations that one method might inflict. The analysis of the primary and secondary data will be augmented by a discourse analysis on the social practices and nature of the tribes to reveal their projected identity, while simultaneously exposing the more unclearly expressed aspects of their identity. The chapters will incorporate references to psychology and philosophy in an attempt to examine how the retention of tribal heritage is conveyed politically.

This research has used the Thematic Analysis (TA) method which is applied to detect patterns of meaning within the gathered data. The analysis reached through TA represents cognitive and symbolic meaning on the phenomenon at hand (Daly, 1997). This method is

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[2] Details on the participants and the questionnaire can be found in the appendix of this research.

applied after the transcription of interviews with participants, as the researcher I have selected repetitive phrases or words used by the participants that reflect a specific meaning that is linked to topics or sub-topics being researched and questioned on. The cluster of words and phrases are then categorized into themes; accordingly, different themes illustrate different types of understandings (Joffe, 2012). Furthermore, by comparing individual cases I contextualize them into a framework to further understand and interpret themes throughout.

The themes produced are patterns of either explicit or implicit content. To explain this further, a theme prescribed from the transcripts may contain either manifest content - which refers to a direct and observable mention of stigma, or a theme may contain latent content - this refers to stigma more implicitly. The interviewer may identify manifest themes that point towards a latent dimension of meaning. Achieving latent meanings is deduced from a set of manifest themes, which in turn requires interpretation (Marks & Yardley, 2004).

Furthermore, selected themes can be seen through two ways, firstly they may either be drawn from a theoretical standpoint that the interviewer weaves into the research, this is termed as deductive, this distinction acts as an extension to existing parts of the research and on the phenomena at hand. Secondly it may be that a resulting theme is marked directly from the transcribed data termed as inductive, this distinction allows the interviewer to draw upon the representational and naturally occuring themes that is found in the raw data itself. This research will use inductive-deductive and latent-manifest themes that will feed into the synthesis of the themes into an analysis.

A noteworthy aspect of this method is to acknowledge reflexivity in the interview processes at hand, otherwise it would be simple to imply or suggest my personal point of view as to

what can or should be considered as a valid theme to be coded. For example, I can note down that I saw some hesitation to a particular topic and place it as a theme to be acknowledged, while the participant could have been simply reacting with a pause to ensure the correct word choice.

The interview process follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-step framework to Thematic Analysis, with the first step is reading the transcripts to familiarize myself with the data. The first step will be to read the transcripts and get familiar with the data. The second step consists of systematically organizing the data in a way that clusters the main themes found across the data, while avoiding handpicking the themes that I would find applicable for the coding process. Coding the data has allowed me to transform the accumulated data into smaller groups with specific meanings. I used a theoretical thematic analysis rather and in step two the research then applies the open coding technique after drafting a few reflections around the codes relevant to the research question that I wanted to examine and consider. As I examined the data, new codes were generated while some other existing codes were modified. The third step includes a process of selecting the themes, Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that there are no set rules which may be considered or result in a theme. Codes are afterwards linked together under one common theme, or in some circumstances each code may become a theme. The fourth step requires a revision of the themes to ensure that they are significant and relevant to the research across all data sets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The fifth step involves the process of defining and contextualizing the themes based on the data provided by the interviewees, which allows me as a researcher to understand the different themes, or how the themes link or may relate to one another. Finally, the sixth step includes writing up the analysis throughout each theme.

The reference to the first-person perspective in a few sections of the research is used to emphasize the personal nature of these reflections and thought processes as a researcher in the methodology section and during the interviews. Since I am from the Middle East, this positionality is used to engage with the content of the participant. As I was writing, I became more cautious about the use of abstract word choices and specific expressions. Yet, given my experience of living in the Arab world, I believe in the importance of highlighting the subtle differences in such underlying themes as they express a source of creative power for collective groups in the Arab world. While individuals and groups tend to over-identify with one idea or a concept such as one's sect, this can skew the perception away from the hypothetical and towards the physical boundaries of the community. Therefore, I chose abstract words related to the notion of tribal identity while being aware of their varying definitions. Accordingly, I had to ensure that I added further explanations because, when used independently, they took on a meaning of their own. By continually contextualizing, qualifying, and layering specific terms, and clarifying today's general misunderstanding of the tribal system and its abstraction as a system from the past, the research discovers much of the strength and durability of this informal system that continues to play a role in politics.

Critical discourse analysis allowed a more comprehensive understanding of Arab tribal identity and the contextualization of social power within larger social practices, precisely before political action and language enclose and limit what 'thinkable' and 'sayable' mean. The dimension in which discourse takes place begins with social relationships within a specific social community or organization, in this case tribal networks, as well as their

attitudes, language, practices, norms, traditions[3] and how they communicate to define power (Fairclough, 1993). In this way critical discourse analysis shapes the philosophical characteristics of the research related to Arab tribal identity.

Although discourse analysis does not necessarily provide solutions to research problems, through gathering the perceived relevant narratives through texts, a certain reality can be recognized and conceptualized (Hewitt, 2009). The subliminal interpretations of the data therefore provide an opportunity to apply various ideological aspects of Arab identity such as its relationship to nationalism, heritage, lineage, country, gender, ethnicity or sect. Such experimental analyses will allow a more comprehensive study of Arab beliefs and culture and demonstrate, for instance, how Arab tribal ascension to state power took place through Islam.

Secondary data for the contextualization and historiography of the research has been collected from various authors including scholars such as, Ali al-Wardi, Ameen Rihani, Al-Tabari, Ibn Khaldun, Edward Said, Amine Maalouf and others. It is critical for this study to include literature written by authors from varied backgrounds, not only to expand the scope of perspectives but also to increase the reliability of the argument and its hypothesis. The authors referred to adopt different historical perspectives and possess different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, political affiliations, roles and professions. Such divergences solidify the argument through discourse analysis by garnering the variables that create threads and patterns found in history. The timeline of the research is also varied to include various events

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[3] Tradition will be referred to in this thesis as "a distinctive behaviour pattern shared by two or more individuals in a social unit, which persists over time and that new practitioners acquire in part through socially aided learning" (Fragaszy, 2004, p. xiii).

across history, that are purposely set in order to contextualize and frame the understanding of tribal heritage which necessitates a historical understanding of how it was built and shaped. Such references begin from the first tribal migrations from the mid-third century onwards as well as what became apparent as an Arab ethnic tribal organization leading to Muhammad's emergence in the 7th century. The research, therefore, relies on historical contextualization to make political arguments regarding the tribal system.

The examination will refer to Arab tribal heritage, customs and ways of life from various historical accounts and observations. It will also include analysis of the emergence of Islam since this played a fundamental role in tribal expansion, providing the means for the development of a complex governing system through kingdoms and caliphates. This period represented a new way of sociopolitical organization for the tribes. The accumulated evidence, themes, descriptions and commonalities will finally usher the research into the 20th century. The tribal and political developments of this period will help guide the study into the current sociopolitical setup of Iraq and show that the accumulated pieces of evidence of the tribal system is relevant in contemporary Iraqi politics.

Research has repeatedly proved that foreign intervention has a profound influence on why Iraq has struggled to build a sustainable governance model and improve its political legitimacy; hence, the research will not dwell on these consequences. Nonetheless, references to the period of colonial intervention will be included. Also, while various group identities and allegiances will be examined such as familial or sectarian groups, this research recognizes that ethnic groups such as the Kurds or Jews are also an essential part of the region's shared history. However, the research does not include an in-depth examination of

such ethnic groups, as the main focus lies on 'Arab' ethnic identity and its associated sub-characteristics.

1.7.1 FIELDWORK

Since the research focuses on the historicity of political tribal culture by referring to cultural encounters, I focused the interviews on participants which include 27 Iraqis online during the fourth year of my studies, as previously mentioned interviews were conducted online due to ethical considerations including security risk assessment and COVID 19 measures that prohibited me from traveling to Iraq. In addition, 7 Lebanese, Syrians and Omanis were interviewed in person in Lebanon during my second year. This helped to readdress my earlier thesis drafts to solidify the thematic analysis of the data as the themes exhibited continuity throughout the research. Since the research aims to utilize heritage and culture as a framework for the interviews, the day-to-day encounters of the participants helped to reveal, support, and prove many of the theories and claims made in the research. Tying in the primary and secondary data will assist in substantiating the research argument by providing evidence that explains the linkages between the three agencies, as well as the origins of how the tribal value structure is shaped and in return how these values can shape political outcomes.

Participants who were contacted, irrespective of whether their input was included or not, helped in my personal analysis, especially with counterarguments which nuanced my ability to discern between opinion and accurate analysis, as is often difficult. However, driving the

question and conversation towards the topic the tribal system and its links with the central government helped to clarify the research's central focus on notions such as authority, and the legitimacy of both formal and informal systems. I reached out to the participants by email first, participants' contact information was communicated to me through my social and professional networks who put in in contact with participants who have knowledge about the subject. Accordingly, one contact would lead to the other in a snowball effect. Since I have directed the research towards a historical, political and cultural analysis, the examination requires interpretative methods alongside analyzing data collected through the interviews. However, travelling to the region with the research framework in mind allowed me to absorb the political developments in a more constructive and supportive way by applying the hypothesis linked to the tribal system I also noticed that the Iraqi government's interaction with community cleavages did reflect the argument of this research, and that political leaders often exerted their power through a traditional and customary mode of influence.

Furthermore, empirical data was collected through several interviews with activists, Iraqi members of tribes, subject specialists such as social scientists, artists, and journalists in Iraq and Lebanon through interview questions and discussions. For the online interviews, many of the 26 of the Iraqi participants who were interviewed in 2021 online expressed their strong desires to remain anonymous for safety reasons. I attempted to ask the reasons behind why they chose to remain anonymous, they explained that they were reluctant to share due to the tumultuous, political situation and insecure political environment of Iraq at the moment, the general apprehensions included repercussions of political groups, tribal leaders or government representatives and institutions knowing their opinions or their general reflections towards the political situation in Iraq through this research. Others did not want

Iraqis from their communities to know their opinions. Hence, participants' general concern evolved around Iraqis expressing their opinions about sensitive topics such as inter-tribal dynamics and how politics is exercised across Iraq on formal and informal levels. Although the participants were comfortable with speaking to me through online voice or video call communication services such as Zoom or Skype, they trusted that I would respect their privacy including their wish to keep their names anonymized. While other participants felt reluctant to even participate through a phone call, in these circumstances I asked for written answers of the questionnaire. For that reason, even their names or occupations were not mentioned, while a few others provided an alias or a pseudonym to use. One of the main reasons for their anonymity is their security, as many are afraid of repercussions from being included in a published material of a western institution or gather in meetings where their names can be disclosed, which could possibly put them at risk. Moreover, during the interviews some participants were unwilling to even provide their names for the same reason.

Regarding the in-person interviews, after I had received the ethical approval for my fieldwork in Lebanon, I travelled to collect data and conducted interviews of the neighboring countries and it is also my home country where professional links had been previously established. Since I am familiar with its sociopolitical dynamics and semiotics, through the answers and discussions provided I was able to recognize people's convictions given the political climate and the different variables of a sect, their personal histories, and local political affiliations. One of the biggest limitations I faced was my direct access to Iraq, which limited my direct contact with members of Iraqi tribes as the events of 2019 into 2022 only escalated further with COVID 19 restriction measures. However, to support the in person and online

interviews, I also layered the analysis with the reference of secondary sources of many travelers, scholars, anthropologists, and activists who have written of their experiences in Mesopotamia and also provided a comprehensive and different view on the subject as opposed to the evidence and experiences uncovered in the 21st century. The objective of this research does not center on analyzing the current tribal affairs of traditional tribes but involves the interpretation of tribal ways of social organization, heritage, and values to trace and decode where possible signs of this system may be extended towards political dynamics of governmental apparatuses. This will be performed by analyzing the way in which tribes have interacted with the three agents through formal and informal political, religious, and social structures.

The more I researched my topic, the more I believed that the essence of my argument entailed an examination which was more focused on my interpretation of political culture rather than the inter-dynamics of specific tribes. Examining specific tribes and their complete history could have highlighted the political culture that is a response to the sociopolitical makeup of the region, yet this also failed to answer how the tribal system may have links to government or religious authorities. The further I delved into my topic, the deeper the argument became. It was no longer about the political position of the tribes across time, but rather presented an outlook of how tribal authority may intersect part with Iraq's central government. This explained, for instance, that even if a member of parliament does not originate from a tribe, the individual appears to express similar tribal ways through *asabiyah*. Traditional tribal membership in Iraq is important for an individual as it affects a member's social status as will be discussed in the interview chapter. Affiliation to a governing authority therefore, whether formal or informal, includes its responsibilities of provision, security, the

population's inclusion in the larger political space, the government's systematic performance in managing public affairs and the organization of the polity such as functional specificity, and the greater inclusion of organizations in the country (Pye & Verba, 1965). Hence, the reference to history plays a fundamental role in proving the research's argument as a basis to help explain how both formal and informal political systems can co-exist.

The interview chapter will include the generated themes and the thematic analysis explained above. This chapter includes the research contribution as it consists of the primary data, and it will help answer the research question as it will weave in the themes into the following chapters as a foundation to the hypothesis. The themes that have resulted are the following: deliberations on identity, the limited role of state law with a sub topic of customary law, tribal authority and governance, interdependence of tribes and government, common conflict Issues, on independence of tribes, links to Islam with a sub topic of paradox of sectarian differences, conflict resolution, values with a sub-topic of preservation of lineage, cultural and artistic expressions, with a sub topic of expressions of bonding.

I was able to contact participants by email and telephone to make appointments for the interviews. In some other cases where participants wanted to remain anonymous, I sent them an email with the questionnaire with open questions and they wrote back their answers at length. I provided the participants with a cover letter containing the background and aims of my research, including my own personal details as a researcher. I conducted interviews with Iraqi activists, member of tribes, and artists as well as Syrian and Omani members of tribes who were in Lebanon. I provided them with a series of questions to gain their views on the nuances of Arab tribal identity and the importance of tribal values and its connection with religion and politics. Based on the participants' reflections and arguments, this provided the

research with a rich perspective on how such links may appear in political dynamics of the country from a more intangible cultural perspective to an institutionalized process and structure perspective. It is critical to emphasize that understanding the facts and data should not be viewed as objective ends in themselves, but rather as a way of coming to terms with the social meanings attributed by social actors when they interact with others (Emerson, 1981).

Before the interviews, I asked if the participants agreed to have the interview recorded and I transcribed the results as I went along, of which none of the participants agreed to avoid self-incrimination or response from any political group that may find offence in their answers, while others were simply uncomfortable with having their voices recorded. I acknowledged my responsibility to protect the identity of the participants who wished to remain anonymous, and that, only if written consent were granted, I would mention their names in my research. While they continued to express all their opinions and ideas throughout verbal discussions or written exchanges, one participant did mention that he would rather not have the recorded dialogue circulating in his Shiite community, which is represented the politically active Popular Mobilization Forces and that he would prefer to avoid any criticism or alienation.

My familiarity with social semiotics helped in understanding the points that were intended to be shared clearly by the participants in order for their opinions to be heard, while at certain moments they appeared to jokingly refer to oxymorons and ambiguity related to the political dynamics of the Arab world. Since I have lived in the region, such sentiments are not surprising; the anonymities and negative attitudes towards governments and non-state actors have developed into a culture where expressions about the absurdity of the political, social and economic positions of the region are colloquially highlighted. Thus, being aware of such

nuances, I could differentiate between a statement, a claim, and an argument. However, this indirectly highlights a separate issue which is the lack of satisfaction among the participants towards their governments or political institutions in the country.

The interviews were conducted individually, and participants did not receive any kind of compensation or money for providing the information. The fieldwork notes were first transcribed in English, and I was able to translate the discussions conducted in Arabic since this is my native language. Data analysis, storage and collection guidelines alongside the interactions with the research participants were also observed in line with the University's ethics policy in order to ensure the safeguarding of the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

During my fieldwork across the years, I kept a diary to register the reflexivity of the research and findings. After the interviews, I made further notes in addition to my observations and analysis, such as on location, dates and the background of the participants. Bourdieu (1992) presented an idea of reflexivity which defines the researcher's ability to understand and react to the subject being addressed. This may also lead me to conclusions in my research to be completely different to another researcher. Hence, Bourdieu addressed different types of biases that may take place when conducting research interviews, some stages of the research may be undermined because of a language barrier, reflexivity could be present for example if I would overlook a specific point that may be important to the participant but they could not address it clearly due to language difficulties during the interview or in my case, due to fears over expressing their opinions in a politically tense period. By using interviews as a method for primary data collection, reflexivity can happen during the drafting of questions and can also take place in the process of data analysis to a generated theme. Lastly, I was

careful in what was taken into consideration as a meaningful and relevant interview question given my own presupposed notions of authority, values and political narratives.

This accumulation of data enriched the original framework of the research (which is built on secondary data) with a perspective on social reality. During the interview process, issues such as the reflexivity of the participant and my background as an interviewer or researcher were considered. Such sets of data play a significant role in the discourse analysis not only for considering the language used as a means of communication but also the larger systems of thought which exist within the specific context and history of the research that precedes any form of communication (Foucault, 1982).

Moreover, avoiding any relational transgressions is indispensable; quoting one participant and not another can lead to biased research, such as including input provided by an interview that coincides with the research's argument rather than one that challenges the argument. However, the researcher also ought to keep in mind that inclusion is always a choice made to build towards their argument. This is particularly true if the interview was conducted with an individual who expressed an explicit political agenda or, alternatively, a social actor who intentionally articulates their political stands. This ethical issue may expose power and privilege in the interaction. Thus, as the researcher, I avoided any references or comments which entailed political and social implications based on my judgement. Invading the privacy of any active participant is considered harmful and immoral, as it may place them in future harm by denying them the protection that privacy dispenses (Kelman, 1982). Therefore, researchers are responsible for preserving the data and information as well as the confidentiality of all subjects involved.

Applying theory during fieldwork is also essential. For instance, Symbolic Interaction theory aims at interpreting the world through human interaction, utilizing the connotation of symbols by which human beings interpret their world and the actors who interact with them. Moreover, the employment of Grounded theory helps to translate and discover new understandings of human behaviour that are generated through symbols. It is crucial to gain knowledge about socially shared meanings which formulate social behaviours and the social reality of the participants studied (Glaser, Strauss, 1967). When dealing with social semiotics, the analysis of structures of text, linguistics, or communicative approaches also offers a detailed view of the other side of the relationship (Van Dijk, 1993). Therefore, symbolic mentions in Arabic dialects may provide meanings which are only understood by those who are local or culturally familiar with them. Participants may not withhold from speaking up on subjects involving political angst, especially in relation to politicians or social actors. With that said, with my personal background and origins in mind I ensured that personal relations and attitudes did not misconstrue any analysis of the fieldwork.

Aside from the interviewed who were interviewed online my video call, online voice call and email exchange, in regards to the in-person interviews since I am most familiar with the political situation in Lebanon, I made sure that there was no potential risk associated with meeting the participants at any location. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the participants to express themselves further and discuss their analysis and opinions on the themes presented. The questions that were asked included a general inquiry into how their identity has been formulated and how social and political institutions, as well as ideas, affect the formation of this identity. I also questioned the geographical affiliations of Arabs by asking whether the participants believed that they had a sense of belonging towards a specific

area that transcends the establishment of Arab nation-states today after the region's independence in the 20th century. This question aims to examine to what extent identity today has social, communal or religious roots in ancient ideas.

Another question probed how Arab communities regarded their political institutions in the face of the changing dynamics of ideologies, sectarian identities and structural changes over time. This question was intended to help reveal how social groups and communities view the state, including how much they recognize the sovereignty of its political institutions. This is particularly significant as it discloses the participant's characterization of aspects related to the sociopolitical, traditional and change of values in their country which based on the interviews showed signs of linkages between the tribal system and the central government. These discussions evolved into a debate on sectarian identity, the history of Islam in Iraq, authority, common tribal conflict dynamics, women's limited role in various social and political domains, and the perpetuating political allegiances of external countries.

The final concern with the fieldwork was the number of females I was able to interview, as their positions limited them with the freedom of expressing their views. Since males represent the majority of the decision-making positions in tribal and political fields it was slightly more challenging to maintain parity amongst the interviewees. The domain in which I was able to find females was, especially, in the area of social sciences in academia or some women who are members of tribes amongst the Iraqi diasporas. However, it was significantly less so in government, tribal groups in Iraq, and religious institutions since women were unwilling to take part in such interview discussions.

1.8 THEORETICAL APPROACH

The data will be organized by using various theoretical approaches to help answer the research question, beginning with the Interpretive approach, which is chosen to understand how social groups derive value and meaning from their actions. This analysis will also refer to Durkheim's Functionalist Theory (1997) as a way to characterize the various functioning roles of tribal members within the family or tribe, state, country, religion and economy. By analyzing these theoretical elements, the traits and characteristics of tribes it will be help in laying the foundation for this research to then move forward with examining how this outcome may create links with religious and government systems. The use of Grounded Theory will create a systematic approach to process the data linked with the respective agencies. This approach will help to identify the different allegiances and loyalties found in the social organization of Iraqi groups, beginning from the events of traditional tribes in history and extending down to the current politics of sectarian identities. Thirdly, George Herbert Mead's Theory of Symbolic Interactionism (1980) will be applied throughout the entire research project as an attempt to comprehend what the symbols tribes and clans apply and represent and how they may have retained the meanings of such heritage throughout history. Consequently, this will determine the apparent social culture and traditions originating from Mesopotamia and how it interacts with the three agents of Islam, the central government and *asabiayh* which this research will assume are the main social and political drivers.

This thesis argues that there is an aspect of Arab Iraqi identity which is rooted in the tribal history of the region, and which may intersect with the official government system through direct political engagement and intervention, or through an intangible influence across a

value-based and heritage understanding. To this end, the research approach comprises several accounts and narratives found in the history of tribes and which will be tested under various theories to further the understanding of the earliest form of social groups in Iraq, namely are the tribes. As Michel Foucault writes (1982, p. 24):

"there must be a level (as deep as it is necessary to imagine it) at which the *oeuvre* emerges, in all its fragments, even the smallest, most inessential ones, as the expression of the thought, the experience, the imagination, or the unconscious of the author or, indeed, the historical determinations that operated upon him."

The 'authors' in this case are the tribes as the creators of their history, who played a part in weaving the narratives while losing part of their identity by the loss of their total traditional modes of social organization today. However, tribes have also managed to outlive that previous identity through their value systems which ultimately shape part of their political actions. Therefore, the research will apply the interpretive theory from chapter 3 onwards to distinguish between factual language and values. This is useful in questioning what tribal values are founded on while using the relevant philosophical approaches to address and define the values of one of the leading agents that will be examined, namely *asabiyah,* which is the corporate spirit that bonds a group together. The use of an interpretive approach is additionally beneficial in providing structure to meaning, such as the meaning of culture, customs, language, predisposed tendencies, and patterns in behaviours. Due to these aspects external intentions arise in an *ad hoc* manner in relation to internal actions. "The analysis of it to be, therefore, not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is an explication I am after, construing social expression [which is] on their surface enigmatical" (Geertz, 2008, p. 3). This approach will also be linked with Emile

Durkheim's Functionalist theory to interpret how members of a collective group operate and identify depending on their various functions. For instance, it will be investigated what adaptive measures are taken by members to maintain order or stability in their social group, religious institution or even at the level of state power. This denotes a crucial theory for this research as it will enable a broader scope for understanding how the various functioning roles of traditional tribesmen in Mesopotamia then Iraq who have continued to maintain relations with formalized institutions. In current day Iraq, this link becomes particularly complex given the presence of sectarian political groups, a democratic constitution, ideological influences, and territorial demarcations which may not reflect the existing social and tribal habitation.

The external mechanisms are employed through the three agencies that will be tested throughout the research, namely Islam, the central government and *asabiyah*. However, there must also be a conducive environment to act as an enabler for the agencies to actualize their intentions, such as an institution or geopolitical reality veered towards shaping or restricting the results of the agencies involved. This approach is highly beneficial as it will help the research create structural links between concepts of official authority and legitimacy in relation to non-state authority which will be considered through the Iraqi tribal system.

Moreover, social phenomena can be regarded an epistemological process, such as transcendental realism, which is defined once meaning and action are shaped into a reality. For instance, the notion of *asabiyah* becomes a human activity once its language and context are defined. However, such a process relies on conditions or mechanisms which affect *asabiyah* as there are many changing intentions of tribal or group members. For example, the structure of the social phenomenon may necessitate an agent for its activation, or it might

remain inanimate. Accordingly, they will transform or reproduce the structure into outer expressions. Hence the political culture of tribes exists as a phenomenon, and this phenomenon or effect can only emerge into action if the conditions of the agencies are adequately understood. For this reason, examining historical narratives offers a significant analysis for the research.

It is crucial to state that, as long as agency or agencies are reliable, patterns will continue to appear and take place. In this research, it will be argued that the agencies of *asabiyah,* religion and the state are strong and durable and have consequently subsisted through cyclical patterns of behaviour and political outcomes used by collective groups, regardless of the geo-historical and institutional changes surrounding them.

The second theory applicable is the Grounded Theory approach. It is relevant in this context as it does not aim to search for a certain reality that reflects one specific perspective, but to conceptualize the results and actions taken by social actors in a particular setting. The Grounded Theory approach can be described as a process of data collection which is inductive in nature (Mills et al. 2006). It allows a researcher to interpret the meanings behind social interaction and examine the interrelationship between the meaning itself, which is purely noumenal, and the perception of the subjects and their acts, which are phenomenal. Therefore, it encompasses a systematic approach which begins from a goal and extends to formulating a hypothesis based on a conceptual idea that will require its verification through comparing concepts of data on various levels of abstraction (Glaser, Strauss, 1967). It necessarily entails the notion of producing new explanations for the phenomenon and the data that are being investigated inductively. This theory will be further applied in chapters 5, 6 and 7. For instance, the research will contain references to literature to examine how social

roles maintained a degree of authority during the emergence of Islam, on the one hand, and the development of the Iraqi state and its institutions, on the other hand.

Moreover, Glaser (2007) argues that the concept of Constructivist Grounded Theory emphasizes that a subjective interrelationship exists between the researcher and the data that is being researched and that implies a set of research values. The argument positions itself as a representative of 'real' reality, which the literature referred to in this thesis will support the understanding to tribal identity and its links with other identities. Since relativist pragmatists argue that theories are embedded in history, this argument cannot be completely free from bias (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this reason, references to historical narratives have been considered not only for the interpretation of political events but also to accumulate data from various historians and sociologists and so ensure the reliability of the hypothesis. Furthermore, the interviews that have been included intend to highlight the facets of political culture rather than a political opinion.

The third theory that will be applied is George Herbert Mead's theory of Symbolic Interactionism (1934), which states that humans act according to the meaning of everyday interactions, such as language and thought. Language in this framework is the source meaning, which helps generate the meaning of a person's intentions. After being negotiated through symbolic interactionism, this meaning develops a discourse of communication. The interpretation of the discourse then constructs each individual's own set of meanings. However, according to Mead, this can be modified alongside its interpretation through thought. Through social interaction, communicators become aware of one another's behaviour and often approach their responses according to the other's expected behaviour. This is defined as role-taking, which, according to Mead, involves the shaping of oneself as

one is seen by others. The other is most recognized as the social group or organized community, which in return consolidates the self. Through their environment, humans can construct a definition of the situation, as Thomas (1978) deliberates. One defines a position based on its symbolic representation of oneself; this is where the response is formulated instead of providing an objective presentation of the situation. It additionally allows a better understanding of how humans behave in certain circumstances.

Symbolic interactionism provides a guiding scheme to gather data about the meaning of specific types of behaviour and their surrounding conditions. Similarly, to Clifford Geertz's anthropological theory of 'Thick Description' (2008), raw observational data by an ethnographer's work is shown not to be enough for cultural analysis; what is required is a practice of interpreting and tracing meaning. This research will achieve this by examining the customs of tribes in Mesopotamia with respect to not only how they are practiced, but also how they initially emerged to become an intrinsic value for tribes' nomadic survival in the deserts. To view this from an alternate outlook, according to Jurgen Habermas (1991), the political character of culture stands in a dialectical relationship to the socio-cultural and political system.

Other important theories that will be applied include Emile Durkheim's Functionalist approach (1997) to comprehend how tribes as social groups play a role through the three agents through their possible changing social roles across time. Its reference will classify the level of political impact and implications that the tribes impose on the socio-political state of Iraq. By applying the Functionalist approach and Symbolic Interactionist theory simultaneously, both will reveal the symbols, language, behaviours, and methods by which tribes can consolidate and exercise their authority and political power. For example, it will

highlight the importance of the Arabic language, which enabled Islam to spread across the Middle East and beyond, and in return reinforced the Arabs' identification as defenders of the Islamic faith. Hence, these theories will help clarify how the tribes fused political power with Islam in order to create formal structures.

Furthermore, the symbolic expression of a tribal social group and its respective boundaries carries a degree of significance depending on the geo-social boundaries of the social group, in which the negative external impact of the group will ultimately distort or debilitate group identity (Burke 2009). This will be analyzed in chapters 5 and 6 with reference how the Arab region's official territorial demarcations introduced in the 20th century, may have implicated tribal sociological realities.

This aspect in turn raises the concept of rejection: what responses are associated with having a collective identity threatened? Rejection is often translated into the following terms: cultural identities often create an opposition, leading to forms of resistance; cultural purification may appear; lastly, cultural segregation which in the case of the Middle Eastern countries may see the acceptance of Western advancements (ideological or technological) but not Western values. It is the threat of losing traditional identities followed by violence that triggers what Freud described as an obsession of slight differences (Burke 2009). Therefore, to promote adaptation as an aim of harmonizing newly integrated elements, Burke analyses it as a process of de-contextualization and re-contextualization. The purpose of highlighting the idea of responses among these collective groups in Iraq is to discern how the tribal system's authority may play a role or may influence the authority of the central government.

Burke (2009) states that cultural hybridization takes shape when the receiving culture assimilates through accommodation and acculturation. On the other hand, notions such as accommodation and appropriation highlight the human influence by creatively rendering a less mechanical term. Burke also describes the term 'interference' using the analogy of people shifting from one language to another depending on the situation. For this reason, bilingual individuals are incapable of dissociating between their two languages which, when practised often, influence and debase one another, leading to the conclusion that pluralism can promote the process of hybridization. In contrast, however, depending on the circumstance, hybridization can encourage pluralism as well. Specifically, the positive response to appropriate imports creates a balance between cultural disharmony and cultural harmony. This raises the question: if tribal networks are considered as hybrid or plural forms of organization through clans, federations, or sectarian divisions, can there be a degree of engagement from these groups to assimilate the different forms of formal and informal authorities as a form of hybridization? Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will delve into examining how the ways and values of tribes may influence this social and political setting.

1.9 STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

This research will be organized into the following chapters.

Chapter 1, which is the current chapter, presents an overview and background of the topic, the research question and hypothesis, the rationale of the study and the methodological approach including the fieldwork background and theories that will be applied and the research structure. It also provides an overview of the main themes that will be investigated.

The second chapter, named 'The Premises of Tribal Identity', includes a literature analysis about identity, Arab political thought and reflections on Orientalism which will help frame the thesis in context of the hypothesis and research question. This will enable the characterization of factors involved in the formation of this identity. This will be followed by a description will include the environmental, geographical, and organizational aspect to tribal heritage. This chapter is important as it will help contextualize the understanding what factors have contributed to shaping tribal values and subsequently their system of authority while taking into consideration orientalist arguments and critiques.

The third chapter, named 'Three Agents', includes ethnographic research through extensive historical academic materials in both the English and Arabic languages to examine the three agents. The exploration of these concepts will attempt to explore the correlation between the three elements as the most influential factors in the region's politics. This section will contain a background of the tribes of Mesopotamia, who share an extended history across what is today Iraq and Syria. The tribal members described and referred to will mainly include male individuals, since the events and periods raised throughout the research have taken place in patriarchal societies where male leadership is standard. Such attitudes affect the position and role of women which has long been secondary within Iraqi and other Arab societies, inevitably spilling over into modern times to shape formal structures such as the judicial system. This stage of the study aims to clarify the context of the sociological construct of the area.

Accordingly, I have selected the country of Iraq for this research since it exhibits vast historical significance in Arab history, in which concentrated ethnic Arabs who had settled on the fertile lands enabled a consistent agricultural flow, moving them away from the

nomadic life of raiding and relocating. Over time, they also developed social and political institutions, as was seen when Damascus and Baghdad became the centres of the Islamic empire at various points in history; this included the Umayyads based in Damascus, and the Abbasids based in Baghdad. From the year 661 AD, Damascus prospered as the scientific, economic, and commercial centre of the Arab world. Baghdad also experienced the Islamic Golden Age from 750 - 1258 AD and contributed to areas including science, mathematics, and arts. Therefore, the examination of the region's social actors historically will lead to valuable insights into the local dynamics and highlight the qualities and characteristics necessary for constructing the framework of the research.

Regarding the three agents, an extensive discussion of academic literature around the contextual definition of *asabiyah* will be provided and some of the factors that shaped the creed. This will include the actors' cultures, social ethics, physiology, speech as well as the study of kinship bonds which are an expression of group solidarities. *Asbiyah* is important since it provides a study of a more intangible aspect that holds a group of people together through its practiced values yet is not institutionalized and therefore requires its consistent practice and application to ensure its longevity and is often not considered when studying politics since it is not an 'apparent' driver on a formal level. Secondly, the role of religion will be regarded as a politically unifying factor for the Arabs in which tribes have directly engaged with it through early tribal involvement during the politics of succession or directly through religious authorities or sectarian party-based politics. Finally, the role of the central government and how the tribal system forges relations with it will be examined, those will include direct engagement with the respective acting central government or through indirect often unspoken value-based ways such as election of a state representative who emerges from

a specific tribe and is loyal to his or her tribe, this notion will be further backed the interviews in the following chapter.

The fourth chapter, named 'The Transitional Stage into Iraq', will turn to Iraq during the 20th century. It will include contextualization of the transition of Mesopotamia into the modern state of Iraq. This will involve study of the period between the end of the Ottoman rule which was followed by the British occupation and later the start of the Baathist period from 1968 to 2003. It will also examine the changing social landscape such as social hierarchy and the intersection of religion and social status to highlight the cultural nuances of the tribal system's direct and indirect engagement.

The Baathist timeframe has been chosen since it is preferable to avoid all-inclusive generalizations and descriptions, especially given that the political, economic, security and social developments have exacerbated during the last two decades. In this way, the research will not include excessive mention of themes and events that relate to regional geopolitics in Iran through to 2022. Although politics in Iraq has endured continuous conflicts, structural changes have been explicitly witnessed during the spread of the Baathist ideology from 1968 onwards. The decision to focus on events from the Baathist period from 1968 to 2003 is explained by the military and ideological roles which were played during a significant period in Iraq's contemporary history, and through how the tribal system has directly and indirectly engaged in politics. Hence, it will elucidate the ruptures, continuities and discontinuities associated with political culture and history, using too the research theories to shape a non-linear approach for this topic of discursive elements.

The fifth chapter, named 'Interview Themes' will include the section consisting of the thematic analysis of the conducted interviews with 27 Iraqi participants (total interviews are 34 which include non-Iraqis). This contribution to the research will emphasize accounts from the participants on how tribal authority as an informal structure interacts with the official government and religion or religious institutions and vice versa. It will also include themes that will explain manifestations of *asabiyah* through cultural expressions and art.

The sixth chapter, named 'The Tribal System Intersects', will reapply the three agents examined and analyzed in chapter 3. In this phase, the three agents will have developed into highly politically interdependent functions in relation to today's complex social, political, territorial, and ideological developments. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the areas in which tribal values and ways are evident and hence may intersect with the political developments of contemporary politics. This examination of the Baathist ideology, the role of the military, the reference of sect and Islamic schools of thought, civil and tribal law and the elements of the Iraqi constitution, as a way to test the hypothesis of the research. The Baathist period is chosen as a focus case as it plays an important role in modern Iraqi political history.

The seventh chapter is entitled 'Cultural Memory Revisited'. It seeks to shape and define the various paradigms of culture founded in various references of the past. It will begin by revisiting the notion of culture. Since tribal culture is a permeating term of the overall study, the chapter will revisit the concept of culture and its critiques, orientations of Arab political thought within this context. It will also present an analysis of the association with the values of collective groups and individuals which the research has examined thus far. This will also include a section on poetry as an expression of this culture which often expresses notions of

asabiyah and tribal values of collective bonding will also link to the discussion on culture and art from the interviews with participants. This purpose of this chapter is essential as it accentuates the characterizations of tribal communities after the research has provided an in-depth examination of founded structural and group understandings what constitutes of tribal heritage. It addresses questions of how legitimate collective solidarities on a social level can co-exist with a legitimate and official state system. The connection between these two political systems and cultures appears to be a crucial factor influencing national development (Pye & Verba, 1965). This inherently provides answers to the research question which questions if tribal heritage plays a role in politics today.

Chapter eight contains the 'Conclusion', which will feature the final remarks on the research findings and highlight the main themes discussed. It covers areas including what the themes researched mean for Iraq today and what its future outlook looks like today. Finally, it will re-visit the research question on how tribal heritage may link to Iraq's politics and political outcomes.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PREMISES OF TRIBAL IDENTITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present a contextualization of the research subject as well as an overview and introduction of the main phenomena of the research, beginning with what is meant by identity with respect to tribes. One of the main intentions of this research project as a whole is to address the various layers and depths of identity associated with tribes. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to explain how the setting in which Arab Bedouins lived led to the formation of the three agents, namely *asabiyah*, religion and the central government. There is a stark difference between individual identity and collective identity associated with the ancient Bedouins' social role, with various layers of identity being expressed through allegiances and loyalties. Accordingly, the identity of Arab tribes has been fostered across history through *asabiyah*, as it will be examined further below. For this reason, it is necessary to provide a description and contextualization of the themes which will lay the groundwork to understanding what elements are associated with the shaping of tribal identity on multiple levels. These include understanding of identity, reflections on Orientalism, Arab political thought, and the influence of territory and geography. To understand how this intertwines with the authority of the tribes it will cover religion and religious authority as well.

This chapter will support the main hypothesis of this research by defining the potential leitmotifs and perimeters of what constitutes tribal identity as an authority of a particular social landscape. Such themes are also necessary in respect to the concept of social sovereignty as a form of authority which persists in the sociological landscape of Iraq today.

Therefore, the chapter will begin by tracing the phenomenon of the political dynamics of more traditional tribal communities. This phenomenon will be linked with the following chapters, which will discuss how tribal identity developed into more complex systems such as the caliphate, monarchic or democratic forms of representations.

2.2 EXPERIENCING IDENTITY FORMATION

Since tribal identity constitutes the overarching focus of the research, in order to understand the uniting factors which members instrumentalize to formulate their identity through group solidarity, the role of the individual's identity, as opposed to his or her collective identity, will be examined. One does not, as Amin Maalouf states in *On identity* (2000), 'just 'grow aware' of what he is; he becomes what he is. In other words, one does not merely 'grow aware' of their identity; one acquires it step by step. Surely that is to say that one is indeed influenced to a great extent by the surrounding community. Specific attributes of social groups are gradually acquired, such as ethnic nationalism, a culture of language, politicized religion or indigenous tribal allegiances. Identity nevertheless also encourages conformity, as it reduces social phenomena directly to the individual, 'who am I alone versus who am I in a group?'

Identity can be defined as a basis for social or political action in which the theorization of the action is described based on one's position in a social space (Brubaker, Cooper, 2000). This can also be understood as a collective phenomenon in which the similarities among members of a group are highlighted. Moreover, the profuse definitions of human nature only prove how ample and changeable human behaviour can be. For example, the tribal understanding of communal stability involves fulfilment of honor, if a member of one clan

is killed, it is the tribe's obligation to kill in retribution as a settlement, an example which will be discussed below. This can be understood with the help of Mead's definition of symbolic interaction, in which the self is a product of social interaction (Blumer, 1980). While this is true in respect to identity, Stryker and Serpe argue that identity theory is intended to recognize links between a multifaceted idea of the self and the wider social structure (Hogg et al, 1995). This notion also connects the behavioral outcomes which lead certain facets to have greater relevance for one's individual identity than others. This is applicable to the present research as it argues that Arab Iraqi identity has several levels such as the nation, family or sect, and the tribal level, which is supported through its value system.

Moreover, the post-colonial era has also imposed a particular influence on Iraq, in which colonial powers took on the shape of the collective 'self' and a collective 'other' based on inclusions and exclusions. This included both subtle and conspicuous influences on identity as well as challenges what is imposed or inherited. Once these various identities are shaped, they assume powerful political forces in the country such as political parties, organized social movements that carry out actions which have reshaped the institutional configuration of the modern Iraqi state.

Another element that is part of the foundation of tribal identity is ethnicity. This serves as an integral and exclusive part of a nation-state which is composed of one or multiple self-aware ethnic groups. From this viewpoint, a nation is defined as a group whose members share a common objective of cultural, religious or political dynamics, or a socially mobilized group of individuals, believing to be united by a similar set of characteristics (Barrington, 1997). Despite the existence of cleavages and fragmentations such as class or gender, which act as subdivisions of identity, the ethnic bond instils a sense of unity through shared beliefs

towards a single identity. This unity is consolidated in relative terms or through the process of 'self-categorization', where a group can categorize, name or classify itself in relation to other social groups (Burke & Stets, 2009). Moreover, social comparison allows individuals to position themselves as members of a structured society by contrasting themselves with other categories (Hogg et al, 2004). For instance, belonging to a specific territory constitutes an expression of a sense of solidarity which categorizes the group into an identity. However, one may argue that culture can also transcend beyond national boundaries and link its members together. This is witnessed by the various groups within the Arab diaspora for whom spatiality does not define their forms of identities, but cultural homogeneity also does.

In a similar way, as Raul Pertierra (2004) states, the E.U has changed itself into a superstate, yet in the process, it has taken in its previous national consciousnesses. Thus, during the observation of one's detachment from a group, a rational experience develops which Alain Badiou (2010) describes as 'Epoche'. This represents the suspension or disruption of any relationship to objectivity, where one can decide that objectivity is not present and thus reduce all existence to one's pure and personal perception of reality. Equally, conflicted identities in Iraq surfaced during the post-colonial period when the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 enforced unfamiliar territorial definitions, in which subnational identities such as tribes found themselves disconnected from their networks across borders. On an even larger scale, the Islamic *Umma* today spans across the Arab world as a regional community.

Another bonding element that can create a common identity religion. The religious stimulus and its relationship to political identity has had a profound influence on society, at times misrepresenting its role, such as in the case of Islam in politics. To apply this to the present research topic, ruling powers throughout history have often adjusted their political agendas

in line with their beliefs to justify their actions to the public. After years of being marginalized, Bedouins finally made their exit from the deserts of their origins to exercise dominion across the Arabian Peninsula. Instead of analyzing the essence of a religious doctrine in a specific time and place, it is more helpful look at how tribes have adopted Islam. For there is an ontological gap between thought and reality, where 'truth conditions' or what is being said does not necessarily reflect the physical reality (Johnston, 2013). In other words, instead of only scrutinizing the influence that religion has on people, why not consider the impact of people on religion?

It is fundamental to emphasize the dialectical nature of influence between society and religion, as is exemplified by the church's resistance towards change in the 16th century, where the scripture was challenged by secular ideals, the liberation of women, acceptance of premarital sex, out of wedlock births, and many more similar examples. Eventually, the church accommodated to the calls for change and adapted. The evolutionary track becomes more apparent as societies take part in this process. Individuals contribute to the evolution of their religions through the evolution of mental attitudes, while also differing in their approaches to dogmas and basic guidance. Hence, there is an interplay between the notion of political development and various unifying forces such as nationhood or a common religion and their symbols (Pye & Verba, 1965). For example, throughout the deployment of various religious figures in numerous places in Arab world, the presence of moderate influences and persuasion will at times manage to represent different groups who seek to redefine religion for their own benefits (Sen, 2007). However, to succeed in this persuasion, there is a reliance on the causal link between intergroup differentiation and the sense of confidence in the identification process. This can either increase or decrease a group's

favorability amongst other social groups as well as the ingroup bias (Brown, 2000). It is therefore in the power of group cohesion to allow for normative or cultural changes in society to come about.

Governments may often represent different structural and cultural shifts through revolutions, protests, or traditional allegiances that may take shape by social and political interaction, often, when distrust takes the final solidarities to survive are the most visceral ones (Maalouf, 2000). As this is in essence a reaction, a group of people alarmed by change tends to pursue sanctuary in the ideals and symbolic values associated with tradition and heritage, and such a sense of identity can increase a person's affinity with the warmth of the relations shared with others. Perhaps it also marks an attempt to merge the need to claim an identity and the need to become accepting of it.

Maalouf concludes that identity should be defined as the sum of all allegiances; this argument, in his opinion, must be accepted in order to formulate the one allegiance, which is the human community itself. In order to do so, one must unite the two elements. He further claims that each individual has two heritages: the 'vertical' one, which is inherited from ancestors, the religious community, and shared traditions; and the 'horizontal' one, which is conveyed by modern-day life. This schema raises the following question: is the vertical heritage more dominant with Arab tribes?

Emile Durkheim (1997) also discusses how collective consciousness is bound together around a shared culture leading to a sense of solidarity. 'Mechanical solidarity' in Durkheim's terminology becomes effective as different individuals feel a sense of solidarity with one another, based on shared values, beliefs and practices, in such a way that they together create

a society. Religion here often becomes a mechanism which reinforces group solidarity, as it will be examined below. Groups of human beings have become extremely interdependent through similarities within societies. For instance, the different organs within a biological entity have different functions, yet they normally depend on one another to ensure the survival and health of the body. This organic solidarity, as termed by Durkheim (1997), also applies to modern societies in which the reality of structural change influences normative assumptions. The moral consciousness of the collective thereby becomes inherently reliant on the interdependence of individuals, social groups, and institutions in which social facts are determined through experience.

As Aristotle states, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Vella, 2008). In regard to this research, characteristics and attributes such as sectarian identity, national identity, and familial or tribal roles arise from the social structure as a whole. This research attempts to establish a causal link between these various layers of identity through a common set of values which create a culture. This social and cultural exchange helps to predict what is likely to take place, even though, as Rex (1959) argues, the emerging patterns fail to provide any theory of change. This is performed by examining where power lies in the value system of tribes and by emphasizing the cultural elements that may continue to play a central role in politics.

There are numerous experiences of the interplay between the social and political orders which define the mode and viability of rule. Writer Ameen Rihani (1931) for example has argued that tribal societies have a system of balancing out power after a conflict has taken place by redistribution, a process in which the leader of a tribe plays a vital role. In the case of the Middle East, the rise of Muhammad's charismatic religious authority allowed a unified

region through Islam for the sake of a divine cause. The founding of the first Arab state shows the political power of religious ideas, such as Greek, Hindu, Roman, and Chinese ideas, all of which are associated with divinity. However, the Arabs' environment of harsh deserts and its ill-suitedness for agriculture may explain one reason as to why they were never conquered and why their social and political systems are structured in the way that they were. However, before delving deeper into the Arabian deserts, this discussion raises the need to define the framework of how political order is generally established to study how tribal political order is founded. This will help answer the research question as to how tribal heritage may create linkages that may influence politics.

2.3 REFLECTIONS ON ORIENTALISM

There are three distinct definitions of Orientalism. First, the term is rooted in art history, particularly in painting and the works of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century western artists, who sought to portray 'oriental' themes and motives in their art and literature. Artists in the past were referred to as Orientalists and their work was termed 'orientalism'. Second, orientalism was also coined as the study of countries, regions, language, and literature in the eastern world or as referred to 'the Orient'. This discipline is referred to as Oriental Studies and was founded by European states during the colonial conquest. By the 20th century, the definition of Orientalism was redefined by Edward Said, a Palestinian-American cultural critic in his book Orientalism (1978). He refers to orientalism as a specific discourse of knowledge shaped by interpretations, ideas, thoughts, military reports, and cultural attitudes of western imperialism as superior over the Middle East and North African Arab-Muslim countries beginning in the nineteenth century onwards. This discourse is still pervasive in

common understandings of 'oriental culture,' foreign policy strategies, and interventions directed toward Muslim countries in the Middle East, and, on a broader sense, cultural engagement with people. Said's ideas utilize a post-structuralist approach and were inspired by the works of French philosopher Michel Foucault. His later works in different fields such as anthropology, geography, social sciences, etc., sought to apply Orientalism to several contexts (Haldrup & Koefoed, 2009).

Said's Orientalism was coined to create awareness on the western imperialist stereotypes and attitudes formed towards Muslim societies. Said argues in his book "Orientalism" that the romanticized depictions of Islamic regions, namely the Middle East, and Western civilization have long functioned as implicit grounds for European and American imperial goals. In response, Said condemned the behavior of influential Arabs who aided the internalization process of assumptions created by US and British orientalists about Arabic and Arab culture. This is significant to consider when researching the topic of the Arab tribal system as social and political actors. As a result, he claims that Western study on Muslims has historically been incorrect and further distorts the reality of Muslims (Said, 1978).

Said's Orientalism is concerned with the Western construction of the Orient as the 'other'. The author examines key Western writings to explain how the concept of the East came to be formed. According to Said, this paradigm laid the groundwork for the West's political and cultural domination of the east. Said's argument on Orientalism is influenced by Foucault's ideas on the concept of discourse and the knowledge and power equation. Another conceptual framework that was utilized in Orientalism is the concept of Hegemony, which is drawn from Antonio Gramsci's philosophy. Using Hegemony, Said demonstrates how Orientalism was a system of representations that served to reinforce the West's control and

superiority over the East, rather than simply reflecting or describing it. Said, like Foucault, connects images, ideas, and texts to actual government and subjection methods used to exert power over the Arab world. One of the most important consequences of Said's work is that scholarly research concerning the Orient is highly political in the sense that it is an essential aspect of the imperialist mechanism of control and exploitation. The main significance of Said's Orientalism is that it demonstrates that, even during post-colonial era, the systems of thinking, talking, and representing that served as the foundation of colonial power relations continue to exist.

The War on Terror and colonialism discourses label Muslim women as 'Beautiful Souls' (Elshtain 1982) in need of rescue from the clutches of Muslim men, who are portrayed as 'Incorrigible Beasts' (Abu-Lughod, 2002). This paradigm of rescue, according to Abu-Lughod (2002), is highly problematic because when one attempts to save someone, one implies that one is saving her from something. Also, one is saving her to something. As such, Muslim women were portrayed as needing liberation to gain status and become as superior as western women. Male terrorists, on the other hand, are portrayed in highly stereotyped, monolithic ways. The dominant narrative of perceiving extremism as a 'conveyor belt' portrays Islam as a culturally ossified, mindless foe of liberal principles. This assumption suggest that individuals turn to terrorism as a result of their acceptance of an extreme religious ideology (Azeez, 2019). This narrative, however, obscures political agency, decision-making inside radical organizations, and the myriad and complex factors that can lead to an individual picking up guns against state authorities. This outlook also greatly contributes to greater surveillance and securitization within home areas (Kundnani, 2015).

A decision maker who regards Iraqis as savage, backward, and evil could influence and build a culture in which anything and everything is acceptable, regardless of international law (Abu Ghraib prison). Hence, this notion that all force is permissible, fosters a normalization of the use of disproportionate force, resulting in low accountability. As a result, it is critical to investigate the extent to which international law was able to shield Iraqis from the consequences of orientalist knowledge creation.

One would think that U.S. soldiers making choices in Iraq would be well-versed in the country's culture, ideals, and history. This, however, was not the case. Knowledge of Iraq was not required for the decision-makers of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Instead, from the start, the goal was one of orientalist imperialism. Joshua Muravchik of the American Enterprise Institute projected that the model suggested for Iraq would spread like a "Tsunami" (Muravchik, 2002). Bush later described the aim as "promoting freedom in a turbulent region," with the goal of "establishing a US-Middle-East free trade zone within a decade" (Bush, 2005). (Chen and Reynolds, 2003).

Through the use of orientalist discourse, the US was able to create immunity in international law for US forces in Iraq in the same way that they did in China. The distribution of information progressed from rhetoric employed by U.S. elites and in the Bush doctrine to justifying a major bombing campaign to enabling lawlessness that was formally established in Iraq through US-imposed orders. Orientalist knowledge permitted a reality in which US firms and personnel had rights superior to those they had at home, with complete impunity for any crime (Al-Ghadeer, 2013). Later knowledge gained on the Middle East and Iraq tacitly validated every decision made by the US occupation, with little or no regard for international law (Nouri, 2021).

Entering the second decade since the 11 September 2001 terror attack in New York, and a decade since the Arab uprisings of 2011, it is becoming increasingly evident that the terror of that day has been hijacked into a "casus belli" for endless privatized pre-emptive/preventative wars using sovereign-sponsored agents of terrorism (Al-Kassimi 2021). This is combined with modern sectarian geostrategic goals aimed at redrawing and re-engineering the Arab geography and demography, populating abstract colonial frontiers, and changing the region into a modern, sociable, and civil 'New Middle East' (Kumar 2012, p. 233). According to Kumar (2012), and Gopal and Lazarus (2006), the preemptive and preventive legal doctrines developed after 9/11 are more accurately described as redemptive measures because the legally sanctioned violence and domination effectively replaced. Debates on culture or race war discourses, or, more precisely, neo-Orientalism collaborating with racism, Islamophobia, and selective prejudice, have been at the heart of judicial developments impacting Arabs and Muslims (Al-Azmeh 2009; Kumar 2012; Al-Kassimi 2020). With liberal interventionists claiming that a new defensive imperialism is required and welcomed in the twenty-first century to transform premodern Arabs into modern Arabs, or bad Muslims into good Muslims, the coinage of a new terrorist has been 'part and parcel of an incendiary discourse that is designed for the sole purpose of relegating terror to an [Arab] alien domain as the authors explain. This is due to the premodern Arab areas that are essentialized as lawless in battle and do not provide a culture reminiscent of Latin-European epistemology, the new barbarian is formed utilizing powerful reason of symbolic discourses. This is particularly significant in this research since the tribal system is not considered 'lawless' rather, the research attempts to prove that the system has a system of customary law and approaches to self-governance. Therefore, these reductionist representations situate

Arab space in a non-discursive degenerative temporal epoch inhabited by objects of sovereignty deficient in civil personality and democracy, and thus prone to producing irrational objects fanatically driven by an 'evil sharia' seeking to violently target Western civilization (Mamdani 2004; Goodwin 2006; Al-Azmeh 2009; Kumar 2012; Kerboua 2016; Ventura 2016).

Therefore, Arabs can be seen as victims of symbolic power in the way race war discourses arrogate terrorism as an inherent cultural attribute of Arabs, prompting Altwaiji to declare that this is 'imperial stereotyping' and racism of the highest order (Altwaiji 2014, p. 314).

In part, scholars involved in the recent resurgence acknowledge that while Orientalism has operated in diverse historical paradigms, it has consistently emphasized and constructed threatening cultural(ist) assumptions made by the West of the Orient (Beckett 2003; Attar 2007; Al-Azmeh 2009; Altwaiji 2014; Kerboua 2016; Ventura 2016). As a result, similarly imperialism and colonialism are not historical policies because they both Orientalize the colonialized subject and, in the process, transform cultural differences into legal differences, Orientalism has produced and continues to produce distorted images of Arabs as resistant to western modernity in the past and in the present (Anghie 2004; Mamdani 2004; Mahmood 2006; Samiei 2010; Altwaiji 2014; Kerboua 2016). Moreover, Samiei warns about an expanding academic trend that adheres to a non-anachronic legal-historical reading of Orientalism, claiming that it belonged to an era of history that is already in the past. Adopting an anachronic approach to reading as a way to deconstruct legal history, in tandem with being hermeneutically suspicious, emphasizes the inclusive exclusion code of jus gentium in that the technologies of racism and mechanisms of enmity informing sovereignty as a logic of secular juridical concept continue to animate international legal doctrines in the

present. These doctrines place value on the culture debate, thereby enacting a so-called modern or puritan process that legalizes the hiring of 'death squads who engage in acts of carnage', not only spreading a sentiment of fear and terror and causing mass displacement, but also contributing to an immoral process deliberated as necessary to assist the Arab world in attaining the temporal coordinates of Latin-European modernity (Mamdani 2004; Al-Kassimi 2020). This culture debate explicitly emphasizes the exclusion approach of jus gentium imagining the Arab world as a threat to the stability of international law, thereby deciding on imperial policies that can only be exercised on an entity constructed a priori outside international law, or as an object of sovereignty. In this situation, jus gentium is still being applied by sovereign figures who continue to perceive the Arab world as incapable of being a member within jus gentium unless it surrenders Arab philosophical theology that strives to balance reason and revelation or science and religion.

The fundamental difference between early Orientalist discourses and post-9/11 neo-Orientalist discourses is a sense of anxiety, fear, and hostility against anyone and everything involving Arabs in general and Muslims in particular. In the 21st century, neo-Orientalism is a body of knowledge generated and spread by a coalition of academics, political figures, and media pundits with special ties to the United States, Europe, Canada, Israel, and numerous Arab cities (such as Doha, Beirut, Baghdad, Cairo, Amman, and Riyadh). Neo-Orientalism of the twenty-first century differs from early Orientalism in that it is explicitly constituted within a culturalist Islamophobic paradigm that operates within a 'clash of civilizations' that has brought Arabia and the classical Orientalist discourses of differences, with terrorism being the most valued by prevalent term used to address and identify Arab-Muslims (Altwaiji 2014). As a result, a peculiar feature of neo-Orientalism is the hostile

manifestation of a social phenomenon known as Arabization and Islamism, which manifests itself in how Arabs and Muslims are portrayed within Western societies and how peoples inhabiting the Arab world are imagined as threatening universal civilization.

Wajahat et al. (2011), CAIR (2013), and Kerboua (2016) highlight the extensive funding and dissemination of Islamophobic propaganda by wealthy foundations, institutes, and think-tanks involved in power networks in Europe and the United States in producing imaginaries that reference liberal-secular discourses that conflate Arabs and Islam with illiberal and/or terrorist related activities.

According to Mohammed (2014) and Kerboua (2016, p. 24), neo-Oriental discursive components in Western societies are primarily inspired by an ontological anxiety that constructs an essentialist Arab-Muslim issue. A problem that seeks to highlight the illegitimacy of Muslim presence in European and North American (civil) societies, thus highlighting that neo-Orientalist discourses, necessitates the fabrication of a hegemonic view of reality identifying a subject as foreign, threatening, and/or fearsome for the ontological security of the West.

The resurgence of a neo-Orientalist mode of representation is most readily identifiable after 9/11 when we consider that the Arab and the Muslim became the new barbarian as Tuastad explains (2003) and with Orientalism of the 21st becoming a belligerent neo-orientalism (Said 2003). American and European intellectuals such as Pipes (2003), Harris (2007), and Caldwell (2010) argue that Arab and Muslim identity is threatening and irreconcilable with Latin-European civilization. This understanding of insecurity is also induced by recent civilizational debates concerning displaced Arabs and Muslims taking over Europe and

North America. The new barbarian thesis is central to a belligerent neo-Orientalist mode of representation which perceives Islam as cruel, also threatening not only the return to the Middle Ages, but also the destruction of what is regularly referred to as the democratic order in the Western world. Robert D. Kaplan adopted the barbarian thesis in an Atlantic Monthly article called the Coming of Anarchy (1994), in his renowned book *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post-Cold War* (2000), and after the Arab Spring of 2011.

2.4 CRITICISM OF SAID'S ORIENTALISM

Many Orientalists were committed advocates for Arab and Islamic political causes long before notions such as Third-Worldism and post-colonialism entered academia. Varisco (2017) argues that the politics of polemics needs to be superseded to move academic discussion of real cultures in the region beyond the binary blame dynamics. The notion of Oriental homogeneity will exist if prejudice serves political ends, however, to ensure that the understanding of the different perspectives of Orientalism in regard to this research, it is important to read beyond Orientalism as critics of this notion have done. George P. Landow, a professor of English and Art History at Brown University in the United States who finds Edward Said's scholarship to be insufficient. He blames Said for ignoring the non-Arab Asian countries, non-Western imperialism, and gender issues.

In addition to poor knowledge about the history of European and non-European imperialism, Landow argues that Said considers only the influence of the West on the East in colonialism. Critics cite Edward Said's background as placing him outside the issues he writes about in his book Orientalism. Said had an exceptionally privileged upbringing from a financial perspective financed by his father whom he described as 'overbearing and

uncommunicative'. This upbringing would place him in the system that forms much of the focus of his book, which depicts Orientalism as facilitator of British and French white man's burden in the Arab world. Moreover Bernard Lewis' depiction of Islam as an irrational herd ruled by passions, instincts, and unreflecting hatreds is meant to frighten his audience into submission, according to Said.

Lewis' mission is to inform conservative segments of the Jewish reading public that any political, historical, and scholarly account of Muslims must begin and end with the fact that Muslims are Muslims, argues Said. While Said argues, Lewis has striven to depict Islam as an anti-Semitic ideology, not only a religion.

Following World War I and the Ottoman Empire's fall, British colonial authorities captured the provinces of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul, just as the British-owned petroleum company's intentions to produce oil from the region came to fruition. Meanwhile, the newly established British film industry in London began producing newsreels and documentaries on a regular basis, displaying the first moving images of Iraq to be shown to large Western audiences. Until the 1958 revolution, these films were produced exclusively in collaboration with the British Royal Air Force and the Iraq Petroleum Company and claimed to provide the new experience of watching authentic sounds and visuals shot on location in Iraq. This cinematic authenticity gave the filmmakers depictions of Iraq tremendous weight, impacting popular opinion about the country, its people, and the existence of British interests there. These scripted narratives naturalized the concept of Iraq as a nation-state, and they repeatedly contrasted exaggerated portrayals of urban modernity, reinforced by military strength and oil revenues, with allusions to archaic customs of a vague Iraqi past. The author suggests that the essential narratives and images of the so-called Orient, first identified by Said (1979)

as profoundly ingrained in conventional Orientalist schools of thought, were being redeployed in the strong and unique medium of documentary film (Damluji, 2008).

"This is not an attempt to blame our own Orientalist discourse on the West, but rather a suggestion that the power relations that continue to define the West's relationship to the Middle East have a ripple effect that influences not just Western discourse but Arab discourse as well" (Al Khalidi, 2006).

According to media and culture studies academics, Hollywood's usual portrayals of Arabs and Muslims are used to explain the presence of American forces in the Middle East, American meddling in Middle Eastern policy, and U.S. support for Israel's interests (Alsultany, 2012). While the Middle East is portrayed as oppressive, male-dominated, inferior, and authoritarian, western hegemonic ideals are rarely, if ever, challenged.

The media frequently highlights catastrophic occurrences involving Muslims and Arabs while rarely promoting the accomplishments of Muslim or Arab students in the United States. Griffin identifies another successful media tactic that removes imagery from its original context and then presents it in a negative light. As a result, he exemplifies the mechanism by which the media affects public opinion by providing only a partial representation of the original reality.

Generally, Hollywood tends to portray Arab and Islamic culture negatively. Arabs and Muslims are frequently portrayed as billionaires, bombers, and belly dancers (Kozlovic, 2009). Misinterpretations of Arabian and Islamic cultures in Hollywood and the wider Western media serve political purposes (Arti, 2007). The Muslim lady is generally portrayed in the Western media as one of three stereotypes. She is either a belly dancer or an oppressed

housewife with no identity or voice, and recently, the terrorist woman has been added as a fresh cipher to keep the audience entertained (Qutub, 2013).

Many argue that these Hollywood-fabricated overused images are a result of the 9/11 events and 9/11's relationship with Muslim people. Ironically, similar misrepresentations had been created for decades before the 9/11 attacks. Hollywood's affected depictions of Middle Eastern civilizations serve two main purposes, the political and the economical. Current political factors include Israel's defense against its Middle Eastern neighbors, the Iranian Islamic revolution, and the demise of the Soviet Union (Arti, 2007). Stereotypes in the Western media appear to be intended to legitimize an American military presence in Middle Eastern countries rich in mineral wealth and natural resources, such as Iraq's oil (Qutub, 2013).

If Middle Eastern cultures are negatively represented as in need of western modernization, in need of American troops who offer peace through civil wars and despite dictators' powers, and in need of a western value of feminist freedom, those representations will ensure the acceptance of Western troops' presence in various Middle Eastern and Islamic cultures. As a result, educated Middle Eastern women who play important positions in society are rarely shown in Hollywood films (Qutub, 2013).

2.5 ON ARAB POLITICAL THOUGHT

There continues to be a confusing between the Arab and Muslim minds according to George Corm (2016). This misunderstanding is due not only to Western Orientalist scholars, but also to Arab scholars who accepted it. Hisham Djat, a Tunisian thinker, was one of the most

significant Arab intellectuals on this front, popularizing the concept of a long-existing Arab-Islamic philosophy that, according to him, continues to characterize the behavior and values of modern Arabs. Although Mohammed Abed El-Jabiri, another well-known Arab thinker, has written extensively on the Arab mind, he has been describing the Muslim mind, perpetuating the mismatch between Arab culture and Muslim religion. As if the so-called Arab intellect could only be theological (Corm, 2016).

Prior to them, the famous British orientalist scholar of Lebanese origin, Albert Hourani, tended to confine Arabs to their Islamic identity and to create a distinction between Arab Christians and Arab Muslims. He regarded the first as courageous secularist modernizers, whereas the modernist aspirations of the reformist Arab Muslims would be naturally hampered by the enormous influence of Islam and its laws and jurisprudence over their minds. In his famous work Arab Intellectuals and the West, the late Hisham Sharabi took this concept to its logical conclusion (1970). This flawed viewpoint is still widely held today.

In terms religion, culture, ethnicity, and civilization can be considered today almost interchangeable. The rise of cultural studies in the United States in recent decades has added to the uncertainty. It is worth noting here the widespread cynicism with universalistic ideologies derived from Enlightenment philosophy that has emerged since the 1970s. It has sparked a renewed interest in the so-called return of religion as a political and cultural force in the world. It has also created a newly found curiosity with both Islam and Judaism, causing more misunderstanding between religion and culture. Furthermore, the advent of new states posing as representatives of these two monotheistic faiths has made it easier to conflate culture with religion, or to regard religion as an ethnic phenomenon influencing the minds and behaviors of Jews and Muslims equally.

In the case of the Arabs, the confusion is exacerbated by the fact that Islam first arrived in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century of our era as a new monotheistic faith, and the Koran was revealed to Prophet Mohammed in Arabic. Arabs became famous in history for receiving this new prophesy and creating two remarkable multi-ethnic and religious empires: the Umayyad (661–750) and, later, the Abbasid (750–1258). They did not, however, last long, as the Abbasid empire began to disintegrate in the second half of the ninth century, following the great reigns of the legendary Haroun El Rachid (786–809) and Al Ma'mun (814–833), when Persians and Turks began to disassemble it and form independent political entities. Baghdad was taken by the Seljuk Turks in 1055, and the Mongols seized and destroyed it in 1258. Only Egypt's Fatimid Caliphate (909–1171) kept an Arab governmental entity. With the exception of Morocco, Arab and Berber political units in Andalusia and North Africa persisted longer but either perished, as in Andalusia, or diminished by the end of the 15th century, clearing the way for Ottoman dominance. Another source of confusion, as we will see later, is that when the modern Arab renaissance began following Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion to Egypt, most new thinkers concentrated on the need to reform Islam in order to fit it to the needs of the modern world as defined by Europe. Three major problems became the focus of attention: education, women's rights, and state change. It was considered at the time that the degeneration and ossification of Islamic rules and norms was to blame for the collapse of Arab society and, more broadly, Muslim societies outside the Arab World. As religion became the key focus point of discussion among diverse Arab thinkers, this exclusive approach of underdevelopment and historical deterioration for the need of religious reform would have serious ramifications.

Whatever the source of the misunderstanding, what is examined here is that Arab culture and mind are much more than a religious cosmos or a theological structure of thought. The main point here will be that the range of cultural expressions available within the Arab world is far more than what is perceived both within and outside the Arab world. Despite the media and scholarly focus on Islam's key role in the Arab world in recent decades, it cannot be described as a solely religious culture.

The foundations of Arab culture are found in poetry and the richness of the Arabic language. Poetry has always been at the heart of Arab culture, even up to the present day. Famous poets, both old and young, are honored and revered in Arab civilizations throughout. It is also worth noting that Arabs were significant traders who interacted with both the Persian and Byzantine civilizations. They were not only found in the Arabian Peninsula, but also in Syria and the Mesopotamian basin. A number of significant tribes had converted to Judaism or Christianity. Under the banner of the new Muslim religion, Arab victories in the seventh century were able to 'Arabize' the Levant, where significant Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian populations did not convert to Islam. While Arab conquerors Islamized North Africa, many Berber tribes retained their native language and hence did not Arabize. This is to suggest that Arabs were not a homogeneous group defined solely by a Bedouin way of life. Rather, they were well-versed in the greater world in which they lived. When the Arab caliphs constructed the two succeeding Umayyad and Abbasid empires, they opened them to the major cultural influences that existed around them; they absorbed Christians and Jews into the new Islamic civilization that was being formed. Through the rise of Arab trade, they later opened it up to Indian and Chinese influence. The Arab Islamic civilization, which flourished in sciences and philosophy, history, astronomy, geography, and anthropology,

was the result of a strong interaction between the Arab elite and the state of knowledge existent in other great civilizations. The Arabic language became the 'lingua franca' of all intellectuals of all ethnicities, including theologians and scientists. Arabs were particularly familiar with the Aramean-Syriac language and knowledge that prevailed throughout the Levant and the Mesopotamian basin.

Based on this historical data, how can it be explained that the Arab intellectual renaissance, which began in the early nineteenth century, has resulted in the current condition of affairs, in which religious debates, quarrels, and bloodshed are fundamentally destabilizing so many Arab societies? Many political, military, and economic elements, both domestic and external, explain this terrible situation, which will be discussed here. My primary objective, however, will be to illustrate that Arab political thought remains diverse and active. Contrary to popular belief and scholarly research, it has not been imprisoned in what can be refered to as a purely theological mentality; rather, it has remained mostly secular.

Professor Michael Hudson's book *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (1977), which is an influential work on the Arab quest for legitimacy remains a primary interest for the majority of Arab intellectuals. It is due to the complicated challenges that intellectuals have faced since the Ottoman Empire's decline, which peaked by the end of the nineteenth century and fell at the end of World War I. Since then, the Arab intelligentsia has focused on three primary issues, first, what caused the underdevelopment and weakness of Arab societies? Second, what is Arab identity? and third why are Arabs so divided and unable to establish a modern unified nation acknowledged by other nations? These three major concerns that have characterized all political works since the early nineteenth century have remained the subject of research to the current day. It has risen as a result of events that have occurred since the

beginning of 2011. Simultaneously, the response to these three major political and cultural concerns highlighted here continues to sharply split Arab intellectual life. The rich work of Arab secularist intellectuals has been largely disregarded by Arab and Western media and academic circles as a result of international geopolitical developments during the last half-century. This was not previously the case at a time when global intellectual thought was primarily open to progressive methods of thinking about 'Third World' concerns, emerging countries emancipated from colonial authority. Religion and theology were not prominent. Secular modes of thought, whether liberal, socialist, or conservative, dominated the global landscape. Intellectuals and heads of state from Third World countries affiliated with the Non-Aligned Movement took a solely secular approach to combating underdevelopment. Their aim was to establish rules of international social and economic justice among nations in order to close the vast wealth gap between old, industrialized countries and emerging, poor, independent countries seeking to break free from direct Western dominance of the world.

2.6 THE INCEPTION OF GROUP SOLIDARITY

The establishment of group solidarity is an act that requires consistent reference, as many factors play a direct and indirect role in its sustainment. These include concepts such as culture, climate, a coherent form of social organization, rituals, collective actions taken and shared customs and beliefs. The historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun's book, *The Muqaddimah* (2005), provides a basis for this research when examining the role of tribes in

political affairs through the notion of *asabiyah*. Ibn Khaldun links the sociological with the theological and argues that these two components can be attributed to analyse the morality and immorality of history, especially in the context of humans affected by scriptural influence. He describes that the type of rule which exists in the Arab Muslim world is associated with a social organization, where members acknowledge the rule of law and the role of their leader and are required to fulfil duties to contribute to the 'ideal city ultimately'. This represents a form of rational politics where the ruler is concerned with the general and particular interests of authority. In this way the ruler maintains his power by balancing religious law and ethical rules engaged with strengthening group feeling.

With the power of empires spreading towards the Arabian Peninsula in the pre-Islamic era, nomads migrated to the countryside and an area known as the fertile crescent, which is located in the interior of Syria today. They brought with them their customs and forms of social organization. The chiefs of the tribes exercised their power in forging an understanding with the imperial governments to keep other nomads away from settled lands and to collect taxes, thereby creating more stable political units. An emerging sense of tribal cohesiveness was strengthened by the various dialects of the Arabic language, which created a sense of growing cultural identity amongst the tribesmen (Khaldun, 2005).

Ibn Khaldun further argued that, at the dawn of Islam, the religious method would fail to spread at any given time if not backed by group solidarity. In other words, for religion to succeed, it had to include the sociological element of tribes, which is the precise reason why Muhammad, who was also a member of a tribe, attempted to enhance tribal values of solidarity to advance certain objectives, as will be further discussed below.

A large part of the Arabian Peninsula consists of the desert or steppe; its inhabitants acquired several dialects of Arabic and different ways of life. The balance between the Bedouin and sedentary or city peoples was precarious. Although nomads were a minority community, they carried arms and together with merchant groups dominated towns of cultivators and craftsmen. Their spirit of loyalty to family, pride in ancestry and courage was prevalent. They were not controlled by a stable power of coercion. Still, they were led by chiefs belonging to families and groups that gathered in support of one another, expressing their *asabiyah* or group solidarity and fortifying their common ancestry and loyalty to one another.

Understanding the durable nature of the Arab tribes lies in custom as Khaldun (2005) described once the soul becomes accustomed to something, it becomes part of its nature, because 'the soul can take on many colorings'. Inhabitants of the deserts mainly acquired a natural life of agriculture and animal herding, restricting themselves to a basic lifestyle with no excessive food, clothing, and other essential conditions. There were various inhabitants across the region, such as small communities of Berbers and non-Bedouins, whose earnings came through cultivation as they lived in stationary agricultural areas. Others habitually looked after animals and travelled to find resources for cattle sustenance. Both groups refrained from going towards the deserts due to its harsh climate and scarcity of resources. However, the camel nomads, known as the Bedouins, were forced to make deep excursions into the deserts to breed their camels whose greatest need is warmth. They are a group who lived far from the soldiers in the cities who served the dynasty, providing themselves with their defense and protection while always carrying weapons. The socio-cultural nature thus adapted to certain conditions such as the hostile environment of the deserts as Khaldun

describes, and in their constant search for a means of survival they adopted a routine of raiding known as *ghazw* and counterraiding for camels and possessions.

Groups consistently come to power by yearning for superiority and authority, obtaining their moral success through the failure and corruption of previous rulers. Islam here maintains the scriptural mandate for humans to preserve authority, as well as the internal restraint of civilization to avoid self-destruction. Despite the need for internal control of group survival, Bedouins are not acquainted with larger forms of structural control since they are nomads, an aspect which only fortifies their reluctance of subordination and intensifies their pride and ambition. However, sedentary tribes differ since they are groups who choose to settle for more extended periods in one area. The reciprocal camel-raid took place according to specific and mutually implicit rules among all Bedouins against clans of an allied Bedouin tribe; for this reason, raids were formally organized expeditions. Raiding differs according to the understanding of Bedouin culture, as predations against non-Bedouin tribes involved the unilateral raiding of peasants, pastorals, caravans and oasis communities. Although shepherd tribes tended to secure relations with the nearest Bedouin group for protection, they were still exposed to raids from distant Bedouins.

Additionally, Khaldun describes one of the primary rules among Bedouins which is an understanding that every man must be dominated by another as a form of social organization, which only heightens a Bedouin's eagerness for leadership. Self-reliance, therefore, becomes part of the Bedouin makeup, yet, as the author explains, when there exists a restraining power, their fortitude is broken. The governing laws of others such as a ruling dynasty thus create a sense of powerlessness, which intrinsically leads to resistance and, as Ibn Khaldun articulated, the soul's feeling of oppression.

Such groups' greatest values lie in their common descent and family lineage as well as their sentiments towards their blood relations. The preservation of this lineage is practised by 'true Arabs', as Khaldun denotes them, who are Arabs of fertile land. Once a group member's values are shamed or attacked, the group will intervene for protection which increasingly reinforces their solidarity. According to Khaldun, the cause behind such emotional support emanates from the chief and member's closest relationships, which are subject to the same moral agreements and conditions within the same tribal group.

The sense of attachment between individuals exists because of common descent, moreover the level of nobility within a tribe is relative to the group feeling; their 'house' relies on the forefathers' virtuous qualities and socialization with ethical people. Ibn Rushd (2012) describes the 'prestige' of a house as belonging to people who are ancient settlers in a particular town and are considered to be noble. However, as Khaldun deliberates the weaknesses of *asabiyah* became common after the establishment of a ruling dynasty. Under a dynasty a non-nomadic tribe consolidated its power over a specific land and people, acquiring wealth, power, and extending its power further.

After the advent of Islam, the Caliphate system ruled with religion. Over time, it became a precarious setting in which the tribes in cities would succumb to the exploitation of the luxuries their power brought, leading to a cycle of demise and the rise of various ruling and competing dynasties. According to the author, the only way to avoid this exploitation was a regular return and visit to the deserts. While dynasties rose and fell, Islam remained consistent through its prophecy. Some scholars of that time found significance in the study of prophets and God's purpose as a more direct source of divine guidance for their peoples, arguing that caliphs should embody the rule, but very often they did not. While the study of

rulers was intended to reiterate the strong governance and justice of society, Ibn Khaldun contributed by taking into consideration both aspects, resulting in new findings which explained the workings of history.

Finally, Ibn Khaldun assumes that society can operate on its own. He claims that civilization endures mainly due to the moral resilience that is natural to the tribes while they are in the deserts free of temptations. To him, the desert is opposed to the city and its sedentary people and ruling families, who are much more concerned with luxuries and all kinds of pleasures and is regarded as the place of corruption. Accordingly, the return to the desert is deemed as a source of virtue for tribes, which is required to cultivate inner resilience and reinvigorate their sense of self. Soon enough, religion began to play a central role in navigating this sense of nourished *asabiyah* during the tribes' rule. It played a highly political role since its inception, as the following section will explore together with the main ideas of religion with which the research is concerned.

After describing how territory and environment can influence group solidarity, the next section will define the geography of the Arabs to show how group corporate spirit or group cohesiveness can be regarded as the main element that nourishes Arab identity which directly serves political power.

2.7 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS BONDING TRIBES

W.B Fisher (1947) deliberates that political unity in the Middle East was merely a historical chance. The definition of the terms 'near' and 'middle' labeled by the European colonizers have outlined a politically unified region with clear territorial partitions. However, in certain periods in history general environmental unity was missing such as when the Arabs were

unwilling to accept the Ottoman Empire's geographical command. This eventually led to the weakening of the empire and the loss of the term 'Near-East'. According to Fisher, in 1939 it became known that the military province extending from Iran to Tripolitania was denoted by the term 'Middle East'. The diverse factors of disunity in the Middle East, according to Fisher, acted as a land bridge. During a series of tribal migrations, some associated themselves with pre-existing societies while others fled to mountains and deserts. Language represented a definitive uniting factor, where the southern part of the Middle East spoke Aramaic, the Semitic language spoken before the time of Christ. In contrast, the Arabic language encompassed Northern Arabia and Persia.

The historical and contemporary evolutionary course of the various Arab regions reflects the domestic dissimilarities and influences within each country. For instance, tribes of the Arabian Peninsula who remained in the desert habitat inherently moulded and constructed their Bedouin characteristics differently from tribes in other regions. This is mainly due to their prolonged stay in the arid deserts, which created a cultural ecosystem that differed between tribes in other lands. After the discovery of oil in the 20th century, their tribal qualities and tribal organization allowed for a durable founding of their newly established kingdom. The ruling families such as the house of Al-Saud eventually cemented their power through the interlocking of tribal networks with the oil breakthrough into one system, in which Wahhabism played a key role, as will be explained further. On the other hand, in other cases such as the tribes of Yemen or Sudan, a higher degree of political and economic independence developed as they continued to play a role in central authority while maintaining a degree of social autonomy.

The nomadic Arabs known as the Bedouins are organized in tribal networks across the Arab regions and have dwelled in pastoral lands and agriculturally based societies from approximately 1200 BCE until today. The tribal chiefdom, however, prevailed in the deserts alongside their cattle, developing into confederations without proper access to resources and causing their raiding habits. In the 19th century due to the development of complex social structures, in some cases Bedouin confederations would give support to desert emirates as ruling tribal dynastic powers that controlled major caravan routes and resting points, such as the Rashidi Emirate in Hayl, east of Arabia, which was supported by the Shammar chiefdoms (Sweet, 1965). The tribal unit of the Bedouins consisted of a clan of common descent in which interclan relations were initially dependent on mutual assistance in defense of the camel herds which they kept and raiding. Alternatively, in cases of droughts, clans would seek the permission of their tribal chief to graze with another chiefdom. The illustrious symbol of the Arabian camel expressed in literature, culture, the arts, and history symbolizes the great importance that Bedouins bestow on them. Camels provided the desert Bedouins with food, leather, wool and a means for transport in which no other domesticated animal was preferred over them, while other captured cattle such as goats provided them with food. However, even they were unable to survive the extreme weather conditions of the deserts.

Nevertheless, today many Bedouins are threatened with extinction such as the Bedouins of Negev in what is today Israel, with modern developments in cities and societies such as urban planning, the creation of borders, roads, education, electricity, which have caused Bedouins to fear the loss of their identity. This tendency, however, has a direct relationship with their ability to adapt with the changing social, economic and political environment. In this connection Barakat (1993) argues that the Bedouins' rejection of total integration and their

lack of adaptation was due to their fear of a vanished existence in the face of development and modernization. Yet there are also cases where their assimilation has been useful, such as in Saudi Arabia. Here, one of their methods of nomadic integration includes their employment in oil fields and national defense sectors while other tribes became the rulers of the country and other Gulf territories.

Moreover, the phenomenon of the Arabic language is a fundamental principle in understanding *asabiyah* as it fashions a cultural continuum amongst the Arabs. Arabic poetry, for instance, displays an astounding richness of elaborate rhyme, guideline and diction and represents the Bedouins' authentic expression of both the harshness and the beauty of the terrain, deserts, love, hunting, war and the lives of the tribesmen. The eastern winds known as *al-Saba* were also a favourite for Arabian poets (Hitti, 2002). The Arabic language thus enriched the culture even after the fall of the Arab kingdoms. Words are derived from roots of older Semitic words and are pictorially denoted, creating literature and poetry filled with ideas in attempting to describe the inner layers of consciousness. This inspiration was undoubtedly sourced from their surrounding climate and environment. Due to the presence of Bedouins, peasants and tribes the understanding of spatial ontology and the artistic and visual expression of the region contributed to strengthen the social structure through invigorating the *asabiyah.*

One of the Middle East's strengths in unity is its physical climate and agriculture. "Vegetation, both natural and cultivated, shows close adaptation to the climatic regime" (Fisher, 1947), since frequent water loss and land aridity verified the necessity for water. This is associated with the series of occupations that nomads undertook during the past centuries. For example, 'pastoral nomads' were mostly dependent on the settled people

known as the 'cultivating people', who were the agricultural population. The scarcity of rainfall in the deserts prompted the tribal search for food supply and inhabiting certain lands which was key in defining the unity of the region. Material and cultural ties became tightly integrated, resulting in a close-knit and intricate society. On the other hand, trade, nomadic pastoralism, and agriculture defined the culture of the material unity of the region, in addition social bonds became ostensibly consolidated through Islam. Hence, some cultural patterns may have developed based on a Muslim civilization, where neither race nor language and political groups alone could define the Muslim world.

As voyagers of the Arabian Peninsula, the Semitic tribes travelled in search of basic resources for their families and cattle, due to a drought that struck their lands approximately 15,000 years ago (Manning, 2005). Canaanites, Arameans, and Hebrews fled north, settling in Mesopotamia or the fertile crescent. Bedouins, who remained in the Arabian Peninsula, developed tough traits as they endured the harsh and ferocious living circumstances caused by the drought and continued to live in the deserts. As Arab nomads they relocated across the deserts based on seasonal changes, while, as desert dwellers, their presence in vast spaces prevented any feeling of belonging to a specified territory. The concept of geographical borders or territorial space is unfathomable to Bedouins, since their dwelling in a territory is only a temporary location which accommodates their changeable circumstances—these being the need for more food for herding their cattle or severe climate conditions (Al Zubaidi, 2005). Today the Bedouins are still considered as nomadic Arab tribes, while other groups of Arab tribes are spread across many rural and urban areas with established authorities.

Thus, a rough climate and the harsh Arabian geography contributes significantly to the notion of group solidarity, as it brings people closer together to increase chances of their survival

since the odds are higher in a group. Cultural norms, in this case, can be more easily internalized and translated into a collective bond. Arabs originated from the boundless deserts, fought for survival, migrated and reasserted their tribal power through the strength of their family bonds, in the manner of the famous old Arab Bedouin proverb, which states, 'I, against my brothers. I and my brothers against my cousins. I and my brothers and my cousins against the world'. Perhaps these are the inner-outer circles that place an individual member of a tribe within a broader genealogical commitment beyond territory, until finally reaching the most significant commitment which consists in being an Arab.

If such a patrilineal rule which was heightened by the harsh environmental habitat of the tribes-built heritage and values of courage and honour, then how and under what circumstances do the political interests of the tribal system intersect with the central political rule? If the assumption is that the essential allegiance of the Iraqi people is owed to their kinship ties, further research is required on the correlation between the bonding factors of the early Arabs. This section is intended to support the framework for understanding tribal heritage and the factors that shaped tribal ways and culture, for that reason studying tribal lineage and its divisions is important.

2.8 GEOGRAPHY OF THE INHABITANTS

The term Semite originates in the Old Testament where it is used to denote the descendants of the eldest son of Noah and thus a racially homogeneous group. While the term 'Arab' first appeared in an ancient Assyrian inscription celebrating the triumph of king Shalmaneser III

over a group of unruly chiefs in 853 B.C., it later appeared in various Babylonian inscriptions as well, referring to the nomadic peoples of the north Arabian desert with the names 'Arabu' and 'Arabi' (Mansfield, 1976). The Arabs, and more specifically the nomads, constitute a substantial sub-section of the Semitic people, based on their biological, physiological, social and linguistic characteristics, caused by their geographical isolation in the desert-life environment. The Arabs even named their habitat or dwelling '*Jasirat al-Arab'*, meaning the 'Island of the Arabs', a land surrounded by sea with a limited amount of habitable land. A common phenomenon of the Near East were the migrations from pastoral lands towards an agricultural territory. The constant traveling natural to the nomadic people intensified their qualities of raiding and invading, yet the nomads also assimilated a degree of the main features of previous civilizations which they found. Such is the case for the sedentary population of the Fertile Crescent, who were weaker since they possessed less experience at invading and raiding, and were, therefore, dispossessed by the nomadic Arabs (Al Jamil, 1986). Moreover, the term 'Semite' appears to consist of a correlation between ethnological and linguistic factors in Yemen and Nejd. After many migrations and raids, the Semitic languages survived and came to be classified more distinctly. To this extent, had the ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia continued to use their languages, they would not have been defined as Semites.

In the first millennium B.C. Ancient Arabia was divided into three main regions: in the Northwest, the 'Molded Arabia', which was the land between Palestine and the Red Sea; in the Southwest' Arabia Felix', which was composed of the southern part of the peninsula, including Najd, Hijaz, Yemen and Oman; and in the centre and east 'Deserted Arabia', which comprised great deserts extending from Syria and Mesopotamia (Van Beek, 1969). The

people of Arabia, who constituted one-fifth of the population living as nomads, were groups who repeatedly escaped threatening weather circumstances such as the threat of a *khamsin* (storm of the sandy deserts) as well as times of severe droughts.

The desert can be classified according to three main types. The first type is the great *Nufud* which is a tract of white reddish sand in north Arabia, and which is also known as *al-badiyah*. With occasional winters it suffices for the travelling Bedouin to supply his camel and sheep. The second desert-type is *Al-Dahna* which refers to the red land caused by the red sand that covers its dunes. Once these deserts receive seasonal rains, they serve as ideal land for pasture. However, during the summers the deserts become void of any life, and thus are also named *al-Rab al Khali*, meaning 'no man's land'. The third type is *Al-Harrah,* which translates as 'the hot one' and denotes a volcanic territory in the western and central areas of the peninsula which is composed of fissured and ridged lavas overlying sandstone. Sandstone hills are a feature of the northwestern geography while sands of the north connect the vast deserts (Vesey-Fitzgerald, 1957). Arabia is one of the hottest and driest areas; although the region falls between two seas, the water is too narrow to disrupt the climate of the Africo-Asian rainless mainland. Exposure to such extreme aridity, harsh climate, and environment undoubtedly impacts and shapes endurance in its inhabitants.

Deserts of the Arabian Peninsula are the spirit and origin of the tribes. The tribes revolutionized themselves as they migrated into fertile lands which included the area of Mesopotamia, as these lands provided an ideal climate and ecosystem for the tribes to raid and inhabit, breaking away from the crude life of the deserts and establishing more sophisticated ways of life. But how did the tribes organize themselves within this geography as they performed these practices?

The networks of tribes consisted of ranked lineages united by the concept of exclusive descent, which created a divide from the other societies living within the same region. However, Arabs believed that the only way they could build a powerful and sustainable settlement was to reinforce their customs and creed in their newly raided location. Thus, as this research will research their cradle of strength was their *asabiyah*. For their environments preserved the purity of the Bedouins' speech and bloodline and acted as a guard against intrusions from the outer regions. At the same time, the continuity of the arid deserts symbolized the protection of their sacred moral codes and traditions and persistently shaped their social hierarchy and organization.

Functionalist theories of hierarchy state that groups must make collective decisions to motivate their members to act selflessly in contributing to the success of the group. This serves as a method to solve conflicts of the collective decision-making process by giving disproportionate control to the most competent members. At the same time, lower-ranked individuals are expected to comply and keep their opinions unspoken (Anderson & Brown, 2010).

The purpose of such organizations was to avoid internal conflict over control, by allocating responsibilities and tasks as well as maintaining communication amongst one another to minimize disagreements, as can be seen through Emile Durkheim's theory on the division of labour (1997). Ranks such as a sheikh or emir are appointed by the elders of the tribe based on superior leadership qualities, reputational merits, the unit's technical issues as well as perceptions of the elder's social skills (Lord, 1985). Tribal hierarchies are expected to provide motivation and psychological incentives for their members, while the effects of communication networks tend to define the span of control and efficacy of the centralized

authority. Such a social organization is one aspect that increases group solidarity amongst the Arabs. The following section will describe other elements that allow group cohesion in relation to the practice of enduring religious and political roles.

2.9 DIVISION OF ARABS: QAHTAN AND ADNAN

This research will consider two significant features in maintaining a form of group solidarity are that of time and lineage. Time marks the way that certain beliefs and opinions of groups germinate during a certain period and accumulate into a series of ideas and traditions that become relevant and are rooted in a different transformed epoch. The root word of Bedouin is *al-badiya*, meaning 'the deserts', which also includes an emotional connotation referring to their pride and strength of enduring its living conditions (Azizi et al.,1996). Today a brigade of the Jordanian army is named *Jaysh al-badiya*, meaning 'the army of the desert Bedouins'. Bedouins were nomadic Arabs who organized themselves into tribes, and over time they spread across the entire Arab geography after a series of migrations. Bedouins of North Africa today differ from the Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula or Mesopotamia in their ways of living, since many of them developed into either sedentary populations or became urbanized, but they also maintain a vestige of tribal heritage. Throughout various intervals, Bedouins altered and shed many of their habits and lifestyles yet remained and maintained themselves in the similar tribal organization.

The Nabateans were sedentary peoples who lived in the Syrian and Mesopotamian desert fringes and who spoke a language close to Arabic. From the early years, the interaction

between the Nabateans and the Bedouins took place within these areas, producing new sedentary people and pastoral tribes. When Islam appeared in the seventh century, the distinction between 'old Arabs' and 'new Arabs' became more clearly defined. The 'new Arabs' were generically defined as Adnan who were Arabs of the north, located in the Najd oasis, and were known to exercise their 'partisan behaviour' through *asabiyah* (Crone, 1994, p. 2). Conversely, the 'old Arabs' were known as the Qahtan, meaning 'desert dwellers' and were the people of the south, originating in Yemen, also known as *Al-yamaniyyah*. Such a divide created an ecological dichotomy where tribes were exposed to climatic fluctuations which enhanced migrations and thus improved trans-Arabian trade. The Qahtanis, however, have been continuously wrongly classified by genealogists as one group of people (Salibi, 2010), even though in fact, as the name of one southern tribe, the Qahtani were a combination of peoples. According to one view, the reason for this was that Qahtan was mistakenly understood as Joktan in the Book of Genesis in the Bible, who is considered by Arab genealogists to be the ancestor of ancient sedentary peoples of South Arabia as well as the Nabateans as the 'old Arabs'. Their kingdom also comprised of a culturally advanced and stable Bedouin state (Macdonald, 1991).

On the other hand, the Adnan people originally appeared as a group of people known as the Azd who migrated northwards to Mesopotamia and merged with various inhabitants including the Bedouins, before eventually forming a confederation of tribes known as Tanukhids or the settlers after they became 'Bedouinized'. This confederation comprised of the Ma'ad, Nizar, and Mudar. The Tanukhids constituted a loose confederation of many subdivisions brought together owing to various circumstances; their ranks included the kings and chiefs of various kingdoms and authorities. Such circumstances created the expression

of various forms of solidarities and over time it became difficult to differentiate the origins of the people. However, the tribal solidarities and cultures nevertheless founded themselves deeply within the region.

Most of Arab tribes record and save their lineages correctly and they may be supported by linguistic evidence, national and moral descriptions, and many common archives that are mutually recognized and can be traced through Adanani and Qahtani origins. To distinguish both origins, al-Azzawi describes that Qahtani tribes have a kinship title before their tribal or family names known as 'Al' or 'family of' while the Adnani, Mudar and Nizari tribes carry the title of 'Bani' meaning 'sons of'. However, some tribes are subject to suspicion only if surrounding tribes doubt their lineage to these two main origins (al-Azzawi, 2005, p.67). By looking at what is preserved through the language, expressions of fraternity and customs such sources of lineages portray the value of Arab tribes' and position towards kinship. However, according to the author, some tribes are still 'confused' about their attribution to one of these two groups as their origins across history are unknown and often intersect or overlap with other tribes thus cannot be distinguished.

Two rival Arab groups also persisted during the Umayyad period; one of Adnan's descendants included Nizar, who became known as the father of the Rabia tribe of eastern Arabia. His son Mudar and his descendants became known as the Qays or Qaysiyya, who make up more than half of the Arab tribes (Blankinship, 1988). Most Umayyad caliphates elected Qaysi governors. Politically, the Rabia tribe represents a unique case since their allegiances extended to both the northerners and southerners. Hostility between all groups in both regions existed during the pre-Islamic era or the Pegan years (Hitti, 1937). The hostility later became visible in the Islamic world during the Marj Rahit war of 684 AD in Syria. The

existing rivalry alternated between Qays and Rabia against Yemen, or Qays versus Rabia and Yemen (Crone, 1994), and the persistent resentments escalated into a phenomenon involving all Arab tribes, ultimately dividing the Arabs into two antagonistic factions. This further defined ethnic lines among the Arabs and fueled conflicts to come between the tribal descendants, who protected and organized themselves based on the origins of their lineage.

Such were the first marked organizational and political differences apparent within Arabian tribes. Given the confinement of social loyalties and responsibilities, the Arab Bedouins were proud of their independence as having been acquired early on from the deserts' endless vastness. With time, however, Bedouins began to frequent cities and sell products from their herds and camels; they never slept at night in the city and completed their daily endeavours before returning to their tribe. It was not until the nomadic Bedouins were introduced to sedentary populations and lifestyles that some features of their conducts and organization began to change, as the next section will discuss.

2.10 CONCLUSION

The importance of understanding Arab culture in Iraq involves a vast scope of historical features needed to comprehend the fortitude of the tribal kinship bonds. As discussed thus far, the present chapter has covered the context of Arab identity and Arab political thought as a way to contextualize and understand the nuanced of the Arab Tribal system.

As discussed, the bonding element of *asabiyah* has encouraged Arab tribal identity to take root in individuals and communities in combination with the need to transmit such loyalties

and representations across generations. Hence, cultural integrity tends to be considered as a substantial responsibility especially in its links to Islam. Accordingly, Islamic groups as political, cultural or social movements create an identity in which their viability and reassertion is derived from the integrity of their communities (Moghadam, 1992). For this reason, there is a continuous desire to ensure the survival of Arab identity passed down through kinship, which sprouts from a familiar heritage that provides a safety net in a more familiar and secure way (Al Lami, 2000).

The focus of the following research will question the role of tribal system in Iraqi politics through the three agents mentioned above. The next chapter will discuss how Arab tribes as an organized collective is capable of mobilizing and exerting power based on pre-existing agnatic lineages and values. Political divisions and disagreements within the tribal communities did transpire over the years, prompting members to further complicate the balance of power. The chapter will delve into a study of the agencies which tribes adopted (or some aspects of it) as a vehicle for its political continuance, in which this current chapter has set the thematic environment for. It will do so by exploring who the Arab Bedouin is and what are the Arab's deeper nuances of identity and allegiances. By intersecting with existing parallel political authorities such as religious institutions and the central government, this will illustrate how traditional tribes could have maintained their authority until contemporary Iraq.

CHAPTER THREE

THREE AGENTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine the history and consider the three agents through which the tribes of Iraq were able to maintain their political power. They are, respectively, *asabiyah* or group solidarity, which carries a high emotional appeal, religion as a message and cause, and the central government which exists under different forms depending on the historical period such as the caliphate system or the Iraqi government which will be considered as the legitimate formal and institutionalized political authority that governs over a group of people. The third agent, central government; will be partly intertwined with the agency of religion since the message of Islam emerged with a political rule to establish itself amongst the Arabs. There will also be a shorter section on the central government which will cover several events in history to reveal the relationship between the tribes and the state. It will be studied in depth in chapters 5 and 6, where the contemporary definition of a central government will also be considered.

The term 'agent' is chosen to establish the structure for the research as it denotes elements which take on an active role in producing a specific effect. In other words, each agent acts as a means by which tribes maintain and balance their political interests and sociopolitical power. This chapter will also define and contextualize each agent by relating them to historical events in which tribes have employed these agents for their benefit.

This discussion thereby not only studies the apparent notions of identity but also intends to elucidate on the unspoken elements that constitute of tribal identity which are also required to examine to understand the political dynamics and guise of Iraqi Arabs today. Such elements include the innate hereditary sociological roots, customs, importance of ancestral heritage, and collective expressions of solidarity. To this end, this chapter will emphasize the tribes residing across the Arab world since their earlier migrations spanned across the region. Historical references to the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates will be made as they were centred in what is today known as Syria and Iraq.

The tribes that have been selected and discussed are chosen to discuss specific political events that have shaped the sociological and political interplay in Iraq. Rather than describing one specific tribe's political dealings, the analysis will seek to illustrate a larger understanding of tribal dynamics. The purpose is thereby to reveal how the system maintained its political power down to the 21st-century Iraq. This will contribute to answering the research question as it sets the framework for the understanding of tribal heritage and its connection to political power.

3.2 AGENT ONE: *ASABIYAH*

The first agent discussed is *asabiyah*. This agent is necessary for understanding the components which influence and shape the physical and emotional identities of the tribesmen and their circles of loyalty. The Arabic root of *asabiyah* is 'asab', which translates as 'nerve' and denotes the nervous system, i.e. the very system through which humans communicate by transmitting signals from the internal to the external world.

To understand the process of political and social integration, the patterns of Arab tribal life will be identified to grasp the modern Arab political system and contemporary Arab society and to make this relationship more explicit. Thus, the historical assimilation of Arab creed into the tribes' speech, lifestyle and physiology are particularly relevant to comprehending the cultural context of the research, since they especially emphasize one aspect of the continuity of Arab tribal values.

Kamal Salibi (2010) defines circles of loyalty in Arab tribal structure in the following way. Beginning from the outermost circle and proceeding to the innermost, the extended family is known as the *bayt* or *a'ila*, the clan is known as the *batn, imara* or *qawm,* and finally the tribe is named the *qabila*. The territorial confederation of various tribes which have this arrangement forms a group of people called the *sha'b.* Combined groups of people who share common interests will willingly merge into new tribes after the disintegration of older tribes. Subsequently, they aspire to enhance their solidarity through the myth of common ancestry, as Salibi argues.

To understand the power of sustained group solidarity, an understanding of the power of collective groups or crowds is required to make sense of the Bedouin's individual position in respect to his group duties and loyalty. The power of ideas, customs and sentiments is particularly powerful to humans, as they have always provided an identifying essence. Institutions and laws are thus an external manifestation of human character, which expresses desires and needs communicated through a common language. Their loyalties tend to be maintained through tribal group ways, which can be compared to crowd movements and behaviors.

There are two factors which may prompt people into invigorating the group spirit, hence expressing their desires. These are, first, the accidental or intentional passing of ideas or doctrines, which generates a sense of cultural influence; and second, the fundamental concepts passed along through constitutions, religious or social beliefs, laws of heredity and public opinion (Le Bon, 2012). For such ideas present a solid base for transitory ideas to evolve often away or from collective memory. Ethnicity is a particular example which represents an inherited bonding of ancestors and descent and validates its relevance through traditions and customs which express familiar desires and attitudes, such as in the case of the Arab Iraqi tribes.

According to an interview I conducted with Wajih Kanso[4] he describes that there can be several 'asabiyahs'. In this way, asabiyah can exist at various levels of heritage held by a family, the extent of its religious piety, and the level of political influence across the landscape. When asked about how political life was balanced with tribal life in early Arab history, he said that civil life consumed the Bedouin life. This response was similar to Ibn Khaldun's analogy (2005) that the fate of dynasties which rule in cities eventually becomes consumed by urban life and its decadence ultimately fails to contain its authority, with the result that asabiyah – solidarity – is lost.

While urban-rural relations have evolved from their earlier understandings today, blood ties did not escape social relations from the Arab society and culture as Kanso explained. He describes that degrees of solidarity are measured through two dimensions across history,

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[4] Wajih Kanso is a professor of Philosophy and Hermeneutics and director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Jordan. He is the author of books on Islamic Theology, Islamic Schools of Thought, Arab Modern Thought and Politics. Interview conducted on November 22, 2018, in Beirut, Lebanon.

firstly, the pact between the tribes and clans, which represents the foundations of the sociological activities and events; and, secondly, the state-building process presented by the prophet Muhammad's political movements, which brought forth the establishment of civil society. Across time these two dimensions intermingled as some of the historically formed solidarities were replaced or built over with newly established solidarities such as the unity of a sect, in which this process of changing solidarity becomes integrated with time as the informer described.

3.2.1 NOMADIC ORDER AND POST-NOMADISM

The flourishing civilization in Yemen revealed ancient southern Arabian inscriptions written in Arabic, which referred to the term Arab as Bedouin. It was only in the seventh century, with the emergence of Islam, that the term Bedouin became more clearly defined as an inhabitant in northern and central Arabia (Al Taher, 1972). The Bedouins did not roam the lands meaninglessly. They either represented townspeople in the making or remained close to their nomadic nature, and thus constitute the best example of human life's adaptation to the desert. As Hitti writes, "nomadism is as much a scientific mode of living in the Nufud as industrialism is in Detroit or Manchester" (Hitti 2002, p. 23). The stages of the settled folk, as Philip Hitti explains, include phases of semi-nomadism and semi-urbanism among the Bedouins who chose to become sedentary peoples. As tribes developed into settlements, settlements developed into towns by becoming successively more urbanized, but the nomadic order remained intact and tribal social organization remained effective.

The nomadic Bedouin society and culture claims to endorse values of chivalry, power, manhood, pride, rivalry and courage. In the culture of the *badiyah* or open desert lands or range, Bedouins were freely mobile while sheikhs who visited other rulers would incidentally receive gifts and rewards for their initial visits, such as water for raising plentiful crops, in exchange for their circumvention of any intertribal disputes (Cole, 2003). The settlement of Bedouins on a particular land did not necessarily imply a full process of integration with their communities since their habits were essentially dedicated to mobility, raids and wars. Indeed, it was considered shameful for a Bedouin to earn a living through labour or the sweat of his forehead (Barakat, 1993).

The difference between Bedouins and sedentary tribes lies in their different lifestyles the first being nomadic and the second rural. Returning to clan life is rare, especially when tribes moved from cities to clan life or from the countryside to nomadism. For that reason, it is commonly seen that some individuals will attempt to nurture the Bedouin characteristics and ways of living to maintain it. On the other hand, those who abandon such an identity are said to be 'cursed Bedouins' who abandon their desert origins (Al-Azzawi, 2005)

Yet, it is important not to generalize by categorizing all Bedouins based on their nomadic and sedentary lifestyles or their ancestral origins. Therefore, Abbas al Azzawi argues the importance of understanding role of tribes in the transitional period that new economic systems and technological changes brought through. While Bedouin tribes' main characteristics include traveling freely with no constraints to return or arrive at a specific location, such changes introduced Bedouins to a value in sustaining accrued land ownership for instance.

As mentioned, within Bedouin life the group is expressed through the social unity of blood ties of *asabiyah*. The group defends itself against the adversities and dangers of the deserts based on "premises of equality, autonomy and acquisition of reputation" (Barakat, 1993 p. 50). Structurally, the basic units of an organization include the tribe as the outermost circle, the clan, the subtribes, families, and, lastly, the nuclear family. All families and extended families trace their descent through a patrilineal lineage. At the head of each tribe is a male sheikh or emir who deals with political matters and the management of relations with other tribes or governments, which are ordinarily discussed on the condition of consensus among the extended families. The emir attains his position through his proven strength in the battles fought against other hostile tribes and his capability in sustaining his power and position within his tribe. Moreover, relations with neighbouring camel breeders represented a form of maintaining the corporate spirit. The emir is also responsible for protecting his tribe from predators and maintained his merit as long as he honoured his father and forefathers' reputations by upholding the glory of the tribe. High-ranking positions derive from admiration, autonomy, power, social support, material resources and great respect (Anderson, Brown, 2010).

As Abbas al-Azzawi has describes in *The Tribes of Iraq* (2005) that the family unit was formed as a result of circumstantial representations and developments around orthodox laws and systems. In other words, certain events necessitated the formation of family units despite whether laws around their organization were written or not. With Islam's appearance, the Sharia did not significantly change the preexisting system because the basis of Islam had to compliment the living requirements of the Arabs' environment. Accordingly, one can see the cohesion and solidarity between the members within a tribe as well as their homes, and the

solidarity between them is very strong and is emphasized through the personal responsibility of one over the other.

However, some exceptions to the general norm of the tribal system did and continue to occur, according to an anonymous Iraqi participant who studied tribes in Mosul, Iraq[5] and whom I interviewed, there are very rare instances in which, upon the sudden death of the sheikh of a tribe, his wife would become the leader or 'sheikha'. However, such successions did take place in the 20th century in the Rakabi tribe of the Iraqi region, where the former emir's wife managed the day-to-day political affairs. At the same time, the fighting and protection were provided by male members of the tribe. Surely such happenings marked no more than an interim phase until a suitable male candidate, such as the son of the deceased sheikh or another male of a reputable lineage, proved his worthiness through physical prowess and, owing to his ability to lead, was appointed through the consensus of the tribal members.

Central Arabia and the fertile crescent were consequently controlled and organized based on the movement of people rather than the territory. During their travels, tribes did not rely on the protection of any government, since they provided their own security and order. Yet there were no explicit coercive parameters requiring individuals to live within a community. Consequently, from a tribal perspective the individual is regarded as isolated, weak, and deprived of the support of his or her community, suggesting that the structure is accustomed to a central authority or hierarchical organization as a support to this community. Smaller

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[5] Anonymous Iraqi participant interviewed in Beirut, Lebanon, September 2018.

groups become a vital association to the organized tribes, for even sedentary peoples became influenced by the Bedouin life (Stewart, 1987).

In parallel, political legitimacy in the region was mostly dependent on the unity within the individual tribes that was reflected in the choice of official representatives or the ruling elite. There is, however, the disparity between the ruling tribal circles in respect to other circles. Accordingly, the sedentary populations were continuously connected in a web of feudal socioeconomic relationships, having influence over the nomads themselves. There were also branches of nomads who had transitioned throughout the years into peasant cultivators for economic reasons and who developed a source of manpower which fulfilled the nature and cultures of the nomad (as will be further examined below). Before Islam, the nomadic exigency to relentlessly escape the deserts of their nature led to settlements in agricultural lands and securing a comfortable rural life. However, the Bedouins did not adopt the ways of the agriculturalists because they were obliged to work for their means of living, which in the Bedouins' eyes reflected a lack of physical strength in their ability to rule over others. At the same time, the arrangement provided a profitable exchange (Al Zubaidi, 2005).

This may result in a balance which Thamer Abd al Mohsen (1995) describes also includes a degree in which the fertility of the lands or an improved method of cultivation that would enable them to dominate their lands. Such reforms may have undermined the nomadic people's economic intercommunication and social influence over cultivators in their villages and towns from the 8th century onwards. Disunity, however, persisted between social classes led by a robust ruling elite, as both political and economic forces generated cultural discord between the elite and the masses that restricted the economic and political activity of the people.

Yet historical references also demonstrate that, in many cases, "the intensity of the *asabiyah* increased in direct proportion to the Arab loss of tribal ties" (Crone, 1994, p. 4). Specifically, in the 740s the *asabiyah* between Arab tribal groups was heightened and repeatedly by the competition of the caliphates for power. In this case, the need for *asabiyah* to manifest itself was displayed in various expressions of religious, societal, and state power. One must here distinguish between being ethnically Arab or non-Arab, as the Sudanese Bedouins are, as well as differentiations based on nobility, such as being among the tribes of Shammar, Beni Khalid, Rola, and Anazah. To what degree did such inter-cultural differences influence tribal organization?

3.2.2 URBAN AND RURAL CULTURES

The evolution of Bedouin societies became more visible as nomads settled in towns and cities. Each clan created a *majlis* which took the form of a council, and which was regarded as an emir's court, consisting of scholars, philosophers, theologians and representatives of several confessional communities (Kenderova, 2001). Each *majlis* possessed a stone in a central shrine, similar to the Kaaba in Mecca, which expresses the unity and endurance of the Muslim people. Similarly, pre-Islamic archaeology shows that shrines of polytheistic religions existed, such as the Ziggurats that were built during the Babylonian civilization with the temple of Marduk, and through which the gods conveyed a sense of unity, direction and central source. A more complex council known as *Mala'* eventually replaced the Majlis as a consensual authority of the sheikh, yet this was also weakened once several ruling families defined their power amongst a group of clans. Moreover, owing to the prominence

of lineage and heritage, the documentation of descendants of certain tribes brought with it a new set of values and laws maintained by the group.

The power and hierarchy of a tribe is measured based on several elements including the degree of surrounding credibility from other clans or tribes, while larger organizations are referred to as the tribal confederation which acts as a merger of tribes. Also intermarriage between tribes is common, at various times some families within a tribe would lose their nobility by marrying members with lower degrees of nobility (Al Jamil, 1986). The Rola tribe managed to maintain their nobility as they only married their members into tribes which had an ancestral history of pride, might, strength and generosity. For this reason, they felt superior to tribes such as Beni Atieh or the Huwaitat who did not retain such a high reputation across time. Evidently, *asabiyah* became heavily based on *nasab* which is the lineage in relation to the kinship ties they formed, while the level of cohesion within the lineage came to be based on these levels of attachments (Khaldun, 2015).

On the other hand, the cohesiveness forged by *asabiyah* also relied on the Bedouin and group's relationship with religion. The Bedouin's association with religion was less intense in relation to the urban population's faith, despite their intense belief in God's will as the Quran states. During an interview I conducted with Wajih Kanso[6], he said that, in his view families that trace their lineages to nomadic tribes are more likely to exhibit stronger religious affiliations and beliefs inside cities since these structures provided a bonding element of solidarity. However, he argued that, once these groups return to rural areas or the desert, their

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[6] Wajih Kanso is a professor of Philosophy and Hermeneutics and director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Jordan. He is the author of books on Islamic Theology, Islamic Schools of Thought, Arab Modern Thought and Politics. Interview conducted on November 22, 2018, in Beirut, Lebanon.

sense of religious devotion declines considerably as they feel inevitably stronger in their familiar surroundings, people and lands, which are capable of exhibiting and retaining their power on their own. He further asserted that there is no *asabiyah* more remote than that of the tribal *asabiyah*; in other words, there exists no deeper identifying form of solidarity for Arabs than in the form of a tribe. For this reason, people of the cities were inclined to accuse the Bedouins of having insufficient religious consciousness due to the varying intensity of their faith, depending on their surroundings and sense of security; they valued their customs and traditions more than the Sharia law. Even in Medina, blood feuds would divide a community of clans into two hostile factions in the years before Hijra in 622, the Aus and the Khazraj, who even murdered out of a duty to maintain honours and banished those who would breach their understandings until Mohammad emerged with a tribe of believers (Wellhausen, 1927).

Over time, the tribal values played a role in the city's arrangement since many of its inhabitants and ruling elite also have clan lineages. Political and economic dealings, for instance, took place through their tribally maintained social order and hierarchy. Therefore, such exchanges inherently subjected Bedouins to new ways of living, such as their access to technologies, as Ibn Khaldun argues (2005). Consequently, the complexity of the formation of Arab society included a degree of tribal presence and a developed city, where the evolution from rural to urban living began to take shape.

Yet villagers, unlike members of nomadic tribes, also offered a significant role to clerics in their social orders. The religious duty ascribed in the *Sadat al-Ashraf* group, for instance, involved a subclass of people who claimed that they were descendants of the prophet Muhammad, who still exist today and who will be discussed again later on. In their case

peasants sourced their religious values not directly from religious establishments or texts, but from their immediate environment and tangible expressions of faith. It is not only the social composition and religious factors that influenced the evolution of the Arab peoples, but technologies of construction, circulation and production as dependent variables did as well as Al Jamil explains. The interrelationship between the tribe, city and the village involved shared values and norms regarding the importance of family and loyalty to the community.

In due course the nomadic inhabitants spread across Mesopotamia, Syria and the Arabian Peninsula, where the establishment of a caliphate following the death of Muhammad took place and the Islamic community began to expand. The caliphate became the Arab Islamic kingdom, being united by a common race, language, religion and ancestry as only the members who were descended from a tribe were considered pure Arabs. Also, before the annual pilgrimages to Mecca where the intermingling of different ethnicities originated, Arabs who resided in Mecca were considered to be the purest of their kind. Such a mixture also followed between the Phoenicians, Turks, Turkomans, Chaldeans, Berbers, Persians, Romans, and Greeks. The Arab peoples merged various elements of civilizational heritage expressed through religion, language and arts, which resulted in wide-ranging influences from one's environment. However, despite their settled or urbanized life, Bedouins always perceived the *badiyah* (open lands) as their own. They possessed these lands in the truest sense, and it is this belief in their ownership of them that led them to resist attacks from any kind of outsider (Grant, 1937).

However, the interplay between the sedentary people and the Bedouins was not always constructive; political disparities persisted between both groups. This was exemplified in the

mid-1920s when Saudi Arabia's King Abdul Aziz was able to subjugate the Bedouins' ideological conversion to Wahhabism through a military confrontation (Fahad, 1991). He was able to do so by uniting the tribes to take over Mecca. Although, this does not reveal a complete animosity between the rural-urban settlements, nevertheless there was evidently an overlap of mixed attitudes towards one another. The historic subculture of Bedouin tribes and clans reveals the context of Arab homogeneity as stemming from a way of life that the family is the basic unit of social organization which contributes to the existence of a comprehensive value system (Al Taher, 1972).

Building on this notion of values, the next section will provide further descriptions of encounters in the region to uncover more information about the dynamics of Arab tribal life in Mesopotamia. After the research has discussed what *asabiyah* is and how its inception took place. In this manner, it will become possible to detect different expressions of *asabiyah* in politics.

3.2.3 Accounts of Tribes in Late Mesopotamia

After Arabs settled and became ploughmen, they typically insisted on keeping sheep and revitalizing the land, unlike the rugged lands of their neighbours. Alongside sustaining life and invigorating the geography, the tribes were highly political in their ability to retain relational compromises, since they were consistently managing and maintaining their social power. Eastern towns of Syria including Damascus, Hamah, Aleppo and Homs were markets for Bedouins who emerged from the Syrian desert, and Damascus in particular became the metropolis, centre of civilization and the interface for various groups of people (Lukovitz, 2003). On the other hand, Kufah emerged after an ancient capital of a small non-Islamic

principality named Hirah. It operated as a link between the nomads of Arabia and the Sasanian kings[7], similar to links made in the 20th century between the west and the south Euphrates. The Syrian desert consisted of two powerful rulers, namely the Beni Sakhr and the Anazah tribes, who considered themselves among the noble Arabs (Sweet, 1965).

Extending towards Mesopotamia prior to the establishment of Iraq, the Anazah were the more numerous but were less recognized for their courage. Hundreds of tribesmen and camels died during their desert journeys before they reached the gulf, whereas ones who survived proved their resilience and endurance. As Abd al Mohsen (1995) describes the main tribes that existed and are still prominent in today's sociological landscape were, first, the Anazah. They were peoples of the Syrian desert who originally came to Aleppo across the sands of central Arabia. They are divided into four main groups with emirates reaching the boundaries of Iraq and who are known to be the ultimate breeders of animals.

The Bani Lam tribe are the second largest and lived in the region above Amarah for approximately five hundred years. Their sheikhs claim to be descendants of a pre-Islamic tribe of East Arabia; they are cultivators, but none of them abandoned the nomadic life entirely. They migrated with their herds yearly and are known to possess the best camels in Mesopotamia. These tribes still exit in smaller numbers today, although, with the creation of nation states, most of the Bedouins settled in one area (Al Radwan, 2008).

Such accounts demonstrate the consistent variability of tribal alliances which would only take place based on the parties' immediate advantages and willing to swiftly be altered to

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[7] The Sasanian dynasty ruled from 224-650 CE. It was the last Persian lineage of hegemonic rulers over Western Asia prior to the emergence of Islam.

best serve the maintenance of their social order, authority and reputation. Lastly, Bani Rabiah is a tribe of ancient fame in Arabia. They were renowned for having a tempestuous nature and were well-known robbers and dispensers of traffic along the river, although being poorly armed with fewer rifles in comparison to their southern neighbours. They did, however, manage to gain control over the more submissive smaller tribes of Toqah and Zubaid on the banks of the river Tigris.

As for the relevance of these descriptions for modern times, the Bedouin culture in Iraq today is still present as will be discussed in the following interviews chapter. Bedouins serve in armies, security forces, and national guards as more than half of the Iraqi population is inclined to do, leading a life according to the values and norms of their ancestors. Many elements in Mesopotamian or pre-modern Iraqi culture reflect the levels of affinity and expressions of solidarity through their customs and culture that Iraqis continue to maintain, such as the traditionally elaborate floating houses made of harvested reeds and adobe from lake marshes, where tribes convene for cultural and religious ceremonial occasions in what is known as the Mudhif. These audience chambers are headed by a local sheikh and are used to run and discuss their estates as well as to settle tribal disputes as guest houses, where visitors are hosted with a ritual of sweetened coffee. The earliest traces of these houses existed in the fourth millennium B.C.E in the Sumerian city of Uruk, whose people used narrow fishing boats and kept water buffalos similarly to contemporary dwellers (Ochsenchlager, 1998).

Today the Mudhifs are built near swamp lakes, such as in Lake Hammar in the southeast of Iraq, near the Tigris and Euphrates known as Iraq's 'Garden of Eden'. This is the home of the Ma' dan tribe of the Beni Hassan, known to be semi-nomadic since they inhabited the

Marshes and are thus known as the Marsh Arabs. In 1992 Saddam Hussein used water diversion manoeuvres to drain the marshes in a bid to drive the Ma' dan out of the area, as a consequence of their supporting role in the 1991 Shiite rebellion against the Baathist regime. Nevertheless, the Mudhif culture persisted, and the wetlands were reflooded and revived in 2003 to make modern reconstructions of the marsh homes, accommodating people who returned to the wetlands of southern Iraq after their displacement through war.

Throughout the period the tribes retained a social order that they were accustomed to without external imposition, and which was organized through forms of municipal patriotism. During the Ottoman rule, the power of the sheikh, for example, was not derived from the Ottoman sultan or the constitution. It was rather a hereditary kinship system that the Bedouins followed. The sheikh's jurisdiction in all tribal matters was maintained by their social order, which was reproduced in the newly settled lands, while at the same time they maintained relations with the central authority.

Nonetheless, Bedouins were often willing to change beyond their own cultures and customs, such as under the sheikh of Hamah, who enjoyed witnessing his children being taught by a Christian teacher how to read and write. Alternatively, we know that Sultan Hamid founded a school for sons of sheikhs in the mid-1800s in Constantinople to convert them into fervent Ottomans and be recruited in a bid to recognize the glory of the Turks. Little was he aware that they were true children of the desert; his efforts ran counter to his Ottoman interests as the Arabs had not forgotten their lineage and language. This episode consequently strengthened their Arab identity as their understanding of their origins increased. Moreover, those who lived permanently under the Ottoman officials were subjected to continuous coercion, such as being forced to enroll in military service. Thus, Bedouins were reluctant to

assimilate into any foreign dominance or authority for they had been masters of their lands for generations. Even more so, other religious sects were often secondary to the essential allegiance of an Arab due to a conserved memory of their inherited legacies and historical origins (Hitti, 2002). Hence, how did the role of Islam play an advantageous role for tribal authority?

3.3 AGENT TWO: RELIGION

"It is implicit in the categorization of human societies given in the Qur'an (49:13) "O mankind: We created you from a male and female and made you into peoples and tribes"" (Khoury et al, 1991, p. ix). After the emergence of Islam in the seventh century CE, Muslims, Christians and Jews lived alongside one another in the region as long as a Muslim was the ruler who asserted his privilege. The notion that the community was ordered according to a centralized governing authority during the emergence of Islam was unknown amongst the Arabs. The central political authority can be viewed not as an institution or a territory but instead as a collective body. Hence, the organization of the central government became recognized not as an unnatural organization, but as a full-grown organism with heads of families and tribes bonded together by the sanctity of blood relations, within which the political unit was the tribe.

Prior to the annual pilgrimages to Mecca where the blend of different ethnicities originated, Arabs residing in Mecca considered themselves to be the purest of the Arabs. They attained such recognition by enforcing their ethnic identity over other ethnicities by political strength. In the early years of Islam during Muhammad's lifetime, there existed two politically challenging empires, namely Constantinople, which was the eastern part of the Byzantine

empire, and the Persian empire, which extended towards Asia. The integration of religious identity, hence, became central to the Arabs under the dynastic power. The Jahiliyyah war in the 6th century was said to have broken out over disputes about camels and horse-races, reflecting the elevated tribal tensions within Najd. Such accumulated strains included the tribes' contest for Arab dominance with the kingdoms of Ghassan, Kinda, Hira and even the Abyssinians in south Arabia, which added to the growing discord amongst the Adnan Bedouins in central Arabia. However, references to the Jahiliyyah wars were later conceptualized and shaped by the Umayyads and Abbasids through the association of processes of change with the changing functions of the pre-Islamic past (Drory, 1996).

The Quraysh were Bedouin-Nabateans known for their business dealings, which took the focus away from tribal and political battles. Yet they maintained friendly relations with existent warring tribes and various Arabian kingdoms. They gained power by playing a pivotal role, offering themselves as mediators to Arab tribal disputes and becoming specialists at reconciliation. Consequently, Mecca became a neutral convergence-point for Arabs of every tribe. Since Muhammad emerged from the Quraysh tribe, the recognition of his authority made his conception of the Muslim Ummah[8] more accepted, as the creation of a civic order among the peasants and Bedouin tribes was similar to the role of the modern state system.

In the second half of the seventh century, the centre of political power moved from Arabia to Damascus in Syria under the Umayyad caliphs, and later to Baghdad under the Abbasid caliphate, which ruled from 750 AD until 1258 AD. To benefit from the political rule,

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[8] Ummah is referred to as the 'Muslim community' bonding believers together.

Mu'awiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, broke the model of the political rule of *shura*[9] and *ijma*[10] and transformed the caliphate into a total and hereditary government based on tribal custom, founding a new model of political rule that persisted through the centuries up to more recent times. In parallel, however, these institutions were subjected to the authority of many powerful tribal confederations, for whom devotion to honour, loyalty and family were held in the highest value.

Religion in this regard can be viewed as not only a social construct but also a form of power in a community itself. It has historically been characterized as a critical force that generates a collective conscious by transcending the individual being and lending to it a sacred existence, enabling power and worship for the collective. If Durkheim's functionalist theory (1997) is applied here, the individual's responsibility to the group becomes eventually weakened by the division of labour. In such an occurrence, what replaces religion as the common bond? Emile Durkheim introduced the sociological concept of 'collective effervescence', which describes the event when a society or community occasionally gathers and simultaneously participates and communicates the same thought by doing the same act (Olaveson, 2001). This, according to Durkheim, is where one's birth into a society without choice creates an overarching collective awareness which binds people further together. Religious imagery becomes a metaphorical way of expressing a concept that is difficult to define to one another. Customs and traditions practised until today prove the presence of

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[9] *Shura* is an Arabic term for consultation; it is praised in the Quran as an activity organized by its representatives to make decisions on the affairs and decisions of the Muslim community.

[10] *Ijma* is the consensus agreement reached by the Muslim community on a particular subject based on the support of the Quran and the Sunnah.

asabiyah, as symbolic religious interactions are used to strengthen people's collective identity. Historically, religious institutions such as the church have protected these norms as well as the collective bond, for which ideologies have more recently come to present a replacement. People who feel a moral need to enjoy communal experience and group sentiment in regular ceremonies will therefore spontaneously feel the need to re-live and strengthen these memories, such as traditions around marriage ceremonies within a sect, as a religious duty and a form of communal bonding.

Thus, aside from the power which religion possesses to reinforce the collective effervescence of a group, the functional imperative of religion in society involves the incorporation of several disciplines of religion. These include social identity and social membership; stability and cohesiveness providing moral unity; and a collective consciousness, in which all factors exist while the community is continuously adapting to new patterns. However, in some cases of the Arab world, social or political actors may also have religious metaphors extracted as literal definitions or projections. Today this is manifested through the for-example interpretation of religious jurisprudence of the Quran and Sharia law for political reasons rather than interpretations of the scriptures.

Moreover, Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, was a man of noble descent who belonged to the Quraysh tribe of Hejaz, where small groups of believers gradually began to gather around him. A few young members of the influential tribes of Quraysh, including some members of minor families and clients of other tribes placed themselves under the protection of Quraysh. Unravelling the role of Islam in tribal life involves studying the self-governing nature of tribes in contrast with sedentary people who depended on their rulers for power to secure their interests.

Unlike the rule of political power, Islam became a form of distinct governance with a set of laws sourcing from 'within'; thus, it is not 'external' to one's soul as ordinary political power would be. Self-rule involves the circumstance in which an individual is not coerced into a particular set of laws and disciplines; consequently, regulating behaviour becomes an element with ethical power. Historically, Arab tribes were not familiar with external commanded authority. Therefore, religion naturally became an internal strengthening mechanism.

As a result, Ibn Khaldun suggests that religion acts as a sense of solidarity, consolidating a group feeling of superiority by enabling it to unite the tribes. In other words, religion allowed tribes to exert their power and assert their control beyond their tribal homelands. Yet, many Bedouins remained naturally distant from royal leadership as they preferred the deserts, which reinforced their *asabiyah* and allowed them the freedom to exercise their political and societal orders as they saw fit. The royal authority did not appeal to these nomads; it was used by the tribes who settled outside the deserts. Khaldun offers the case of the Arab dynasty, where Islam emphasizes its leadership with religious laws. The succession of the Caliphs resulted in a strong Arab royal authority, in such a way that religion acted as an enhancement to justify and prolong their authority. They maintained their dominance by collecting taxes and organizing soldiers to defend their dynasty and right as the ruling power.

Khaldun emphasizes the cyclical trend of tyranny and unjust power which also causes the fall of dynastic power. When the Arab group feeling of solidarity is weakened, several smaller local authorities will divide the territory amongst themselves to sustain their status, until an emerging dynasty once again seizes control of the empire through the same tribal traits and religious doctrine. The durability and strength of the royal dynasty accordingly rely

upon the number of supporting tribes. The more numerous and more reliable the group feeling is, the longer the dynasty will last and maintain vigorous larger provinces and lands. Islam reinforced this feeling as it provided a stable form of authority with a regulated doctrine and sets of laws dictated by the Sharia.

The primary concern of this form of governance was that political leadership in a social organization must be filled by a leading figure. As Ibn Khaldun (2005) writes, human beings tend to have a person who will guide them to what is good for them and who will stop them from doing things harmful to themselves. This is similar to the role which a tribal leader performs as a way to safeguard the tribe and ensure its durability through its group cohesiveness including provision of basic needs and security for the group. However, the separation between the mechanisms used by the dynastic ruler as described in *The Muqaddimah* is defined as analogous to the distinction between 'the sword' and 'the pen'. When people are busy establishing their power in the early stages of a dynasty, the sword is more significant than the pen. 'The pen' acts as a liaison to the ruler's authority in the form of governmental institutions such as the 'Wazirate', the police or the ministry of financial operations and taxation.

On the other hand, 'the sword' acts as a form of active support when, for example, the military is employed to protect the establishment from foreign invaders, or when people are unwilling to submit to their rule. It thus provided vigour and restraint that spoke directly to shaped character of the Arab tribesmen and women.

Furthermore, cultural activity served as a necessary element in maintaining cohesive group identity, representing a motivation for many Arabs to hold on to their customs and beliefs

since it consolidates their group *asabiyah*. On the other hand, one of the most important aspects regarding the unity which religion provided for the tribes was that the Muslim community valued the holy war of *Jihad* as a religious duty, due to the universalism of the Muslim mission. For this reason, the caliphate and royal authority are united in Islam, so that the ruler can devote his potential strength to both. The interweaving of the *asabiyah* and Islam thus becomes apparent through central political power, thereby signalling the three agencies through which tribes have intersected with which ultimately sustained their authority.

Muhammad's way of preaching Islam according to Khaldun necessitated a manner of speaking that would permeate into the tribal creed to invigorate the *asabiyah* and unite the Ummah for a religious cause. By promoting the attainment of glory and righteousness through Jihad wars against the enemies or unbelievers, he spoke directly to the tribesmen who felt a sense of duty to accomplish their loyalty to their pledged tribal allegiances and who wished to prove their skills and strength to their superior tribal sheikh. Even the term 'Islam' in Arabic translates as 'submission' to the one true God as the highest authority. Although this may appear contradictory to the dominance-seeking Bedouin, the hierarchal order accustomed to Arab tribal customs required a central leader to be operative and effective. According to Sidanius and Pratto (2001) Social Dominance Theory shows that societies exhibit social inequality as a direct result of the unequal distribution of social value, such as the social and ideological differences between democratic or Marxist groups. This hierarchy can be viewed as partly regulated by legitimizing and endorsing social needs which essentially support the social hierarchy, in what is known as *social dominance orientation.* This orientation applies to the Bedouin social order in one way as their desire for maintaining

their traditions and values through *asabiyah* is exercised as a need to maintain political power and economic interests. In this case, the unequal distribution of social values as Sidanius and Pratto's argue arises with the interlocking of the agencies. For example, the case of tribal confederate rivalry was based on previous ancestral reputation and glory, while during the emergence of Islam different social distribution was brought about by the Sunni-Shiite divide or the rivalry between the different caliphate hierarchies (as will be discussed below).

Triggered by political pressure from Mecca, Mohammad migrated to Yathrib in the year 622 CE along with some members of his Quraysh tribe. His constitutional legislation provided him with authority as the prophet of God and managed to incorporate the Arab tribes into a Muslim polity which also extended to the Jewish and Christian protectorates (Arjomand, 2009).

The Islamic belief that Muhammad is the final prophet of all Abrahamic religions is stated in verse 33:40 of the Qur'an. It describes Muhammad not as the father of all men, but as the messenger of Allah and the 'seal of the prophets'. This is also mentioned in the hadith of the Qur'an, which maintains that there is no prophet after Muhammad as he is the concluding and final figure in the manifestation of the line of messengers. The fight or *qital* was practised in the name of God and Medina was defended partly through the tribal networks. New contractual solidarity among the believers of Islam became superimposed on existing clan solidarity through client-hood and loyalty (Arjomand, 2009). This transformation was welcomed by the tribes as it maintained the structural mechanism of the tribal social hierarchy that Bedouins were accustomed to. This was the environment that set the tenor for the foundation of the caliphates in the future after various complex constitutional and legal developments had taken place.

Furthermore, during the Abbasid caliphate's golden age in 786-809 AD, Harun Al-Rashid transformed Baghdad into a flourishing scientific, artistic and cultural metropolis. It extended its power into Asia and Spain by fostering an intellectual climate that welcomed unconventional thinking thanks to his support of the Mutazilite school of theologians in the 10th century. They were a group of speculative theologians who considered themselves neutral Muslims and who had made excessive political gains in investing the caliph with vast religious authority (Renard, 2002). One of the leading causes of the region's prosperity was the applied religious rhetoric and, similarly to other civilizations, medieval Islam was convinced of its divine superiority, requirements, and self-reliance. Yet for the context of this research project, did Islam influence the sense of solidarity amongst the tribes?

If Islam spread by conviction, with its direct words combined with the sentiment of justice and charity that accompanied the religion's proliferation, Islam henceforth can be considered as the offspring of Arabia and the prophet Muhammad developed the system of belief as the unifying element of the Arab civilization, which can be viewed as a basis to the 'Arab-ness' of Islam. Yet it was also politicized by other elements such as the central government. By the 740s the Arabs had progressed into complex societies for generations to come. They would incorporate their ways into different provinces by allowing inhabitants, including non-Arab converts, to take part in the social, economic and cultural aspects of Islamic practice. At the same time, Islamic theologians increased in founding numerous schools of thought and subdivisions. On the other hand, the Sharia as a code of holy law was and remains a highly contested matter by jurists, mainly since it played a strategic normative role as a instrument of state power (as will be discussed below). The effectiveness of political and religious propaganda has been observed in a number of ways throughout Islamic history in

regulating aspects of an Arab's life through its public, private and international law. With the caliph as the spiritual viceregent of God, he assumed absolute control of religious, military and civil matters with a duty of maintaining the divine and physical legacy of Muhammad. Yet, the caliph was still considered as subject under the sharia law. His wealth was derived from the agricultural produce and trade within Arabia and parts of Europe, Alexandria and India.

3.3.1 UNITY UNDER ISLAM

Before the emergence of the prophet Muhammad, Arabia was divided into thousands of independent kingdoms consisting of many tribes in which each kingdom encompassed various ethnicities. However, it did not fall under any broader concept of a united rule such as Islam. Mohammad's disciples, therefore, found themselves between an arrangement of traditions and customs, while heredity became a way to preserve their power through organizational preservation of the agnatic system such as through the tribal elders. This particularly applied to the sedentary Arabs who originated from the countryside, as foreigners such as Persian groups continuously influenced Arabs living in towns. The Muslim Ummah accordingly took the form of a dual character as informer Wajih Kanso explains. One can view is as a structure where the union of tribes represents an all-inclusive united tribe under Islam, with Muhammad as its sheikh, as Kanso described. This enhanced the original system of the Arabian tribes with a nuanced religious purpose. On the other hand, the political ways of tribes continued to operate under their informal system of self-governance. Thus, the links between the tribal system and religion became inherent to its members.

The Ummah was responsible for uniting the tribes and preventing any internal fighting through political and institutional management of the caliphate. Therefore, tribes were assisted by the right to settle feuds and disputes through civil judgement, on the basis that disputes must be brought forth to God and Muhammad. However, if the dispute escalated into violence against one's tribe or the member of a tribe, then the entire community was duty-bound to unite in force against the aggressor to reach a settlement. Although religion did not prevent the tribes from resorting to bloodshed, it transformed the notion of revenge into punishment as a religious obligation to bring justice as commanded by Allah influencing the conflict resolution mechanisms which will be discussed by interviewed Iraqis in the following chapter. The duty of revenge became modified from the duty of tribal members towards one another into believers among each other, shifting social or political dispute-settlements into a military affair.

This tribal integration within the Ummah can be related to the concept of a plural society. "The term 'plural society' itself is a contradiction since the idea of 'society' in terms of [its] usual sociological definition implies unity-the antithesis of plurality" (Mitchell, 1966, p. 25). This particularly applies to the case of the Arab-Muslim tribes who are organized on a kinship basis. As Radcliffe-Brown (1952) argues, groups that maintain their own culture, language and customs are characteristic of composite societies, in which sections of the community live side by side but to a degree separately under the same political unit. Correspondingly, the different lineages of Arab tribal society organized themselves within communities as a method of external social organization, as Durkheim (1997) argues, yet they also fall under one larger political ecosystem.

However, animosity towards the social structure surfaced continuously as not everyone agreed to the system of rule. The levels of respect towards family, religion and institutions, customs and traditions differ from the sedentary peoples who were only governed by the Quran and the traditions of the Sunna, since any legal arbitration was agreed and settled based on the Shari'a. While the documentation of written legal issues was not customary among the Bedouin, over time its regularity increased in parallel with sedentarization (Layish, Aharon, 1979). Although blood for blood retaliation was a beneficial custom that would, in their belief, avoid further clashes, it did not require any formal religious process. Thus, such continual interplay and rebalancing of values affected the political stasis of state and tribal relations.

For instance, after Caliph Uthman's murder in 656 CE, civil war followed, and the sense of religious unity maintained by the caliphate became weakened (Hourani, 1991). As the Umayyad period emerged and relocated, Syria became the metropolitan province of the Arab empire. The Umayyads, however, relied on desert-power and even built their castles on the verges of the deserts. Mu'awiya Ibn Abi Sufyan was the first caliph and founder of the Umayyad Caliphate and Umayyad dynasty. His attainment of power presented difficulties as the empire's administration was decentralized and disordered. Mu'awiya's challenge was to find a new way to protect the cohesion and stabilization of the empire, since the caliphate was not only Arab but had also become a Persian and Byzantine successor state. To strengthen the coherence of the Arab empire, he came up with administrative solutions such as employing a Syrian Christian chief to avoid rivalry amongst Muslims and to ensure a degree of inclusion. The caliph thereby attempted to centralize regional power through the dominant tribes and transform it from an Islamic theocracy into an Arab monarchy. The

moral bond replaced the lost religious bond with a sense of loyalty to the Arab rule, which formed a hereditary social caste of which one can only be a part through birth.

3.4 AGENT THREE: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The third agent of which the tribes make use to maintain their balance of political or social power is through the central government, which came into being following the founding of the caliphate as the first centralized authority. The state, as defined by Bartelson (2001), is a concept that refers to elements of unity which possess significance based on metaphorical and deducible connections. Examining the state as Philip Abrams describes (1977) lies in explaining the nature of political systems, which includes the creation of a political-role structure within which binding decision can be made. It can be viewed as the ideological device where political institutionalism of power is legitimated as what has been referred to in this research as the 'formal' level. This also consists of social processes in which communications generate a political culture that operates as feedback. This These features include recognizing and legitimizing elements that exercise formal sovereignty over a territorial boundary.

As mentioned, thesis considers the structure of the political system from the organizational properties it provides which will be referred to as at the government level. This includes formalization, institutionalization of leadership roles, stratification of influence, balance of formal and informal structures and visibility as Abrams states. According to Jessop (2017), although the central government is treated as a subject with a social stratum, political parties,

an economic class and politicians who will pursue its interests, social actors may consider the state as a subject or instrument which changes its shape depending on the political forces that act in it (Teschke, 2005). Thus, the government's capacity to exert power relies on the political forces that create a complex system of structural interdependencies and strategic networks which are connected and embedded in the social system (Jessop, 2017.) This may be exemplified by civil society or, in the case of this research, the social tribal network that has the power to expand or reduce its actions for competitive political gains or promote a system of power-sharing that includes the social order. According to Hitti (2001) with Islamic governance of the caliphate system and Muhammad's previous tribal organizational support, the tribes themselves became an integral actor in shaping the Islamic state of the pre-modern era. Initially, the tribal decision-making process involved the *Shura*, which is a council of tribal leaders usually summoned by the provisional governor and later on by the caliph, as well as a tribal consultation-unit known as the *Wufud.*

Moreover, Hitti writes that the theocratic basis for being in power distinguished itself from earthly rule through a system known as the *Mulk* system, which benefitted individuals privately by giving them access to a kingdom belonging to God. Islamic justice was also maintained by mutual moral codes under which the tribal system constituted of. Election through the people was not possible in this system as the leader was 'appointed by God'. Muslim rule therefore was not organized into a hierarchy as the tribal system was, and there was no formal structural order between clergymen in the earlier period of Islam, yet it was marked by a special sanctity with the central government. The caliph was the highest order who embodied the supreme authority. At the same time, the Qur'an does not speak of any hierarchy between clergymen as all Muslims are considered equal. However, over time such

clerical divisions became more clearly defined in practice as the state developed, such as in the case of the Shiite Marja'iya in Iraq, which will be considered later.

Moreover, tribes were directly involved with the central government through the Abbasid empire. This consisted of a province known as Khurasan which included Persia and parts of central Asia, over which the caliphate-maintained control by employing Arab state guards named *Arab-al Dawla* who were ethnically pure Arabs loyal to the new rule. The Abbasid empire, which had its centre in Baghdad, is a particularly interesting period for this research since it provides a more accurate display of the exchange between the state and the tribes. Its response to the tribal organization in comparison with the Ummayads' strict ethnic system of pure ruling Arabs, the later on the Abbasids in contrary were relatively more diverse in respect to ethnicity to serve the unity of the diverse social and ethnic mixture under the newly founded caliphate.

The Abbasid caliphs owed most of their achievements to the proficiency of their top officials as well as the vizier or high official in Muslim countries or caliphates. The vizier managed the accounts of the empire as well as the Arab tribal warrior sheikhs, who became caliphs and assumed titles such as the 'Shadow of God on Earth' (Robertson, 2016). The central government hence maintained religious organization in order to fill the gap left by the effects and disruption of Arab national unity. The transfer of power, for instance, upgraded the condition of farmers giving them an improved title and a more equitable tax system.

3.4.1 POLITICAL CONQUEST OF THE TRIBES

Occurrences where tribes became increasingly linked to the political developments of the region can be noted in the Arabian Peninsula, which included members who are today known as the national guards of Saudi Arabia and members of the Ikhwan or brotherhood group. The members of this religious and military pact are an outcome of an alignment of tribal allegiances that took place during the 18th century. The founder of this movement was the theologian Muhammad Abdul Wahhab from Nejd, who formed the group through his opposition to the popular Sunni practices of the period. Abdul Wahhab's teachings were rejected by most scholars, prompting him to establish a religious-political party with Muhammad Ibn-Saud of the Banu Audi and the Hanifa tribes, who rejected an allegiance to the Ottoman sultan. Ibn Saud was a historic figure in terms of his leadership qualities and his exceptional impact across numerous tribes, reflecting how the ultimate source of power in the course of Arab history characteristically lies in the personality of the commander (Kostiner, 1985).

Consequently, the first Saudi state was founded in 1744 in Diriyah, with Ibn-Saud as the emir of the Saud dynasty. However, such an occurrence did not lead to accounts of tribal frictions taking place, but it also enabled Abdul Wahhab's Islamic school of thought to cement itself with the help of the stern traditional Hanbali[11] Sunni sect. The followers of this reformation became known as the Wahhabis. The inherited leadership grew stronger throughout the years, reaching Abdul Aziz in the 1900s in Saudi Arabia with the support of tribes from

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[11] The Hanbali school is one of four Islamic Sunni schools of jurisprudence derived from the Sharia and was adopted by the theologian Abd al-Wahab, who led the Wahabi movement in the 18th century.

Anazeh and Rabiah. In the early 1900s, a young emir was appointed by his tribal elders to lead Shammar, while simultaneously clinging to the old policy

Such developments consequently divided the tribes internally between those willing to adhere to Turkish authorities and those who desired to maintain their independent authority through their desert values. However, history showed that internal Arab solidarity ultimately prevailed. As Rogan writes, "[t]he very measures the Young Turks imposed to reinforce the Arab's attachment to the empire had the unintended consequence of encouraging a nascent nationalist movement" (Rogan, 2010, p. 185). Hence, *asabiyah* reinvigorated to produce a corporate spirit aimed at strengthening their sovereignty through ethnic unity. In this respect, limitations placed on the Arabs by the Ottomans included the alienation of the Arabic language, as Rogan states, which plays an integral role in the robustness of national identity.

Both these instances show attempts to copy the prophet Muhammad's efforts to consolidate the Muslim Ummah through the tribes. Nevertheless, Islam's attempt at merging various autonomous socio-geographical authorities proved politically challenging, and resulted in further subdivisions of sects, religious schools of thought, or very often various political parties or ideologies.

Following the death of Muhammad, the succession of Abu Bakr took place through the wars of Ridda in 632, which were part of a tribal movement that renounced its allegiance to the Islamic authority. This sequence of events posed a challenge to the theological interpretations of historians because it represented the tribes' refusal to accept and recognize the succession of Muhammad (Sharkey, 1994). The tribes near Medina who had converted to Islam had previously identified with the Ummah, while other groups took no part in the election of Abu

Bakr and suspended any subjugation and obligation to him. The Ridda were wars of reconversion and developed into a war of conquest beyond the boundaries of Arabia which extended into Egypt, Iraq and Syria. It is plausible that the Arab tribes would never have been subjugated if the conquests in the north had not provided an attractive solution to the internal socioeconomic problems related to their scarcity of resources in the peninsula. This was due to the peninsula's overpopulation. The Arabs furthered their migrations towards the fertile crescent through conquests, initially aiming to expand not only Islam but the Arab nation as well. How their *asabiyah* was employed played a key role in ruling the Bedouins, who were unaccustomed to a sort of discipline beyond their own; in other words, Muhammad had to persuade the Arabs and not to command them. Thus, the conquests became an expression of pride in the tribes' ability to unite and prove victorious in the wars.

Another event in which the state agent was applied took place after the succession of the Rashidun caliphate in 661 CE, when Muawiya's theocratic opposition undermined Arabism and centralization by emphasizing the freedom of religious expression for the benefit of a caliphate. Consequently, tribal discontent and feuds broke out between supporters of Muawiya's ideals and those who preferred their familiar ways. This led to continual tribal factions along geographical divides who were in rivalry in the northern and southern segments. The autocratic caliph claimed his authority through divinity, while this greater cause was elementary to the unity of the Arabs. However, the independent tribal divisions became the Achilles heel of the central state, since the tribes were unwilling to be forced into any decision. The Kharijites group, for instance, was one of the first recognizable sects of Islam that exited the community and politics of Islam and which represented a threatening desire to reject the centralized state and maintain a pre-Islamic order with its Islamic customs.

This consequently grew into an antagonistic anarchic opposition, hence illustrating the interchangeable political dynamics of the tribes with Islam and the central rule.

3.5 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the three agents of *asabiyah*, religion and the central government have been discussed in this chapter to later examine how tribal values may intersect with the agencies which have taken different forms in contemporary Iraq. Consequently, several loyalties or allegiances were formed, such as one's tribal, ethnic, religious and its various schools of thought, and sectarian loyalty to the caliphate as further layers of their identity. The agency of *asabiyah* has been described as a major factor influencing tribal group solidarity. These include the environment of the deserts, the tribes' social organization, lineage, and their customary values. What can be concluded is that the second and third agencies, religion, and the central government, significantly intersect with one another, since the inception of Islam mandated the creation of an Islamic political entity known as the caliphate. The central government agency has also been examined independently with reference to various political developments in which tribes engaged, illustrating the interplay between the framework of the tribal system and its political objectives which require agency in the face of introduced formalized political authorities.

In sum, this chapter has laid the basic foundations for understanding what the agencies of the tribal system are, to move the research into the contemporary context of Iraq. After contextualizing Arab identity and the three agents I will next apply these themes to modern Iraq after it reached its independence. Here, the following questions may be posed: how has

the concept of territory affected the tribes' sociopolitical power? And how has the tribal creed lived on through the pretences of political changes through the late 20th century into the 21st century? Such questions will be answered with respect to *asabiyah,* which may have become increasingly complex in the contemporary political environment, as it has generated various intensities in the affiliation and expression of its changing forms.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM MESOPOTAMIA INTO IRAQ

1916-1932

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will involve an analysis of the ideological and cultural elements that emerged with the creation of Iraq in the 20th century, in which tribes were viewed as a pre-existing construct with a degree of sociological sovereignty. It will analyze how the tribal system's political power maintained its links with the central government through direct representation and through its values and cultural influences after the Ottoman rule ended in the period between 1916 and 1932. It will draw on Durkheim's Functionalist theory (1997) to characterize the changing roles of the tribes. During this time multiple significant and detrimental events took place that marked and contributed to the shaping of the country's sociopolitical outlook since its formation. These include the post-Ottoman period, the British occupation, the Baathists' role, and the role of ISIS and the internal political landscape that developed in the recent period. In conclusion, it will demonstrate that the hypothesis is applicable at various stages in Iraq's historical timeline, which suggests that *asabiyah* plays a role in Iraqi politics by supporting the sense of a collective identity.

This chapter recognizes that there are many political events which have affected Iraq's political climate, especially the history of British colonialism, the Sykes Picot agreement, or even in a more recent case the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In particular, it will provide an outlook on how some groups shifted from a traditional tribal structure towards urbanized tribes that depended on the modern economic and political systems that were brought forth across time of which inhabitants adapted to. In contrast, tribes in rural areas remained relatively more traditional in their ways as they had less access to newly developed ways that the cities brought forth. Hence, this chapter will refer to Hanna Batatu's work *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement in Iraq* (2004). This work supports answering the research question through its examination of the foundations of the central government of Iraq,

including empirical details such as the electoral system to reveal how the system ultimately caused tribes to transition into complex systems. It then turns to the Baathist period, a lengthy and marked period in shaping of Iraq's modern history. In a first section, this chapter will set out the elements which were introduced in the country's contemporary history in which the tribal system could form linkages with the government in return it will question how tribal heritage may have played a role in shaping the Baathists' politics. It is important to note that at this shifting stage there are two tribal groups: on the one hand, those that have remained socially organized in traditional forms as described prior; and, on the other hand, those who broke away from the original social structure as contemporary sociopolitical and cultural changes took place in Iraq. The second group however continued to retain tribal qualities and values which they expressed in different contexts.

4.2 SOCIAL HIERARCHY: OTTOMAN ARABIA TO BRITISH CONTROL

As discussed in previous chapters, the interlaced network of tribes in Iraq has historically reduced the distance between the national power and the free choice of the individual, leading to a natural subjugation of the members of one group towards their leader. However, the politicization of tribes can occur according to multiple degrees as various Mesopotamian tribes and clans were influenced by superior powers, such as in the case of the tribes of Basra. As Tripp writes (2007, p. 19):

"A wary relationship developed between the provincial capital and the tribal lands. It was in these areas that the Ottoman authorities fell back on a traditional strategy of

encouraging dissent and factionalism within the tribes and their leading families. That weakened the capacity of any one of them to challenge the Ottoman state".

Yet even here, political differences did occur, since officials of the lower ranks did take tribal hierarchies and order into consideration and believed that such rivalries are significant for maintaining control. Clientelist tribal networks, in this case, were exploited as they were provided with material incentives through government channels to ensure their participation. As a result, the Ottomans were induced into a form of tribal code. Conversely, tribal confederations were regarded as adversaries to the central authority. But this did nothing to undermine the tribal hierarchal orders; they nevertheless remained a crucial component in the political discourse of the years to come by identifying their communities through lineages and sects.

Three factors influenced Ottoman Arabia's history from 1516 to 1918: firstly, their dominant role in the coastal areas within their empire; secondly, the Ottoman state's lack of direct authority over the Arabian Peninsula due to the physical distance from its centre; and, thirdly, the significance of religion in the politics within the Arabian peninsula. The Ottoman Empire's reason for its interest in the coastal region was chiefly geostrategic and religious. During this period, the geography of the peninsula constituted an area of approximately 2.6 million square kilometres and consisted of a desert interior, scattered oases and limited natural resources where only minimal agriculture was produced alongside the semi-nomadic Bedouin inhabitants (Ochsenwald, 2016). The Ottomans were largely interested in the coastal regions rather than the interior desert lands unless it benefited their trade economy through regional travel routes towards the coasts.

In Ottoman Arabia, the impetus of religious identity was particularly prevalent in Hejaz, since the Ottomans capitalized on religion as one of the ways to justify and consolidate their rule, conveying their reign as the protectors of Sunni Islam. A large part of the political legitimacy of the Ottomans in Arabia included their rule of Mecca and Medina in 1516, in which their support of the Hajj pilgrimage, the spreading of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, and their support for Jihad fortified their political and religious legitimacy (Ochsenwald, 2016). The Ottoman Empire's limited scope relative to its rule in Arabia also included primitive means of transportation. For this reason, Turkish-speaking Ottomans remained at a distance from central Arabia, despite their overarching political control exhibited through means such as taxes or compulsory military service. According to Batatu, Ottomans who settled in Arabia were said to have assimilated into Arabian society and its culture, producing a climate which limited Ottoman rule across the entire region.

According to Hanna Batatu (2004), even during Ottoman rule the Arabs in the countryside of Mesopotamia were known for their military involvement with the Ottomans, which essentially perpetuated the existing tribal hierarchy between the people of the camel and the agricultural people. The dominant groups were headed by the *shaikh al mashayikh* or the chiefs of the tribal confederations. Moreover, the relationship between the tribes in Baghdad and the Mamluks and Ottoman sultan was fragile due to the relentless conflict with nearby tribal confederations. Since most collective representations were highly political, their standing was precarious, so the most secure social position proved to be that of religious status. Here it is important to mention that social stratification was also ideologically legitimated by the Quran, which asserted that "we have divided among them their livelihood

in the present life and raised some of them above others in various degrees so that some may take others in subjection" (43:32).

Furthermore, the Quran states that God has given preference to some people regarding the ownership of property; the sharia then further defines and reinforces such pronouncements within the social strata, such as that, in regard to marriage, a man cannot be ranked below the status of a woman (as determined by the status of her father) and in regard to laws of inheritance. Likewise, Ibn Khaldun (2005) states that the five fundamental elements that the sharia preserves are life, the mind, religion, offspring and property.

According to Batatu (1978), since the late 1800s social classes in Baghdad were divided based on a hierarchy of wealth as well as due to religion. The civil lieutenants, known as *sadah,* laid claim to being direct descendants of the prophet Muhammad by the prestige of birth; both strata were known to have military or administrative training as well as an intimate knowledge in domestic affairs. The *sadah's* influence emerged through their awareness of their genealogy; groups were standardly based on religion and tradition as a basis for a hierarchal social order which sources its power from traditional structures.

Correspondingly, the political community in Iraq experienced a rift between urban and tribal members from the early 1900s which continues to exist today. Trade took place along the Shatt-al-Arab and the Tigris where tribesmen connected the territories that were politically contentious. The urban Arabs were governed under Ottoman laws as they were influenced by Turkish culture and also educated under its systems. However, Arab tribes escaped such influences and continued to operate according to ancient tribal customs marked by Islamic traditions (Batatu, 1978). As far as tribesmen were concerned, the government continued to

be subject to disdain, so that, as Batatu describes, tribal Arabs did not embody an intense feeling towards Islam and the Shiite tribes of the Euphrates did not develop a strong religious faith, although they did continue to chant secular or tribal themes. However, as mentioned in earlier chapters, tribes did develop a close attachment with religion, as there were and continued to be true and non-politically linked faithful groups in Iraq. For these groups Islam operated more as a facet of their identity that offered greater credibility for the tribes to engage in politics than under the Islamic caliphates. However, Batatu continues by stating that their Arab consciousness was never intended to resemble what was introduced at a later stage by Arab nationalists. Hence, many Arabs remained divided along the urban-rural axis and their tribal affiliations, which were both further divided along sectarian lines.

Prior to Iraq's gradual conversion into an industrial capitalist system, the social fabric of the Iraqi region before the 1920 formation of the Hashemite kingdom consisted of a plurality of self-governing city-states and tribal confederations. At this time Ottoman-Mamluks had accumulated property and riches through inter-Arab and urban-tribal exchanges. The enrichment of many tribal sheikhs through oil income during the early 1920s also played a key role in shifting the traditional social status of a sheikh within a tribe, introducing an economic character which ranged across a more extensive social landscape, transcending a sheikh's position within one tribe to a more competitive role. Other tribes, however, continued to adopt their traditional roles by herding their cattle but some also resorted to cultivating roles despite their previous prejudices against cultivators as socially inferior. For this reason, subsets and classes within the tribal network began to take place due to economic opportunities.

According to Hanna Batatu (2004), there were several factors that influenced this change, including the religious sect, size of land, income levels, amount of political and social prestige, and the relative interests (or lack thereof) of British economic diffusion in the region. However, the most significant underlying factor concerned the issue of status within the same social group, especially under the Ottoman rule in Iraq. For example, a tribal sheikh, agha or a tribal member who possessed a wealth of land, merchants, industrialists or the ulama as chiefs of mystic orders are all considered to carry higher social status within their sub-groups.

Moreover, the reason for the interpenetration of social reform, according to Batatu, is mainly down to money-making and the increase of private property ownership. Value placement shifted in terms of its symbolic importance from more traditional forms of religion, noble ancestry and lineage, religious knowledge, and tribal property to modern economic systems. Hence, it is crucial to consider groups that were detached from ideological initiatives and beliefs during Iraq's Hashemite monarchy from 1932 onwards, despite a tribal member's awareness of the distance caused by the economic and social development, as other groups began to develop simultaneously.

As Batatu writes, "[t]he members of a class may not be class-conscious in their behaviour, but their behaviour could nonetheless be class-conditioned" (Batatu, 2004, p. 10). For instance, alongside the ownership of property, the presence of the British market created a sense of private appropriation as the means of production not only in the cities but also in Iraq's towns. The hierarchy of wealth was originally created and stratified on the basis of religion, so that Muslims typically ranked more highly than Christians as well as Jews and Sabaeans, Sunnis ranked above Shiites, and Turks ranked above Arabs, Persians and Kurdish

people. These hierarchies of status also included former traditional orders comprised of *shaykh al mashayikh* (chiefs of tribal confederations) rather than only a single tribe and rested mainly with military power and ancestral recognition.

In the next section, the research may ask: given this social hierarchy within the history of the transition that the tribal system experienced, how did the role of religion and in particular sects further allocate social roles within the region's composition?

4.3 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION BASED ON SECT

To begin with, the main religious and holy cities of Shiism include Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf, which are considered the sources of the germination of Shiism. In the battle of Karbala in the year 680 AD, Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Mohammad, was killed, giving the city its Shiite prominence. However, Shiite politics has not always been stable, since, according to Hanna Batatu (2004), there are Sunni communities that are urbanized except in Basra and Nasiriyah. The area where Sunni Arabs settled was the Euphrates valley above Baghdad and the Tigris valley located between Baghdad and Mosul, while small Shiite communities lived in Dujail, Balad and Samarra. The third area demarcated rests along with old Baghdad, Mosul and the Istanbul road, in which a mix of groups resided including Turkoman settlements in the Shiite Tal Afar, Tuzkhurmati and Daquq, while the Sunnis lived in Altun, Kirkuk, Kifri and Kopru. Thus, with time the sectarian configuration in Iraq became noticeable with Arab Shiites becoming populous in the south, Arab Sunnis in the north and a Kurdish belt where a Sufist influence existed. In 1947, the religious and ethnic population was estimated at 170,000 Sunnis and Christians, who were mainly Assyrians, Armenians and

Chaldeans, discounting the tribesmen. The Kurdish populations included the Zoroastrian, Nestorian, Muslim, and Manichean groups, as well as followers of the Yazidi religion.

According to Abed al Mohsen (1995) older inhabitant tribes were scattered across the region while new tribes who emerged from Arabia migrated into the valleys of the rivers, which remained persistently Shiite. But what was the reason behind this Shiite continuity? Sunni ascendency had already taken place during the Ottoman Turks from 1534 as well as the Mamluks in 1749. Firstly, the presence of Shiite sanctuaries in the cities of Karbala and Najaf, alongside the Shiite schools in Najaf and Hillah, solidified Shiite presence which later became embedded in a long-drawn-out sectarian game of tribes and politicians in various periods. Secondly, there existed a network of commercial and religious communication between Mesopotamian and Persian Shiites at the time as Batatu explains. Finally, Bedouin tribes that migrated into Shiite areas increased their population, and in doing so they characteristically adapted to the beliefs and customs of Shiism, given that Islam was not a priority to them.

Nevertheless, similar circumstances occurred in Sunni tribal domains during the monarchical rule such as in the Euphrates and Tigris areas where the Jarba and Shammar tribes were living. For example, an offshoot of the same Shammar tribe in Najd was found with tribal domains in the Euphrates and Tigris and became known as the Shammar Toqah tribe, where one carried a Sunni origin and the other a Shiite. Similarly, dual sectarian identities existed within the same originating tribe such as among the Jubur groups, who resided on the Hillah branch of the Euphrates region and were Shiite, while the Jubur groups in the southwest of Mosul were Sunni. Yet, during the British mandate in Iraq which decided the future of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, after the San Remo agreement in 1920, such ethnic divisions were

exploited through the geographical boundaries imposed onto the region, apportioning the sociological breakdown of the landscape.

Concerning the religious groups and institutions during this period, groups converting to Shiism tended to be sponsored by fervent travelling missionaries. In 1826, Ibn Sanad, who was a historian of the Mamluks, described the sectarian conversions undertaken by the travelling Shiite propagandists as *Rawafid* or disavowers, referring especially to the sheikhs of the Zubaid tribal confederation (Nakash, 1994). During the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the authoritative laws were vigilantly applied in the countryside, since tribal power is not centralized. Consequently, the tribal conversions may have been a result of the tribes' dislike towards any form of governmental rule that could have challenged their authority. Moreover, the Sunni Ottoman government may also have contributed to their Shiite transition, as the government consented to give liberties to the Shiites in expressing their religious devoutness. Such liberties included sacred areas which attracted pilgrims to Iraq. Yet, during that period, the Shia were also denied the right to practice their religion in the two cities of Baghdad and Basra.

On the other hand, the Arab Sunnis inhabited the northern region of Iraq, where the Shiite influence was unable to take root. This was mainly due to economic ties between the geographical areas of Mosul and the upper Euphrates, which were primarily oriented towards the Sunni parts of Syria, as well as the Sunni areas of Turkey (Batatu, 2004). Therefore, during Iraq's monarchic years, inhabitants of Mosul grew closer in character to the Arabs in neighbouring Syria (and particularly those in Aleppo) than the Arab inhabitants of central and southern Iraq.

There was thus a process of religious, sectarian and tribal intermingling during the transition of Iraq into a monarchy and later into a modern nation-state. At the same time, this transition fashioned a distinctive cultural refelction of historically linked traditional values associated with tribal identity into what became known as modern-day Iraq.

4.4 A CULTURE OF FAMILIARITY: FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN IRAQ

Issues connected with culture in Iraq often reveal a politicization of historical memories that reflect the different perspectives which coexist and highlight fundamental political cleavages at play. The historical memory and culture of tribes have legitimated the current hierarchies of power, since, according to Davis (2005), the state plays a role in the sponsorship of historical memory through the production of its own culture or through a cultural codification that benefits the state's political leaders. Numerous cases in history illustrate how narratives are positioned to prove national authenticity.

As the interview themes will touch upon, many Iraqis are proud of their heritage, where one can there is a sense of collective Iraqi identity that exists alongside their Arab-Islamic heritage, which gives rise to a Pan-Arabist movement of resistance and protest against colonial rule and represents a form of cultural unity towards an older civilizational identity. This is also applicable to other states in the Arab region which have existed for so long as nation-states that it becomes the primary identity of their citizens. Moreover, such identities are very much still alive as they are continually referred to through symbolic signs. For example, the journal of the Directorate of Antiquities is named 'Sumer' to honour their Sumerian history, while ancient Mesopotamian symbols have been depicted as part of the

iconography of the Arab revolution, including the sun of Isis in Iraq's flag. Another example is when Saddam Hussein stressed the endurance of centuries-old traditions and culture across Iraq society, such as in his plan to rebuild Babylon's mythical Hanging Gardens in 1988. In this event the rebuilt temples were stamped with Saddam Hussein's name and date as the rebuilder:

"[d]irectives from the top have addressed themselves with such subtle matters as changing the official designation of Babylon from an "archaeological" to a "historical" site. In Said's Baghdad offices, which sport a small reproduction of the great Bruegel painting "The Tower of Babel," the director makes the point explicit: "It's a Mesopotamian tradition that whenever a new ruler arose, he would rebuild all the principal cities of Mesopotamia." (Schwartz, 1990)

Such an expression of heritage may reflect the connection of *asabiyah*, mad its links to Iraqi identity as an additional layer of allegiance and collective bonding even during this transitional period between the British mandate and Iraq's independence in 1932. The Pan-Arabist political ideology carried a deeper intrinsic affinity and allegiance, which, by allowing for the constant revitalization of historical memories, created a source of unconstrained power that would transcend time and change, such as through territorial demarcations or institutional transformations. For it is these historical roots that fortified the unity of the Arabs. As Eugene Rogan writes, "[f]or those who aspired to Arab greatness in the twentieth century, only the broader Arab nationalist movement offered the prospect of achieving the critical mass and unity of purpose necessary to restore the Arabs to their rightful place" (Rogan, 2010, p. 10).

As a strong form of allegiance which this research is examining, the tribal Bedouin *asabiyah* acted as the vessel for such sentiments, as the Bedouins' cultural and historical experience provided this allegiance with continuous solidarity. This came to represent the 'built-up identities' of Amine Maalouf (2000) which influences Peter Burke's conception of 'hybrid cultures' (2003) and produced a significant sociopolitical basis for the Iraqi nation-state to operate on. Moreover, this can be in Iraq through the power-sharing arrangements between the various sects and ethnic groups. According to Potter (2014), sectarian relations in Iraq can be viewed as competing subnational mass group identities. The different perceptions of self are influenced by the nation-state such as between the Iraqi Sunnis and Saudi Arabian Sunnis. Although this can be regarded as a cultural lens, differences are based on historical and ethnic variables. But culture can also be seen as comprising groups which have a high degree of similar perspectives, in this case sectarian views, which emphasizes a form of conceptual sharing (Godwyn & Gittell, 2011). In other words, while differences in sects such as Sunnis or Shiites are found, ultimately both groups operate from the same worldview which is founded on an intra-religious lens. This shows the significance of the social landscape and the sovereignty that groups carry, irrespective of their adherence to the the central state.

Given the build-up of narratives and arguments used in this research, it is difficult to detach Arabs' subjectivity from their political accounts, largely because *asabiyah* is a core stimulant for their conceptual and objective being. Here, one ought to keep in mind that, despite divisions such as class, these attitudes are heavily present across all strata of the population as an over-arching phenomenon. Collected memory, according to Whelan (2016), is an opposite notion to intuitive memory, in which memory is a product of external programing

and one's personal experience is influenced from one's surrounding elements rather than merely inherited. While it is reductionist to assume that only one or the other exists, this research finds room for both of these notions. Thus, not only does historicity have implications on the generations to come, through heritage and cultural preservation, but surrounding political developments influence the culture and disposition of groups as well. In the following interviews chapter, the research will exhibit the different ways in which the expression of this memory may still be alive.

In this way, a common culture produces links with its developing environment, such as through new territorial boundaries, the introduction of advanced economic systems and political changes. This in turn offers an added dimension to identity, which is linked to a shared pattern of assumptions so that a group may cope with issues of external adaptation and internal integration within an area (Godwyn & Gittell, 2011). Hence, Iraq comes into being as a sovereign territory and a newly constructed state identity. This enhances the inhabitants' livelihoods over time through agriculture, technology and industry, incorporating the 'Iraqi' solidarity as another form of collective allegiance in the hierarchal order of loyalties. Ethnic and cultural homogeneity serves national identity well, a fact driven home by the ongoing discord with the ethnic Kurdish population in northern Iraq as they seek self-determination.

While, on the state level, political dynamics within institutions can forge ethnic ties based on a sense of national identity, such conditions can also deem it insufficient for further development towards united and robust nationhood (Smith, 2009). In particular, such ethnic alliances can create divisions within the nation itself, causing a level of dysfunctionality and

intra-political dynamics. This aspect will be further discussed in the form of ideological differences which are relevant when considering the notion of social sovereignty.

Hence, the concept of nationalism in relation to the creation of Iraq may have lead to the fragmentation of its sociological composition alongside its narratives of 'national character' (Smith, 2009) and the elements that constitute a nation, such as its consequential history. Ethnic connections are accordingly renewed, rejected or revived across cultural conflict to prompt their reinterpretation, such as Sharif Hussein's conquest in Iraq's post-colonial period to liberate the Arab people from the Ottomans or the aftermath of the Sykes-Picot agreement.

Despite such reorientations, the level of national consciousness varied depending on the political climate of national identity. For example, the Baathist regime which desired to create a secular national identity intensified into an authoritarian government which coerced the regime's ideology across the country. In particular, it sought to suppress the various communal attachments within Iraq which defined the different levels of authenticity that groups carry. The origins of such a cultural evolution include the institutionalized practices of the three agents of religion, state and *asabiyah*, which have since created a retrospective cultural basis for Iraq as a nation.

As part of this research, I conducted an interview with a specialist scholar in Iraqi politics who chose to remain anonymous,[12] which I assumed was due to their controversial history with former governments in Iraq. The interviewee mentioned that Iraqis have a need to believe in a superior 'Iraqist' identity based on their inherited civilization. He also described

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[12] Anonymous participant. The interview took place in September 2018 in Beirut, Lebanon.

that the term 'Iraqist' denotes a deeper meaning by combining *qawmiyya* or nationalism, and *wataniyya* or patriotism, which reflects the Iraqi people's deep convictions of predominance as the descendants of the first civilization in the world of ancient Sumer, followed by the Akkadian and Babylonian empires that carried riches and strength according to many measures. In another interview which I conducted with the scholar Nahla Chahal[13] in 2018, she described that Iraqis (seemingly including herself) carry an inner belief that, as the progeny of the dwelling Semites of Mesopotamia, their identity is more nuanced in comparison to other Arab peoples. She also argued that Iraqis' collective solidarity as galvanized by *asabiyah* dates back even earlier than other countries and groups across the Arab world. Thus, this longevity helps to deepen their sense of identity as Iraqis. This was not far from Saddam Hussein's political expression and beliefs in leading Iraq, particularly in his frictions with Iran which shares a similarly powerful heritage of ancient Sassanian and Persian history, although it stands in historical opposition to Iraq.

Under the discussion of how tribal culture and values may have flowed into the economic and political dynamics of modern Iraq, one may ask how is today's political culture and the sovereignty of the state an expression of Iraq's historical authenticity? How is its authenticity measured? The basic understanding of authenticity encompasses a strong sense of authorship or a perspective of undisputed origin, which is usually attributed to the agency of humans (Varga, 2014). In this understanding sincerity represents a public notion played in social roles

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[13] Nahla Chahal is a writer, researcher, activist and journalist on various topics including Iraq, Lebanon and Islam. She is a columnist at the London-based Al Hayat newspaper and president of the Arab Women Researchers Association. The interview took place in September 2018 in Beirut, Lebanon.

which validates the self through others. On a collective national level, definitions entail a level of 'possession' of an authentic culture which is original to its possessors. This authenticity is lost once individuals lose their political liberties and, as a result, their moral ideals and a sense of meaning, as Taylor (1992) describes. Consequently, authenticity as a feeling of origin to social groups such as the tribes in Iraq is closely linked to their historical narratives, one of the main features that this research considers is their strong sense of social sovereignty.

Moreover, as a basis for the conception of sovereignty as a structure that carries its own decision-making authority (Krasner, 2007), the validity of authenticity will be determined on the basis of the level of recognition that the social or communal aspect assigns to not only culture but the state structure itself. This measure, however, tends to not only rely on its social impact on the state, but also is interlaced within the subtle yet compelling influence of shared collective history and memory, which affects both equally. It entails the transformative effect and integration of the world economy and the shift from agrarian to industrialized societies, including their interaction with concepts of production and reproduction. These aspects have spread certain preconditions for the appeal of nationalism (Gelvin, 2009). For nationalism has undoubtedly altered large cultural systems which may have played a role in transitioning of tribal system's ways.

Yet at the same time, the politicization of religion did not stop sectarian political parties from establishing networks which have benefited financially from being in politics. The cultures of sectarian groups were not only shaped by the pre-existing characters and beliefs, but also operated as a means for furthering social order and status amongst the people, which enabled a more complex interlocking of tribal temperaments to exist.

4.5 RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL STATUS CONNECTION

Social status is considered to be relative to the degree of social authority one possesses, while social authority suggests that its relative power is what has persevered across time. While some tribes remained organized in the traditional system, other groups that retained tribal heritage and values but adopted certain dynamics to maintain their political connections with the agents. This includes the politicization of sectarian groups. How have religious sects in Iraq interacted with newly introduced concepts of social status to ensure the further maintenance of their social sovereignty? According to Weber (1978) sovereignty with regard to a territorially demarcated state can be defined by the notion that there is no higher authority that can legitimately act against the state. However, when sectarianism is introduced, the credibility and justification of the religious doctrine as a divine doctrine can be viewed to carry its own degree of credibility. Moreover, the traditional tribal authority over their communities is regarded within the framework of this research as a form of 'social sovereignty'. This creates a diversity of contestants for power, whereby former traditional or cultural structures such as the tribal hierarchies begin to operate under their own authority (Wrzesniewski, 2014)

Batatu (2004) argues that this framework has emerged from a concurrence of religious and social structures within the monarchy in Iraq since the late 1800s and the early 1900s. In particular, there exists a degree of interrelation between confessional loyalty and social positioning across populations in various parts in the south and centre of the country. During this period, the Shiites were known to be cultivators of palm gardens, where their communities and bazaars dwelt along the canals. Conversely, the Sunnis were largely

landlords who dominated the desert markets while the leading traders emerged from Sunni families, with a few minor exceptions. Moreover, the army officers were also Sunni; however, as Batatu states, the ranking that they commanded was decided from the agricultural tribesmen of the southern areas as they were amongst the most powerful individuals. Therefore, the Sunni and Shiite dichotomy reflected a socioeconomic rift which hindered social and political development. Yet a crucial feature of this dichotomy was also owed to social and economic differences between tribes; for example, in earlier times the rural areas of the Muntafiq confederation drew its authority over the Shiite farmer tribesmen or the 'People of the Sheep' as well as the marsh-dwellers by the Sunni warring tribes, or the 'People of the Camel' (Al Samarai, 2004). One also ought to keep in mind that such Sunni political power in the towns additionally emanated from the Sunni-represented Ottoman political authority in the region.

In the 1940s, the social positioning of the Shiites dramatically changed in the southern and central parts of Iraq. One of the reasons for this shift lay in the social aspect, where the higher income class who were Sunnis started to marry their daughters to Shiites. Whereas in earlier times such an act of intermarriage was almost unthinkable, this shift became more credible due to the changing class and socioeconomic status which occurred because of the changing structure of the central government, that allowed for more significant financial gains. Another cause was that, between 1947 and 1958, the Shiites sought higher social status by reaching ministerial positions, even though their weight on a governmental level was not immediately decisive (Al Radwan, 2008). Yet at the same time, there were still Shiites who were predominantly living in extreme poverty, such as the Shurugas or the Easterners, who were migrants from the Amarah tribal country living in mud huts in Greater Baghdad.

Moreover, Shiite representation in government grew during the period of monarchical rule from 1921 until 1958. During the mandate period from 1921 until 1932, the total number of representatives who were Shiite was 20 out of a total of 113. From 1947 until 1958, these appointees increased to 87. Representation was initiated by the appointee's tribal affiliation alongside the sum of land possessed in dunum. Shiite families who accumulated wealth and acquired a higher social status gained substantial economic power through relations with the central government. For instance, in 1958 according to Batatu (2004) six out of the seven largest landowners in Iraq were owners of above 100,000 *dunum* of land (one *dunum* is equivalent to 0.618 acres) and were Shiites. They lived on Habbaniyyah and Wadi Tharthar, where water-control systems raised the value of the land in which irrigation schemes flourished. These included Mohammad al-Habib al-Amin from the Rabiah tribe, Hasan al-Khayyun al-Qassab from the as-Serrai tribe, and Nayef al-Jaryan from the Albu Sultan (Batatu, 2004). Hence, the intersectionality between sect and social status can be understood as a tribal way of assessing order.

Such issues were later altered by the Agrarian Reform Law of 1958 which stipulated that land proprietorship had to be registered. Those who benefited from this law included the heads of the tribes or the sheikhs; however, this law did not encompass the tribesmen who practised collective ownership through customary rights (Baali, 1969). The reform aimed to destroy political feudalism and the power of these landowners which had been placing obstacles in the way of government, since it imposed limitations on landholdings to the effect that each ownership should not exceed 1000 *dunums*. The relationship between the tribal chieftains and the tribal members thus came to resemble a landlord-tenant relationship regarding the property.

As a result, the class separation within the tribal network became even more distinct, since it now legally guarded the economic standing of each sheikh. "Only 2 per cent of landowners owned 68 per cent of the total agricultural holdings, whereas 89.4 per cent of the total peasants (fellaheen) owned no land" (Baali, 1969, p. 62). The same measure also extended the authority of the tribal chiefs of landowners by giving them more power and control over the peasant groups, enforcing taxes on them and blocking any peasants from organizing unions to defend their rights and interests. Social stratification in rural Iraq became very wide, and landowners had the capacity to influence the farmers' voting behaviour, even though they lacked basic needs such as education and healthcare because the governments chose to focus such endeavours in the urban areas. This indirectly strengthened the rural chieftains or landowners as they exercised further authority.

But how do such tribes manage direct tribal-governmental relations based om their status? In an interview I conducted with a member of the Hdadin tribe (2019) from a rural area of Homs, Syria, named Salah Dnadeel[14], he stated that he had fled to Lebanon from the 2011 war and had been working on the farming lands of villages in the Bekaa with his wife and children. When I asked him about the tribal climate and dynamics back in Homs, he revealed that his tribe, the Hdadin, is based in the northern region and is known to be the largest tribe in the area alongside the Bani Khalid tribe. Their power and political sway are autonomous since they tend to enjoy a degree of freedom within the lands they inhabit, without accounting directly to the local municipalities or governates. Salah continued by recounting that the

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[14] The interview with Salah Dnadeel took place in July 2019 in Bekaa, Lebanon.

Hdadin carried not only valour but also status, which is measured by the number of cattle as a resource and asset. Such networks, according to Dnadeel, are protected by other tribes based on a geographical pact outside state control. However, due to today's violent conflicts, the Syrian and Iraqi governments are exerting more pressure as they are acquiring more lands for state ownership, prompting such tribes to take over other villages in order to assume control of their agriculture and herd their animals. The government, however, distanced itself from such dynamics holding that communities had a degree of autonomy to maintain balance according to their understanding and consensus of the customary order. Tribes within Baghdad also consisted of individuals of varying status between the tribes who were farmers, the marsh dweller tribes (as discussed in chapter 3), tribes known as 'the people of the camel' and finally the tribal aristocracy, which was usually related to desert ancestry.

I asked Salah Dnadeel how disputes are typically settled, and he explained that disputes are less likely to happen depending on the level of the pacts made between the sheikhs of the tribes, in which their rules included the protection of women. Moreover, most of the agrarian tribes today are armed and tend to guard their weapons for security. In the occurrence of any outbreak of violence, the Syrian government tends not to interfere unless the tribes are unable to settle the dispute themselves, as prominent tribal members and sheikhs do maintain close relations with the government. In return, such relations ensured that the sheikh remained powerful, upholding a higher social status and control over his tribe. Dnadeel's account provides an idea of how traditional measures of power remain connected with cattle wealth, adult prowess and artillery in order to maintain a degree of social sovereignty outside the parameters of the state.

While Baghdad consisted of approximately 110 tribes in the last century, accounts such as Salah Dnadeel's shed light on how older tribal confederations withstood changes as they began to break up after the fall of the monarchic system in Iraq in 1958. Urbanized middle and working classes who were previously from patriarchal tribal societies in the desert were able to retain their authority over their areas from the rents of oil revenues. Patriarchy in this context is related to the dynamics of kinship structures in place, which relates to morals of male authority. Consequently, patriarchy and connectivity are intertwined to organize a hierarchy which ensures the necessary stratification of power (Joseph, 1993).

Such an interaction was used to revitalize traditional sociopolitical systems around which the state is consolidated, in which, according to Batatu, larger tribes such as royal families were substituted for state-ruling political parties, while tribal networks corresponded to corporatist associations. Also influential was the military institution which ultimately overthrew the monarchical system in Iraq and could sustain itself by recruiting not from the urbanized middle class, but from tribes and royal families, as will be discussed in the next chapter. In this way, *asabiyah* as this thesis argues, not only maintained but somewhat played a role in politics as a result of pseudo-ideological incentive.

Given this foundational transition in how tribes shaped parts of their ways to fit new social roles which are also linked by sect, the tribal temperament soon became capable of entering the newly established state of Iraq through the Baathist ideology. This transition will be the subject of the next section which will focus on a more modern period of Iraq's history.

4.6 TRANSITION INTO BAATHIST IRAQ

As a result of the Arab revolt led by Sharif Hussein against the Ottomans in Hejaz in 1916, the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq was established in 1921 under the British-installed King Faisal I. It was declared by the League of Nations under the British mandate of Mesopotamia, which led to Iraq's official independence from the United Kingdom in 1932. At the start of 1930, Iraq experienced a period of stability as a constitutional monarchy and was the most successful mandate under the British colonial rule of the time. Other Arab states envied Iraq as its nationalistic accomplishments centred on its independence (Rogan, 2010). Soon after in 1941, a coup d'état produced a nationalist reaction in Iraq with the main intention of removing the previously installed pro-British government and appointing Rashid Ali al-Gaylani as prime minister.

By this time, the socialist Baath party was on the rise due to its promises of reform and social change. This ideology, which was created by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar in response to the spread of Marxism, attempted "to fuse a commitment to Arab nationalism with militant anti-imperialism and a focus on state-led developmentalism" (Dodge, 2018, p. 32 sec.1.5). Aflaq believed that territorial boundaries exposed a weaker Arab position in the face of western imperialism and for this reason intended to promote Baathism as an ideology which could develop gradually rather than as an immediate reaction. A third coup against the government took place in 1968, finally bringing the Baathists to power with their robust nationalistic sentiments, later on ushering in Saddam Hussein's reign in 1979.

The Baathists concentrated their capital on their physical force, employing tools of coercion such as the army and police, economic investments, cultural or informational capital as well as symbolic capital (Bourdieu et al., 1994). In this way, they produced a cohesive corporate Sunni political elite which marginalized societal groups correlated with ethnic cleavages to

establish authority. This allowed the Baathists to obtain further socioeconomic hierarchal order and for their political community to be directed at regional objectives of Pan-Arab unity, as Davis (2005) states. For example, the Baathists also emphasized their Mesopotamian heritage and at times even revived the civilizational pride of the Babylonians to exemplify their power, such as in the naming of the Special Republican Guard as the Hammurabi Brigade after an ancient Babylonian king.

Although the Baathist ideology had underlying humanist roots, built on pluralism, inclusion and participatory politics, Aflaq's plan to unite heritage on a trans-historical level, including the period of Muslim unity coupled with Arab nationalism, as a way to unite the Arab spirit further and reach the transcendent ideals of Baathism (Abu Jaber, 1966). In Michel Aflaq's *Choice Of Texts* (1962), his description of Baathism drew attention to the central tenets of the movement, one of which was freedom as a precondition to unity, which in reality struggled due to the region's fragmentation partly due to reasons such as colonial interference. This aspect was described as an effect of the dysfunctionality of Arab societies rather than a cause. His desire to foster a transformation of moral understanding towards national consciousness required a spiritual change towards higher ideals and love that would usher in practical changes, such as the ownership of the means of production, through the *inqilab* or the overthrow of the government, thereby re-awakening the nation.

This degree was partly expressed in the party's stance against western imperialism, with a focus on the implementation of socialist ideals locally in order to attain a measure of material and moral production (Haim, 1962). These ideals, Aflaq stated, would bring back the 'Arab personality' by merging intellect with pragmatism and by strengthening the linkage to formal historical lineage, which according to him had been a form of dependent inorganic

attachments. To legitimize Arab identity, all degradation and obstacles must be eliminated to allow the 'pure blood' lineage to be revitalized. One notices here the previously discussed recurrent tribal themes such as pride, bloodline purity and ascendency.

By transporting the Arabs back to memories of older Islamic civilization, Baathism emphasized a readiness to act according to nationalistic commitments. Such an enactment requires three agents: firstly, an ideological sentiment to ensure a vigorous central government; secondly, Islam as an integral element to Arab identity as discussed before; and, lastly, a highly spirited level of *asabiyah* that would aim to 'perfect' Arabism, in the terms that Aflaq expressed. Such a task would be implemented with the support of tribes in Iraq. Hence, the outlook of the Baathist ideology appealed to the Iraqi Arab and tribal temperament.

While Baathism aimed for unity, it effectively advocated for a multi-party system that included the Nasserist, Kurdish and communist parties in Iraq, causing internal bureaucratic dissatisfactions to grow. The Baathists' cause compelled them to initiate a series of military coups, beginning in 1963. They believed that they were a competent group carrying a strong conviction which resembled its Arab predecessors, who exerted influence to maintain their sovereignty and authority across the region. Socialist Baathism soon became a key ideology seizing power in the latest form of collective mobilization seizing power in 1968.

Ideological movements such as Baathism and Pan-Arabism can also be regarded as reactions to the Sykes-Picot aftermath. According to Andreas Jacobs (2017), after the end of the colonial period, revolutionary policies were not promised by Arab monarchies, so Arab countries came to rely on the continuity of traditional mechanisms of legitimization. This

leads Jacobs to consider the argument of the functionality of states in relation to political reforms, new ideologies, redistribution of societal resources and economic investments. Perhaps the reason that the tribal element remained robust during this shift was, as Young (2016) argues, since political movements resisted colonial dominance, which in return gave locals a strong sense of cultural empowerment. The response during the transition was fueled by the French and British colonizers, prompting Iraq's treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1971 as well as Abd al-Nasser's anticolonial movement of the 1950s and 1960s. It also included President Ahmad Hassan al-Baker's nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1972, which was previously headed by a consortium of foreign oil companies.

Various tribes, therefore, politically aligned with the Baathists for various reasons. Similarly, tribes who had historically benefited through patronage were undermined by various central governments. The permanence of the hierarchy of tribal institutions has been particularly notable as tribal structures have been able to adapt to the changing circumstances throughout recorded history (Wrzesniewski, 2014). As a result of the 20th-century changes, economic, political and infrastructural terms, relationships have developed among the state, sheikhs and tribesmen. Moreover, although some tribal groups broke away from the traditionally organized communities, yet traditions, ways of life and the tribal creed continued to be present and will be illustrated by the accounts of the interview participants in the next chapter.

While the Baathists primarily established themselves as socialists, the shift to the authoritarian regime became increasingly evident. As Tramontini (2013) argues, the Baathist regime was characterized by censorship, control and the promotion of a culturally produced

subordination which served as an instrument of state power. This was reflected in the militarization of Iraqi society that was vital to the Baathists' construction of national identity, as well as the personality cult which was heightened by the spread of related myths, images and words. This represented, as Tramontini stated, a bargain between the ruler and the ruled, which denoted a way to create direct relations with the government and prevent an opposing group solidarity, similarly to the earlier Bedouins' politics of persuasion amongst tribes.

Moreover, populist authoritarian regimes have proved far more popular than other variants as they adopt a revolutionary scheme by which the peasants and middle classes consolidate against existing oligarchies in instigating social conflicts (Porter, 2019). Thus, instability caused by earlier structures of authority in Iraq was curtailed by the presence of the revolutionary Baathists. The regime was able to expand societal organizations through its military and bureaucratic methods. Yet, since clientelist linkages were incapable of gaining the support and loyalty of the mass population, the military had to rely on the immediate party-building process to access multiple societies and generate reliable support. Accordingly, such regimes prove to be more complex, as their leaders consolidate a convoluted synthesis of tradition and modernity, ensuring that an elite body is produced and ruled over by a dominating leader such as Ahmad Hassan al-Baker or Saddam Hussein. Such trust and affiliation in the leadership as the operational means of power is decided on the basis of a leader's traits, including his or her tribal descent, kinship, religious sect or region, which automatically infuses patrimony into the regime's one-party structure.

Moreover, as a more recent reference, Saddam Hussein's appeal to traditional tribal values for control, such as communal honour and heroism, ensured support for his declared wars, since he himself came from the Al-bu Nasr tribe from Tikrit. Consequently, tribes were

always portrayed by him as symbols of patriotism and courage. Those who assisted the regime eventually gained from the benefaction of the Baath rule, by possessing electricity networks, road infrastructure, healthcare, water systems, and education services in their communities.

After the second Gulf War in 2003, Saddam placed his trust in Sunni tribes to protect the country and maintain the stability of the government. Moreover, the allocation of sponsorship was used to appoint and guarantee the allegiance of key groups, such as the amassing of oil profits and foreign support that permitted the clientelist groups connected to the regime to be compensated. Networks associated with the Baathist regime also deployed repressive means such as the activation of belligerent security forces and intelligence against any potential act of disloyalty or insurgence. The clientelist networks, allowed for the flow of capital and personal gains through individualized political action. Certain groups possessed not only regime power but also the social power that inevitably fragmented Iraqi society into groups to gain privileges based on sociopolitical relationships with the government. This hindered any potential class mobilization required for the US-introduced democratic change in 2005, resulting in a succession of collectively exploitative groups in power. This raises the question of whether the tribes were exploited or benefited under the Baathist regime.

4.7 TRIBES UNDER THE BAATHISTS

According to Mehdi Noorbaksh (2008), when the Baathists took power, the role of the tribes was dismissed as the regime was building its political system according to its ideology. Tribes in Iraq were primarily traditional institutions which did not play a role in building a

one-party system. However, Saddam's political support of the tribes shifted as he began to openly support the tribal sheikhs as a reaction to the deterioration of his power after the ramifications of the Iran-Iraq war which erupted in 1980, as well as after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 conflict against Kuwait. In particular, they were funded and provided with the necessary autonomy in exchange for political allegiance to the state, which exercised its political control over the countryside tribes by forcing their recruitment into the army. Before Saddam Hussein's Baathist government, his sociopolitical stronghold was primarily based within the Sunni Arab community, which prompted other parts of the tribal society to become more resentful toward the regime.

Precise and comprehensive tribal anthropological research in Iraq has not been conducted in years according to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations released in 2005; this is partly due to political reasons. However, we know that tribes have become increasingly divided across the centuries with heightened internal politics since 2005. There is an estimate of approximately 1000 tribal organizations in modern Iraq including 20 or 30 large tribes or federations, who have roughly 100,000 members. A Director of Tribal Affairs represents the tribes in Iraq at the Interior Ministry of Iraq; today, the government recognizes their role as they have been granted autonomy over resolving disputes and combating forms of violence and extremism in their confederations. Security links have also been established between the government and the tribes as a way to solve issues that can only be resolved through customary and traditional approaches that are familiar and respected by the communities. As an interview participant explains the governmental Directorate of Tribal Affairs was established in 1923 under Iraq's monarchy and was at that time, linked directly to the king and the government. Years later, under Saddam Hussein the structure changed as there were

three tribal levels which were heavily controlled by the regime. The current in 2022 was established in 2004, which consequently removes Saddam Hussein's three levels policy. The main responsibility of the office today is to agree upon the representatives of each tribe and appoint a leader to head each group. Each major city accordingly has a council of tribes, except in Kurdistan which in direct contact with the Baghdad office. The councils regularly meet every Sunday to find solutions to any tribal disputes or issues that take place within their area(s) of control. They are acting as a court of justice. They currently have 47 tribal judges[15].

The most powerful tribes of the 20th century included the Shammar, Anaza, Bani Tamim and Zafir tribes (Al Radwan, 2008). The unification of these tribes was based on shared sentiments of Iraqi nationalism. Yet, the socialist Baathists were also criticized by the tribes in the 1960s, as the Baathists intervened in tribal affairs by fragmenting the large estates of tribal sheikhs and coercing land reforms. In response, many tribal Iraqis fled to urban areas, seeking jobs that ultimately contributed to the building of Iraq's modern economy. This indicates that individuals often left their tribes in search of more favourable economic conditions; the implications of such actions inevitably affect the sociological and demographic aspects between rural and urban areas.

On the other hand, the Shiites of Iraq, who are represented through the Marja'iya in Najaf by the Ayatollah Al-Sayyid Ali-Husseini Al-Sistani also benefit from the strength of his tribal connections. Generally, the role of tribal Sheikhs includes the protection of their people,

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15 Participant Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

ensuring a basic level of economic wellbeing and acting as mediators and judges to settle disputes and solve property issues and marriage arrangements. Unlike in earlier times, when their power began to be challenged by the presence of centralized nation-states, a sheikh's role was unrestricted; today, their roles are limited by the state and constitution (Otterman, 2005). Some groups accepted state authority by performing their social duties, including settling disputes which the state allows. In contrast, others rejected the central authority on the grounds that it undermined their social sovereignty as was inherited centuries ago.

As discussed earlier, Bedouins have always followed customary law, while, in times of instability, the central government becomes weak and corrupt in the limited application of durable laws accountability and legislation, which has historically caused Bedouins to exercise their control of the countryside. Customary law varies in different communities; however, over time, most laws in Iraq have become influenced by Islamic law. Yet the degree of religious impact fluctuates and has essentially conditioned the communities' sentiments towards Islam. This is seen across communities where the political relationship between the clerical institutions is revered. Thus, social power is transferred to those institutions in which the community would often organize itself into a party. For instance, the strength of Iraqi Shiites today is enhanced through political parties such as the Moktada al-Sadr party.

In contrast, some communities are indifferent to the religious institutions, despite their Islamic identity and faith. In such cases, social power and affiliation may override other forms of representation, generating a vigorous affiliation towards their community or group, and more specifically to their tribe. This was highlighted when Saddam forced the conversion of various groups of Iraqis to become Sunnis during his rule, showing Islam playing a part in the agency of mobilization and expansion of the regime's power. For this reason, tribes

such as the Shammar today, who still identify their primary allegiance to their tribe, are mixed between Sunnis and Shiites due to political reasons.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Shifting from the history of tribes in Mesopotamia to contemporary Iraq, the remainder of this investigation argues that similar representations of identities and their expressions which are rooted in history continue to be alive today. However, how can such a firmly rooted identity endured through time into the 21st century, and how embedded are the identifying elements in the memory of Arab Iraqis today? Before shifting the research into more contemporary history to test the validity of the hypothesis, the following chapter will include a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with 27 Iraqi participants and will provide a contribution and perspective of how the tribal system in Iraq maintains its political power and what cultural effects emerge from this dynamic. Participants will provide reflections of the historical overview of Iraq, the three agents and culture while linking it with their opinions of how tribal heritage may continue to be present today.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERVIEW THEMES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter includes the research findings from a list of 26 interviews conducted with Iraqi participants in 2022 (1 other participant in 2020). A thematic analysis has been applied to detect the common emerging themes from the discussions. After transcribing and coding the interviews, this chapter highlights the themes and will be examined and analysed independently. This process is undertaken to help answer the research question and will tie into the following chapters as a foundation for the hypothesis. The themes that have resulted are the following: deliberations on identity, the absence of full implementation of state law with a sub topic of customary law, tribal authority and governance, interdependence of tribes and government, common conflict Issues, on independence of tribes, links to Islam with a sub topic of paradox of sectarian differences, conflict resolution, values with a sub-topic of preservation of lineage, cultural and artistic expressions, with a sub topic of expressions of bonding. This chapter is built on the primary data and interventions of the participants.

5.2 DELIBERATIONS ON IDENTITY

Throughout discussions with various Iraqi participants on the topics of belonging, several notions emerged including their connection with the feeling of being 'Arab' and in which this identity often includes tribal, ethnic, or sectarian affiliations. Several participants expressed that the term Arab nation as a collective space holding Arabs together has ceased to exist in Iraq after 2003. Yet the closer term which could reflect this connection in the region today would be the 'Arab world'[16], accordingly one can understand Iraqi identity by looking at the relationship between the concept of the 'Arab nation' or 'Arab world' and the

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[16] Shatha al Juburi, PhD Researcher. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

tribes. According to a participant[17] tribal origins in Iraq are still very important to Arabs as their connection is essentially their identity and where they originate from which dates to many previous generations. In general, when Iraqis first become acquainted with each other, in almost each encounter the next question asked is what tribe or *'asheera'* they are from, which is very important to each individual as it gives them a sense of pride to be representing their tribe.[18]

Moreover, there are descendants of Arab clans and tribes, including the tribes of Al-Obaid, Jubur, Al-Quraishi, and others who still strongly affiliate with their identity and belonging to their region through their family lineages. For instance, although the interviewees are Iraqi, a few shared that their tribes carry roots from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria and other areas showing a presence across the region's social landscape, but today they have no role outside Iraq[19]. On the other hand, other participants believe that there is a close connection between clans and the Arab region or the Arab nation because Arab Iraqi tribes are proud of their Arab history and their connection with their 'Arabness'. For instance, Gulf States, have started to capitalize on the fact that the Iraqi tribes in south and west celebrate 'Arabism more than sectarianism'. Accordingly, the development of relations between the tribes in the south with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and UAE governments as well as their tribal counterparts (such as Al Shamer tribe whose branches spread in Saudi Arabia and UAE) was witnessed.[20]

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[17] Participant Um Alawi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[18] Participant Um Alawi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[19] Participant Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[20] Participant K. Al Saray is a researcher in politics based in Irbil. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

The various narratives discussed with the interviewees illuminate on a nuance within Arab tribal identity In Iraq, which is multi-layered and encompasses varying degrees of regional political allegiances, institutional benefits, and connections with religion often seen as the driver of the collective or respective sect, this, however, does not diminish the underlying tribal or ethnic identities and affinities as they may in different cases be intersecting.

While Iraq's recent political experiences show that sectarian, national and ethnic rivalries may have cast tensions over local politics, there is a continuous identification towards not only to one's sect or ethnicity but also to Iraq[21]. This can be contextualized and interpreted through different cultural perspectives, narratives, formal and informal systems of governance. It can be seen as many of Iraq's southern tribes have announced their break from the 'Arab world' whilst undertaking their sectarian identity, which has provided another form of bonding and has acted as a 'savior' from political and socio-economic distress at the same time[22]. In other cases, this secondary identity through a sectarian affiliation has extended across the region towards non-Arab countries to solidify political interests locally. More recently, some Shiite tribes believe that dependance on Iran's presence in Iraq for example, is considered by some as a legitimate argument towards strengthening the political position and population of the sect, which is "one of the most surreal paradoxes in the history of people[23]". To some extent, the same applied to Sunni

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[21] Participant M. Abdullah. Interviewed online via email questionnaire, 2021

[22] Participant M. Abdullah. Interviewed online via email questionnaire, 2021

[23] Anonymous participant 18. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

clans who did not object to Turkish intervention in the northern part of the country during the Ottoman period.

Other arguments referred to the United States' invasion of Iraq which ushered in a bloody history, whereby adding to the Baathists' exclusion of religious or sectarian politics, this indirectly unleashed sectarian and ethnic differences to what one participant referred to as the 'genie' of tribes, a process which has answered to the wishes of tribes relevant to their interests. This critical response continued garnering increased corrupt activities by the tribes and their 'sacred ally' the religious institutions. Such corruptions according to the participant triggered a sociopolitical decline in Iraq as it also disintegrated the cultural identity[24]. "I don't see any relationship between Iraqi tribes and the Arab nation now. In the last 10 years, tribes have become armed entities and organizations that impose their laws by forcing their weapons in their respective areas of influence and do not have any positive role"[25].

While the several layers connected to Iraqi identity (or affiliations) are highlighted here, the participant responses point to the importance of tribal belonging to Iraqis today. Whilst religion continues to play a role in the political developments, the presence of tribal roles in such dynamics points to, first, its continued presence in key political aspects, second, the interconnection between the sociological and political realities in the country. If the data is assuming that there is a connection between the social and the political which also points to the strength of the role of the tribe, hence it prompts an analysis of the next theme which connects the tribe with the state as the central political authority in Iraq.

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[24] Shatha al Juburi, PhD Researcher. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[25] Anonymous participant 16. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

5.3 ON THE LIMITED ROLE OF STATE LAW

This theme builds on discussions on the limited presence of a consolidated central state and appropriate law enforcement and answers whether its limitation has driven groups including tribes to operate outside the legal and normative framework of the nation state. As Ibn al Iraq al Quraishi[26] explains, the tribe and tribal culture in Iraq is prevalent in Iraq, specifically at a time when the adherence to law and subsequent judicial accountability have been absent which has been illustrated more clearly after the fall of the last Baathist regime. One of the main resulting issues is the structure of security services that stand in the face of the tribes in Iraq. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the limited role of durable functioning state institutions drove tribes and tribal associations to dominate urban life of some major Iraqi cities including Baghdad. This according to the participant, has inevitably strengthened the tribal networks and their customary codes as an immediate response to provide protection and services to their people. Yet, the tribal system has always existed in Iraq under varying forms of central political authorities and political regimes that were in power. The tribal system's dominance fluctuates depending on the strength of the central state and Islamic authorities which affects the centrality and dominance of the role that clans and tribes play in politics. In recent years, as the informer explained the tribal system has taken 'full control of society', especially after the U.S. occupation, tribes have imposed tribal law across the Iraqi society not only in provincial areas but even within the capital.[27]

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[26] Participant Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[27] Anonymous participant 17, Interviewed by phone call, 2021

"My relatives had a physical quarrel, where one member went to the police station to file a case against the aggressor, but he was surprised by the officer telling him to go to your clan to receive justice, for we will do nothing for you" [28]. Iraqis adhere to their tribal affiliation because they do not have another affiliation that provides them with protection and safety, because of the weakness of the law and its insufficient application. Had the Iraqi state been stronger and fully legitimate in the eyes of the society, perhaps the affiliation would shift from the clan to the nation state. However, Iraqis tend to identify and maintain allegiance with the clan by relying on their cousins and relatives to protect them from others and apply the justice they deserve 'by force' as the informer describes.

Since the law does not 'protect an individual' or provide them with rights, there is a fear that anyone affiliated with a militia can take away their rights, for that reason the informal system operates independently from the state yet continues to maintain linkages with formal institutions including the religious authorities and government as a way to maintain access to the institutions, economic opportunities, protection and provision for its people.[29] Nowadays it can be seen as a reciprocal interest based link, where the tribe's relationship with the Iraq state as well as militias are based on mutual interests, especially during election year. Therefore, one can infer that with the provided accounts, customary law can play a role in maintaining stability and ensuring accountability on both social and tribal levels in cases where the state is weak in functioning efficiently and providing protection and services to its

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[28] Anonymous participant 17, Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[29] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

citizens. However, how does tribal customary law connect with formal or official institutional processes to play an effective role on both formal and informal levels?

5.3.1 CUSTOMARY LAW

In the case where the tribal system strengthens, customary law becomes widely effective in several aspects. After 2003, tribal culture in Iraq has come to dominate the political, social and individual lives of Iraqis, which as S. Huboub explains, implies that almost all conflicts or issues between individuals tend to be resolved by tribal means. There is a general tribal code that governs the tribes in the south and west, and there are more specified codes of conduct for each tribe as well. Some participants also argue that both the official and customary systems are completely independent from one another. "The tribal system is basically not regulated by any official state law as it operates completely independently, so they have their own ways and decision-making processes which are far from any legal norm that should ordinarily regulate daily social behavior within a democratic nation state".[30]

Yet, other participants argue that customary law is prevalent not only in official political matters and daily social matters, but often intertwines both. "For instance, it is considered normal if an employee faces a problem to seek the help from his or her clan and not state law, and perhaps one of the most paradoxical realities is that you may see two ministers in the Iraqi government quarreling over an issue, only to finally agree to ask a tribal or clan sheikh to accept to host them as a solution to their problem"[31]. However, according to S.

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[30] Anonymous participant 17. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[31] Anonymous participant 13. Interviewed by email questionnaire, 2021

Huboub, there is a limitation of a sense of fairness and justice not only from the state, but often from the tribal mechanisms of conflict resolution known as *sulh*, "in short, there is no justice in tribal solutions, but rather, only bargains".[32] This implies that it is not only about whether both systems influence one another but that it can also be seen to be interest based, in which one could argue that both systems benefit from one another due to the presence of effective state institutions and methods accountability as stated above.

To understand the link between the informal and formal systems of law, the connection between state law and customary law can also be recognized by considering the process by which government representatives are appointed[33] as an informer explained. Representatives in parliament or in government cannot be appointed to their positions by those who do not have a large and strong tribe supporting them, regardless of their political party affiliation. Therefore, when each candidate in Iraq nominates himself or herself to parliament or provincial (municipal) councils, one of the first actions the candidate performs is a formal visit to the leader of his tribe or the sheikh of his clan and declares his/her allegiance to him. The candidate then promises the leader that members of their tribe will be appointed in a government position as an expression of goodwill for the loyalty exchanged for the duration of the four-year government period. This, of course, also applies to the prime minister, the presidency, parliament, and ministers.[34] Such processes illustrate how tribal

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[32] Participant S. Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[33] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[34] Participant Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi, interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

power or influence may be seen to extend to state institutions and their governing responsibilities.

5.4 TRIBAL AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

The following theme describes the various accounts in which tribes govern in Iraq and based on the participants' input it helps create linkages with the previous themes and understand how authority is perceived under certain conditions of the state and the tribal system. The tribal system's strength is apparent in its control of aspects in the social, political, and often economic life of its networks. As they have the power to regulate, uphold, or adjust practices, and to condemn or exclude others within their tribal and clan networks. This is backed by the exchange of large sums of money to satisfy a political leader or sheikh. "Today, the sheikh of the tribe is looking after his interests rather than qualities of honor and courage which they would once exemplify"[35].

As one informer explains, the tribe can be considered as a form of a micro-government in Iraq, more especially seen after 2003. Therefore, any consultation and support for any government that took place after the fall of the regime, emanates from these very tribes that have supported the validity of the government[36]. In brief, the tribal system 'comes first and last', in other words, since government requires tribal support to ensure its credibility and gain legitimacy on a social level, in which aftetr the fall of the Baathist regime, the tribal system acted as a form of government by taking over governance and provision within their

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[35] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[36] Anonymous participant 4. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

respective consistencies. "There is no authority in Iraq, perhaps it exists in other countries. The authority of the clan is stronger than the authority of the state in Iraq".[37]

In contrast, others regard the tribal system to be less important as opposed to what others regard, however, this does not infer that the tribal system is weak and nonexistent, rather that due to the current entanglement of sectarian and tribal dynamics, the traditional tribal system independently has changed in their opinion. For instance, one informer[38] who is a member of a tribe inhabiting the marshes in the southern part of Iraq in the province known as Amarah explains that much of the power of tribes today has decreased in comparison to previous periods across history in his region. After reflecting on his own tribal origins he continued by explaining that in today's political climate, there is not one single form of authority that is centralized and organized that can unite Iraqis and maintain relative stability. Another participant shared "there is no prominent role for most of the tribes, at least since the fall of Baghdad, as well as the Ottoman era. Iraq generally weakened in all respects, including the clan, even during monarchic rule and later when democracy in Iraq were established"[39]. This reflects on several themes covered thus far, including the nuances within Iraqi identity as well as how they operate on informal and formal levels. The interaction between the authority of the state and that of the tribal system can be seen to operate co-dependently given that certain elements are in place including the security environment of the country, provisional capacity of both systems. Tribes not only benefit from weak political parties that

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[37] Anonymous participant 6, Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[38] Anonymous participant 2, Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[39] Participant S. Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

do not have a clear political platform but run on sectarian and tribal rhetoric. Nowadays tribes and tribal values are closely intertwined with the political elite in reciprocal-interest based relations[40].

Therefore, the connection between the tribe and its approach to state authority can be more accurately described and understood through an inverse perspective in their relationship according to M. Abdullah, where the more the central government strengthens and causes an increase in tyranny. Thus, its relevance in political affairs directly increases, which weakens the centrality of the tribe causing them to retreat. Often, tribes or clans will rebel against the government's authority when it is weakened, which points to a more pragmatic approach to the relationship rather than a clearly defined relationship as Abdullah describes. Across history Iraq lost its political centrality after the fall of the Abbasid empire at the mercy of the invading nations, sheikhs of tribes either fought their enemies or supported their political rule. The Ottomans attempted to regulate the clans with money which was often a struggle especially in the south and central Euphrates, since there was no specific strategy for their development in Iraq[41]. As the informer reflects, they succeeded in weakening the clans through land ownership, but the British Empire did the opposite for their own interests and issued the Clan Claims Law. This deepened the role of the sheikhs and enriched them over the peasants until the 1958 revolution and the abolition of the feudal system. Afterwards

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[40] Participant M. Abdullah. Interviewed by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[41] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

came the rule of the Baath party and during the rule of Saddam Hussein the clans were weakened as he aimed at focusing his efforts and resources towards urban areas[42].

Others explained that the tribe defines power through its primary leading authority, who is often under the watchful eye of others. Since the Abbasid era until the American intervention, external authorities have been approaching influential clan heads and relying on them for their support in return for gifts and privileges. They also often seek the help of clerics who issue fatwas with the help and support of one government to oppose or fight another. This dynamic took place until the Baathist rule which some argue that such a change took place due to the regime's weakness in managing and ruling over clans and their elders and their larger ruling tribe. "The Americans repeated what the English did, by relying on clans in the management of the state, so the sheikh of the Shammar confederation was assigned the position of President of the Republic, as well as many heads of the western and southern clans".[43]

With this historical background, the informer then mentions a recurrent analogy amongst tribal networks 'clans will rise like the Phoenix'. In the participant's opinion, after facing challenges, the tribal system regains its power since they rely on a 'closed system' which constitutes their own set of traditions and customs which can often contradict civil laws. However, in exceptional cases, tribes would also accept the rule of the state due to their perception and value connected to respect to authority. A paradox worthy of highlighting is that there are Shiite tribes residing in the center and the south of Iraq who support and protect

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[42] Anonymous participant 5. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[43] Anonymous participant 14. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

the Shiite religious authority in Najaf. However, there are other instances in which disagreements with such a political alignment happen, such as the 'great breach,' when the sons of tribes united under a revolutionary movement representing Muhammad al-Sadr, came out to express their opposition dressed in the cloaks of their fathers to display their power and make themselves known. This account exhibits how several allegiances or affiliations such as the tribe, the sect and the political can overlap or often diverge based on different interests.

In the period after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, foreign intervention affected the capacity for the central government to govern effectively [44]. More recently, the rise of political Islam has not only dominated the political scene but also the Iraqi society. Such developments have revived alliances between classical references such as the religious authorities with the political parties and the Iraqi clans, as the participant explains, the tribes were particularly strong given the mutual respect of tribal custom and code from all references. On the other hand, today the sectarian dimension of politics has intensified through more than 50 channels of broadcast, exaggerating the role of clans in politics, whilst providing arms to clans. Given the rising political role of the tribes this does provoke changing alliances amongst tribal and clan networks, "days ago, clans attacked power stations and others defended them. Unfortunately, it is an anachronism."[45]

Despite the changing sources of authority and modalities of governance, other layers such as a group's ethnic identity may affect the ability to govern efficiently or forge sustainable

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[44] Anonymous participant 3. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[45] Anonymous participant 7. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

relations between government institutions and clans or tribes. "I am Kurdish, and Kurdish tribes do not have the power and legal authority that the tribes in the south and west have because the Kurdistan regional government has -relatively- stronger legal and security systems".[46] To follow up with this discussion, the theme about the relationship between tribes and the state authority becomes prominent, in which interviewees explain how such links are formed and how their respective 'authorities' are maintained.

5.5 INTERDEPENDENCE OF TRIBES AND GOVERNMENT

Building on the previous theme, tribal authority exists across the social landscape in varying degrees, in specific cases it can also be seen extend to the government since many officials working in public institutions have family ties with one another where financial benefits exist. "I would say that there is a strong relationship between the government and tribes as most of Iraqi people with relatively senior government jobs have been employed simply because they are from a certain tribe, or they have been given a job through a friend or family member and they do not necessarily hold the right qualifications for the role". Informer Um Alawi continues to describe such issues as discrimination and injustice on a national scale as individuals with the correct qualifications are left to struggle to even receive slow skilled jobs whilst non-qualified people are easily given senior roles simply because they are part of a certain family or tribe. in most cases, people tend to favor someone simply because they are from a certain tribe.[47]

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[46] Anonymous participant 10. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

[47] Anonymous participant 14. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

Moreover, Huboub explains that governments that have engaged with tribes, have provided privileges to the leaders and their members in exchange for the support and backing of their government formation and decisions[48]. As he clarified, their authority does extend to government institutions by which they exercise and maintain a status and power across all levels. Senior and high-level positions would be distributed not only based on sectarian or ethnic considerations but tribal allocations too. The relationship thus, can be seen to be based on an opportunistic interest from both sides[49]. For example, governments support some tribes and overlook the presence of uncontrolled weapons to please the tribal elders as the informer described. In return, the tribe exploits the state for the purpose of strengthening its influence and obtaining economic and contractual benefits.

On a practical level, tribal and clan authority may even control government institutions at times by monopolizing appointments and job and development contracts in some areas "in many areas of Baghdad and the southern regions, there is no state law applied but the prioritization of tribal law"[50]. Yet, the issue with the current Iraqi government is that it is not representative of all Iraqis and regions in Iraq. Many appointed officials would have been living in Europe, the United State or Canada. For that reason, what is needed is a fair representation of Iraqis residing within the country who also represent different religions and ideologies to increase the credibility of their authority.

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[48] Participant S. Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[49] Anonymous participant 12. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[50] Anonymous participant 18. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

Based on these discussions, one can suppose that there is a relationship of tension and attraction between both systems of governance the tribal on as social scale, and the state on an official national level. Apart from the notion of tribal or clan representation in government, other interviewees believe that Iraqi clans continuously attempt to consolidate their presence in the country by taking advantage of the weakness of the state rather than building relations with the state. Hence, the relationship between tribes and the central state is a 'worrying' relationship as Huboub shares, because it does not act based on common national principles, rather adapts based on personal interests to obtain contractual agreements with state institutions that are most often filled with cases of corruption due to the considerable illegal monetary theft and appropriation at the expense of state resources from many actors involved. According to an interviewee, this exchange or transaction takes place at the expense of the Iraqi homeland[51] inferring that the tradeoff is the security and stability of the country. What further destabilizes the links between the tribes and the government as K. Al Saray explains is that Iraqi politics is often shaped by foreign intervening states, in which the tribal system is also subject to the politics of international interests in the region and would be engaged according to their personal interests. [52]

5.6 COMMON CONFLICT ISSUES

To describe the presence social and national state-level systems of power, many of the interviewees provide examples of common conflict issues which take place in Iraq. This helps the research frame the varying degrees of influence actors may have, as well as what

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[51] Participant S. Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[52] Participant K. Al Saray is a researcher in politics based in Erbil. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

type of issues can shape disputes or conflicts in Iraq. One common element found today includes a group's adherence to their Islamic reference and the legitimacy of the armed group's behavior which is vital for armed groups' internal cohesion and external competitive or cooperative relations with other actors. This is important as religious authorities can play an influencing role in Iraqi political life and might therefore be considered as an actor in conflicts or disputes based on this research's primary data.

As Ibn al Iraqi explains, tribal culture is picking up and dominating social interactions not only in the remote areas in the south but also in cosmopolitan cities as Baghdad. Applying tribal law as a conflict resolution mechanism has become a lucrative business for tribal leaders who are commissioned to mediate conflicts, solve disputes, or mobilize members of a tribe to threaten or take revenge on behalf of a member. In the limited presence of the rule of Law and formal legal institutions and functional courts, as well as widespread bribes and corruption, the tribal law is 'easier and faster in solving problems', collecting compensations, bringing people to tribal justice; therefore, Iraqis can see tribal ways directing social life even in Bagdad.[53]

Other typical conflicts take place over illicit trade routes, especially in border areas such as Basrah in the south and Diyala in the center, or disputes over job assignment or contracting, trade, public office, and administrative appointments. However, when tensions are high such spheres of influence reach a point of clash by using 'light and medium strength weapons' and it has often continued in some areas in the south for days. Such clashes are usually

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[53] Anonymous participant 2. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

resolved by government mediation and the payment of royalties.[54] "Every little conflict has a possibility of turning into a major conflict with dozens of deaths, a car accident, money, work, a look at a woman in the street, and sometimes trivial matters than that"[55]. For example, a smaller scale dispute between two people or car accidents may evolve into violence due to past existing tensions. In most of these incidents, clan elders intervene for reconciliation, which is usually done by paying a financial compensation.

Another informer added that most of the conflicts that occur between tribes are caused by events that transpire between individuals belonging to two different tribes and involve mostly killings, encroachment on property rights or sexual assaults. But after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, some conflict issues that appeared between tribes included disagreements in economic interests or land ownership which as Al Saray stated is attributed to the limited presence of a functional governing state and institutions that can manage such disputes. For example, there are some tribes residing on lands rich with oil, natural resources, or lands consisting of historical archeological sites or traces of significant cultural heritage. In such cases, a tribe may claim that it has the right to exploit the land and benefit from it which posits a challenge to the government, in other instances a private company may be contracted to work on a land neighboring a clan base, in which the clan would then try to impose themselves by force on the companies to obtain financial gains[56].

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[54] Participant M. Abdullah. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[55] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[56] Participant S. Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

Tribes operate based on 'pragmatism and opportunism' with their interests largely dependent on economic and survival needs as the informer explains. Clan and tribe association to the Iraqi state are dependent on basic conditions evolving around their struggle for survival such as their sustenance in daily life.[57] For example, a participant describes her tribe whose is famous for agriculture in southern Iraq and then participated in the twentieth revolution against the British when their interests were damaged and not for the sake of the homeland[58].

However, some disputes or conflicts are not easily resolved with money settlements. Often when the tribe's pride is insulted, grudges are carried for many years and often generations in which adversity becomes the method of revenge. In an interview conducted Iraqi with filmmaker and director Aida al Hassani Schlaepfer[59] whose tribe is a family descendant from the lineage of the prophet known as *asyad*, she describes her experience while filming with tribes as the only woman invited to their *madif*, known as hosting houses of tribes. She was also one of the only women to attend an all-men's conference discussing disputes amongst tribes. The director describes an incident that she was exposed to in 2006 and 2007 between Iraqi Shiite tribes and the Qataris government where tensions built up over a disagreement related to the hunting of eagles. On a yearly basis, many princes of the gulf would travel to Najaf for this hunting season, and during Saddam Hussein's era they would hunt and afterwards organize parties during Ashoura[60] where they would take pictures with women

[57] Participant K. Al Saray is a researcher in politics based in Erbil. Interviewed online 2021

[58] Anonymous participant 6. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[59] Participant Aida al Hassani Schlaepfer is an Iraqi filmmaker and director. Interviwed in person in Zurich, Switzerland 2021.

[60] An Islamic holiday marking the first month of the Islamic calendar known as Muharram, commemorating the death of Prophet Mohammad's grandson in the Battle of Karbala.

kawali or *kawliyya* (or prostitutes). The princes would even serve and drink alcohol, which is forbidden in the month of Muharram, as the informer described this was purposely done to provoke the Shiites residing in the area.

"The Najafi Shiite tribes held this grudge internally, especially since they are responsible for imam Ali shrine". After fall of Saddam Hussein the Shiite tribes gained strength and as the Qatari princes arrived in Iraq again, they planned to seek revenge. One Qatari royal family member was eventually abducted along with a group who traveled alongside him. This prompted a negotiation between one designated Shiite tribe and the Qatari authorities. While millions of dollars in hard currency were offered in exchange for the release of the hostages. However, the tribes refused the money and lit it to fire. They responded by stating that the Qataris do not understand the severity of what their actions did to their honor in which no material compensation would suffice. Eventually, one of the hostages became ill, the tribes were urged to release him, in which he became the person to share this story and expressed that it is almost impossible to expect that the rest of the hostages will be released because of the gravity of the mistake. With this incident what is apparent is the link between tribal code of honor and Islam. While this conflict evolved around shame and dishonor that the Qataris brought forth close to the Najaf Imam Ali shrine, as defenders of the shrine, they would honor their responsibility as a core customary expression of dignity and tribal strength[61]. On the other hand, as seen by the accounts and opinions of other informers, religion to the clans and tribes can often be regarded as secondary while their tribal codes and social organization are a priority. Therefore, Islam here can be seen as a bonding element for tribes, where their

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[61] Participant Aida al Hassani Schlaepfer is an Iraqi filmmaker and director. Interviewed in person in Zurich, Switzerland 2021.

belief system is expected to be respected by others as it becomes integrated into their identity and assimilated as part of their honor. Accordingly, any case of behavioral provocation or offence in this case the disrespect of a commemoration connected to the prophet's family, can be translated as a principle to defend their honor.

Other participants view that since the Iraqi government includes religiously inspired groups, who also adhere to the sharia law, it is important to mention that does not represent all Iraqi citizens and their religious beliefs or ideologies[62]. This in turn, has led to different tribes interpreting and adopting the law independently hence undermining the legitimacy of the constitution which should govern society through fixed laws and punitive measures for each crime committed. On the other hand, Um Alawi considers that while tribes are comprised of different sects through inter sectarian-marriage, differences within family dynamics are friendly and agreeable yet can become more complicated when they connect with religious authorities or government.

5.7 ON INDEPENDENCE AND TRIBES

After considering the examples provided by the informers, independence appeared as a concept describing tribe and clan separation from the central political authority being the Iraqi state and its institutions. The separation speaks to a level of dis-attachment rather than complete dis-association since both systems exist within the same nation state. This also includes their relative independence on a social, legislative and decision-making levels since sheikhs of clans will ordinarily manage and decide over the political and economic affairs

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[62] Participant Um Alawi. Interviewed online 2021

of their tribes and clans; and independence on the juridical level since tribes have their own conflict resolution mechanisms. One of the most common aspects is that the tribe enjoys a degree of independence in almost all aspects of life and operates within its system. They may for example interfere in more personal instances such as with the ending of a marriage, what is known as Al-Nahwa, or separation. Other areas where the tribe exercises control is through the 'clan's bench', which is a form of a tribal council that oversees members' dynamics and takes decisions over personal, political, and ethical issues. When this council is consulted over a particular matter such as a crime committed by a tribal member that is contrary to custom, such as deliberate killing, looting, or raping of either sex, the tribal council will convene as a common practice with the leader of the tribe to decide on the appropriate consequence. In such cases the council even has the power to move residents of one area to another area as a form of exile with no opposition from others and no penalties since they are not considered reasonable.[63]

Social organization is the second aspect in which tribes shape independent from the official or formalized level of state in Iraq. To understand the extent of tribal authority it is best to take a closer look at clan dynamics which are subgroups of a larger tribe. The tribe and its general sheikh carry an overarching sense of moral strength that bonds groups together. Each one of the clans is almost independent from the general sheikh except within the limits of moral consideration within disputes or arising clan-based issues. "For example, I belong to the 'Al Bou Nada' clan, which inhabits the center and the south of Iraq, and it is a Shiite clan. While the mother tribe is Sunni and lives in Diyala and is called the Nadawat, in which

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[63] Participant Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

there is a rupture between both sides, especially after the escalation of sectarian violence"[64]. This reflects the changeability of relations amongst tribes as it illustrates that inter-clan, inter-tribal or clan-tribal tensions can exist within the customary framework that holds the entire system together in peace or discord[65].

5.8 LINKS TO ISLAM

Under this theme, two main aspects related to Islam became apparent. The first is one of tribes and their sectarian affiliations, the second is of tribal links to political Islam. Differences between tribes or members of tribes from the same genealogy are religious sectarian differences. Such differences within clans can exist through marriages since many Sunnis and Shiites will intermarry causing further differences in clan lineages. An informer shared that his tribe named Al Nada belongs to the Mousawi *asyad*, and they inhabited the lands of Mandali and Diyala. The tribe's earliest grandfather migrated from Diyala towards Maysan in the south of Iraq and founded our lineage there and named the tribe Al Bou Nada. 'Al Bou' was added to the name 'Nada' to differentiate between clans living in the west from clans residing in the north. The clan did not play a major historical role except within the context of inter-clan dynamics, and they are characterized by being peaceful and people-loving. Within the general tribal affairs and dynamics, despite efforts in retaining the unity

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[64] Anonymous participant 13. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[65] Anonymous participant 14. Interviewed online, by email questionnaire exchange 2021

of the Sunni clan, it was eventually divided once the participant's clan immigrated to the south and adopted a Shiite identity across time.[66]

A few of the deliberations on the relationship between tribes and Islam, interviewees shed light on the presence of a mix between Sunnis and Shiites within one tribe yet highlighted the weakness of a devoted relationship to Islam. "Even Christians and Mandaeans in southern Iraq joined Muslim Arab tribes in order to obtain protection and power"[67]. In a way the presence of religious and sectarian affiliations within tribes has continuously led to further differences between the sons of the same clan. One informer describes her clan the Janabi, where members consist of both Sunnis and Shiites, and in one point in time a great war broke out between the Sunnis and Shiites from the sons of the same tribe[68].

However, the politicization of sectarian affiliations was enabled by different groups to maintain power through a process of religious jurisprudence of each respective sect while appealing to historical narratives, tribe and *asabiyah* as Ibn al Iraqi argues. In recent times this is seen as "proposals from religious figures have been initiated while fatwas from past centuries have been once again resurrected. The Shiites hold on to their imams, while the Sunni clans to their men. But to my personal knowledge, most of the clans and their sheikhs have a more superficial and not a guaranteed relationship"[69]

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[66] Anonymous participant 11. Interview online by email questionnaire exchange 2021

[67] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[68] Anonymous participant 18. Interview by phone call, 2021

[69] Participant K. Al Saray is a researcher in politics based in Erbil. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

5.8.1 ON THE PARADOX OF SECTARIAN DIFFERENCES

In one question participants were asked about the what the relationship dynamics are between tribes emerging from a common lineage and shared ancestry but belong to a different religious sect. A participant shared a personal background of how their family's tribal relations differ when they deal with a different categorical sect, "I am an example of that, half of my clan is Sunni and the other half is Shiite, and they intersect in times of sorrow and joys. This is a paradox that exists even before there is any sectarian escalation, which I insist is political and not by conviction, at least in the minds of its leaders and scholars"[70]. Others expressed that there is no see clear relationship between the two, "the tribe is an organization based and sustained through discrimination to benefit oneself which is inherently opposed to the principles of Islam in Iraq"[71].

However, in other cases religion has seen to play a critical role in justifying and backing political positions. During the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqi state was successful in rallying Shiite tribes against their co-religionist Iranians. In the 1990s, the state encouraged activity of tribes and religion across predominately Arab populations which it controlled, through its patronage and financial support. However, after the collapse of former regime in 2003, the tribal system emerged the second influence over the sociopolitical dynamics after religion[72].

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[70] Anonymous participant 10. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[71] Anonymous participant 13. Interview online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[72] Shatha al Juburi, PhD researcher. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

Before the 2003 invasion in periods where the state was weak, tribes enjoyed state patronage and the state also mobilized the tribes to its political benefit as Al Juburi explains. These consequently led to the tribal system's reemergence. However, the fragmentation of the Iraqi state in April 2003, deprived these tribes from the benefits it received from the state, especially because of the rise of institutional religion, such as the Shiite religious authority in Najaf, or the Marja'iya, and the rise of Shiite political Islam. This resulted in the decline of their political influence as reflected in their weak performance in provincial and parliamentary general elections after 2003, in particular in both January and December 2005 parliamentary elections. The loss of state patronage and the domination of the institutionalized religion and political Islam further exacerbated the political marginalization of the tribes especially due to the former, unlike them, enjoyed tremendous resources because of their enormous infrastructure and nation appealing ideologies which they can use to mobilize their followers. Having said that, in 2007-2008 tribes emerged as crucial actors in the fight against insurgency and al-Qaeda as the case of the Sunni Sahawat groups which were led by the tribal chiefs sponsored by the Americans. On the Shiite side, the paramilitary Shiite groups led by Shiite tribal chiefs recruited by former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in in his law-and-order campaign in Baghdad, Basra and Amara to fight Shiite militias such as the Mahdi Army of the Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. The Al Sadr party is an Arab nationalist Shiite party, and its presence has resulted in Arab *asabiyah* growing very strong especially against Iran even among major Shiite tribes.

In another response, an informer explained that while the clan and tribal system may be seen as a primitive social organization by orientalists, it is often used as a form of social control, especially after the decline of state power and the expansion of political Islam and its armed

militias. "The irony is that the average Iraqi citizen who spent his life promoting interests of a country where the law and the spirit of citizenship are respected, found himself in the midst of this political chaos needing to resort to his clan to protect himself and his family"[73].

"For example, a few days ago, my uncles asked me to attend a clan meeting to set rules for specific issues. I was listening to timeworn proposals regarding death, life, and relations with other clans, such as blood money and cases of intentional and unintentional killings. The matter seemed to be a nightmare to me, but there is no choice but to listen and accept"[74]. The participant continues by clarifying that clans have managed to take over governing some aspects of social and political life similarly as the religiously inspired militias have done. "I will tell you that all tribes follow one principle, which is there is no god but one God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God, but sometimes they do not apply half of it"[75].

5.9 ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Another prominent theme is of the mechanisms that the tribal system applies to ensure justice and accountability, this follows a degree of traditional and customary codes as clan intervention takes place. Although one can gather throughout the previous themes that members of tribes appear to have a direct relationship with the government as well, this theme which highlights the significance of relative systemic independence from the Iraqi government and its justice system. An informer explains that due to the tribes' closeness to

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[73] Anonymous participant 9. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[74] Anonymous participant 11. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[75] Anonymous participant 2. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

the government for more than four and a half centuries, most clans and tribes of Iraq, to a lesser extent tribes in southwestern Iraq, do not give full legitimacy to state law but rather about its own laws, customs, and traditions. For example, even if a perpetrator is imprisoned for a murder or any other crime, this ruling remains incomplete unless it is resolved by clan intervention[76]. Most tribal conflicts described include accounts on revenge killings, inheritance issues, and others. Such conflicts are usually resolved through clan *fasel* which is known as the consequent blood money paid as retribution for a killing.

M. Abdullah provides an example of an incident where there was a quarrel between two clans over the means of transportation, the 'tuk-tuk', in which one driver killed another but quickly turned himself to the police station. The deceased man's clan later rushed to the murderer's house shot and burned him. This act is known as the tribal '*dakka*' where a group of armed clan sheikhs assail the perpetrator's house by firing gunshots. In such a case no one interferes as the aim of this act is to threaten the perpetrating clan towards negotiation with a third-party clan. However, if either of the conflict parties disagree to the settlement, the conflict may escalate to further attacks and deaths. "Although state law stipulates that this act is considered a terrorist act, other clans outside of the two clans in conflict interfere within a certain custom to stop the incidents of revenge. Afterwards, blood money is paid, and the conflict is over, and this is what makes their authority higher than the state's"[77].

Another typical crime between two tribes, would be when a female member of one tribe is sexually assaulted by a member of another tribe. In most cases, the issue is resolved by

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[76] Participant Um Alawi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[77] Anonymous participant 7. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

collecting a ransom in large sums of money, from the tribe that committed the crime. However, in some serious cases where the female's chastity has been affected, it results in a death sentence or being imprisoned indefinitely.

Such conflicts are highly active daily in the south and to a lesser extent in the north and western regions. This is primarily due to the limited role of law enforcement; this is seen through the dominance of drug and oil smuggling groups. Despite the central government's attempts to control these conflicts, the conflict dynamics are stronger than what the government can control in the first place. As the participant described, this is mainly due to tribes' possession of light, medium and heavy weapons, to which the government is often unable to resolve disputes. In such cases clan elders or in some instances the *asyad* who carry a symbolic religious power and are well respected as descendants of a sacred family, can settle disputes amongst clans through dismissal or blood money.[78]

Yet as mentioned, it is possible for such conflicts to reach government intervention despite there being an independently tribal code that governs the tribe and its different sects; however, nowadays the Shiite side of the tribe would rule for most part given the connections with the government. Through the armed Popular Mobilization Units connected and funded by Iran as Al Juburi describes these Shiite groups whose members are also related to Iraqi tribes, simultaneously strengthen their respective clans in their residing areas. In this case one can consider the tribe as the main player in the social sphere, but simultaneously every clan will attempt to roam government institutions through specific officials and representatives. For example, the Ministry of National Security is also referred to as the

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[78] Anonymous participant 3. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

'Ministry of Albu Amer' since most of its officers and affiliates are from the Alwa'm area, in which the person heading the ministry is Faleh Al-Fayyad who also belongs to the same tribe and area[79].

Therefore, according to tribal-politics dichotomy in conflict resolution several participants argue that there must be a separation between Iraq's official judicial system and the tribal system, in this way conflict settlements are reached on a formal level or in parallel with followed consultations rather than only an informal and oral basis in which violence is often a common result of the conflict settlement, especially if damage to the code of honor is made. "Do you know that there are many Iraqis who to take murder easily? In a way to force another clan to pay money as a settlement. There are those who create clan problems to obtain sums of money (tribal *fasel)* which has reached millions of dollars".[80] Therefore, by separating the formal and informal systems of justice and law, placing the recognition over the legitimacy and sovereignty of the official system of law in Iraq may encourage Iraqis would have the 'minimal sense of citizenship' and loyalty to Iraq as a nation state rather than solely to the tribe.[81]

5.10 ON VALUES

The interviews touched upon how tribal values can influence politics, with a predominant reference to tribal values being part of the political system. Yet how can Iraqis adhere to the

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[79] Participant S.Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[80] Anonymous participant 12. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[81] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online 2021

values of both the state system and the tribal system instantaneously? While issues that shape tribal disputes and conflicts are manifold, some tribes still adhere to noble morals, such as honoring the guest, not killing the refugee, or not physically abusing the female as Al Quraishi argues. The clan bond continues to be strong since the same values that have connected members have been maintained and deepened. This is exemplified in the sense of duty clans place to one another, such as attending the funeral of another clan's member, in which lengthening the duration of the mourning period would express the support and loyalty to each other. Similarly, attending a public event of another clan in large numbers, such as in funerals or weddings, acts as an expression or public declaration of respect and allegiance in front of other tribes.[82]

When questioned about what some of the most prominent values in which tribes or clans carry today, a common response indicated is that the clan is a 'closed off system' where understandings around values and the correct way of life is common within their circles. Such values evolve around notions of pride, brotherhood, courage, strength, not being silent about grievances and the support of the 'brother' or 'cousin'. Participants describe this as a form of an automatic response or manifestation of loyalties without a need to contractually agree over certain partnerships since bloodlines play a definitive role in determining the nature of relationships amongst people. "The strong bond between members of clans is sturdily present, this is solidified by value preservation and is transmitted through generations, it seen during weddings, funerals and other forms of celebratory occasions in

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[82] Participant Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

which adults talk about the glories and dignity of the clan". [83] Thus, the youth learn these values to become embedded within their value systems as the informer stated.

Throughout the interviews some negative implications of tribal values were also shared. Some informants expressed feelings of pain for seeing young Iraqis becoming more enthusiastic about tribal practices and traditions, which were almost forgotten in the 1970s. Such responses were connected to the regret of seeing younger tribal members taking part in armed conflicts rather than other pursuits such as education and building a stable life. "Loyalty to the tribal leader and tribe, and that is the situation in Iraq nowadays". [84] This has possibly added to the lack of tribal loyalty to the state since distrust can be considered as a possible factor. Rather one can view it where there is tribal loyalty to parts of the state's security apparatuses which themselves benefit from government services and access decision making processes[85]. Therefore, the advantages that result sometimes exceed the tribes' ability to operate independently.

Such dynamics may further complicate the understanding of when values of the tribal system are willing to be compromised. For instance, state representatives may have tribal origins and feel loyal to their constituencies, yet specific political and economic decisions may oppose the interests of the tribes or clans. One informer argues that there is no definition of the concept of tribal loyalty to the state as it was in the time of the previous Baathist regime. During that period there would be one leading tribe that would control and shape decision-

[83] Anonymous participant 12, Iraqi artist. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[84] Anonymous participant 11. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[85] Anonymous Participant 9. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

making processes, but at the present time there are only a few tribes that have strong and convincing influence within the government through their higher and lower ranking official representatives. Therefore, reactions where these tribes attempt to defend their interests through state support is expected as an informer explained[86]. For most part, tribes are conservative relative to their worldview, which is shaped by their social organization and customary codes, but they are not religious or rigid in applying or interpreting Islamic texts. This places some sets of their values apart from religious or governmental systems.

Inversely, an interesting response that was mentioned was that traditions and values may also have control over the tribe rather than only tribes controlling and socially organizing through values. Since the 1970s and 1980s and after the fall of Saddam Hussein's rule, the decline of tribal control began. Tribes then started justifying their positions and decisions through Islamic reference. For example, in the act of *zina* or adultery, Islam has equal punishment for women and men however it is not actively applied. In this case 4 witnesses are needed to prove that adultery was committed by a man and does not affect his dignity, while a woman would immediately receive the consequences and would have her dignity and honor severely damaged[87]. If the tribal value system does take control of the tribes as the interviewee assumes, the following theme may explain the possibility of how specific meanings and tribal expressions circulate specific cultural expressions.

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[86] Anonymous Participant 18. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[87] Participant Aida al Hassani Schlaepfer is an Iraqi filmmaker and director. Interviewed in person in Zurich, Switzerland 2021.

5.10.1 ON PRESERVATION OF LINEAGE

This theme sheds light on the way in which tribal lineage is preserved, this emerged as an important theme since it highlights the strength of maintaining lineages orally until today, hence can reflect on techniques and procedures attributed to the upholding of the tribal system across time. In many cases the tribe as a unit in Iraq has preserved itself by choosing the leader of the tribe through the process of agnatic familial inheritance. In most cases, the sheikh of the clan is the of the son of a previous sheikh, meaning that he must be a descendant from his grandfathers in which his appointment should not be one of a circumstantial emergency selection rather a family right as Ibn al Iraqi explains. For example, one of the sheikh's duties is to maintain the group loyalty and cohesiveness, accordingly the sheikh has the power to expel a member by breaking his or her honor. Hence, the expelled member's reputation is tainted because of certain actions deemed unacceptable by tribal code and values.

"For me, my clan is descended from Arab origins which dates back to the lineage of the family of the Holy Prophet, as a Qurayshi)"[88]. In general, for every clan or tribe there is a clan tree that is present with the clan's sheikh, and it contains all tribal history, origins, founders, and the number of its members.

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[88] Participant Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

"There are some documents in the government archives, as far as I know, that record the family tree and the tribe, but access to it is not easy".[89] There are also some specialists in the science of genealogical origins who can give an accurate registration to each tribe without referring to any records. Documentation often takes place through the family tree, which occurs constantly through specialized individuals, but not ordinarily through photos, despite the veneration of the father in each clan, explains one informer.[90] On the other hand, Kurdish tribes would also preserve their lineage through oral stories, and more recently books, however, historically the Kurds were not allowed to publish or record their history.[91]

According to another informer lineages are often preserved orally through myths and conversations that occur between grandparents and sons who would later recite stories about the origin of their lineage and characters who played influential roles in their family's history to their children and grandchildren.[92] This brings forth the next theme which focuses on shared cultural values which can also contribute to bonding within tribal members and the preservation of the tribal system.

5.11 CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

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[89] Anonymous participant 1. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

[90] Anonymous participant 3. Interviewed online by phone call, 2021

[91] Anonymous participant 15, filmmaker. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[92] Anonymous participant 16, Iraqi artist based in Baghdad. Interviewed online on Skype 2021

There are many ways in which the expression of tribal origins takes shape, the interviews have gathered that this commonly can take place through deconstructed illustrations, such as folk poetry, public declarations of opposition or union in physical or oral ways entrenched in traditional and cultural processes, and music characterized by lyrical poetry and rhymes, performed in front of councils of clans and tribes. These expressions work towards enhancing the corporate spirit between groups. For example, each clan has its own *bayrak* or flag that it raised during the funeral of a male child. This acts as a cultural expression of respect and joint feelings of pain and sadness in mourning.[93] Tribes participate in these parades to express the shared feeling of joy and mourning as a collective effort that celebrates the undying sense of unity even in unspoken ways, here it is experienced through the movement of the body.

Tribal culture is also observable with those who recite *shaabi* poetry or popular poetry, this form of art of is known as Al Hawsa, Al Mahaweel and Al Ahzawja. Such expression consists of poetic rhymes that is often performed in front of councils of clans and tribes to showcase the upheld values through the means of literary and artistic expressions.[94]

In literature and arts, the tribal spirit or its values can be found through stories that are verbally passed, but it is greatly found in poetry, especially popular poetry known as *Al mahaweel*. Through this genre, poets speak in the name of the clan and express its values and glories through descriptions or storylines. They are often mercenaries, who praise and approach the one who pays them the most. Such expressions can also be found in cinema,

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[93] Anonymous participant 10. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

[94] Anonymous participant 13. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

television and radio dramas that are presented daily across Iraqi media outlets. They highlight specific values expressed through tribal customs, but not to promote them, rather to fight or condemn them through cinema. Such sentiments are illustrated in films such as *Alia and Essam* (1948) where the theme of revenge is particularly prevalent, or the theme of honor conveyed in the movie *Man al Mas'oul* (Who is Responsible) as well as *Al Da'imoun*, (The Immortals, 1972). *Al-Nahiba* is another film which depicts a well-known phenomenon in Iraqi rural communities, where a young girl escapes with her lover after her parents refuse their marriage. Such films at times express tribal values and customs explicitly and in other instances such codes are portrayed through the storylines or narratives and speech of characters which often symbolize the tribal social phenomena found in the daily lives of Iraqi societies. On the other hand, there are television channels that broadcast programs that directly glorify clans, tribes, and their hosting houses[95].

Moreover, an informer who is an Iraqi artist, referred a painting by the Spanish painter Goya entitled 'The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters', which is characterized by a dark vision of humanity as a man sleeps in the center of the painting with the image of bats and owls looming around him. The image depicts dark atrocities witnessed by Goya as a reaction to the transformative period between the end of Enlightenment in the advent of Romanticism. The participant provides this reference as a reflection of Iraq's negative sociopolitical manifestations by which in his opinion is due to the exacerbation of political Islam and not the religion of Islam. He explains that throughout clan and tribal history, Islam has acted as

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[95] Anonymous participant 1, Iraqi Poet. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

a means of fostering the tribes as original defenders of religion and honor[96]. "The origin of all of this is the mutual benefit between the tribal sheikhs and the authority legislated by the English, at least in our contemporary history, it was then stalled during Saddam Hussein's regime but returned to its dynamics after the US's intervention"[97]. The sleeping man in Goya's painting depicts the 'sleeping' or forgotten positive elements found in Iraq's culture and history during protracted conflict.

The theme of values in the maintenance of culture become particularly prominent across the interviews as participants discuss the difference between earlier years of their lives with current times, where tribal traditions were prevalent, in comparison to more recent times where political Islam has brought forth a cultural influence that has changed much of the lives of Iraqis across areas. The Iraqi artist, emphasized that religion was not, in general, a form of fixation or ideology followed vehemently by tribal members, but rather a set of remaining historical rituals in their simplest forms. There was never a conflict between people and forms of social manifestations that were rejected by religion, "for example, as a child I was residing in a tribal city and all the joys of life from drinking to the culture of gypsy dancing to the presence of converts living amongst us were not provoked or bullied. But the victory of the Islamic Revolution and its cross-border religion-based political project witnessed through the activity of religious parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the

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[96] Anonymous participant 12, Iraqi artist. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[97] Anonymous participant 15, Iraqi filmmaker. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

Dawa Party and others, have changed people's viewpoints by spreading ideas that call for joining the 'good' side and forbidding evil".[98]

Yet social issues linked with Islam continue to affect the way people commonly understand or accept dynamics which may have a problematic outcome. "In Islam, although it is permitted for a virgin female to have sexual relations with a male, provided that she is of a mature age and has received approval from her father. This practice is hugely frowned upon and forbidden due to tribal cultural traditions and ideologies" [99]. In this case, tribal cultures and beliefs play a big part here. Although, another participant argues that it is a tribal custom in which the father as the head of the household or clan, would approve or grant permission for his daughter or wife to make such a decision[100].

Generalizations however can result in the essentialization of tribal culture, and are rejected by others too, "I object to the concept specific to tribal culture, in my humble opinion, there are tribal customs and practices of which we cannot separate as different to mainstream Iraqi culture"[101]. While others express their hope that the direct role of tribal influence in politics and government would decrease as it will provide the space for relevant institutional capacity for governance and provision to develop independent from the tribal system and even religion, which in almost all cases plays an indirect and often 'behind the scenes' role in Iraqi politics.[102] Ultimately there are many ways in which tribal culture manifests, and since

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[98] Anonymous participant 12, Iraqi artist. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[99] Anonymous participant 8. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[100] Anonymous participant 8. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[101] Participant S. Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[102] Anonymous participant 1, Iraqi Poet. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

the research studies the presence of collective bonds amongst Iraqis, interviewees were asked how they see this phenomenon expressed.

5.11.1 EXPRESSIONS OF BONDING

The members of the Iraqi tribes would ordinarily represent themselves in one unit of support as an expression and tribute of their loyalty. Tribal bonding therefore is often expressed amongst one another in weddings and mourning, as it is considered a great shame for those who do not share the joys and sorrows of any person from the same clan or tribe.[103] The very same values upheld by tribes and clans across Iraq are deepened by *asabiyah* and impact the so-called 'clan bond'. Such displays of loyalty are important as they feed into the corporate spirit and bonding of groups even if it is not stated or spoken explicitly.[104]

Some interviews show that the participants are familiar with the presence of *asabiyah* in their lives and how it relates to externalized values of groups in Iraq[105]. "There is an inherent feeling of Arab Iraqi *asabiyah*, and it is not hidden from anyone, but expresses itself in varying degrees. For example, the closer a person lives in the center of a city, the less drastic he is in feelings and worries, and the farther he goes, the matter becomes complicated"[106]. While Iraq's main cities Baghdad, Basra and Mosul represent the country's civic strongholds, according to participant 13, this has weakened after major tribal migrations took

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[103] Anonymous participant 18. Interviewed by phone call 2021

[104] Anonymous participant 14. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[105] Anonymous participant 14. Interviewed online by email questionnaire exchange, 2021

[106] Participant K. Al Saray is a researcher in politics based in Erbil. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

place in the 1930s, to the 1950s as tribes imposed their clan system in the areas. There was no integration process with the inhabitants of the city since they were the majority, however, they did manage to transfer aspects of their rural life as well as means of production into the city explains the informer.

"There is no one in Iraq, especially now in the era of increased clan influence, who does not have a tribe and this connection also points to *asabiyah,* even those who do not have a clan try to join and be associated with a tribe that has a presence in the so-called group concept known as *thibab al jarash,* which means that once a person joins a clan they are obligated to perform all the duties expected from a member" [107]. Such requirements are fulfilled by each member attending important occasions of the other clan and are expected to pay the so-called *balwadi* which is a known standard amount paid to the family of a deceased. According to another account, it often occurs when Sunni clan members living in Shiite majority areas would also join the *thibab al jarash* with other Shiite tribes since they are a minority in exchange for protection.

The tribal system moreover can be seen through a circular system that includes its laws, customs and traditions known as the 'Al-Sunun', of which there are no radical transformations or changes in it. "Therefore, what was practiced in the past continued to be practiced today, even if the means have changed, instead of the horse, the car, and instead of the traditional mobile phone and so on. Such ways are not always verbally taught, they are

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[107] Anonymous participant 6. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

often a natural way of living in a certain environment in which younger generations become accustomed to and the ways live on".[108]

"Whether *asabiyah* extends from the social to the political realms is a big and important question, and it requires research because of what Iraq has gone through from the horrors at the level of governance and policy was great and had a clear and obvious impact on the Iraqis"[109].While Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi states that there is 'no doubt' that there is a link between tribes and the state in Iraq creating a type of unity in their dynamics.

Solidarity may be seen to be extremely important amongst tribes in which the display of alignment is a process built on honor, personal relationship building which often includes inter-marriages, as well as recognition of past glories and lineages. For the allegiance to manifest, there are two underlying factors that are considered, first it is important that tribes stand in solidarity against other opposing (enemy) tribes as a sign of loyalty, second, sectarian doctrinal differences are only taken into consideration as a secondary element, and if conflicts that are shaped by religious issues would arise, then they are discussed during a meeting with sheikhs or during a *sulh* process[110].

On the contrary, other informers reflected on the notion of tribal bonding as a weaker influencing element today. "The expression of tribal values over bonding and the maintenance of the corporate spirit in the way that they were originally placed are very weak

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[108] Anonymous participant 10. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

[109] Participant Ibn al Iraqi. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

[110] Participant K. Al Saray is a researcher in politics based in Erbil. Interviewed online on Skype, 2021

at the moment"[111]. Such values in their opinion have been swept away by the stream of political Islam, especially since the matter caused many deaths due to increased violence, which in return exemplifies the death of the corporate spirit known to Iraqis as *asabiyah*. "While the scene may appear to be bleak purely because of political interests, seen as a game of nations whose interests do not end. Yet, there is always hope for the days ahead"[112]. Moreover, others suggest a complete shift from the current sociopolitical setup in Iraq, "in conclusion, I hope that Iraq will have a system that achieves social justice where Iraqis can live in a state of citizenship that achieves justice, dignity and freedom for the country, away from the domination of militias and sectarian political parties of all kinds, sects and direct intervention of tribes in politics".[113] Although the participant did not express an alternative to how he envisions Iraq to consist of, yet what his statement does illustrate is the very presence of these actors who can be considered to be directly or indirectly shaping the issues of dispute and conflict.

5.12 CONCLUSION

In sum, the themes discussed emphasize many elements that help answer the research question and attempt to understand linkages with the central government, Islam and *asabiyah* from the primary data collected. The themes that have resulted from the interviews provide

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[111] Anonymous participant 6, Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[112] Anonymous participant, 17. Interviewed by phone call, 2021

[113] Participant S. Huboub. Interviewed online on Zoom, 2021

a reflection of accounts that support the hypothesis of this thesis that connects tribal heritage with current day political, religious, and cultural dynamics. However, what can be deduced is that the government today recognizes the tribal system and its customary regulations as important structures on the sociopolitical level. Hence, including tribal representatives in government and recognizing tribal law. Accordingly, the following chapter will attempt to test the hypothesis by focusing on the modern period in Iraqi politics to examine how the tribal system may intersect with the central government of a respective period. The chapter will also focus on the Baathist regime since it marked an important period in contemporary Iraqi history. There I will provide an analysis of how the tribal system's values and ways which may influence Iraq's politics. This will help to answer the research question by clarifying how the Baathist regime as a case-study may have been influenced through the direct and indirect role of the tribal system, to potentially influence political outcomes.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRIBAL SYSTEM INTERSECTS

1968 TO 2003

6.1 INTRODUCTION

After examining the region's transition into the modern state of Iraq and the thematic analysis that has resulted from the interviews the aim of this chapter is to trace how the tribal system's inherited value system, political dealings, and culture may be present in this contemporary period of Iraqi politics. The primary data will act as a framework and larger understanding of the main themes that are linked to this research's subject and hypothesis. This chapter aims to identify how patterns of tribal values and ways may express themselves through this period in Iraq's politics. It will examine the political transformations of traditional structures which have evolved to find their way into modern-day domestic and state affairs. Finally, the chapter will again turn to some events from the Baathist period from 1968 to 2003 as a significant time in Iraqi modern history, in order to prove and test the viability of the research hypothesis.

The chapter also examines the interrelationship between the three agents to underline the difference between social sovereignty and state sovereignty. Sovereignty can be considered as a concept of law while simultaneously being a source of law and often being coupled with the concept of power and legitimacy as covered in the thematic analysis. As Lansing writes, when applied to small communities made up of simple institutions,

"it is apparent that the individual, who has the bodily strength to impose his will upon all the other members of the community, possesses the supreme political authority. View it from what point you will give it to the intellect, the emotions, the conscience, their highest place in influencing human conduct". (Lansing, 1913, p. 64)

6.2 CULTURE AND ITS BOUNDARIES

Culture plays a crucial role in this context which this chapter aims to discern by addressing two key questions: firstly, to what degree has social culture influenced the central government itself? And, secondly, is the current political culture produced by the government itself? By analyzing each of these questions, the chapter aims to interpret the sociopolitical environment of Iraq today addresses the varying levels of sovereignty from a formal and informal perspective. Initially, the notion of *asabiyah* will be revisited to understand the existing social and political solidarities through groups which operate politically through descent-based affiliations. Then the continuity of Islam will be considered in the context of political-sectarian dynamics, identities, and political parties, as well as the degree of clerical institutions' influence on the political sphere. Lastly, the state's ideology and political representations will be examined to test how tribal ways and values may be intersect with such institutions.

The three agents will be more strongly correlated and intertwined throughout rather than viewed as operating somewhat independently, since political settings have become increasingly complex and multifarious, encompassing both regional and international

dynamics. Examining the intersection between all three agencies can ultimately clarify how formal and informal forms of authorities as interview themes have suggested, may have also played a role during this Baathist period case study from 1968 to 2003.

However, at various stages, the power and influence of one agent can create imbalances to others. For example, during Saddam Hussein's rise to power, he attempted to engage with the tribal system to increase his influence and advantage over some regions, such as by appointing tribal leaders in exchange for loyalty. Consequently, tribal leaders managed to strengthen their communal and customary laws outside of the power of the state but not outside the boundaries of the state, maintaining their power over their territories and people. In particular, a select few became willing to engage in politics with religious clerics who were familiar with tribal law in order to maintain order and security as sources of social authority in different areas. This instilled a system of collective responsibility identified by a public ritual which expresses the devoutness to the group, the internal dynamics of which are based more on a balance of power than on its concentration (Khoury et al, 1991).

Such a set of dynamics is the result of the recurrence of older societal characteristics that synthesize the culture of a community and its self-image. For example, kinship ties, the political action of groups, language, landscape, religious ties and ideological movements all function as resources for ethnic mobilization in the formation of Iraq. Together, they inevitably illustrate how previous tribal communities have survived by adopting new ways of living while also retaining their hierarchy of values. This in turn reveals the groups which have also engaged with nationalistic forms of political practices among the relevant hierarchies of political elites, maintaining a strong sense of belonging towards their communities.

However, changing political alliances and the inception of new political groups have shown that tribal lines have repeatedly been exploited for political interests irrespective of state authority. In such cases, the seeds of radical and extremist actions can even take shape, as past grievances and injustices are brought to the forefront. The weakening of one's identity becomes perceivable as the expression of multiple competing political identities take shape. As Burke writes, "[t]he symbolic expression of community and its boundaries increases in importance as the actual geo-social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred or otherwise weakened" (Burke 2009).

Several themes here are relevant in the context of the modern politics of Iraq, such as nationalism and its ideological discourses. This research does not delve into the conceptions of nationalism and the political movements that have risen as a result of it, even though nationalism is one of the major catalysts for the formation of the Arab states after the Ottoman Empire, which managed to dictate nation-state identity in the subsequent decades. Nation-state formation in respect to group solidarity defines itself as follows:

"a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or 'homelands', create and disseminate a distinctive public culture and observe shared customs and standardized laws". (Smith, 2009, p. 29)

Yet there is disagreement over the nature of the state in the region which affects the definition of culture in various ways, such as whether the form of governance should follow religious law or who should have the right to hold power.

With no strong army to support the newly installed monarchy, the agreement played a part in facing Iraq's longtime contentious border shared with Iran (Baram, 1991), a problematic matter which largely affects political developments today. In most cases, the power was held in the form of monarchical or republican rule; in Iraq and Syria, however, most ideological ambitions had failed such as with the Baathist socialist regimes. The regimes that seized power had promised efforts for political development, but these had failed or were deemed autocratic and these countries were transformed into police states such as the Baathist periods of Saddam Hussein or the Assad regimes. Additionally, the roots of sovereignty during the post-colonial period appeared to consolidate national movements that aimed to avert foreign intervention and maintain their interests in both cases their ideological Baathist positions were different.

In this research thus far, one can deduce that one of the elements that has driven modern conflicts in Iraq includes local interpretations of ancient feuds and the prevailing balance of ancestral power as the interviews have highlighted tribal rituals, identity and belonging continues to be prevalent in personal and political areas of Iraqis. This power is maintained through a harmonious equilibrium and a unity of culture as a permanent aspect of social systems (Mitchell, 1966). Thus, the different associations of value and attachments to memory invoke a collectivity that requires the research to build on the interview theme which discusses the notion of sources of authority and how the tribal system's ways may intersect to the varying definitions in relation to the Baathist government(s).

6.3 SOURCES OF AUTHORITY: MILITARY

Praetorianism is a process where the military intervenes excessively in the political processes of the state and potentially dominates the political system itself (Perlmutter, 1969), giving rise to an interventionist military and conservative authoritarian class which aims to protect property acquisition and its rights. Such a political culture and system is likely to develop in the limited presence of civilian institutions as they are susceptible to being dominated by the military or else give rise to domination from within the society. This is exemplified by Iraq's Baathist revolution, whose supporters employed a socialist ideology to mobilize as a political party. How may have the tendency of the military to appear as a professionally united establishment speak to traditional tribal societies as an organized collective? Praetorian conditions include institutionalized political and socioeconomic systems and political parties which operate from a centralized administrative bureaucracy, in which low social cohesion and the lack of meaningful universal symbols enable such systems which suffer from a disintegrated social condition (Perlmutter, 1969). By the end of the 20th and into the 21st century, Iraq had maintained its social tribal and communal networks; however, as since these networks were politically avtivethey had to face the emergence of state ideologies, nationalism, socioeconomic variables, foreign intervention, regional wars, a changing constitution and property rights, social disorganization infiltrated the landscape.

During this time tribal culture did not cease to exist, but, as the research centrally holds, the values and culture sustains themselves by intersecting with religion and its institutions, the central government through interests and its connections to representatives with tribal backgrounds, finally through *asabiyah* as a binding component amongst Iraqis. A certain social and economic landscape, such as a polarized class system may affect the conditions of

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such dynamics and the degree of agency dependency. For example, the army emerges as an institution separated from the social system and as a unit is able to influence through their organization, take overpower and introduce a consistent force, the way in which the government reacted to tribes varied depending on region-based interests, sects and potential tribal opposition. Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1980) can also be reapplied here, as the institution of the army developed complex symbols of order, group divisions, hierarchy, the protection and ability to fight, all of which are traits that are familiar to the history and social order of the tribal landscape. In this connection, a cohesive and robust society is necessary in order to avoid a power-gap, where the military would potentially intervene.

Concomitantly, tribal political culture has laid the traditional foundations for specific organizations to act autonomously, including in the social and communal realm. As a result, the organization of political parties' politicized identities are not necessarily regarded as legitimate in regard to the country's institution. Legitimacy in this regard rather emerges from the level of interests shared between the society and the political party, which adds to the credibility of the political party. The effectiveness of the military's power thus lies in the level of political institutionalization and is based on capability and expertise as a provocation to the military's involvement in government affairs.

In the 1930s, which were still the early years of the modern state of Iraq, moderate political leadership was sidelined as authoritarian tendencies increased with the military's objective of replacing the British collaborating cabinets. However, this became increasingly difficult after the assassination of key army officers, such as Jaafar Al-Askari or Bakr Sidqi, alongside the military coups that left the military ineffective and divided due to its lack of stability. As

Perlmutter notes, "[c]uriously enough the political failures of the Iraqi army did not discourage Middle Eastern praetorian armies, including the Iraqi army itself" (Perlmutter, 1969, p. 392). Conversely, the reason for accepting the ranks of military personnel in government from 1958 onwards lay in their role as mediators. On the other hand, most of the high-ranking officers emerged from tribes, where their emerging ideological rivalries became infused into politics, creating cleavages within the various coups with regard to the ruler.

Often, the leader would resort to a thorough approach of an existing ideology to amplify the power of the military at the expense of the civilians. This approach within the army rested on its internal structure and its ability to identify with its ideological autonomy and structural reforms, such as with the Baathist ideology, and its desire to eliminate or reject the existing establishment. The longevity of the army rule would be dependent on its ability to legitimize its own political ideology, party, or support (Al Marashi, Salama, 2008). In line with this research, one can test whether such dynamics are heightened by the level of *asabiyah* that a military unit possesses, creating a cohesive solidarity capable of enforcing its ideology through a coup and of lifting the power and status of its glorified military leader, similarly to a chieftain in relation to his tribe.

Another driver of military intervention and coups would be represented by the lower levels of national affinity with Iraq as a newly defined republic. Established in in 1932, so much so that the newly formed 'Iraqi' identity had yet to take shape, as a result, such organized collective movements were easily permissible as they signified strength; they were armed, organized in a hierarchy and had a leader as a commander in chief, constituting a systemized dynamic which was very familiar to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. However, this is not to

say that an awareness towards identity did not exist; on the contrary, as seen in chapter 5, the interviewees expressed the extent to how much Iraqis are proud of their civilizational heritage. Iraq maintained not only its tribal history but also the religious which is important to them. Thus, political parties and other groups continued to play a role through the interrelationship with the tribal system as an informal authority, while Islam represented another source of a legitimate authority.

6.3.1 AGENCY OF ISLAM IN BAATHIST IRAQ

According to Michel Aflaq (1962), Islam is an Arab movement that brought forth the first renewal and perfection of Islam, which explains the reason why Islam is indispensable to the politics of the region. To bring relevance and context to the factors leading to the current sectarian developments in Iraq, the core actors today can be listed as follows. To begin with, the Grand Ayatollah Ali-al-Sistani is an Iranian Twelver Shia *marja'*. He is the primary Shiite cleric in Iraq and is aided in organizing the largely Shiite United Iraqi Alliance and running for parliamentary elections in 2005, a party which has the largest number of followers amongst Iraqi clerics. He was able to acquire support by maintaining a 'quietest approach' during the Baathist period where Sunnis were politically predominant. Quietism denotes "a conscious distancing of oneself from politics [and] represents a mainstream Shiite tradition in which the clergy remains aloof from participation in routine politics but reserves for itself the role of observer and critic in social events" (Fuller, 2003, p. 4). While quietism is no longer practised since the fall of the Saddam regime, the approach allowed for the survival of the Shiites in the face of the majority Sunni Arab world. Quietism can also be considered as a means that strengthened the Shiite *asabiyah* by expressing the need to protect and nurture

the belief and value-system of Shiism in times of dominant Sunni power, including the Ottoman Empire's reign. The choice to deny Shiite identity (by claiming a Sunni identity) helped individuals to endure despite the fear of facing sectarian discrimination, which ultimately enabled their freedom in political involvement.

Moreover, the Baathists were particularly hostile towards the Shiites and attempted to co-opt Shiite regions who were nonconforming to their rule as Faleh Abdul Jabar explains (2003). Consequently, the growth of the Shiite political movement began firstly through the Shiite religious Ulama, and secondly through political activists. Earlier during the British mandate, the religious hierarchy of Shiites focused on the 'Iraqist' agenda to drive out the British colonial regime. Knowledgeable jurists known as *mujtahids* formed the Dawa party as an entry into political Islam and a response to the increasing power of the communist party. Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr, as one of their key speakers, contributed to the rise of Shiite Islamism, strengthening the Shiites' identity as they aimed at maintaining a degree of political power (Jabar, 2003).

Moreover, Al-Sadr issued a fatwa forbidding Muslims from joining the Baath party in the late 1970s; this opposition was the trigger for his execution in 1980, an event which marked a significant division between the Baathists and the Shiite population. After this, the Shiite *mujtahid* and the activist Muhammad Sadiq al Sadr emerged to create an explicit opportunity for the political voice of Shiites to take shape through the Shia religious establishment (Dodge, 2018). Although Al-Sadr was assassinated in 1999, he left an enduring political and cultural competition in the Shiite sect as his legacy.

To give further context to the interplay between political Islam and political parties today, currently in Iraq the Imam Ali Brigades are a Shiite majority parliamentary group which falls under the larger umbrella of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), also known as the Hashd groups. The Imam Ali Brigades of the PMF are a state-sponsored organization of subgroups funded and backed by Iran; they played a decisive role in the ousting of ISIS from Iraq. The narrative espoused by the Imam Ali Brigades appeals to a religious storyline that justifies their presence in Sinjar, citing a history of constructing religious sites in both Iraq and Iran. They have also been able to maintain their influence not only through religion but also across a patchwork of militias through the country (Porter, 2019). Moreover, Iran has tried to extend itself in the region even through cultural influence, such as forming links with the Hezbollah-guarded shrine Sayyida Khawla in Baalbek, Lebanon, as well as the Lebanese town of Maroun al-Ras, which was destroyed in the 2006 war with Israel and rebuilt with the addition of an 'Iranian garden'. In other words, the Islamic milieu, which is saturated with political and religious cultural discourses, is navigated through the recreation and practice of historical sites, architecture, hymns, prayers (including Farsi calls for prayer across Shiite villages in Lebanon), and rituals that reawaken the sense of *asabiyah.*

Moreover, the Shiite Marja'iya, which is an Islamic religious authority operating in accordance with religious jurisprudence (Jimenez, 2005), was not historically sought or complied with to the extent that it is today. After hundreds of years, the spiritual guide of the Marja'iya has become one of the most influential political figures, with many advantages and benefits for the religious and political rule. This has also prompted religiously inspired groups to back the religious Marja' or leader since his position can influence not only domestic but also regional politics such as the Iranian Shiite-Arab Sunni rivalry. While such

political issues have benefited from forms of identity politics such as sectarianism, national identity has also played a role in the identity discourse. In particular, according to Abbas Kadhim's deliberations (2018) on his meeting with Al Sistani, the latter would very rarely refer to the name of the 'Shiite people' but rather denote them as the 'Iraqi people'.

The Shiite influence was also extended through state-sponsored cultural constructions of history, including the construction of causes behind conflicts. According to Fuller (2003), the Shiites have been more politically active for an extended period than they were previously, with distinct social practices bonding them together on more than a theological basis. Clerical guidance, for instance, evolved into political leadership as Shiites adopted the concept of *maraji al-taklid* or the sources of emulation, allowing leadership to be closely linked with Islamic guidance.

In this connection, Moqtada al-Sadr, another leading Shiite cleric, formed the Sadrist party after his father Mohammad Sadiq al-Sadr was killed by the regime. An observation linked to tribal custom was the emergence of revenge killings that took place even within clerical circles. One example took place after the murder of Abdul Majid al-Khoui's son, Abu al-Qasim al-Khoui, when 50 fighters linked to Al-Sadr allegedly surrounded Al-Khoui's home for four days after the murder and ordered Sistani to step down and depart Iraq. As a move of retaliation and protection, Sistani called a number of tribal leaders to support him, and after a deadlock the blockade was lifted. Such interplay between the sect and political party reveals the various measures taken by groups which adopt a sectarian narrative to strengthen their bid for political power.

On the other hand, Islam has been referred to, as a way to solidify or reinstate legitimacy during political stand-offs. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni group in Iraq established in 1951, had been subject to almost five decades of suppression since the coup of Abd al-Karim Qasim; this prompted the call to Islam or the *dawa*. Saddam Hussein's regime persecuted the Muslim Brotherhood for years, which had the effect of weakening his status in 1991, forcing him to publicly embrace Islam as a means of emphasizing his legitimacy and increasing his international support. For example, he engaged in building mosques and initiating a school of theology in 1987, which is today known as Nahrain University. The final flourish by Saddam was his crucial contribution to the Iraqi national flag, to which the Islamic invocation 'there is no God but God' was added. Political Islam then developed a more complex system by applying the different schools of thoughts within each sect, which generated additional complexity to a predominantly multifarious political and social setup.

6.3.2 THE TRIBAL INTERSECTION WITH *TA'EF* AND *MADHAB*

"Nothing precludes a given state from codifying the Sharia to provide for more certainty of the law and clarity and consistency in its application" (Bassiouni, 2012). Many distinctions within Islam lie behind the interpretation of the Quran, including the distinction between the meaning that is 'apparent' and what is 'hidden' deeper within it. Shiite religious hierarchies, for instance, tend to determine such interpretations, which inherently fortifies the spiritual and temporal influence on the Shiite society (Bassiouni, 2012). The definition of *Ta'ef* or sect connects as a subset to what is known as the *Madhab* or school of thought, philosophical understanding or creed. Examples of *Ta'ef* or sect include divisions within a monotheistic

religion, such as Sunni Islam, Shiite Islam, Catholic, or Christian Orthodox, or offshoots of Islam, such as Alawite or Druze. Conversely, the *Madhab* denotes the religious and philosophical application under each sect. *Madhab* translates as a way or path; it is known as a school of jurisprudence and operates as an ideological approach and definition of Islamic thought (Weeramantry, 1988).

An opposing perspective would be the philosophy of Ibn Rushd, which has acted as a secular ideology of Islam. While Sunni jurisprudence includes Hanbali, Hanafi, Shafei and Maliki, countries across the Arab world differ in the question of its application, with some schools of thought being stricter than others. In Egypt, the Maliki school has been adopted, while Saudi Arabia follows Mohammad Abdel-Wahab's teachings but is also known to follow the Hanbali tradition. Shiite Muslims adhere to three significant schools, namely the Twelvers, Ismaili, and the Zaydis. Iraq consists mainly of Twelver Shiites as well as Sufis, such as the Naqshbandi groups, and groups of Hanafi Sunnis. The Christian Madhabs in Iraq include the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Yazidis and Shabk.

Sufism reflects the mystical path of Islam, whereby an individual, through practices and faith, is directed inwards to the point that he or she will transcend daily religious practices dictated by the Sharia for his or her external behaviour, reaching a higher sense of spirituality attained through love for God. Islamic jurisprudence witnessed a resurgence beginning from the 19th century with the interpretations of Mohammad Abdu or Al-Ghazali, in which the matters of modern life were addressed. As previously mentioned, the politicization of Islam and its schools of thought were partly influenced by the Bedouin heritage as tribesmen who supported the legitimacy of Islam. Irrespective of whether the Bedouins were truly religious or not, Islam was sought as a holy fortune which they had been gifted and consequently they

had a duty to spread its message. It thereby provided them with validity, which later evolved into the highly politicized and intra-sectarian means of operating under nationhood and statehood as Jabar describes.

The politicization of sects becomes evident once individuals form themselves into groups based on their religious affiliations, creating a bloc built on a confessional sect such as Sunni, Maronite, Druze or Shiite. However, a religious school of thought, or *Madhab*, allows further functionality of a specific sect or *Ta'ef* to conduct themselves politically. For it furthers the religious influence of sectarian leaders.

The underlying argument regarding the place of *Ta'ef* in this research asserts that it operates as a functioning structure that enables political activity to take place under a collective unity based on a religious sect. At the same time, it is fed by a specific school of thought to strengthen political and religious identity. Such foundations aim to further solidify the theories behind religious and other sub-groups, enabling them to exercise influence over a community. In a similar way pacts between tribal confederations or inter-clan dynamics reach agreements and allow groups to establish cross-sectarian power-sharing relations (Porter, 2019).

Reaching agreements amongst highly politicized sociopolitical groups as well as traditional tribes is a challenge in Iraq since there exists formal and informal systems of authority that carry a high degree of legitimacy as well, building on the interview theme of tribal authority, this also infers that there is a dual system of law in Iraq. This system is constituted of the relatively newly established civil law as part of the Republic of Iraq's constitution and the

traditional tribal law which comprises a sovereign and independent body of customary laws that are historically held by tribes.

6.3.3 CIVIL LAW AND TRIBAL LAW

According to Frank H. Stewart (1987), many villages and towns that have experienced a decrease in population due to urbanization owed their revival to the tribes that returned to the lands, in which the sedentary people assimilated many aspects of nomadic culture, and chiefly among them was customary law. While Islamic law varied in its degree of influence depending on socio-religious variables, historically customary law was more important to a population that was self-organized, including those who administered the law itself. Ali al-Wardi's (2008) understanding of the confusion between the nomadic and civilized peoples rests on the application of law and the tackling of dispute settlements. The application of nomadic customs in conjunction with the use of civil law addressed resolutions by tribal mediators, who undertook a traditional and commonly unwritten approach to the issue at hand.

While there are no definitive texts regarding tribal law, the legal code was similar across most tribes. Despite the persuasion and lobbying exercised by newly appointed tribal leaders, these laws always carried a set of objectives (Najm, 2011). According to Stewart (1987), the best system of tribal customary law can be found in Sinai, while the works of Awda al-Qusus are the richest and most trustworthy sources on Bedouin law in the central region. The only book-length study on this subject is by Hasanayan, written in 1967. Villagers in Iraq often compiled their laws, and publications were found in a classic study of the Al-Chibayish

marsh village and another on Sharqat in the upper Tigris area, where customary law appeared to be similar in northern and southern Iraq. Although tribal law publications were difficult to compile, such laws were understandable to the region's inhabitants.

Moving forward in time, after the establishment of Iraq conflicts often occurred between the tribes and the state. Sunni tribal coalitions in Baghdad expressed the needs of tribal leaders to the newly established authorities, and the Iraqi National League for Chiefs of Tribes, headed by Thameer al-Dulemi, and the Iraqi Tribal National Council, led by Hussein Ali Shaalan, were established, both of which claimed hundreds of sheikhs as members. Here, it is important to define that tribal law is a communal reconciliation that has existed across history and continues to be indispensable as many interview informers stated, since Iraqi culture holds families and communities responsible for the actions of their members.

After the 2003 U.S-led invasion of Iraq, Iraqis have increasingly resorted to methods of solving disputes and injustices through tribal negotiations which were mainly conducted by the tribal sheikhs. After the invasion the Americans made several mistakes which could be considered to have contributed to the political situation in Iraq today, those being the De-Baathification law, the dissolution of the army and the destruction of the judiciary apparatuses. Yet, as discussed this in return strengthened the tribal system. Today in tribal negotiations the outcome has commonly been a kind of legal pluralism in which religious, tribal, and even competing political forces take part. In addition, much of the tribal social sovereignty mentioned throughout the research is derived from the degree of arbitration which can be reached as a resolution when the state's authority is weak. This in turn produces the confusion between the degree of influence between tribal and civil law present in Iraq today.

As chapter 5 covered, one of the interview themes named 'Customary Law' described the various instances where tribal law is applied in the limited presence of direct state intervention. While tribal conflict resolution mechanisms are at place, they often intersect with police intervention as mentioned by an anonymous informer. In cases where this the resolution process is primarily customary, Katherine Blue Carroll (2011) discusses the process of dispute resolution where tribal law acts as a set of communal rituals of reconciliation, which is initiated once all facts are known. The communal gathering or diplomacy is traditionally carried out in the sheikh's house (as the representative of the tribe) or the victim's house as a symbol of goodwill. The whole process of the settlement is named *sulha* in Arabic, in which a *fasel*, or what is referred to as 'blood money' according to Carroll, is settled as a price to pay for the damage of honour that has been caused. However, as mentioned in the interview with S. Huboub, often such processes of resolution end up in a bargain rather than a durable solution.

Therefore, *fasel* represents a communal ritual to determine the amount of money which is donated to the victim tribe. It is essentially a payment for forgiveness to move forward, in which the victim by tribal law has the right to forgive or seek revenge. If the choice of retribution is decided against the perpetrator through arbitration, the order of rights responsible for vengeance is the *khamsa*, which signifies the 'five generation vengeance group'. This comprises the victim's father, brother, son and others appointed within the group.

The basis of the process of negotiation begins with what is written initially within each tribe's legal code, or alternatively bilateral agreements that have been previously agreed upon between the two tribes. As Carroll writes, "[t]he process of setting the amount of a *fasel* is not just one of mathematics and memory; the final sum is also influenced by the reasons for

the incident, the behaviour of the perpetrator, the suffering of the victim's family, and the status of the victim" (Carroll, 2011, p. 15). However, the *fasel* amount may be reduced by the victim's family in honour of notables that are present in the household, such as *sayyids* who are descendants of the prophet.

In another example, social researcher Fouad Khalil explains that the resolution of clan disputes is based on the forces of control seeking a settlement in order to preserve the clan structure from annihilation as a result of the escalation of fighting. These control forces, according to Khalil, are what were conventionally agreed upon in the tribal community through reconciliation councils, which consist of tribal leaders and dignitaries who have experience in the field of conflict resolution. Peace councils also have the ability to resolve disputes, only in the cases where revenge is excluded. When the reconciliation process takes place, it is either settled according to the blood money, or by handing over the offender to state agencies and thus to the judiciary. Sometimes the killer's family brings him to the dead man's house and carries him in his shroud, which, by convention, requires the family of the murdered to accept this process of reconciliation (Amhaz, 2022). Often, the clans would also adhere to a political party which can also represent a sectarian or intra-sectarian divide, in such instances as Khalil states, party divisions will almost never contradict clan values or creed. Yet each political party will have a specific way in which it manages clan and government relations, this depends on the official representative of their constituency. As Trad Hamadeh states, in other cases tribes and clans may not allow direct political party inclusion or exercising politics with the central authority, however, the political parties themselves are only able to penetrate the tribal system by touching upon the group *asabiyah* (Amhaz, 2022).

As seen here, tribal creed and its law become more prevalent once civil law is not justly applied or when government and civil institutions fail to intervene or forge relations in the necessary ways, such as during the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, where the a limited role of legal authorities pressed tribal law to solve social conflicts consensually without the use of governmental bureaucracy. Moreover, tribal law not only plays a role in social affairs, but the communal settlement culture is also present across sectors in Iraq since many nationals are descended from tribal families themselves. For instance, it has played a part in solving disputes between high-ranking government officials. Najm (2011) from Niqash provides the example of an academic and former dean of education at Baghdad University who turned to tribal law. In this case, the dean was accused of fabricating documents which resulted in the termination of his employment. Although tribal law was not technically capable of reinstating the academic, it was able to permit the former lecturer to regain his honour, and hence his broader social reputation.

The initial steps towards recognizing tribal law in the 20th century were first taken by Britain's Tribal Disputes Act in 1916, which was then adopted in 1924 by King Faysal's government, allowing tribal law to function in the Iraqi countryside. When Britain entered Iraq, a complete tribal system existed so that the tribe could commit any criminal activity without responding to the government (Carroll, 2011). Later in 1958, Abdel Karim Qassim emerged and sought to combine the legal system under one state law; however, he was not able to reach this goal before his death. Therefore, the disparity between the two sets of laws continues to exist within the country. In 1979 Saddam Hussein managed to maintain the loyalty of some tribal leaders, by permitting them greater control over the process of dispute resolution this

inherently created a space for increased tribal authority and governance as the thematic analysis brought forth.

Moving onward in time, efforts of dialogue between the state and the tribes were established, and in 2018 the Ministry of Justice in Iraq assembled a team to secure the safety and peace of communities across all provinces, through an appointed group of well-respected tribal arbitrators. Moreover, 47 tribal leaders known as *Al-awaref* were selected by the Ministry of Interior to resolve disputes on a regular basis and to reduce the expansion of conflicts, with no salaries provided; the initiative aims to preserve tribal life by supporting the law (Saadoun, 2018).

According to Al-Monitor (2018), a sheikh from the Al-Fatla tribe named Sarhan al-Fatlawi stated that "there is no harm in a bill that could potentially stop those who encourage tribal revenge. The arbitration bill will be essential for tribes and will help end issues before they develop into armed clashes, such as those that occur in some areas of southern Iraq" (Saadoun, 2018). However, there is a discrepancy in Article 45 of Iraq's constitution, since paragraph 2 states that the state is responsible for seeking the development of Iraq's clans. Accordingly, based on some tribal traditions which have associations with 'blood money' and revenge killings, the implementation of this law has been problematic, since there is a discrepancy between tribal law application and the constitution's position on human rights.

This violation is exhibited in sectarian killings as well. Mustafa Saadoun provides a case in 2006 between a Sunni tribe that was involved with Al-Qaeda and a tribe involved with the Mahdi Army, which led to 67 men being killed, 100 being injured, houses being burnt,

families being displaced, and properties and farms being destroyed. Such as issue required the assistance of tribal judges to find a *fasel* settlement.

In sum, *fasels* appear to be a means of using money to solve disputes, as well as a resource which was historically scarce among the tribes, and which prompted them to continue to migrate in search for better conditions of living. However, while such processes continue to exist without accountability related to human rights as mentioned in the account of the informers – with money alone being used as a means of settlement, rather than moral retribution around safeguarding humanitarian ideals – this reveals a gap between the official constitution on formal level and the resolution mechanisms of the tribal system on an informal level. To further study this gap, the following section will examine how parts of Iraq's constitution are not effectively applied due to a potential intersection of tribal values and applied mechanisms which may lead to an inconsistency in the written principles of the constitution. This is important as it may underline instances of how the tribal system may directly and indirectly affect political outcomes in Iraq.

6.4 CONSTITUTION AND ITS APPLICATION

Examining the premises of tribal sociopolitical culture and its influence on the current political dynamics within the country highlights a possible junction between tribal ways and the degree of implementation of state law. Since the constitution's ratification in 2005, the Iraqi government has consisted of a hybrid presidential-parliamentary executive and a legislative council within the government named the Federation Council, which comprises of representatives from various regions and governorates in Iraq. Several articles in the constitution prove that the strength of social dominance in politics begins at the level of

expressing identity along with the factor of sectarian law. The principles underlying Iraq's federation include a liberal consociation that promotes executive power-sharing, proportional representation across the public sector, self-governing communities, and veto rights over constitutional modifications. None of these is, however, are wholly effective, as long as one specific community enforces its will over the others.

To begin with, article 14 states that "Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, colour, religion, sect, belief or opinion, or economic or social status" (Constitution of Iraq, 2005, art. 14). This article can be seen as contradictory as religious institutions or sectarian parties exploit their authority by applying their rhetoric to political power, rather than by accepting the principle as political. Therefore, issues related to 'colour, religion, belief and gender' tend to be regarded as secondary to settling social issues, which may lead to discrimination. Moreover, the second act of Article 19 states that "[t]here is no crime or punishment except by law. The punishment shall only be for an act that the law considers a crime when perpetrated. A harsher punishment than the applicable punishment at the time of the offence may not be imposed" (Constitution of Iraq, 2005, Art. 19).

Moreover, Article 20 states that "Iraqi citizens, men and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs and enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect, and run for office" (Constitution of Iraq, 2005, Art. 20). Spiritual law does not wholly adhere to this article, while freedom of expression is not a right that is freely practised and safeguarded by the government, as communal cleavages determine the outcomes of such dynamics. This shows that there is an inconsistency between the written constitution and its actual implementation. For groups represented in the social landscape (including those who have

representatives in the government in Iraq) continue to protect their social sovereignty without offering total political recognition to the central government since on a social level, groups continue to maintain a partly independent authority, and partly dependent to fulfil political interests.

Perhaps the section that has been applied and exercised most heavily within the constitution is the following: "Iraqis are free in their commitment to their status according to their religions, sects, beliefs, or choices, and this shall be regulated by law" (Constitution of Iraq, 2005, art. 41). In an interview I conducted with Rima Fawaz al-Husseini[114], she argued that it is at this moment that sectarian law takes precedence over the constitution, as it carries the strongest sense of legitimacy towards the respective communities (2019). This article is strengthened through the effective application of Article 43, which holds that followers of religions within Iraq are free to practice their religious rights and endowments. A contradiction arises since groups tend to practice only what is seemingly most fitting while neglecting other state laws. As well as stating that "[e]ach individual shall have the freedom of thought, conscience, and belief" (Constitution of Iraq, 2005, art. 43), the term 'conscience' carries an uncertain meaning as it can range between what is ethical and actions which align with pre-established values.

A major criticism against Iraq's federal system is that it may potentially facilitate communal of sectarian fragmentation while privileging particular identities and excluding others. This may also include inter sectarian divisions as well, which may then develop into competing

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[114] Rima Fawaz al-Husseini heads an NGO and centre for women's empowerment which is funded by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF). The interview took place on May 20, 2019 in Baalbek, Lebanon.

party politics. For example, Shiite Islamist parties and groups – namely the Dawa Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution, the Fadhila Party and the Sadrist movement all appealed to speak on behalf of the Shia community. 128 out of 275 seats in the Transitional National Assembly, have splintered over the intervening years. Moving forward into May 2018, a large number of Shiite Islamist groups have even competed against each other, those include Muqtada al-Sadr's Saairun Alliance, Hadi al-Ameri's Fateh Alliance, Haider al-Abadi's Nasr Alliance, Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition and Ammar al-Hakim's Hikmeh (Mansour and Khatib, 2021).

Furthermore, it may express a preference for families who originate from traditional tribes that carry a glorious and weighty political reputation, or families who are representatives of the direct lineage of the Prophet Muhammad and are known as Al-Shurafa. Such ascriptions are then mobilized into political parties that are permitted and represented within the government, allowing the party to develop from a religious, sectarian, or social member to a collective group itself. In the interview I conducted with Wajih Kanso[115] during our discussion he described this process as a course of naturalization in which certain intrinsic elements of identity develop and mould into other forms that in turn become incorporated into the social and political environment at play. For instance, provisions in the constitution of the presidential council charges the candidate of the largest political party in the council of representatives to form the council of ministers. He or she is also usually a representative whom all factions of the representations agree upon, given the intra-ethnic and intra-religious

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[115] Wajih Kanso is a professor of Philosophy and Hermeneutics and director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Jordan. He is the author of books on Islamic Theology, Islamic Schools of Thought, Arab Modern Thought and Politics. The interview was conducted on November 22nd, 2018 in Beirut, Lebanon.

identity divisions across the government. At times there is disagreement on the appointment of the candidates which further impedes the government's functionality and promotes fragmentation across the communally represented councils.

On the other hand, the supreme court of justice carries jurisdiction over the 4th and 5th sections of Article 93. This article involves "[s]ettling disputes that arise between the federal government and the governorates of the regions and governorates, municipalities, and local administrations; and settling disputes that arise between the governments of the regions". At the same time, the creation of a public commission has been established to ensure the rights of the areas and governorates that are not organized in a province under the federation, in order to guarantee their fair participation. This in turn highlights the dynamics of federal divisions in respect to community interchange and the ability for the social landscape to influence such divisions.

6.5 FEDERALISM AND COMMUNITY JUNCTIONS

In the period of constitutional reform after 2005, Iraq shifted from a centralized system into a decentralized model where provinces operated as administrative bodies, aiming to deliver deep structural and political changes. However, shifting authority from the federal ministries to the provincial level caused internal political conflicts in central Baghdad. Additionally, the consistently low budgeting of investment, ineffective budget execution, scarce means of revenue generation (non-oil) and a rapid growth of employees all contributed to an expanding payroll with low operational costings, which may have cumulatively impeded the functionality and efficacy of the government itself (Fleet, 2019). Accordingly, the federal government became weary of corrupt individuals, as many tended to manage tribal matters

through their influence in communities as a way to increase their political authority, similar to Ibn Khaldun's descriptions of the causes behind the rise and fall of dynastic powers in the cities explained in chapter 3.

According to Mike Fleet (2019), the dynamics between the local governorates and tribes contributed to affect the relationship with the federal government. For this reason, the directorate observes that tribes are most capable of providing specific services on account of their locality. Consequently, a successful decentralization process was initiated to limit the complete authority of one leadership as a necessary step. Yet, issues with potential imbalances may take shape given Iraq's previous experience with decentralization which was primarily controlled by Baath party officials who maintained a tight grip across the country (Al-Mawlawi, 2019).

Decentralization firstly entails growth, support and diversification of revenues on central and provincial levels, and secondly must be appropriated to back investment budgets. The second step requires the political acceptance of a decentralized system (Fleet, 2019), which in turn requires traditional tribal communities to adhere to the larger political network of the state. The problematic issue lies in the constitutional reference that the degree of federal autonomy must be equivalent across all regional governments. Since this is not effectively applied, competition often arises between regional entities, including an exacerbation of political conflicts due to sectarian divisions (Hiltermann & Kane, 2012). One way to address this issue is to consider two key schemes that enabled a federal system to emerge. Firstly, there is the fact that there are formerly independent autonomous areas, such as tribal confederations, which were merged into a new country. Secondly, the joined groups living under the newly founded state typically attempt to maintain territorial integrity, which takes place due to the

regime and its ideology to preserve unity. Keeping in mind, as the research argues, these tribal networks have continued to maintain their political power and legitimacy through their connections with the central government, religion and its institutions, while maintaining tribal expressions as a cohesive and bonding element amongst its members.

On the other hand, the inconsistency of the constitution's application further explains the confluence of geography, community and sect in respect to Iraq's tribal networks. In this connection, Zahra Ali (2018) suggests the term 'ethno-sectarian representation' as a concept that was introduced into Iraq after the de-Baathification period in 2003. The process was led by the Provisional Authority with the intention of eradicating the Baathist party and establishing a new Iraqi political system; this was followed by the ratification of the Iraqi constitution in 2005. This course of events, according to Ali, eventually led to the development of a new influential system in the country that promoted divisions along communal lines, where leaders are identified as a Sunni leader, a Shiite leader, or a Kurdish political leader, respectively.

However, this only furthered ethnic and sectarian fragmentation in the region, especially because Iraq currently consists of 19 governorates or provinces, with Baghdad and Basra as the oldest of three administrative regions. This level, as Ali argues, is where the loss of legitimacy was witnessed, so that sectarianism became the recognized system that fell outside the constitutional understanding of legitimacy in Iraq. Article 1 of the constitution states that "the Republic of Iraq is a single federal, independent and fully sovereign state in which the system of government is republican, representative, parliamentary, and democratic, and this Constitution is a guarantor of the unity of Iraq" (Constitution of Iraq, 2005, art. 1). This entailed the state's role through the constitution in managing ethnic,

national, and religious differences. However, the ratification was approved through a referendum that took place on October 15th, 2005, which gained the support of a wide margin of voters across the country. Nevertheless, drafting the constitution also triggered sectarian tensions, although parties eventually agreed on the main elements of the constitution. With this in mind, how can a consolidated approach to political identity be achieved in Iraq?

If community is based on both one's territory and one's religious sectarian identity understood together, then the communities (Sunni Arab, Shiite Arab and Kurdish regions) would adopt a hypothetical collective self-governing model under the Iraqi federation. However, Kurdish identity has proven challenging as Kurds have been seeking self-determination as a non-Arab ethnic group, as have other sub-groups under the Sunnis and Shiites who deviate politically by shifting alliances. For instance, the Iraqi Islamic Council and its supporters ordinarily claim to be more Iraqi in their identity than other groups, such as the Sadrist and the Dawa political parties.

Moreover, the Shiite region that is governed by the Sharia contains divisions across the north and south. This makes it challenging to create one united federal governorate, since their democratically elected delegates are required to represent each constituency. Similarly, other minority Shiite groups who are protected by their Iranian counterparts may also pose a challenge due to different internal interests.

As mentioned, the country's natural resources which are not exclusive to the federal government's power, fall under the management of the governorates. Article 115 of the constitution states that all powers that do not fall 'entirely' under federal capabilities, but rather belong to the regions, including the governorates which are not organized into regions.

It also maintains that, where capabilities are shared and there is a clash, then the regional laws predominate, proving that the communal law has a larger extent of direct influence. This is further supported by article 121, which determines that the regions have an overriding general power outside the realm of exclusive federal capabilities.

For this reason, decentralization may allow regions to be governed by their communal or ethnic communities as these socially organized groups contribute to their political influence (McGary & O'Leary, 2007). Communal power has also maintained its authority by engaging across with other systems or sources of authority, for instance the significance that the Sharia attributes to property ownership could be deduced from the fact that property was, as Ibn Khaldun deliberates (2005), one of the five critical facets for conservation, the others being life, religion, the mind, and offspring, as the Sharia had commanded as imperative (Batatu, 2004).

Throughout the course of the 20th century, we have seen how collective identities merged or retracted as a result of changes to one's surrounding sociopolitical environments. Different identities fused with economic and structural advances to produce groups with sectarian or ethnic, military, ideological and traditional tribal affiliations that adjusted themselves and their connections to other authorities to accommodate these changes, ultimately in a bid for political continuance. Amid the modified territories that affected the social sovereignty of many communal groups, lending power to the state was not completely an involuntary act. Hence, *asabiyah* can be argued to have also played role, during this period as communal cleavages were challenged or at times threatened. To illustrate the viability of the research hypothesis, reference to sectarian armed groups and how it intersects with the tribal system for mobilization or territorial gain, will help contextualize and test the theory even further.

Examples will include the Syrian conflict that erupted in 2011, which witnessed the rise of many Islamist groups such as ISIS and the rise of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU) in Iraq.

6.6 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE CONSEQUENCES: THE SYRIAN CRISIS

Alongside the internal conflicts of Iraq after 2003, one of the main costs of the regional wars that took place was the regional spillover of the Syrian crisis of 2011. This section will examine one case to illustrate the validity of the hypothesis. Reference to the 2011 Syrian crisis allows for a strong contextualization of the research argument. It illustrates how, in a different context in recent politics, the three suggested agents of this research maintain their consistency as intersecting entities that can influence politics on a formal and informal authorities.

The conditions of war in Syria in 2011 prompted political parties to seize the opportunity to revive tribal identities and so secure the backing of large clans. In this connection, Khaled Fattah (2011) has argued that tribal voting is not precisely based on ideological affiliations but rather on the social and tribal obligations of membership. The relationship between political administrators and tribesmen is, therefore, represented when tribal members vote for their sheikhs who are approved and supported by their tribal leaders. Thus, the boundaries of the state's local administrative officials are essentially based on tribal lines, in which local tribal sheikhs play the role of the local administrative officials:

"The exercise of power by tribes and their leaders should not be seen, however, as a tribally-motivated attempt to overthrow modern state institutions and replace them by a

traditional tribal political order. Rather, Arab tribal leaders prefer the extraction of maximum political concessions and economic benefits from the state, without being directly involved in the complex management of state affairs." (Fattah, 2011)

In this passage Fattah makes an important point, as this research argues that the degree of social sovereignty that tribes possess challenges the sovereignty of the central government and, hence, the effectiveness of the state to enforce its authority and perform its responsibilities based on the constitution. Moreover, the 2011 war not only included a majority of the Sunni population in Syria but also Kurdish, Alawites, Druze, Turkmen and Christian clans. The following discussion represents an example of how to understand how tribal and governmental relations transitioned. In an analysis published by Chatham House (2018), the Syrian journalist Akil Hussein explains that many tribes had been divided between loyalists or supporters of the Assad regime and opposition forces. The Kurds had also taken their political stance of self-determination. The geographical spread of tribes in Syria is complex: to the north east of Syria, also known as upper Mesopotamia, are a significant number of tribal groups, the largest of which is known as Jubur; others are Tayy, Anazah, and Shammar. Political exchanges and alliances often take place between them in the form of partnerships, such as when the Al-Sanadid Forces, which consists of a coalition of Arab tribes, were joined by the Kurds and led by a Sheikh from the Shammar tribe.

Other tribes operate based on the backing which they receive from intervening regional states, such as the Army of Free Tribes which is backed by Jordan and Saudi Arabia and which is present in the south of Syria in the Bedouin stronghold of Lajat. Moreover, one of the largest and most expansive tribes today is the Al-Naim tribe located in southern Syria, while in the deserts the major tribes include Mawali and Hadidin, who have always been

politically active and also played a role in the 2011 war. Hence, a range of different loyalties has developed. The changeability of loyalties is the main character in tribal dynamics; during the crisis in Syria, many clans in the Euphrates region stood against the regime except for the region of Raqqa, according to Akil Hussein. This prompted many young members to join the Free Syrian Army. However, elders chose to side with the regime due to the benefits and privileges which it granted to them.

In this context religion did not play a major role; instead, the political advantages varied to determine their decisions. This subsequently drove opposition to the regime out of their areas such as Deir El-Zor and Raqqa, which led to their diverse support in political parties including support for Jabhat al-Nusra and Harakat Ahrar al-Sham. Many of these opponent organizations mobilized based on religion and sect as a way to consolidate their parties, further complicating the clan members' identities.

During Saddam Hussein's regime, Sunni tribes in Iraq benefited from significant advantages by ensuring a high degree of loyalty to the regime, hence enforcing a similar pattern of power and influence. Many of the sheikhs received expenses for access to weapons, discounting illegal activities including smuggling in Baghdad. Saddam employed internal security forces such as the Presidential Guards and the Special Republican Guard from the tribes of Tikrit, of which he himself was a member, Al-Ujah, as well as secondarily from the countryside of Sunni and Shiite areas. Most tribes enjoyed special treatment, but the extent of this varied based on their sect. The most favoured tribes included the Jubur and Luhayb in Sharqat, Ubayd in Al-Alam and Tarmiya, and the Al-Azzar in Balad; other areas included the Tayy and Khazraj in Mosul and the Maghamis in Khalis (Baram, 2003).

Another example is the PMF today known as the *Hashd al Shaabi* provide an insight into the dynamics of tribal sociopolitical movements. The Hashd is a heterogenous movement of subdivided groups who have a close interrelationship with one another and with the Iraqi government. There are three classifications of the Hashd group (Ezzedine, Van Veen, 2018). The first classification concerns the pro-Iran Shiites, who pledge allegiance to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Those groups include the Badr Organization, Asa'ib Ahl al Haq and Kata'ib Hezbollah; such groups are tied to Hashd al-Wala'i, meaning loyalty, and are more seasoned groups with a history of paramilitary activities (Haddad, 2018).

The second classification of Hashd actors are the armed nationalist Shiite groups who lean towards the Iraqi government. They generally conflict with other Hashd groups and back their members by joining the Iraqi army or police such as the Abbas Combat Division. The third group are the non-armed Shi'a armed groups that follow local objectives. They are part of the social fabric which is represented by the largely Sunni Tribal Mobilization Forces from Anbar and Nineveh, as well as the Yezidi and Kurdish Sinjar Resistance Units. The variations between the coercive and territorial resources which such groups develop depend on the degree of interrelated socio-religious legitimacy, which intrinsically defines their various dimensions of power with the government and with one another.

The socio-religious factor, however, can become problematic once the representation of intra-sectarian divisions take form. In this case, the levels of inter-sectarian tensions are not the only factors affecting legitimacy. For instance, the source of power within a community of Shiite groups creates a dimension of inter-communal competition, nourishing further cleavages within the communities themselves. This is exemplified by the political-religious

divisions between Saraya al-Salam and the Abbas Combat Division, where there is a distinct support for Shiite clerical leaders such as Al-Sadr and Al-Sistani.

In such organizations coercive security is defined by military proficiency, such as the number of operating fighters and possession of heavy artillery. For example, the Sunni Tribal Mobilization Force has 18,000 tribal combatants alone, even though their recruitment is limited to prevent the emergence of a large and unified Sunni block and despite its mobilization to support the anti-ISIL coalition. While many of the groups rely on state funding budgets to capitalize their strength and popular support, even dismissing non-Shiite Hashd groups, other groups such as the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq group rely on Shiite tribes in southern Iraq. This group operates with the support of the existing social welfare system, offering people social services such as establishing an organization of religious schools.

On the other hand, capitalizing on popular support also incorporates the inclusion of tribal members' leaders into the Hashd groups directly. For instance, the Badr and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq's fighting forces rely on tribal leadership and strength for high-rank positions. Such tribes also favour being incorporated into the Iraqi state's security forces to enhance their level of political engagement in return for maintaining their leverage.

Due to such developments, the Iraqi state has developed its influence over each Hashd group, as Ezzeddine and van Veen (2018) explain, which has weakened an already weak central power in a manner that generates full adverse spillover effects into other bases of power. This can also lead to the emergence of further differences between key Hashd groups.

Thus, despite the challenge that Hashd groups present to the state's legitimacy, there appears to be a marked counterbalance between the Iraqi state and functioning Hashd groups, due to

the involvement of some of the Hashd groups in consultative and security engagements. This highlights the intersection between Islam and the central government through group-based organization.

Moreover, in another example I interviewed a Lebanese journalist named Hazem al-Amin[116], who led research which was made public in 2018 in Iraq and Syria and entitled the Fifth Generation. For his fieldwork he met with various members of ISIS, former Islamist groups, tribal sheikhs, Muslim sheikhs, Yazidi women and active nationalists. When Al-Amin spoke to these groups in both countries, the significance of religious organizations played a dominant role as it shaped a considerable part of social mobilization and influence. Al-Amin also provided a background to the waves of Islamists and the reasons behind their ability to persuade individuals to affiliate with their political and religious causes. Enabling features in the emergence of these groups included the fact that some tribal members became active with ISIS as they desired revenge from past political conflicts, which gave Islamists the opportunity to spread their influence.

Since 2003, the Baathist regime in Syria has been a clear facilitation and supportive factor for Islamic groups. ISIS leadership was able to adapt, consolidate and create conditions for their eventual resurgence in Iraq and Syria, by undermining public confidence in local authorities (Cordesman et al, 2019). Syria provided access into Iraq for many of these groups. In particular, the regime allowed such groups to be operational by facilitating the appropriate environments for indoctrination, including lessons on Jihad given by sheikhs and

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[116] Hazem al-Amin is a Lebanese writer and journalist for the Al-Hayat newspaper. He is a specialist report on Islamists in Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Pakistan and Kurdistan. The interview took place in Beirut in February 2018.

imprisonment. In my discussion with Al-Amin, he described that prisons played a crucial role as they were a platform for members of many different organizations, such as former Al-Qaeda fighters who shared their prison cells. He stated that many of the participants' proclivity to join the mobilization of ISIS in 2011 grew because the prisoners served as the ideal individuals for recruitment and since they were willing to engage in combat. ISIS's brutishness is also reflective in its bitter response over the Baathists' decades-long rule that broke the social landscape, as Fawaz Gerges (2014) explains. The core issue according to Gerges rests on the vacuum of legitimate authority in Syria and Iraq. This was enabled by the political power conflicts between the major sectarian groups, including the Arab Sunnis and Shiites, and the minority groups which broke politics in the region and delegitimated state institutions (Abdel-Razek & Puttick, 2016).

Since the 2011 war in Syria, the Syrian regime's knowledge of such Islamic organizational tactics and history became more apparent as ISIS became a major player in the politics of the war and its spillover, with many Syrian and Iraqi nationals turning to fight for the organization. After many potential ISIS recruits were released from prison by Bashar al Assad in 2011, "the regime did not just open the door to the prisons and let these extremists out, it facilitated them in their work, in their creation of armed brigades," as a former member of the Syrian Security Services told the Abu Dhabi newspaper, the *National* (Cordall, 2014). Similarly, Hassan Hassan argues in the New York Times (2015) that Assad's regime did not follow a similar policy that it had employed continuously in other areas. If he genuinely intended to fight ISIS, he would have reacted in the same way that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki did in the Iraqi provinces.

The discussion with Hazem al-Amin continued by his description of a meeting he held with a tribal chief of 200,000 members in Deir al-Zor, who was named Sheikh Ammar. In this meeting, the sheikh spoke about relationships formed between ISIS and tribes in Syria to ensure ISIS's ability to take control of the tribes in return for tribal interests, such as increased control in certain areas or seeking vengeance towards the government. However, other confrontational encounters also occurred; Al-Amin discussed the Al-Shaitat tribe in Syria during his meeting with their tribal leader who is regarded to possess symbolic strength over all the tribes in Der al-Zor. ISIS planned to avenge Al-Shaitat and claim control over the territory, a land filled with over 100 oil fields, of which Al-Shaitat controlled a few wells with peasants working on the lands. No other tribe was capable of standing against ISIS at that point.

Consequently, ISIS launched a series of attacks against Al-Shaitat, killing approximately 2,500 people according to Sheikh Ammar in the village of Al-Shahee. In relation to the Syrian crisis, this is considered to be a small number; however, in the tribal environment and dispute, such an event can have extensive consequences. When a vast number is killed from one single tribe to this extent, it can only create a future filled with retribution in the region and shape a culture of revenge, as Al-Amin describes.

A further significant factor to mention is that the Syrian crisis had a considerable cultural impact on the tribal structures in the region. This claim is based on the interview I conducted with a Syrian tribal member, who migrated from Deir El-Zor into Lebanon and who was

named Ibrahim Al-Ghadban[117] (2019). I asked him about the degree of social impact the war had on Syrian tribes, he mentioned that tribes survived during displacement by intermarrying with other tribes. The social dynamics of the tribes who had fled into Lebanon in recent years were especially concerned with the crisis management and organizational abilities of the tribe to survive and save their tribe's reputation even outside their home country. Al-Ghadban was proud at reporting on these events, since he was employed by a Lebanese countryside landowner where he and his family settled and lived off the agricultural and animal produce while managing the fields. For this reason, he regarded the social status of people living in refugee camps in the Bekaa valley as being of a lower rank to him. The reason for this was that they did not live in an organized way as they were all refugees fleeing from Raqqa, living together with all one's distant cousins in the same tents. By contrast, according to their traditional tribal organization, each male figure respected the privacy of another man's wife and children, which represents a sign of dignity. He also criticized the refugees' work ethic as well as their ways of living as disordered on the grounds that their camp tents contained no hierarchal order, privacy or respect for their nuclear families and wives. As a way to avoid further chaos, alongside the support of Lebanese tribes in 2020, an unofficial Syrian tribal commission has been formed in the Bekaa in Lebanon. It is recognized by all refugees emerging from tribes as the central authority to organize their lineages and settle disputes amongst them.

Such cultural dynamics demonstrate the extent and need for customary preservation even during times of displacement and war. Whether they are minor day-to-day choices of living

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[117] Ibrahim Al-Ghadban is a participant I interviewed who is a member of a Syrian tribe interviewed in July 2019 in Bekaa, Lebanon.

or standpoints in the geopolitical tribal combat, they are all reflections of the sense of *asabiyah* which influence the culture.

6.7 CONCLUSION

In summary, this chapter has examined how the tribal system intersects with the Iraqi central government either directly through representatives or through political alliances and sectarian political parties. This, however, can also take place indirectly through values that that are expressed on a cultural level. It has analyzed how the tribal system and its values can extend into formal politics through the authority of the army that has implemented the Baathist ideology; Islam and its various sects and schools of thought, which have played a role in directing collective politics; by showing the discrepancies found in the application of Iraq's constitution due to the social and state level legitimacies that interconnect; and, finally, examples of armed groups that overlap with political and tribal interests.

In the earlier chapters the research has examined the structure and role of the tribal system, it then considered how narratives of tribal history shape or support political decisions, at this stage it is important to further examine how the tribal system and its values manifest on a cultural level. By building on themes presented by the interview participants, the next chapter will address the concepts of community, poetry, values and meanings associated with tribal memory that are important to Iraqis until today.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CULTURAL MEMORY REVISITED

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to revisit the concept of tribal memory as an overall theme of this research, in order to analyze the hypothesis of the conceptions examined throughout the thesis and what this may mean for future studies. This research suggests that by Ibn Khaldun's definition, *asabiyah* as the sociocultural corporate bond of cohesion amongst group-forming communities, is found in tribal heritage and continues to play an influential role in Iraqi politics by supporting collective identities. This chapter will create a basis for understanding the overall nuances of Arab tribal culture and group identity to help underline in which cultural ways this may be expressed. If the three agencies intersect on a structural way as outlined, do their subsequent cultures overlap in the same way?

Although the research examines the informal nuances which may influence politics, the following analysis will also provide an inner look at concepts and actions behind these positions. This chapter will include an analysis on culture, understanding kinship ties, poetry as a literary expression of *asabiyah*, and what future research could take place.

7.2 THEORIES ON THE CULTURE OF ARAB IDENTITY

Many events which encourage social mobilization in the Arab world often take shape through political parties that garner a degree of political integrity. It can therefore display a sense of *asabiayh* in which their natural loyalties can supersede the leader of the political party to

centre on the ideology of the party itself. For example, the sense of symbolic representation in the Baath Party or the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria goes beyond the role which a member plays within the party itself; it is transformed into an intensified expression of solidarity with shared identities and beliefs. Such actions are exhibited in tribes today or traditional family-groups that have moved away from their tribally organized communities over time for economic reasons and due to urbanization, but who have also managed to preserve their traditional values. Often the repeated behaviors that influence the organization and practices of communities become patterns in which individuals come to share a common sense of learning, which then becomes a phenomenon (Whiten et al, 2011). According to the authors, culture can evolve and as such is characterized by a degree of change which consistently builds on previous generations. Any changes in the tribal system have been characterized by similar traditions yet has also accepted changed ways of living, for example, many tribes or clans have become sedentary or urban populations under the Iraqi nation-state, which entails changes in economic systems and notions such as citizenship.

Yet, Identifying Arabs as barbarians because of their irrational mind is based on the idea that the Arab world is inhabited by people who conform to 'tribalistic identity'. The barbarian s argument intertwined with neo-Orientalist imaginaries reinforcing an idea highlighting a "deep cultural dualism between Islam and the West" (Tuastad 2003, p. 1149). This serves hegemonic strategies requiring the production of distorted images of an Arab-Muslim enemy that is "not wholly reasonable". Neo-Orientalists construct images of Muslims and Arabs as not only cognitively backward and inferior, but also violent and threatening. The new barbarian argument involves a psychological and mental configuration to explain the premodern cultural stagnation and backwardness of Arabs.

Arabs have a sense of temporal marginality which never allows an Arab to detach himself from his traditional culture (Zureik 1979). This distorted hegemonic reality is further emphasized by Patai and Zureik who claim that Arabs lack the cultural quality making them psychologically ready members of an international democratic society (Patai 1973; Tuastad 2003; Altwaiji 2014).

Building on the interpretative theory, George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism (1934) states that humans act according to the meaning of everyday interactions, such as the communication of language and thought, which are both shaped on the basis of normative and cultural systems. Language in this framework is the source of meaning which helps to generate meaning in a person's intentions. After communication through symbolic interactions, this meaning begins to develop a discourse of communication. The interpretation of this discourse then enables the construction of each individual's own set of meanings (Blumer, 1980). However, according to Mead, this meaning as well as its interpretation can be modified through thought. Yet, through social interaction, communicators become aware of one another's behaviour and often approach their responses according to the other's expected behaviour. This behavior is often repeated since culture implies a patterning that is inclusive within a group (Godwyn & Gittell, 2011). However, this creates an issue between a more general and a more specified approach to analyzing the various expressions of culture. While the integration of values, beliefs and symbolism are often considered as broad ideational aspects, the authors argue that practical and structural considerations are often disregarded. Tasks such as responsibilities or hierarchical reporting are presented as more specified cultural manifestations which make it clearer to understand the aspects of culture which overlap or intersect to create long-lasting patterns. In this way

the tribal system has changed along with the shifting surrounding sociological, political and structural environments.

According to Mead, role-taking involves the shaping of oneself as seen by others. In this constellation the other is most commonly recognized as the social group or organized community, which in return consolidates the self. Through their environment, humans can construct a definition of their situation, as Thomas (1978) argues, in which one defines a situation based on its symbolic representation to oneself; in this way the individual's response is formulated without providing an objective presentation of the situation. This allows a better understanding of how humans may act in certain situations. In this connection, Bhabha (2004) writes that cultures function as projections of 'otherness', just as the social and the psyche, or the past and the present, are interlinked to create more clarity. Bhabha describes the concept of an authentic or organic sense of culture and what is produced from national historical issues or disparate political causes, arguing that culture is not considered as a form of 'allegiance' since cultural hybridity takes shape throughout time. Identity is not fixed, and "the demand for identification becomes, primarily, a response to other questions of signification and desire, culture and politics" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 50). This impression of the fluidity of culture is strengthened through *asabiyah* and other forms of values and bonding.

Moreover, Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism provides a guiding scheme to gather data about the meaning of a specific type of behaviour and its surrounding conditions. Such a theory is critical for application as it contextualizes religion and the central government as systematic legitimate sources of authority that function through their institutions in Iraq. In this context *asabiyah* serves as a latent driving factor which provides the inherent life force

of Arab Iraqi tribal societies. Without communication with *asabiyah* Arab tribal values may not be fully influential within its social networks and hence may not intersect with political institutions.

Furthermore, in order to consider the relevance of tribal system in today's political context, one must examine the several identities attached to tribes and their surrounding environment. For example, an examination of the roles placed on individuals in Iraq's patriarchal society that is still present today reveals the duties and objectives of different members of a family or a political party. Accordingly, this creates a sub-identity within the group. For example, in a political party this might include the roles of a male leader, an executive, an administrative chief, or a follower. Today's world assumes a large degree of interdependence and openness among citizens from different governments, markets, communities, and individuals. Theorists of hybridity have also examined cultural identity as expressions of attitudes, values, and mentalities, that are embodied through representations and symbols. According to Hall (2000) there is also more information today given about the types of interactions brought forth by hybridization. For example, not all religions are governed by a similar leadership and cultural continuity is not viewed in a single whole image; rather, narratives regarding homogenization are linked with intercultural mixing. Although Archer and Archer (1996) argue that cultural contradictions can still take place due to structural differences, this depends on the perspective of traditional perceptions where concepts are appropriated for cultural coherence. For instance, tribal traditions and values are perpetuated in Iraq to maintain their strength alongside other existing value systems in the country. Yet over time tribes in the region have adopted parts of different cultures based on their changing surroundings, such as their sociopolitical shift into a nation-state which introduced

citizenship and a nationality. This shows that culture changes depending on the relationships between cultural agents which are rich in symbolism and which produce a socio-cultural interaction (Archer & Archer, 1996). Furthermore, Peter Burke (2009) states that cultural hybridization takes shape when a culture becomes assimilated through accommodation and acculturation, and that this takes place through negotiation. This avoids any response of rejection since differing identities are integrated together.

On the other hand, Burke describes that, depending on the circumstances, hybridization can encourage pluralism as well, since the positive responses to appropriate imports create a balance between cultural disharmony and cultural harmony. This explains the hybridization of the tribal, ethnic, sectarian, structural or ideological affiliations found in Iraq, the fusion of which produces an interplay based on the need to attain and maintain power as a means of survival within a frequently conflict-afflicted environment.

In this way, hybridization can imply the presence of perspectives relative to an individual such as one's political party preferences. The term 'ethno-symbolism', as discussed by Anthony Smith (2009), denotes the need to comprehend the 'inner-world' that inherently affects individuals' cultural perceptions and attitudes. In particular, it asserts that the boundaries of ethnic identities can shift from symbolic mechanisms related to signs, languages, words, or any form of communicative symbols (including ritualistic or religious symbols) to externalized political and identity-related expressions. Smith describes the two distinct notions of nationalistic movements that exist in parallel: the first encompasses the political aspect and is angled towards state sovereignty, while the second consists of the cultural aspect, which is oriented towards establishing identity within an ethnic community.

In the case of Iraq, Arab ethnic tribes that have branched into many familial sub-groups over the years have managed to maintain their cultural identity even after the creation of the Iraqi republic. Their *asabiyah* has played a crucial role in continually triggering the reimagination and recreation of their cultural identities as an authentic process which adheres with their social sovereignty. Such a process redefines their identity by finding an entry-point of relevance within the current socio-political culture. It is often referred to as a way to invigorate and relive their memories, heritage, religion, and roles played in politics, their sacrifices made in wars, ancient myths, collective resistances and traced lineages. Often this is expressed through nationalistic sentiments as values which contribute to safeguard their collective identity begin to occupy a primary position in the political formula. For this reason, it is essential to examine culture from the perspective of the long-term ethnic origins of Arabs or through the 'inner-world' lens. For this inner self has defined and navigated many of the actions taken by tribes and has shaped their politics from the earlier tribal organization to the formation of a nation-state.

Religion in Iraq thus has become a key mode of communication among groups. It is especially predominant among members of traditional Bedouin tribes who have been the longest inhabitants of the region and who have enjoyed a high degree of power. For instance, religion has taken into account the tribes' socioeconomic status which act as powerful determinants of social stratification. Conclusions about identification can thereby be understood through the six 'Cs' in the grounded theory articulated by Glaser (1978) to reflect the complexity of the phenomenon studied.

The first 'C' is the cause, which produces the phenomenon itself; the second are consequences, which display the outcomes of the phenomenon; the third is covariance, which

relates to the correlation between the variables; the fourth are contingencies, which allocate the route; the fifth is context with reference to the social symbols used; and, finally, the sixth are conditions, which relates to the situation of the phenomenon being researched (Aldiabat et al., 2011). If members of various tribes develop a strong affiliation to blood relatives, a natural distancing takes shape from a tribal group that is composed of different kin. The symbolic interaction that thus takes form will be shaped based on the relational consequences of members for the tribal group's biological make-up, which simultaneously determines the geographical context of where different tribes reside. Such dynamics are frequented by individuals where loyalties change depending on their value-changing experiences. According to George Akerlof (1983), the perception and understanding of identity can be characterized by one's preference and the effects of economics which inherently produce biases known as 'loyalty filters'. Such biases can powerfully influence a person's position and interactions and can thereby develop into different forms of loyalties.

Thus, in today's complex social and political systems there are variations in the prominence of identities in such a way that, by deciding on the relative significance of certain choices, one takes on different membership categories (Sen, 2003). Singular affiliations to a political party, for instance, can only display one set of experiences related to a part of one's whole identity. For this reason, the conflict between the priorities and demands of different identities can affect the placement of each one. For example, a young Syrian man's affiliations to the Free Syrian Army place him in one membership category. By contrast, his support for the Syrian National Council places him in another membership category. Yet both categories pertain to his drive towards expressing opposition towards the Assad regime in the 2011 war. The significance of individuals' reliance on group membership in Iraq rests

on their recognition of community sovereignty as an extension of one's social and political identity.

If tribes carry their customary laws that fortify their sociopolitical sovereignty by other tribes and clan adherence to the laws, this may consequently conflict with the sovereignty of the nation-state as two legitimate sources of justice and authority. Khaled Fattah (2011) argues that the strength of tribes is connected to the degree of weakness in the state. State-building, as an ongoing process in the Arab world, has thus played a role in disregarded the full sovereignty of the tribal system, their networks, and their territories. This point is valid as mentioned in the interviews' thematic analysis, many encounters display how tribal relations also depend on a of patronage culture that exists between the political elite and the tribes, such as when tribes are provided with contracts of lucrative business deals, payments, houses, vehicles and government positions.

Such encounters also coincide with the definition of an ethnic community which develops through an embedded historical context that involves certain social and symbolic arrangements of practice. A configuration of repeated practices creates a blueprint that is relevant to the territory itself. Anthony Smith (2009) has employed the key term as 'resonance' to denote specific strata or regions related to a population, whereby a range of symbols, memories, traditions, sets of behaviours and values are selected to test the level of resonance or the impact and influence that these factors have over people. The impact and resonance of such practices in terms of their applicability and adoption will ultimately help determine the resonating level of *asabiyah*. Public culture is particularly significant in this regard as it creates an understanding in the reciprocal influence between the public and the

state structure which is captured through the various social or political identities found in Iraq today.

This interplay somehow gives rise to the sensibility of a national community in Iraq as it is reflected in those Iraqi people who, as members of the military, came to rule the country for a lengthy period. This raises the question of how the culture of group identity in Iraq may challenge the political dynamics of the country?

7.3 CHALLENGES AND TRIALS OF GROUP IDENTITY

It is important to situate Orientalist perspectives within the discourse of group identity in connection to tribes in the region. Arab and Western scholars who use a neo-Orientalist discourse to represent the Arab world see the Arab world's political-economic crisis as a natural Malthusian catastrophe, and political violence as a resurgence of Bedouin tribal Jahiliya linked to premodern local traits endemic to a backward peripheral desert culture. By discussing 'Arabness' as merely an ethno-religious signifier rather than a civilization with its own epistemological and ontological peculiarities, Arab compradors promote race conflict to perform a critical function for the militant ideologues of the US Empire (Dabashi 2006), but it does point to circles of power in Canada, Europe, and the United States fetishizing and/or benefiting from academic individualistic-consumer surge promoting authentic and expert information about Mashreq and Maghreb inhabitants. To comprehend the region, these dominant circles infuse a problem-solving logic informed by a positivist technical terminology of the Mandate era. These specific semiotic terms include, among others,

Indigenous/Indigeneity, Majority/Minority, Humanitarianism, Self-determination, Constitutionalism, Sovereignty, Arabization, Civil Society, Nation-State, Secularism, and Democracy, all of which refer to powerful symbolic imaginaries based on distorted Arab cognitive configurations (Beckett 2003; Mamdani 2001, 2009, 2012; Dabashi 2012; Robson, 2012)

Although the tribal system emanates from a competitive spirit, this may have allowed for the regional political framework to serve various group interests. For example, Saddam Hussein set himself on a quest of regional expansion in which Arab nationalism was used as his *casus belli*. Such a plan contributed to the failure of Pan-Arabism, understood as a kind of 'counterculture' (Pinker, 2011), as Arab societies and their networks are divided in the form of kinship lineages, communal and sociological branches, inherited tribal grievances, intra-sectarian divides and conflicting ideological beliefs. Noticeably, the need to situate power within one source of authority – in the case of this research, within the tribe or family – originates from a tribal necessity for its system's survival. Although this is no longer the case, since survival today is observed from many levels, nevertheless, in periods where provision of basic services, protection and security are not given by the the government many Iraqis continue to mobilize in communities to secure and defend themselves.

However, this is also true on an external and more apparent level. This research argues that within the Arab Iraqi ethnocentric identity breathes a deeper identity connected with tribal heritage which can often merge or cross many features together. This includes religious, political, ethnic, sectarian, and tribal or descent-based affiliations. They can also overlap at times, creating a hybrid identity (Burke, 2009) that includes a resilient cultural dimension which is enlivened through the *asbiayah* of each identity projection. This identity seeks social

and political validation through the agencies of the state and religion. It occurs based on aligned political interests in an intra-ethnic, intra-communal and intra-religious way, serving the survival of political groups' sociopolitical sovereignty (or self-rule) in war-torn modern Iraq.

Social stratification in this case acts as a mechanism for further survival as it presents a response and a system of societal needs (Lenski, 2013). Additionally, dominance in a group denotes the ability to cooperate with others, since a leader has to struggle for recognition and prove himself or herself to be chosen by their kin or tribe, highlighting the significance of identity politics. Pratto and Sidanius (2001) argue that there are sociological models of discrimination which may be viewed as a version of group conflict theory, in which power imbalances or social inequalities take place since groups will strive to remain dominant over others. This consequently promotes social attitudes within hierarchal systems which benefit each group. Survival benefits provided by enhanced social cohesion denote the reason why the inclination to religious belief appears to be hardwired into the human brain. Thanks to this, one can deduce that such unity does not express the need for individuality, but rather the fixation and praise of one figure within a hierarchal order, an icon outside of oneself, who represents the glory of a tribal leader.

Moreover, as Fukuyama (2011) emphasizes, humans are compelled to enter society and a political realm as a result of a rational decision, which thereby creates a culture. Geography, culture and ideas thus become natural aspects of a communal organization. Identities in this way can be coupled with pre-existing cultural systems; in the Arab world, the normative stance of kinship organizations includes a link between connectivity and patriarchy that can be labelled as 'patriarchal connectivity' (Joseph, 1993). This is defined as a system that

legitimizes hierarchical relationships that are meaningful when understanding systems of power. In turn it helps to understand the basic foundations of the tribal system and the way in which the systematized cultivation of pre-existing or adopted political identities in terms of sect, gender, party, race, ethnicity, nationality, or ideology are often connected with patriarchal connectivity in Iraq, since groups are typically male-led and higher in ranking.

Building on discussions with interviewees on the theme of preservation of lineage, the next section will discuss how identities cam be preserved through cultural narratives.

7.4 PRESERVING IDENTITY

Throughout history political, economic, social and technological modifications all create waves of change and have an impact on pre-existing identities, leading many groups to search for a way to remake themselves and so ensure their survival. Misrepresentations of identities can also develop in this way and somehow taint a group's original and true reason for collective solidarity. For instance, the Hezbollah group in Lebanon initially established its resistance movement by offering a pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli agenda, where fighting Israeli occupation was primary intended to protect Palestinians in Lebanon as well as to defend the Lebanese territory from Israeli incursion, aggression and occupation in the southern parts of the country. However, today this agenda has altered. Hezbollah is now a political party with a military wing backed and funded by Iran, and it has been directly involved in protecting the Assad regime in the 2011 Syrian war. Therefore, what is seen in this transition is the identity of Hezbollah owing to its need to reassert collective Shiite solidarity, so that it identifies a new agenda as a 'political opportunity' that is directly

connected to the government (Azani, 2011). Hezbollah thus provides an example of the politically incentivized religious paradigm where the Shiite political narrative is shaped by a culture held be the religiously inspired group. For instance, Hezbollah and the PMU in Iraq have resorted to influence families in Shiite areas to gain support through rituals and ceremonies which are practiced together, such as Ashoura[118], funerals or marriages that are still similar to their ancestral heritage.

In an interview conducted with a Syrian migrant named Roukaya Askar,[119] who had lived in the eastern part of the Bekaa in Lebanon before the 2011 war in Syria and had since been working in the agricultural sector. In particular, I asked her about how she defined her sense of belonging, and she explained that it evolved from one's family and that she felt safe when she was around her tribe and community in Tadmor. She continued by describing how the number of members in her tribe portrayed strength more than would an individual who is alone, consequently saying 'you are no one'. I perceived her comment that, without membership of a group, one has no identity or belonging to a territory. A person who has no belonging is implied to have no origin. In a region where ancestral lineage and heritage defines one's status and reputation, the ability of a tribe's previous male figures to provide security through land, food and cattle for their community shows how improved their reputation is.

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[118] Ashoura is a holy Muslim day which denotes the tenth day of the Muslim calendar. The Shiites commemorate and mourn this day as that of the killing of Al-Hussein Ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad, by the Ummayads in Kerbala in the year 680 CE.

[119] Roukaya Askar is a participant I interviewed in Arabic in June 2019, in Bekaa, Lebanon. She has given me permission to use her name in this research.

We also conversed about family dynamics, when she mentioned her six children. I asked how she and her husband could afford to have a large family; she replied that a child tends to 'bring blessings' once he or she is born and continued referring to these blessings as resources. Her reference to resources shows how a larger family has contributed to increased strength and status in the number of its members. Financial capabilities were in this sense secondary to having a family. The idea of being a 'lone-wolf' seemed unattractive in the sense that having a large family is deemed as 'what God wants', which acts as a bonding element to increase the cohesiveness of their solidarity and their power. Whether this was a deep belief, a justification or perhaps both was ultimately unclear; numbers of children mattered as they expressed communal endurance and a larger circle of bonding, which signals an obligation of tribal or familial membership.

"Lancaster[120] elaborates upon this aspect of Rwala society in great depth. He reveals the degree to which marriage patterns, for example, rely heavily upon one's position in the Bedouin genealogy, which in turn impacts the community's ability to reproduce itself. He writes: 'Each marriage is a new departure point in the generative genealogy'". (Dinero, 2000, p. 126)

Such a form of preservation took place earlier on during the early years of Islam, as its spiritual essence played a significant role in giving emphasis to the conservation of lineage.

Components of culture of religion include a set of customary beliefs and norms that are shaped by beliefs based on a holy book and its interpretation or related ritualistic acts, which thereby shape social behaviour. Cultural expressions may illustrate the spiritual essence of the monotheistic religion of Islam, outside of the political realm or sectarian dynamics. Arabs

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[120] William Osbert Lancaster is a social anthropologist from Britain who had specialized in the field of Bedouin tribes in the Levant.

continue to carry the responsibility of preserving the ancient principle that they are the chosen people of Islam, a principle in which language has also played a role. The predicament rests in the responsibility towards the deliverance of Islam's 'truth'. This is also perhaps the burden of the of the treasure of the Abrahamic religions, which has developed into a political and social endeavour through, among other issues, sectarianism which has become easily entrenched in political discourse. This creates a sense of responsibility that shifts away from the core spiritual effort, which requires an awareness around intellectual liberty rather than the fixation on task fulfilment as a prerequisite to the deliverance of the truth.

Yet, the spiritual family of Islam known as *ahl al bayt*, which translates to People or Family of the House, was bonded by blood, and it intended to hold on to the spiritual heart of Islam despite its politicization. According to Al-Tabari, the tree begins with Mohammad as the prophet who possesses knowledge from God and divine attributes; then comes Fatima, the daughter of the prophet; then Ali, his son in law and his two grandsons, Hassan and Hussein, who are also known as *ahl al Kisa*, or People of the Cloak (Brockett, 1997). This family became embroiled in politics, as previously discussed in chapter 3, in the origins of the Islamic Sunni-Shiite schism, prompting the topic of the rightful succession and infidelity of Muawiya towards *ahl al bayt* to become a central principle to the Shiites.

Today the direct descendants of this family include the Hashemites, who were historically the ruling royal family of Jordan, Syria, and Hejaz and Mecca until the conquests of Mecca by the house of Saud (today they are solely the rulers of Jordan). Since pride and honour towards one's tribe is fundamental, according to Ibn Khaldun (2005), both are regarded as necessary if enacted for a righteous cause such as religion; conversely, once the feelings of honour and pride become weak, the tribal group spirit is weakened as well. This explains the

justification of holy wars which are undertaken to exploit people by imposing on them the word of Islam through conversions. Moreover, Omar Ibn Abi Talib claimed that one's lineage and its documentation are indispensable to being Arab to ensure a higher level of consciousness and supremacy which in turn is said to uphold the robustness of Arab *asabiyah.*

Differences in approaches of preserving lineage also exist. As mentioned, the moment of the politicization of Islam lies in the earlier disagreement on the issue of succession between Muawiya, the first caliphate, and Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammad. Characteristically this event has been presented as a conflict between idealism and truth, or in other words between the political and the religious. As Ali al-Wardi states (2008), the reason for Ali's triumph was due to Muawiya's lack of prioritisation towards the spirit of Arab tribes, which produced a neglectful attitude towards the significance of lineage. Consequently, as the author describes, Muawiya did not see any importance in the origins of lineage regarding the spirit of Islam, including the lineage of Mohammad, which others greatly regarded as holy. Rather, Muawiya was able to make alliances with some tribes through the direction of *asabiyah*, which paved the way for the politicization of Islam. Conversely, Ali chose a different route as he was more occupied by the religious and spiritual duty of Islam, including his role in it. For this reason, according to Al-Wardi, Ali was politically weaker as he failed to play by the tribal dynamics, to the extent that even his tribe (the Quraysh) stood against his political approach.

Lastly, differences in documentations as preservations also exist. The development of the Quran's Sunnah or Hadith, constitutes the body of literature containing the traditional established customs and beliefs that derive from the sayings and examples of the prophet

Mohammad. The Sahih Muslim and the Sahih al-Bukhari are both parts of the six Hadith books or compilations which are followed by Sunni Muslims. The Sahih Muslim writings were compiled by Imam ibn al Hajjaj al-Naysaburi, who was in fact a Persian Islamic scholar under the Abbasid caliphate. On the other hand, the Sahih al-Bukhari was compiled and preached by Imam Mohammad al-Bukhari in the Mamluk period, with the aim of resolving social differences[121] (Blecher, 2013); he was also a Persian scholar born in Bukhara (in modern Uzbekistan). Parts of the Hadith writings were, therefore, developed by non-Arabs, while the Arabs were occupied with their military conquests and holy wars (Al Wardi, 2008).

The six books were organized and written based on juridical classifications to benefit jurisprudents who had accepted that the prophetic Hadith provided the principal basis of the law (Melchert, 2001). This may explain the difference that lies within values and priorities of Arab tribes and Islam and its spiritual stipulations.

Despite the possible distinction between Islam's writings and its implementation, this section has provided a reflection of the primary values and identity that have been preserved through various means, some documented while others were maintained through cultural dynamics from a smaller family level to a larger political cause. Other forms of cultural expressions include the arts and literary works also convey themes of tribal values, connection to land and family all portray a deep reverence and connection to the tribal value system.

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[121] Social differences arose after the death of Hussain Ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad in the year 680 CE, which triggered a shift in the social order of the tribes under the Islamic caliphate.

7.5 ON POETRY AND *ASABIYAH*

Since the early stages Arabic literature poetry Arabs have acknowledged the importance and value that poetry imparts. Poetry has reflected a deep sense of self-identity for Arabs even more their shared communal history. In the pre-Islamic time, the poet's figure often describes as having divine inspiration where the poet also regarded as a tribe's spokesperson, the poet would praise the tribe's memorable events and encounters in the past and at times would provoke its enemies through words. Arabic poems are not only written however can be also found in oral forms such as praise dialogue, poetic eulogies or even in songs, and they follow a creative and artistic approach that appeals to the listener through some abstract, subliminal lot direct references. The composition of such odes remained similar from the pre-Islamic period to the pre-modern era, for example when poems were recited to a ruler, they illustrated a degree of pride in the achievements and of the Islamic rule in respective areas. While the modern times poets continue to feel called upon to reflect on the predominant political conditions. In times of crises, it has been poets would even play a critical role in bringing awareness to the tragedies at hand. The emotional expressions appealed to many as placed the determination, frustration, and insecurities into words. Moreover, grammatical structures, lexicon, motifs and images of some poetry would be used to understand the Quran's message and its reference would convey a degree of purity of the Arabic expressions.

Most importantly, poetry in Iraq's history acts as a preserver of cultural heritage through its varying forms of expression, use of language and ability to enter a creative space by engaging with what it means to express 'Arab-ness' in the form of arts or literature. According to Iraqi

poet and publisher Khalid al-Maal (2008) place of residence does not necessarily play a vital role in the framework of Iraqi poetry. In his opinion the state of poetry in Iraqi culture is dispersed however since there is a lack of oppositional writings which also hinder the growth of certain aspects of culture as the poet explains.

The strength in poetry lies in its ability to influence formal processes through art, it acts as a tool for engagement where cultural and artistic methods can be applied in conflict phases including reconciliation phases which can shift perspectives. Since artists are often seen to be a-political, this allows for a degree of freedom in the communication of culture by the people themselves. It helps people gain a sense of ownership within the heritage of the society through art, storytelling. Poets have the role of the news reader, and the poet can inform or translate the unspoken into a framework of literary and oral expression. The context therefore is crucial when dealing with art and poetry, role of cultural heritage in politics. It would need specific artists to know what to say or express in moments were tensions, peace or conflict are at play. This then allows the literary expression as one that can shift something within its audience, to bring different nuances within a worldview of a society together and assist the audience in their sense making process.

For example, personifying cities with a mother's qualities can relay human qualities and instill a manner of emotional intensity to the narration of an individual experience. At the same time, however, a poem gathers its ability unite since it acts as a medium to voice the collective.

In the discussion with an Iraqi poet[122], the particularity of Iraq's oral tradition in poetry is one which underlines a satisfying sound and diction, in which Iraqis have an expectation that poets would express collective concerns. Consequently, poets carry a general responsibility towards other Iraqis, which also includes the responsibility of maintaining certain values which speaks to the *asabiyah* of the tribal heritage.

Such expressions appear in many poems for instance, in a poem recited by the renowned Mohammad Mahdi al Jawahiri to King Hussein of Jordan, he pays tribute to the Hashemite family as a powerful symbol to honor the king's presence as a representation of the significant heritage of the preservation of the lineage connected to the prophet. Al Jawahiri begins by expressing his great humbleness in the presence of the Hashemite king in a stanza, a plea, asking for assist in his recitation as a sign of respect and honor,

> "Help my mouth let it spurt free
> Honey, not sweet honey
> O King of the most honorable place!
> Among the kings, and the dearest tribe
> O son of the Hashemites, ancestors of Quraysh
> Generation after generation you carry the pride
> offsprings from the stallions offered
> Never a martyr, but an honorable one, and a fighter
> O son of those whose houses you descend from
> the surahs of the book recited with a chant" (Al Jawahiri, 2021).

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[122] Anonymous participant, Iraqi Poet. Interviewed online 2021

In another excerpt from Abbas Al Azzawi's Encyclopedia of Iraqi Clans, he describes a poem about the tribe of Maslat, a stanza stems from an order given by Ibn Saud to a man from the Maslat tribe who was ordered to kill his own son. Upon nearing the sword close to his son's neck, his son replies by asking his father to mend his honor as the free does not accept to live in degradation and insult, even if it means that they forbid his tribe from raiding, for ultimately the cattle cannot act as they would. His father replies to him "be patient and gather your spite for good for this is life and politics is necessary" (Al Azzawi, 2005, p36). Another poem illustrates an incident during the Ottoman period authority within the Shammar tribe was divided along Al Muhammad and their sheikh or emir acted as the mediator between them and the Ottoman authorities. He describes the fight accurately including how the knights engage in intense combat with their voices roaring like lions. And they are killed by the enemy, and some of them are killed in high honor. It is a description of the power as an attribute of the tribe that can defeat martyrs with honor. It is a tribal description and part of a feeling that must be in the mind and heart of the members of the tribe in order to form the intrinsic strength of the tribe through a sense of *asabiyah* to maintain dominance over others. This is also present in many proverbs and Iraqi folk tales also express features and qualities of tribal heritage.

Moving to contemporary Iraqi authors, Iraqi Poet Abd al Razek Abd al Wahed writes (translated),

> "Standing on Nineveh, legend on my mouth
> Your letters remain, mother of the masters
> O sister of Ashur, you remain from his galaxy
> reverence of you until this day you enslave me" (Al Wahed, 2006)

In his reference to the ancient land of Ashur, the poet provides a tribute to his ancestors while expressing the remaining feeling of attachment and long living connection to his land. A symbol of civilization and history that birthed astronomy, Greek epics and the story of Gilgamesh. One can sense that the author feels nostalgic towards the history of the land and its people in a way which may transcend his tribal connection for a moment and lends himself to his country and its history. One can sense a desire within this foresight of longing and deep acknowledgement to what Iraq's history represents and pays homage through his words. In traditional tribal Iraqi chant Al Wahed (2021), describes his attachment to the land of Iraq as a particularly meaningful reference, in the stanza below, the chant describes the inhabitants' relationship with the 'dishdasha' (traditional robe) and the barefoot men on the land as a description of the beginning of life:

> "Even I, O the land of Iraq, become disconcerted
> In front of your greatness
> How do I write my poetry for you, my country?
> If not all my life in you inspires me
> of my dishdasha, and the barefoot man" (Al Wahed, 2021)

While Amal Al Juburi describes Iraq as her parent, personifying her home as something inherent to her very body and flesh, where links to her clan and tribe are compared to feelings that run through her physicality. Feelings of which only a mother's love can carry, where her love for human connection meets the homeland. As she attempts to translate this emotional attachment to her origins in a tangible way, she writes to Iraq in 'Mothers Who did not Birth Me':

My mother who

running in her veins is the love of neighbors

the neighbors who were

the clan, the sect

family and country" (Al Juburi, 2021)

Furthermore, Iraqi poet Abed al Razek al Rubei is currently living outside Iraq, yet his relationship with his home country can be seen through his dedication to Iraq as a poet, writing which requires a connection to culture and a high degree of knowledge of Iraq's heritage which includes the capacity to acquire laws of Arabic language as well as the history of Arabic poetry. By activating such knowledge, the robustness of his connection to his home country is strengthened, even to naming his daughter Dajla in reference to the Tigris River. He believes that the country lives within a person even if one does not live in the country and it is his effort as a poet to express the depth of his relationship to his home country. The beauty of his poetry is seen in his written accounts on his longing and suffering for his home.

Al Rubei's poetry is depicted by themes of deep sadness and alienation, inspired by the difficulties he lived through. Therefore, his poetry expresses embodied experiences of pain, loss, and loneliness. He considers that by taking part in history on an individual level, everyone participates in shaping it, thus poets express this process through writing. Al Rubei compares the wounded Iraqi to a colorful artifact with inscriptions of legends but buried in the earth unseen to the public.

Moreover, even with feelings of pain that wars have marked on the memory of Iraqis, poet Adnan al Saegh from Koufa illustrates his connection with his homeland and the pain that his people and its defenders have lived through, by writing "It becomes a word in my blood

that no one distorts, I sing with it my country, from the cracks of places and the heart, where soldiers sleep with showers of kindness" (Al Saegh, 2021).

7.6 GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL VALUE

As artistic expressions portray the human connection with land, people, history, and heritage, one can understand how *asabiyah* acts as a spirit which imbues life into customary and formal political structures. There arises an issue however between the extent of one's individual and group adherence in relation to such values, where adherence to group membership and hierarchy may challenge an individual independent of the group.

Similar dynamics exist across the region, including in Lebanon where tribal heritage continues to appear through sectarian identities. In an interview conducted with Rima Fawaz al-Husseini[123] (2019), who heads an NGO and centre for women in Baalbek, Lebanon, she said that group identity and formation in Lebanon takes shape between one's religion, sect, and family within the environment of a failed state. She described that it is not only geographical factors that determine the fate of the country, such as a shared history or nationalistic sentiments, but rather, in her opinion, the presence of a destabilized state, as one indeed finds in Lebanon.

Al-Husseini described that social groups become stronger in the presence of a feeble state; thus, individuals will accede to sectarian law as the replacement for the nation's constitution.

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[123] Rima Fawaz al-Husseini heads an NGO and centre for women that is devoted to the implementation of a project for women's empowerment. It is funded by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF). The interview took place on May 20, 2019, in Baalbek, Lebanon.

This implies that, once social groups are strong, the affiliation to one's nation or country is undermined. She continued to explain that such a condition takes place through the power of legitimacy conveyed to the spiritual leaders, in which each sect maintains their representation through a power-sharing system. Leaders exercise their control through sectarian divisions, which weakens the nation's constitution as citizens come to feel increasingly secure under their sectarian leaders who are most often male figures, thus separating women and youth as the weakest groups. In such a setting, an individual's primary form of protection is the family or, in many areas in Iraq, the tribe, which is ordinarily headed by the father of the nuclear family or the father figure in the extended family. He attains his legitimate position and authority through respect and reputation bequeathed on him through the patrilineal figures who have previously played similar roles. The second form of protection is through the community, which is most commonly directed towards the sect it identifies with.

One of the main concerns about sectarian protection is that it generally does not take into consideration similar laws about human integrity that the national constitution does as the participant explained. It rather derives its laws from religious doctrines such as the Sharia in Islam, in which religious figures simultaneously generate their interpretations of the laws and apply them to members of the sect. Such laws are often known as s *fatwa* or decree, which inevitably produce a deeper cultural influence on many aspects of social life such as the rules regarding relationships and marriages and what is permissible in the dealings between a man and a woman.

Given such social, sectarian and political formation, the emphasis on group identity proves to be the principal form of allegiance, despite the notion of individual sovereignty that falls within the democratic principles of Lebanon and Iraq as well. As Al-Husseini argues, given

the strength of the sect, there is a 'lack of comprehension behind the concept of civil society' because of its descriptive definition to yet another form of group identity. In particular, the group of individuals who unite in the name of 'anti-sectarian' political movements rather than 'civil rights' and who consequently define themselves under the slogan of a civil society group are not necessarily practicing the proper nature and conception of the term.

Therefore, civil society becomes a political bloc or a unity of political parties which only exist to oppose certain sectarian political parties, rather than to pursue and adopt a set of civil rights. According to Al-Husseini, an example of such a development in Lebanon includes the Shiite organization of Hezbollah in the south, the Bekaa and other areas across Lebanon. The region of Bekaa has historically consisted of large tribes who controlled the area across the Syrian territory and continue to remain in these areas today. Such families have maintained their weight and political control there due to their ancestors and the economic protection they carried. Thus, during the ascension to power of the Shiite group Hezbollah, they did not aim to influence and impose their authority on such solidarities, but rather worked to influence and provide a voice to the smaller and weaker Shiite families and communities in the Bekaa.

Once again, such political dealings work in tandem with the experience of the tribal system in Iraq, since the traditional tribes who migrated into Mesopotamia ultimately formed various confederations which carried the same foundational creed and *asabiyah* as that which is reflected in Lebanon. Although there are many cultural differences that took shape amongst tribes across these areas, basic parallels include the male-dominated hierarchal orders, the emergence of Islam as a unifying element, and values based on honor and loyalty.

7.7 ORIENTATIONS OF ARAB POLITICAL THOUGHT

There are many discourses which influence or orient Arab political thought as it is known. It is important to examine them to contextualize the findings of this research. In this way, the research does not overlook the various influences which affect the formation of identity and affiliation beyond the tribal one. The first orientation will examine the desire for modernity by religious reformists. This begins with Sheikh Tahtawi's viewpoints as articulated in his known book which is an account of what he discovered during his four-year stay in France from 1826 to 1830. Tahtawi was a well-known cleric who attended Cairo's Islamic Azhar University. During his stay in France, he was captivated by all he saw. He ascribed French success and development mostly to an open liberal political system (constitutional monarchy), but he also stressed people's education, improved women's standing, and science.

While in France, he concluded that Islam did not exist, but that most people acted like good Muslims. In Egypt, where Islam is so prevalent, he did not encounter any authentic Muslims. Following his return from France, Tahtawi played a key part in the Egyptian modernization movement launched during Mohammed Ali's reign. In reality, Tahtawi popularized what can be seen as a desire or inclination for modernity, not only in Egypt but also in other Arab nations. He founded a school of modernist thought based on the need for comprehensive reforms, beginning with religious institutions and practices. In Egypt, he was later followed by eminent scholars who began their intellectual formation at Azhar University, such as the famous Mohammed Abdou, who later became Mufti of Egypt; but also, the eminent Ahmad Amine, Ali Abderrazik who demonstrated that the Caliphate system was in no way related

to any Qur'anic verse, and the famous Taha Hussein who achieved much for education in Egypt. All of these outstanding thinkers found no contradiction between modernity and Islam as the major religion of Arab civilizations. This was also true for many religious experts in various Arab societies, such as Kheyreddine Al Tounissi and Algerian Emir Abdel Qader, who heroically fought against the French occupation before being driven from Algeria. This modernist movement attracted a large number of non-religious followers in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, including Muslims and Christians. Here, one might recall prominent figures such as Ahmad Lutfi Al Sayyed, a key intellectual figure in Egypt. He significantly expanded the Egyptian press and wielded considerable power as a result of his modernistic and secular objectives. However, many other thinkers, both Muslims and Christians, rose to prominence during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The second orientation considers, the Arab secular nationalists and modernizers. This second direction of Arab thinking is defined by the preponderance of Arab nationalism views that were generally secular in nature, and where both Muslim and Christian intellectual activists may be found. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the caliphate in the new Turkish state, this school of political thought developed and asserted itself. Prior to this significant historical event, Arab intellectuals were divided between those who advocated the Islamic bond to remain loyal to the Ottoman Empire (such as Al Afghani or Shakib Arslane, who were key figures in this school of thought) and those who advocated Arab national rights to separate from the empire. According to pro-Ottoman Arab thinkers, Europe's colonial aspirations at the beginning of the twentieth century constituted a global threat to all nations residing in the Ottoman Empire, necessitating a global common reaction

based on Islamic solidarity from both Arabs and Turks. The opposing school of thought accused the Ottoman Empire of being incapable of changing and modernizing itself in order to oppose the colonial greed of wealthy European powers. They blamed the Turks for the decline of the Arabs and Islam as a dynamic positive influence. With the fall of the empire and the abolition of the caliphate, the road was cleared for a modernist Arab nationalism symbolized by Jamal Abdel Nasser's sturdy personality and the formation of big Arab nationalist political groups such as the Baath party or the Arab Nationalists' party.

Following two major pan-Arab failures, a strong third school of thinking arose. One was the failure of the short-lived first unity period between Egypt and Syria (1958–to 1961), which was regarded as the start of a bigger Arab unity movement in breaking the borders established by the Sykes–Picot agreement of 1916. The second failure was the dramatic Arab military defeat against Israel in 1967, which resulted in the capture of the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights in Syria, and the Palestinian West Bank territories under Jordanian rule by the newly formed state of Israel. Many Arab intellectuals, including members from both the Marxist and nationalist schools of thought, were outraged by these two dramatic incidents. They conducted numerous research and wrote books to analyze the root causes of the Arab world's incapacity to unite in the face of the myriad issues confronting the Arab world. These challenges were identified as the failure to confront the new Israeli state's occupation of Palestine and assist Palestinians in regaining some of the territories lost in the 1967 war; the failure to confront the United States and its allies' neocolonialist policies; and the failure to accelerate economic and social development. This school of thought globally condemned the failing policies of the armed revolutions that had occurred in Egypt, Syria,

and Iraq, on which high hopes had been placed. Furthermore, they accused many conservative Arab monarchies of colluding with the US in its Middle East policies. For some of them, such as Syrian Sadek El-Azem, the fundamental issue was the harmful role religion continued to play in Arab countries, preventing potential Arab efforts from growing and contributing to the battle against poverty.

Due to the profound impact Islam has had on Arab culture since its inception in the eighth century, most Arab political thought in modern and medieval times can be seen to be framed by Islam. Arabs rose from tribes that were always fighting one another to the level of Islamic Umma (nation) when Islam was accepted, which expanded into an empire. Prior to Islam, leaders who attempted to unite Arab tribes, such as King Numan ibn al-Mundhir or Zuhair Al-Jennabi (chief of Qudhaa), had little influence on Arab thought (Karoui, 2014).

Because many famous Arab-speaking philosophers come from diverse backgrounds, Arab political philosophy from the seventh century has been indistinguishable from a wide Islamic thinking anchored on Islam's sources, the Qur'an and Sunna (the tradition of the Prophet). Given the then-rising culture's relationship to the Islamic ground, no one would speak of an Arab political idea strictly under a state that claimed Islam as identity and the ruler (caliph) as the Prophet's successor. From that point on, Islamic identity overcome and supplanted Arab identity. Belief in Allah's unity and sovereignty is the foundation of Islam's social and moral framework, as well as the beginning point for political thinking (Karoui, 2014).

Only in the nineteenth century did the Arab elite assert an Arab identity in opposition to both Ottoman control and European challenge. Since then, Arab political thinking has been

defined primarily by nationalism, reformism, and modernization, with an emphasis on justice, freedom, and unity. The Arab intellectual awakening to modernity in the nineteenth century would be known as Nahdha (Renaissance), due to its emphasis on the need to connect the light and beautiful past of Arab-Muslim civilization to the present (Karoui, 2014).

Due to the numerous causes and factors mentioned above, Al-Jabiri (2016) focused on 'Arab reason' rather than Islamic reason in his work. His categorizations enabled him to recognize that Islam is neither the problem nor the only aspect that characterizes the Arab-Islamic history of ideas and politics. On the contrary, as he argues in Arab Ethical Reason (2001), it is the neglect of Islamic values such as public welfare and social fairness that has exacerbated Arab conditions. At the same time, he warns that over-politicizing religion in the modern era only leads to more conservatism, irrationalism, and resistance to change. His view of the Arabian environment at the time of revelation, as well as sharia objectives, as emphasized by Maghreb theologians and philosophers such as Ibn Rushd and Al-Shatibi (d. 1388), provided him with further reasons to give religion the priority he considered proper for Arab rejuvenation. While recognizing its vital importance in revival because it is the cornerstone of Arab civilization, he did not see that the current problems are solely religious in nature and that religious reformation is what the Arab world requires to be revived; he refused Orientalist misrepresentations of Arab-Islamic history and responded to them in a couple of chapters in his various books (Hashas, Eyadat & Corrao, 2017).

In Muslim literature, the word Umma (sixty occurrences in the Qur'an) refers to a religious community that binds and transcends all other indicators of belonging. It had a wide range of applications. This interpretation has been questioned in literature, particularly in terms of

the derivation of umma an in the Qur'an. At first, it appears that the Quran and Umma have wildly disparate interpretations, ranging from 'exemplary human being' to 'lifespan'. In general, no thorough explanation is provided to account for all of the meanings collectively (Al Faruqi, 2005).

The argument's clear discrepancy stems from Orientalist fusion of 'Islam' with 'Arab.' The conflation of Associationist (a religious identity) and Arab (an ethnic identity) extends to Christianity and Judaism, which are both perceived as Arab and undeclared at times. It is also behind the unquestioned Orientalist dogma that a 'break' with the Jews and Christians, following their rejection of the Prophet, allegedly prompted the establishment of the pilgrimage and the shift of the qibla from Jerusalem to Makka, ushering in the 'Arabization' of Islam and a shift in religious beliefs (Al Faruqi, 2005).

While nationalistic or pan-Arab movements as endorsed by the Baathists may have intended to play this transformational role in an attempt to unite the Arabs beyond their communal cleavages and sub-identities, in a lecture delivered by Michel Aflak at the University of Damascus in 1943, entitled 'In Memory of the Arab Prophet', Aflak sheds light on the past and present personality of the Arab man. He believes that Arabs were chosen to accomplish a certain mission due to their possession of certain traits and qualities, not least the strength of the bond between Arabism and Islam. This bond, he goes on, has served as nourishment for Arabism by presenting a personified vessel that hosts the spirit of Islam to fulfil its humanist pledge. For this reason, Arabs became strong masters of their territories, as is particularly heightened by their colonial history.

As Aflak writes, "[c]onsequently, the purport of the message of Islam in this dangerous historical period, and this decisive moment of evolution, necessitates that all efforts be focused on empowering Arabs and enabling their revival, and on focusing these efforts in the realm of Arab nationalism" (Choice of Texts, 1962). In these words, he asserts that Islam is needed for the revival of Arabism and that this is mutually exclusive with the Arab world's vitality. In this way, Islam becomes an expression of the power of the Arabs which is also done so by its links to *asabiyah*. This is what Aflak refers to as the 'spirit'. The spirit steered the Arabs through the 'Arab pains' and came to animate his beliefs and writings at the time when the socialist Baathists came to power, with motifs of unity and honour being regarded as an Arab rebirth.

However, in addressing groups that identify with the configuration of traditional tribes in Iraq today, what must be taken into consideration is the tribes' semi-autonomous nature, in which their own set of laws centred on tradition and customary law are followed as opposed to constitutional law. Therefore, the government's decision to co-operate with the tribes by aligning them with the policies and laws of the central political authority will be beneficial while also avoiding interference in intra- and inter-tribal matters.

7.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the subject of cultural memory stresses the importance of addressing culture as a precondition for understanding political dynamics in the Arab world. By appreciating

the values associated with the preservation of traditional or heritage-based identities, one can deduce that the degree of social sovereignty is still largely influenced by an early founded tribal heritage that is interwoven through historical narratives of Islam and the central political authorities of different times to maintain a level of political stability or interest.

By addressing the relationship between orientations of Arab political thought, to tribal history, religious, custom-oriented, and tribal values all become part of the rhetoric of identity preservation in different political environments. For this reason, the chapter has examined the theoretical understanding of culture to recognize the validity of the research hypothesis.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 BACKGROUND

This chapter provides a concluding analysis of the research findings presented in this thesis. This will include observations on the main themes covered in relation to the research question, argument, and hypothesis.

The thesis has argued that across history traditional Arab Iraqi tribes have historically engaged with three significant agents, religion, namely Islam, the central government as the political authority relevant to the respective period discussed in the different chapters, and *asabiyah*. The primary data collected through the interviewed informants (examined in chapter 5) has provided a framework for the thesis. It has assisted in restructuring the methodology, the research question, hypothesis, and secondary data, from the earlier assumptions that this research had drawn in previous drafts. This research's added value suggests that there is a bond known as *asabiyah* embedded in heritage, values and culture within tribal history which plays a role in the political dynamics of Iraq today. Rather than only focusing on formalised political authorities, processes and institutions, or religious institutions as the main drivers of Iraqi politics, this research contributes by arguing that tribal heritage has and continues to play a role in shaping political outcomes in Iraq by intersecting or overlapping its interests through the agencies. In the future this understanding can help conflict transformation processes and dialogues by integrating a wider net of locally viewed legitimate actors such as the tribal networks that in most cases operate as non-state actors. Additionally, this research has argued that the tribal system may shape politics through

indirect cultural influences connected with tribal heritage. The thesis has offered an analysis of the most important forms of allegiance found in Arab identity today, identifying this as a form of tribal nature associated with community belonging rather than a defined form of a group such as a sect. This contribution should lead to a greater understanding of the reasons behind the political developments and conflicts in the region by examining a deeper link to the long-lasting memory of Arab *asabiyah.*

8.2 RESEARCH THEMES

Emerging from the deserts' vast terrain, climate and the rich ways of its people, the historical origin of the Arabs can in one way be captured by the dynamics between sedentary and nomadic peoples. What had once been mild migrations into the fertile crescent started with smaller groups of raids that then increased in number with the spread of Islam. Tribes in the fertile crescent lived a contentious life divided between settling on a lands and migration. Tribal life is built on a nomadic way of continual movement as a basic dynamic of living and was not only particular to the Arabs, since the earliest recorded migrations into the Middle East date back to 4000 BC (Wardi, 2008). Before the Semitic Bedouins, there were the Babylonian, Aramean, Nabatean, Hebrew and Phoenician Semites who ushered in the waves of Arab Bedouin migrations to follow. As this thesis has argued, the build-up of political and historical narratives was nurtured through *asabiyah.* Moreover, the fieldwork interviews have resulted in a thematic analysis that has helped shape the argument formulation and process of answering the research question, specifically in the sections on contemporary Iraq. By deducing questions from the data examined and referred to in the early chapters covering the history of the tribal system, accordingly the interview answers

and discussions as data created a framework to process and draw the necessary conclusions from the themes. The themes are the following: deliberations on identity, the limited role of state law with a subtopic of customary law, tribal authority and governance, interdependence of tribes and government, common conflict issues, on independence of tribes, links to Islam with a subtopic of paradox of sectarian differences, conflict resolution, values with a sub-topic of preservation of lineage, cultural and artistic expressions, with a subtopic of expressions of bonding.

Tying in the primary and secondary data substantiated the research argument by providing evidence that explains the linkages between the three agencies, as well as the origins of how the tribal value structure is shaped and in return how these values can shape political outcomes. It is important to state that the research does recognize cultural differences between clans and tribes across the country, since the heritage is rich diverse, hence, to narrow down the argument the research focuses on the foundation of the value system that is reflected across most Iraqi tribe and clan cultures. In a special address I attended at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in 2020, Iraq's President Barham Salih[124] stated that sovereignty is of the utmost importance to Iraq. He went on to say that change can only take place through dialogue to ensure lasting stability, referring to Iraq as "Mesopotamia: the cradle of civilization" (2020) that has endured a series of heavy conflicts. The political environment of the region acts as a conduit for collective solidarities to work together, through the discussed agents, and establish the groundwork of social, economic and political underpinnings. Barham Salih continued by stating that the role of the youth in the

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[124] Barham Salih, President of Iraq. Policy Outlook on Iraq, public session at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, January 2020.

2020 protests in Iraq highlights the need for inclusivity in order to move away from divisions based on communal identities, in which the stabilization of the youth (which constitute 65% of Iraq's population) is the primary objective and can be tackled by providing economic opportunities. The president's speech also linked to the mass protests that took place across the region in 2011. His speech featured several historical references which expressed the pride and significance of Iraq itself. He acknowledged the unfolding dangers of the regional political climate by describing and referring to 'Mesopotamia' as the 'heart of the Arab world' and said that only once the heart is stabilized will the entire region follow. Yet, given the geopolitical outlook of the Middle East in 2022, such aspirations will require processes of de-escalation, economic resilience, and a robust civil society, which can only become viable if neighbouring countries are willing to comply and provide possible aid.

In another panel Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubair[125] stated that the kingdom values its relationship with Iraq since historical and tribal links have existed between them ever since the Abbasid empire in 750 CE. Such historical references substantiate the influence inherited from past political alliances and loyalties by moving them to the forefront of political discussions. Despite ongoing political developments, such sensitive messages show that the strength of *asabiyah* is still alive as it illustrates the deep historical orientation that may resonate in conflict today. For this reason, a recourse to the tribal system in Iraq as a coordinating reference, can help reflect on the successes and failures in Iraqi politics as described in the accounts of participants in the interview chapter as well. This research has examined actions based on the study of the context, language, and ideas,

[125] Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubair. Registered panel at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, January 2020.

with the main research question being, does tribal heritage play a role in Iraq's politics today? It then followed by answering, what is the structure and role of the tribal system in Iraq? How do the narratives of tribal history shape or support political outcomes?

The main hypothesis: of this research suggests that there is a sense of *asabiyah* which continues to play an influential role in Iraqi politics as a supportive role in collective identities. By studying the customary laws and structures in place such as religious institutions, the experiences and discourses that have been observed have allowed for a clearer approach in understanding the prevalent methods of political and social communication associated with *asabiyah*. For this reason, this research examines how certain conditions or characteristics associated with the tribal system may play a role in shaping politics in Iraq.

Similarly reasoned is Chomsky's suggestion to Kant in his argument about the French revolution, which describes freedom as a prerequisite for attaining the maturity for freedom, on the grounds that freedom is not a gift to be granted when the maturity itself is achieved (Chomsky, 2013). In the context of Iraqi politics, it is important to reflect and fully assume the significance of the tribal system in the region rather than categorizing it as an outdated organization of the past in which western attempts to democratize the region did not fully recognize the legitimate presence and historical credibility of the tribal system. In this way, any opposing perspectives, which may not only consist of external actors but also internal actors who may have grievances or challenges with the tribal system, can therefore question and address the choices, opinions, and political affiliations of the system as a legitimate source of authority amongst individuals within the country. The research therefore has provided an inward examination of some characteristics of the tribe to provide a deeper

glimpse of the origins of Arab identity, Hence, the collective must recognize systems rooted in a rich historical heritage to discern why and how it is brought forth into the present.

8.3 IRAQ TODAY

In the past century and a half, the Arab region has experienced many transitional periods such as the Turkish Ottoman order, a colonial British French dominated order in the interwar period; a transition after World War Two and lastly, the current order which has been under contestation and tensions across the region which include issues on the role of non-state groups. There is a large degree of divergence concerning the nature of the state in the region today, such as whether the form of governance should follow religious law or who should have the right to hold political authority much of academic debate discusses the different worldviews of groups within each case. Therefore, the roots of legitimacy during the postcolonial period had led to the consolidation of national movements which aimed to avert foreign intervention and implement their own objectives. Economic rehabilitation might have been expressed as a concern in these plans.

Facing the challenges of the region has proved problematic as leaders may encounter difficulties in dividing their past grievances and convictions with the needs of their societies as a collective organism, which can impact their levels of legitimacy. Such issues affect the credibility and functions of the government structures, in return indirectly strengthening non-state groups who gain an increased a degree of legitimacy from their constituencies across time.

Furthermore, the challenges of Arab nationalism also influenced the role of Islamic and sectarian movements such as ISIS or the Muslim Brotherhood to push for their versions of Islam. Such cases represent a reaction to the dilemma of state legitimacy and what values these state systems proclaim. Moreover, conflicts between sectarian identities in the region are seen as a response to chronic levels of low legitimacy due to the poor performance of governance indicators (Salem, 2018). Such occurrences pave the way for the establishment of subgroups who identify based on geographic, linguistic or ethnic considerations. For instance, after the collapse of the Islamic caliphates, Arab nationalists moreover criticized the division of the Arab world which they viewed as illegitimate and thus they fought for a united Arab nation. For this reason, as discussed, some tribal networks emerged with the potency to assume legitimacy and replace the state as a result of high levels of repression.

According to Abbas Kadhim (2018), the primary concern in Iraq's ongoing conflicts is the issue of inclusivity as opposed to political decay caused by the level of state legitimacy in attaining economic security as well as meeting the basic needs of its citizens. The performance consistency of government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed. This entails the consent of two institutions that have increased their political control since the creation of the state of Iraq: the Islamic institution and the tribes. Islam is entrenched through the *Hawza* institutions in Najaf as the centre of Shia clergymen, while the tribes represent societal force and solidarity. For this reason, politicians seek support and approval from both Islamic and tribal sheikhs. Tribes as Kadhim made clear do not seek to replace the government as they already have an internal and functional political order, a central authority and a communal influence over themselves. Hence, they do not possess any interests or advantage in overriding the state, unlike the military institution in the case of the

Baathists who sought to expand their authority by controlling the government. The tribes are therefore can be seen as a supporting unit to the central government with a social configuration that is able to influence state decisions.

8.4 THESIS CONTRIBUTION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

By researching the history of tribal formation and how it has played a part in religion and religious institutions as well as the Iraqi government, one can understand to what extent the tribal system can shape the issues of dispute. Such influence includes shaping goal-formation processes of political leaderships, mobilisation patterns, framing spaces of negotiation which are seen as legitimate, or validating specific spokespersons from constituencies. The project therefore challenges the assumption that informal legitimacies are static, and instead explores how the tribal system is a shaper of political decisions in Iraq. By defining its own informal spaces of legitimacy and maintaining relations with formal institutions, it can play a role in the larger political dynamics of the country.

Understanding that processes of conflict resolution followed by peacebuilding efforts take place incrementally and in fragments since harmonizing the different elements involved requires methodical scrutiny within a given cultural context. For instance, it is helpful to increase communication within organizations and institutions to promote collaboration as opposed to political contention. For this reason, there is a need for reorganization not only in considerations of the tribal system as an informal political authority organized society but also in associating peacebuilding efforts with institutional reform, social mobilization and the institutionalization of new ideas, without the one posing a challenge to the other. Yet, in

order to reach such mutually proficient advancements (both politically and socially) on the practical level, the warranting conditions need to be available.

This research has contributed by answering what is the structure and role of the tribal system in politics, it has also addressed how some narratives of tribal history and heritage can shape or support political decisions of the region. By examining the basics of what the relationship of the tribes is to the government and religious institutions and how is has evolved over time, this research can pave the way for political opportunities for an increased inclusion of the tribal system. This understanding, hence, can help assess to what extent can the authority of the tribal system constitute an entry point or pathway towards dialogue or political negotiation given their links to different formal institutions.

While his research can offer a foundational understanding of the subject matter, further research can be built over to study and contribute to topics such as conflict resolution, mediation, or peace studies. As for the current unrest and developments in Iraq, one perspective according to Abbas Khadim (2020) includes the strengthening of Iraq will require the following preconditions. The first need a credible degree of the rule of law. This will require a measure of regard for international law and human rights in which steps Secondly, high measures of transparency are fundamental. This will especially require national reconciliation efforts that will address the lack of impartial mediators, economic and employment opportunities, reform of the education system, investment in Iraq's human resources, improvement of legislation and the legal system, and a firm passage of essential laws to resolve the ongoing social, economic and political conflicts. The emphasis given to the 2005 constitution's article on citizenship-based equality, which was discussed in the previous chapter, would finally promote a just system where individuals are considered as

equal by formal structures rather than excessively reliant on sectarian-based power blocs. This may also involve amending particular articles within the current constitution for further reform. Lastly, infrastructural changes are required for development in, especially the fields of healthcare, water resources, agriculture, transportation and housing systems.

Such examples provide potential avenues in which understanding tribal heritage and the influence it has had across Mesopotamia, can interpret group actions, responses or reactions stemming from its value system which prompts a consideration of *asabiyah* in the context of politics.

On a practical level, given today's refugee crisis caused by the Syrian war, with nearly 13 million individuals still displaced, such a calamity can potentially rearrange and redistribute populations due to their lack of legal property rights. As a result, this may lead Assad to exploit tribes with the aim of readjusting Syrian displacement. Moreover, according to the Iraqi newspaper Almada (2020), the Iraqi parliament has taken action against this threat by creating an Inquiry Committee to investigate armed groups and other tribal groups who have undertaken a number of border crossings that have cost the government 360 billion dollars or more based on the committee's estimate, which took place during Nouri al-Maliki's two terms as prime minister from 2006 until 2014. Generally, it is clear that this enormous demographical and sociological dilemma must be addressed, which will require the aid of a much wider circle of experts and both local, regional and international actors. This includes experts on the historical perceptions of the progression of the tribal geo-social map over the years. In this connection, Al-Amin (2018) has recently argued that the territorial politics of Iraq was never able to truly consolidate internally since it fails to reflect the sociological realities of the regional landscape.

On the other hand, after the U.S. intervention, the transitional period of Iraq has rather been one of opportunism and anarchy as opposed to a form of democratization process that is all-inclusive. A similar verdict can be given on the period after the start of the Syrian war, which affected the regional demographic and political landscape; during this time Iraq faced the mobilization of ISIS, increased intervention of Iranian influence which further destabilized the country during its transitional process. With most political parties withdrawing, arming, and mobilizing themselves politically and even to a certain degree militarily, the central government faces difficulty in successfully building the necessary infrastructure for its economy.

Finally, to question older values in the face of changes being experienced, further research on the heterodox conceptualization of politics and economics and its relationship to cultural anthropology and cultural ecosystems within Iraq are supportive. This ought to include a reflection on ongoing endogenous development whereby regions, communities and localities apply heritage and culture as resources, with an emphasis being placed on the relationship between socio-cultures and space. In this area of research, the environmental features of heritage are key. They are linked directly to the political outcome of this research, which has sought to prove that there is a valid theoretical framework behind such an approach to analyzing the politics of Iraq.

Such research will enable further elucidation about sustainable local and regional development, including the possibility of solutions on how to incorporate heritage and cultural resources to create a viable political economy. By adopting cultural contexts and encounters as a compass towards future examination, clarity about the reasons behind communications and conflicts rooted in politics and the social landscape may arise. This can

increase entry points to encourage the de-escalation of unrest and steer the country towards a positive point of transition by taking into consideration the Arab world's inter-cultural dimensions. At the same time, culture and heritage are preserved and not threatened as they are fundamental aspects that promote social, artistic and growth expansion.

8.5 CONCLUSION: THE PAST IN TODAY

In sum, the objective of this research was not to dwell on the contemporary notion of identity politics but rather to refer to it as a starting point for defining Arab tribal identity. This has helped me as a researcher give attention to the various forms of legitimate authorities within Iraq beyond the known institutionalized structures.

Understanding the importance of including the tribal system's traditions and value system in political discourses, can add to interpretations of authority and legitimacies that in contrary may not be considered 'official', yet can play a major part in shaping political outcomes. Culture, therefore, carries the ability to host such difficult meetings between the past and present. By engaging with the disembodied parts of memory and structure today, it will help to mediate the differences within the co-existing political systems in Iraq.

As argued throughout the thesis, the collectiveness as defined by *asabiyah* is important to Arab Iraqi societies and carries a deep meaning associated with religious messages of communion, co-existence and social acceptance as a way to maintain values and honour ancestors. Despite the conditions of Iraq today, the preservation of ethnic and religious diversity such as the Yazidi ethnic minority, conveys a common affinity of expressing ancient ancestral ties, and is also seen in Saddam Hussein's effort in restoring an ancient

Babylonian palace with passages translated into Arabic as a way of illustrating his pride and heritage while reiterating the Arabs' presence. Despite such an endeavour, it can be inferred that Arabs correspondingly believe that civilizations are preserved through ideals and not necessarily in stone, which only reflects the original Bedouin's moral responsibility towards maintaining the ethics and values of their culture.

Finally, by acknowledging the successes, pain, and experiences of the past one can bring such learnings to the present and future to benefit the collective. Human communities began constructing ethical codes of conduct long before the world's major monotheistic religions arrived, because of the development of morality during the long evolutionary past, while cooperation, honesty, and altruism increased group survival. Whether human nature is good or not, humans can focus on collaboration to push for better living circumstances. An inner moral sense is ultimately what sanctifies a set of norms and prohibitions, which govern the interactions among people both within and between cultures. Competing stereotypes take shape as identities within a state of nature, and the fueling of their respective norms is what produces a heavy burden of emotional, moral, and political baggage. For example, changes in the modern Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and European colonialism ushered in the mandate system which led to the development of ideological tendencies. Hovsepian (1995) categorizes two clusters in this connection: firstly, the ideas of political integration, which were defined by state boundaries triggering Islamic revivalism, Pan-Arabism and Marxist movements; and, secondly, regional nationalism, which emphasized cross-national unity across territories. However, as the author explains, imperial policies encouraged ethnic and tribal regional separatism, causing the disruption of regional

integration. These only incentivized collective solidarities to direct the sociopolitical dynamics further in contemporary politics or, as Mar-Molinero (2020) describes, transmute into peripheral nationalism where some groups under a nation-state would be opposed to the government in defense of a cultural nation.

What can be described as fundamental forms of cultural identity are set in place by respective social groups to preserve cohesion within a society by imparting meaning to cultural connections over time. Ultimately, history is a continuity of memory and thought where the expression of individuals creates an interconnectedness, just like the emotional centre of the brain is inseparable from the immune or cardiovascular system of the human body and stands in harmonious interrelation.

History gives a sense of continuity, raw materials for constructing the generalizations required for prediction, and an institutional framework (Sethi et al., 1984). The unbroken natural progression of national history improves cultural identification, boosts confidence in dealing with unexpected situations, and gives a framework for predicting and anticipating changes. The heritage of the Arab-Islamic empire is evident in the terminology and forms used by modern organizations. Many Arab states, for example, utilize terminology such as Wazir (minister), Diwanal-Jaish (army department), Diwan Arzag (pay-allowance department), Kuttab or Rasail (correspondence), al-khatam (sealed act), al-Arida (document), at-Sakk (financial document), and Tahuil (diversion or transfer).

Foreign elements controlled Arab fate when the Arab empire fell apart. Each Arab generation came to accept foreign customs and habits as their own. Arabs in different regions of the region were cut off from one another. The lack of written communication exacerbated the

problems. As time progressed, rituals and legends were seen as unique and were frequently taken for granted. As a result, when orientalists wrote the history of the Arabs, the Arabs lacked the expertise and scientific procedures to remedy errors and such injustices. Due to the discontinuity in history, Western forces have been able to control the Arab people, which may contribute to the current inadequate infrastructure of the management profession.

The roots of legitimacy, continuity, and evolution are values, beliefs, and traditions. When there is a strong national culture, institutional arrangements, and customs flourish. When individuals of a society are knowledgeable with and dedicated to certain value systems, they have a defined direction in life and an identified set of goals. To avoid conflict and maintain a peaceful coexistence, the Arabs, can connect to the tribal system's values of courage, generosity, honesty, pride, hard work, loyalty, endurance.

Therefore, the tribal value system can be seen to carry an outer garment which is understood through its practices and its connection to communal interaction. The collective mobilization can be seen to express a deeper aspect of the tribal system and this perspective can uncloak principles of human collectivity. It is important to revisit the approach of community-building in the Arab world emphasized by the tribal system, to increase cooperation across formal and informal political levels and integrate the diverse values to work towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

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APPENDIX I:

Consent Form

Title of Study: Tribes, Memory and Politics in Iraq

Lead researcher: Mae Anna Chokr (University of Westminster)

	Yes	No
I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and had its contents explained to me.	☐	☐
I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.	☐	☐
I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.	☐	☐
I wish to receive transcripts of my interview	☐	☐
I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.	☐	☐
I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the research.	☐	☐
I wish to remain anonymous	☐	☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain secure.

_____

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX II:

Participation Information Sheet

Tribes, Memory and Politics in Iraq

Researcher: Mae Anna Chokr (University of Westminster)

You are being invited to take part in research analysing how the Tribal system's heritage and value system may play a role in shaping political outcomes in Iraq.

The following research questions are at the core of the study:

- Does tribal heritage play a role in Iraq's politics today?
- What is the structure and role of the tribal system?
- How do the narratives of tribal history shape or support political decisions?

The study will involve you:

1) Participating in answering a few questions on your relevant experience and opinion on how influential you assume that social actors are in politics.
2) If you choose to, you will have the opportunity to provide your insights on the social, political, and historical significances of various elements, which in return are part of your country's political dynamics and environment. This will also involve you in providing this research and academic field, with a deeper understanding on the context of Iraqi politics.

Please note:

- Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you are free to end the interview at your convenience.

- You do not have to complete all questions if you do not wish to do so.

- Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous per your request.

- No individuals will be identifiable from any collated data, written report of the research, or any publications arising from it if anonymity is requested.

- All computer data files will be encrypted, and password protected. The researcher will keep files in a secure place and will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

- All hard copy documents, e.g. consent forms, completed questionnaires, etc. will be kept securely.

- The researcher can be contacted during and after participation by email (w1656113@mywestminster.co.uk) or by telephone (+44 7399805089).

Tribes, Memory and Politics in Iraq

Mae Anna Chokr

University of Westminster London, 2021

Questionnaire for PhD research

Title of Ph.D.: Tribes, Memory and Politics in Iraq

Please answer the following questions in the order you prefer. It is not necessary that you answer all the questions, only those that pertain to your work and/or personal knowledge.

Tribes and politics

1. What in your opinion is the relationship between the tribe and politics in Iraq?
2. How would you describe the tribe's relationship with the Iraqi state?
3. To what degree do the tribes exercise their power on a social level? Does this authority extend to government institutions?
4. How does the tribe view conceptions of power and justice today?

On Islam

1. If you have tribal origins in your family, how would you describe the role of your tribe historically?
2. Is there a relationship between the feeling of *asabiyah* (or the sense of group solidarity and cohesion) with tribal origins?
3. What is the relationship of the tribe to Islam and its doctrines?
4. How would you describe the relationship between tribes of the same lineage? Is the relationship different if there are sectarian differences?
5. What are some typical conflicts that occur between tribes? And how are they resolved?

On Culture

1. If you have tribal origins in your family, how is its history recorded? Is it through letters, references or charters?
2. What are some of the values held by the tribal system?
3. How is tribal culture and its values maintained today? Can you provide an example?
4. Are tribal culture/values expressed through arts, literature, or poetry? Can you provide examples?

Participant's Biographies

Name/Pseudonym	Background/Place	Place/Date
1. Anonymous Participant	NA	Beirut, Lebanon September 2018
2. Wajih Kanso	Professor of Philosophy and Hermeneutics and director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Jordan. He is the author of books on Islamic Theology, Islamic Schools of Thought, Arab Modern Thought and Politics.	Beirut, Lebanon November 2018
3. Nahla Chahal	Is a writer, researcher, activist and journalist on various topics including Iraq, Lebanon and Islam. She is a columnist at the London-based Al Hayat newspaper and president of the Arab Women Researchers Association.	Beirut, Lebanon September 2018
4. Salah Dnadeel	Member of a tribe from Syria	Bekaa, Lebanon July 2019
5. Hazem Al-Amin	Lebanese writer and journalist in Al-Hayat newspaper. He has specialized in fields reporting Islamists in Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Pakistan and Kurdistan.	Beirut, Lebanon February 2018
6. Ibrahim Ghadban	Member of a Syrian tribe	Bekaa, Lebanon July 2019
7. Roukaya Askar	Member of a Syrian tribe.	Bekaa, Lebanon June 2019
8. Rima Fawaz al-Husseini	Heads an NGO and centre for women in Baalbek Lebanon, for the implementation of a project for women's empowerment funded by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF).	Baalbek, Lebanon May 2019

9. S. Huboub	NA	Online, Zoom Interview, 2021
10. Um Alawi	NA	Online, Zoom Interview, 2021
11. Ibn al Iraqi al Quraishi	NA	Online Zoom Interview, June 2021
12. Ibn al Iraqi	NA	Online, Skype Interview, October 2021
13. Anonymous Participant 1	Iraqi poet	Online Skype Interview, June, 2021
14. M. Abdallah	NA	Email Interview, June, 2021
15. Aida Al Hassani Schlaepfer	Iraqi film director and producer, her films received wide exposure. Amongst them include Marionette, Gangs of Baghdad, and Homeland.	In person, Zurich Switzerland October, 2021
16. K. Al Saray	Researcher in politics based in Irbil	Online, Skype Interview, July 2021
17. Shatha al Juburi	Ph.D. Researcher on the politics of Iraq's Shiite Marja'iya.	Online, Zoom Interview, July 2021
18. Anonymous Participant 2	NA	Online, Zoom Interview, August 2021
19. Anonymous Participant 3	NA	Phone call Interview August 2021
20. Anonymous Participant 4	Political Activist	Phone call Interview, August 2021
21. Anonymous Participant 5	NA	Phone call Interview, August, 2021
22. Anonymous Participant 6	NA	Phone call Interview, September, 2021
23. Anonymous Participant 7	NA	Email Interview, September, 2021

24. Anonymous Participant 8	NA	Email Interview, September, 2021
25. Anonymous Participant 9	NA	Phone call Interview, September, 2021
26. Anonymous Participant 10	NA	Skype call Interview, September, 2021
27. Anonymous Participant 11	NA	Email Interview, September, 2021
28. Anonymous Participant 12	Iraqi artist	Phone call interview, October, 2021
29. Anonymous Participant 13	NA	Email Interview, October, 2021
30. Anonymous Participant 14	NA	Email Interview, October, 2021
31. Anonymous Participant 15	Iraqi filmmaker, director	Email Interview, October, 2021
32. Anonymous Participant 16	Iraqi artist based in Baghdad	Online Skype Interview, 2021
33. Anonymous Participant 17	NA	Phone call Interview, October, 2021
34. Anonymous Participant 18	NA	Phone call Interview, October, 2021