ISLAM AND THE ARABS IN THE ENGLISH TRAVELOGUES OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ABSTRACT

THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
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BY
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Under the Supervision of
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CENTRE OF WEST ASIAN STUDIES
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
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The history of cultural, political and economic relationship between the Arabs and the English people is quite old. From cultural point of view the English people came to know about the Arabs from two very ancient sources i.e. works of Greek historians and the Holy Bible. Both the Greek historians and the Bible portrayed Arabs as a strange people who possessed some characteristics which were highly abominable in the West. The Bible especially depicted them as wily politicians and lurking mercenaries.

The two ancient sources: Greek works of history and the Holy Bible were confined to a small band of educated people. Thus the common unlettered people remained ignorant of Arab race for quite a long time. It were infact Crusades which besides being wars of conquest provided both the peoples with opportunities to know each other in a direct and better way. It is true that after the conquest of Jerusalem most Crusaders returned back to their respective countries. However, a good number of Crusaders decided to settle in the holy land. It were infact these Crusaders who in times of peace found golden opportunities to study the religion, culture and civilization of the Arabs who had become their conquered neighbours. These Crusaders not only gave up many of their unfounded
prejudices but also adopted the Arabs' living style, especially those aspects of Arab culture and civilization which they found superior to their own.

During the same period some scholars and travellers also visited the Middle East. Whereas the scholars tried to make an objective study of the Arabs, and in this process became highly impressed by some aspects of Islamic civilization such as the Arab sciences and their method of learning, the travellers produced superficial, even misleading material about the Arab world. Unfortunately their works were more popular than the serious scholarly works. As a result a highly disfigured and bad image of the Arabs was created in England.

In the sixteenth century the Arab Muslims became subservient to the Muslim Turks. The Turks gave permission to the English merchants to trade in their entire dominion. This paved the way not only for greater commercial activities but also for direct contacts between the two nations. Many English traders sailed to various Oriental port cities which were mainly inhabited by the Arabs. Unfortunately the English merchants proved to be highly unscrupulous and as a result produced materials which further distorted the already disfigured picture of Arabs. Meanwhile travellers and scholars continued to visit the Arab world and portrayed the Arab race both favourably and unfavourably. However, most travellers presented the Arabs as a base and mean people.
It was only in the eighteenth century when the English travellers began to study the Arab society seriously. The religion of Islam was still subjected to harsh criticism but the Arabs as a race and nation were praised, even glorified. Infact the eighteenth century saw the rise of nationalism in Europe which affected not only politicians but also scholars and travellers. Influenced by nationalist ideas they approached and saw the Arabs as a freedom loving nation who had been subjugated by the Turks. Both travellers and scholars adopted a somewhat favourable attitude towards the Arabs. They were portrayed as men with many errors and shortcomings but their merits were also generously appreciated and praised.

The nineteenth-century travellers, barring a few, were highly subjective, imperialist and racist. Both imperialism and racism had emerged as the most dominant ideologies in the nineteenth century. It was commonly held that the Europeans especially the English people were racially and intellectually superior to Oriental races including the Arabs. Their racist outlook naturally led them to think of themselves as being ones who deserved to govern over the world's inferior races. With such logics the Englishmen used to justify the expansion of their empire by hook or by crook.

Majority of the English travellers of the period under discussion were influenced by the dominant ideologies
of their age and presented in their works more of their own prejudices and predilections than the reality of the Middle East. For instance it was their desire to see Oriental races including the Arabs as British subjects. As a result they found out men who could be presented as being desirous of English rule in their respective countries. In fact it was more a reflection of their own desire than the expression of Oriental will to be ruled by the British.

Along with racist and imperialist travellers there were men who visited the Arab world with a missionary zeal. The missionary-minded travellers saw in the expanding European empires an opportunity to convert Oriental races to Christianity. For them Christianity was not merely a religion but a superior civilization which deserved to be imposed upon non-Christian nations. Often such travellers advised their governments to work for the cause of Christianity.

The travellers of the first half of the twentieth century, with the exception of Philby, were as much subjective as the nineteenth-century travellers. They too portrayed the Arabs as ones who liked to be lorded over by the British.

The First World War proved to be a turning point in Anglo-Arab relations. Before the outbreak of the War the English position was to suppress the Arab desire for freedom and help the Turks to strengthen their control of Arabia. But
when the Turks decided to ally themselves with Germany the English started encouraging the nationalist Arabs to revolt with a view to destroying the Ottoman Empire.

The four travellers - Bell, Shakespear, Lawrence and Philby - discussed in this thesis were associated, in one or another way, with the British Government. Often they took stands which were different from the official policy. However, they remained loyal to their Government and served their country obediently. But even then they came to be known as friends of Arabs who struggled and worked hard for Arab independence.

Since most of the above mentioned travellers were actively engaged in the political drama of their age it is natural that their works are greatly concerned with the Anglo-Arab as well as international politics of the time. This aspect of their works naturally helps to understand the political history of the period under discussion.

Gertrude Bell travelled in various parts of Arabia mainly in the first decade of the running century. In the beginning she was merely a travel enthusiast and had no commitment to any political ideology. However, she seems to have been influenced by the nineteenth-century travellers who liked to see Oriental nations under British rule. As a result she found out many a Syrian who, according to her, were
desirous of British occupation of their country.

In her pré-war works Gertrude portrayed the Arabs as well as the Turks as men who had both virtues and vices. However, as a whole, and in keeping with the British policy, she greatly admired the Turks and opposed and criticised the nationalist Arabs who wanted to put an end to the Ottoman rule in the Arab world. But she, like many of her contemporaries, changed her outlook after the outbreak of the war.

Gertrude began her political career with the beginning of the First World War. She served her country in many capacities. She is often referred to as being a friend of Arabs who quarrelled even with her Government for their rights. But a close scrutiny of her political activities proves beyond doubt that she was first and foremost loyal to her country and worked assiduously to promote its imperial interests in the Arab world.

Captain Shakespear was Britain's political agent in Kuwait. His primary task was to watch over Shaikh Mubarak, the ruler of the tiny Shaikhdom. Besides, he was required by Simla-based British Intelligence to gather strategic information about tribal Shaikhs living in the Kuwaiti hinterland. To achieve his goals he made several journeys which enabled him to get into contact with tribal chiefs and to
know their alliances and rivalries on the one hand and to fill in blanks on the Arabian map on the other which was later used by the British army during the First World War.

Captain Shakespear is, however, better known for his friendship with Ibn Saud. It is generally held that Ibn Saud's interests were greatly dear to him. But in reality he was an intelligent British spy and the purpose of his association with Ibn Saud was to promote the interests of his country. There is no denying the fact that he tried hard to change his country's traditional pro-Turkish policies and support Ibn Saud's claims in Central Arabia. On the surface it appears as he wanted to strengthen Ibn Saud's position against his pro-Turkish rival, Ibn Rashid. But his real intention was something else. He had realized well that politically and militarily Ibn Saud was stronger than Ibn Rashid and the Turks in Central Arabia. Hence he tried to convince his Government that an alliance with the powerful Desert King was in Britain's interests.

Shakespear's views were not taken seriously by his superiors before the Turkish alliance with Germany. However, the outbreak of the war and Turkish entry in it on the side of Germany made the British Government realize the wisdom of his approach. He was sought by War and Foreign Offices for expert views and comments on various foreign and military
problems then facing his country.

Because of his friendship with Ibn Saud Shakespeare was sent to the later immediately after the war started in order to gain his support for Britain. He did accomplish his job when he successfully persuaded Ibn Saud not to sign a treaty of alliance with Turkey and take side with Great Britain. Moreover, it was on his suggestion that Ibn Saud refused to endorse and accept the Turkish call for Jihad or the Holy War against infidel Britain.

Thomas Edward Lawrence was also a British spy. However, his true identity was known to the world only in 1969 when some secret records of the British Government were made public. As a British spy it was natural for Lawrence to serve his country's interests at all cost. But he was not merely a spy working in the field. Infact he had his own views on various problems of his time which were different from official British position. Moreover, on several occasions he took stands which tended to be pro-Arab rather than pro-British. However, his real intention was not to promote the Arab cause but to serve the British Empire.

Lawrence's friendship with Faisal and his projection of himself as a great Arabophile were in fact a tool or a means to serve his country. His main intention was to eliminate the so-called Islamic threat by creating rift between the Arabs
and the Turks. He rightly judged that a divided Islamic Ummah would never pose any serious problem for the supremacy of the West. It was with this view that he tried to divide Islam against itself by encouraging the Arabs to rise in rebellion against the Turks. He was not content with this alone. He further divided the Arabs and tried to keep them at loggerheads with each other so that they will never become a force to be reckoned with.

Lawrence was not only against Islam but against any power that tended to challenge the British supremacy in the Middle East. It was with this motivation that he criticised and opposed the Sykes-Picot Agreement which had bound his Government to put Syria under French rule. He supported Faisal's claims in Syria not because he wanted to secure a Kingdom for him but because he wanted to use it as a pretext to stop the French from taking Syria whom he considered to be the main rival of Britain in the Middle East. Clearly Lawrence was loyal to his country alone and his public posture of being an Arabophile was merely a farce.

St. John Philby is the last traveller discussed in the present work. He was an opinionated person and had his own peculiar views on every matter. As a school boy he was highly conservative and believed in the ideals of Christianity and the British Empire. But he became a socialist and liberal when he joined Cambridge University. However, his
socialism was merely intellectual and could not prevent him from becoming a pillar of the British imperialism. He joined Indian Civil Service in 1908.

Although a servant of the British Empire Philby had somewhat liberal views on many issues of his time. He tried to be sympathetic towards the native people while working in India, Mesopotamia and Jordan. He believed that Britain as an advanced nation should help the Arabs to run their independent governments under its nominal control. But he became fiercely anti-imperialist after his resignation from the government service in 1924 and demanded complete freedom for the Arabs. His struggle for the Arab cause brought him so near to the Arabs that in 1930 he embraced the faith of Islam.

Philby's early impressions of Islam were both negative and objective. That he was critical of some aspects of Islam and yet described many other aspects with a great deal of objectivity. After his conversion he seems to have deliberately adopted an attitude of indifference towards the religion of Islam. However, he kept on writing about the political problems of the Arabs.

Philby was a friend and great admirer of Ibn Saud and helped the later modernize his country on a tremendous
scale. On political front he always supported Ibn Saud. However, there came occasions when he disappointed the Desert King. For instance his views on and activities about the Palestine problem proved too embarrassing for Ibn Saud. Philby infact wanted to establish an exclusively Jewish State in Palestine with the help of Zionist Jews and Ibn Saud. His idea was to transfer the Arab population of Palestine to Saudi Arabia or somewhere else in the Arab world. The programme was to be implemented by Ibn Saud and the cost of its implementation was to be borne by the Jews. Ibn Saud publicly disassociated himself from the so-called Philby plan.

It can be reasonably concluded that the four travellers discussed in this thesis were associated in one or another capacity with the British Government and excepting Philby they all remained loyal to their country till their last breath. Philby was anti-imperialist but not anti-Britain. He, unlike his contemporaries not only came nearer to understand the Arabs but also identified himself with them. Bell, Shakespear and Lawrence, however, were committed imperial agents and always tried to promote the interests of their country, even at the cost of Arabs. Their championing of the Arab cause was merely a public posture or a tactics that they successfully employed to hide their real identity on the one hand and to serve the interests of the British Empire on the other. Infact in the heart of their hearts they were imperialist par excellence.
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PREFACE

The legacy of travel-literature is unique and old in England. Men and Women of English origin have been travelling to other nations since medieval ages and most often they took delight in writing down their experiences or impressions about the countries they visited. Not unoften such travel books proved to be the only source of information about a country or a region rarely visited by common Englishmen. Thus it can be justly argued that travelogues have been playing a vital role in the making of the image of various people and nations in England.

Direct contacts between Arabia and England were made in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when many crusaders of English origin went to the holy land to deliver Jerusalem. Since then the Englishmen, travellers, scholars, merchants, missionaries and politicians, have been frequently travelling to and writing about Arabia. Some of the works produced in various ages were serious and made valuable contributions to the common fund of human knowledge. But unfortunately majority of the writers published superficial materials about the Arab world which, as can be imagined, created an unrealistic, even fictitious and misleading, image of the Arabs.
This thesis aims to deal with some major travel writers of the twentieth century who especially wrote in its first half. The author's approach has been to find out the motivations or the ideologies and world views with which the travellers of the period under discussion went to the Arab world. For it were their personal ideologies or, at least, their individual predilections which greatly influenced their view and vision of the Arabs. Thus it can be reasonably concluded that the Arab society or 'realities' they presented in their works, to a great extent, were not objectively studied or comprehended the way the Arabs themselves liked and saw them. Exceptions, however, cannot be denied.

In writing this thesis I have received generous help from various quarters which I wish to acknowledge from the core of my heart. First of all I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. M.R.K. Nadwi, my thesis advisor and supervisor, who helped me with concrete and objective criticism to widen the scope and references of this work. My thanks are also due to Prof. Mahmudul Haq, Chairman, Centre of West Asian Studies, Professor Emeritus S. Maqbool Ahmad, and Prof. M.A. Saleem Khan for their valuable suggestions and encouragement. I also wish to thank the teachers and research scholars of the Centre,
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Finally I am thankful to Mr. O.P. Sharma for excellently typing this work.
INTRODUCTION

Past helps understand the present and the future in a better way. It is in this perspective that one is prompted to touch on the reflections of the writers and travellers who wrote about the Arabs in bygone ages. That, in order to have a fuller and proper understanding of the Arabs' image as depicted in the travel literature of the first half of the twentieth century it would be useful to get acquaintance with the literature that in the past contributed considerably to the making of the image of the Arabs in the English speaking world in one or another way. Naturally such an attempt would also provide a historical background to fully grasp the subject that will be thoroughly discussed in this thesis.

Perhaps one of the most ancient writers who made a crystal clear reference to Arabia was the Greek historian Herodotus (484 B.C. 430-420). In his book Herodotus who wrote in the fifth century B.C., described Arabia as a strange land which was filled with perils and fantasies, and produced 'frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon, and ladanum.'1 Herodotus has further described that how these items were procured by the Arabs. According to him it was not easy to obtain any of the above mentioned items except

the myrrh. The Frankincense, according to Herodotus, was procured by burning the gum styrax. 'For the trees', writes Herodotus, 'which bear the frankincense are guarded by winged serpents, small in size, and of varied colour, whereof vast numbers hang about every tree... and there is nothing but the smoke of the Styrax which will drive them from the trees.'

Cassia was another product of Arabia that, according to Herodotus grew in shallow lakes and was collected with some difficulty. For cassia or the lakes where it grew, was surrounded by 'winged animals, much resembling bats, which screech horribly, and are very valiant.' Hence in order to obtain cassia one had to cover all his body and his face except the eyes, with the hides of oxen and other skins.

The Arabs used to employ a creative method in order to procure cinnamon. According to Herodotus the Arabs had no idea as to which country produced cinnamon. However, it used to be brought to Arabia by some big birds for making their nests on some inaccessible cliffs. To obtain cinnamon the Arabs used to cut dead animals, like oxen, asses and beasts, into pieces, to scatter them around the place where

1. Ibid. P. 498.
2. Ibid. P. 500.
the birds had built their nests and, then, to withdraw from the scene. The big birds would naturally swoop down to take the pieces of meat to their nests which being unable to bear the weight would break off and fall to the ground. The Arabs would then emerge from their hideouts and collect the fallen cinnamon which used to be exported to many countries including Greece.

Ladanum was another thing which the Arabs used to procure in an equally strange fashion. According to Herodotus, ladanum was the 'Sweetest-scented of all substances' which the Arabs used to burn as incense. Strangely enough it was 'gathered from the beards of he goats, where it is found sticking like gum, having come from the bushes on which they browse' (1). But Herodotus was, however, most impressed by the spices of Arabia. 'The whole country,' he wrote, 'is scented with them, and exhaled an odour marvellously Sweet.' (2)

Strabo (64/63 B.C. - 23 A.D.?) was another Greek historian who wrote in first century B.C. He, like Herodotus, has written about Arabia at some length. In his book Geography he described Arabia as a blessed land, which was fertile, rich with spices and filled with strange creatures. But the Arabs, according to Strabo, were not farmers by

2. Ibid. p. 502.
occupation, rather they used to raise herds of all kinds particularly camels.

Strabo has handed down a detailed account of Gerrah (a coastal town on the Gulf) and its inhabitants. The soil of Gerrah, according to him, contained salt and the people lived in houses made of salt which were frequently watered by their occupants in order to prevent them from melting away due to the scorching heat of the sun.

Strabo's Arabia besides being rich with spices was replete with a variety of herbs whose fragrant smell was sweet and pleasant. Strabo has also made a mention of some 'sweet smelling palms and reeds'. Moreover, like Herodotus, he has depicted Arabia as a land filled with venomous serpents 'which are dark-red in colour, can leap even as far as a hare, and inflict an incurable bite'.

Besides the description of the Arab land and its physical features Strabo has also left an account of his impressions about the Arabs whom he sometimes referred to as Sabaeans. He believed that 'on account of fruits people are lazy and easy going in their modes of life'. Moreover they, according to Strabo, were extremely sensual

2. Ibid.
people who spent their lives in effeminate luxury. They also used to become drowsy by sweet odours which they overcame by 'inhaling the incense of asphaltus and goats' beard'. Nevertheless the Arabs of Strabo's time were prosperous traders. As portrayed by him, 'from their trafficking both the Sabaeans (Arabs) and the Ceresaheans have become richest of all, and they have a vast equipment of both gold and silver articles, such as couches and tripods and bowls, together with drinking vessels and very costly houses, for doors and walls and ceilings are variegated with ivory and gold and silver set with precious stones'.

Another ancient source which contributed greatly to the Arabs' image is the Christians' holy book, the Bible. There are numerous references, both direct and indirect, to the Arabs in the Bible. For instance in Genesis, 37:25 Arabs are referred to as Ishmaelite traders who used to go to Egypt for commercial purposes. The word 'Arab' however, first appeared in Isaiah 13:20: 'There no Arab shall pitch his tent'. Obviously prophet Isaiah depicted the Arabs as a Bedouin, without any good or bad attributes. But

1. Ibid. p. 347.
2. Ibid.
3. All biblical quotations in this thesis, unless otherwise indicated are from The New English Bible jointly translated and published by the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses.
in other places in the Bible the Arabs have been referred to as raiders and lurking mercenaries. Such a remark first appeared in Jeremiah 3:2 You sat by the wayside to catch lovers, like an Arab lurking in the desert.' In Maccabees 5:39 the Arabs are again described as a mercenary. It can be reasonably concluded that the Bible, being the corner stone of Christian faith, must have created a bad image of the Arabs in the minis of the people who became its believers.

There is no sufficient written record to show if there was any contact between the people of Western Europe and the Arabs in early Christian centuries. However, there is a reason to believe that the common European opinion about the Arabs might have been greatly prejudiced. Fisher, in his *A History of Europe* writes that the European view of Arabia as prevalent in A.D. 500 was that it was a remote and inhospitable country. 'Nothing is likely to be reported', he wrote, 'from this scorching wilderness.... Arabian Society was still in the tribal stage and the hawk-eyed Bedouen tribes might be confidently expected to rob and massacre each other till the crack of doom.' Fisher further opined that 'the Arabs were poets, dreamers, fighters, traders; they were not politicians.'

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Such images were to last long, even after the emergence of Islam in early seventh century. The advent of Islam intact opened a new phase of relationship between the Latinate Christian West and the Arabs. As commonly known the Prophet Muhammad(s) was an Arab and the early converts to his faith were also of the same race. Moreover, it is also a historical fact that within a century of its advent Islam carved for itself a big empire which was greater than that of Rome at its zenith, an empire extending from the Bay of Biscay to the Indies and the confines of China and from the Aral Sea to the upper cataracts of the Nile. The name of the Prophet-son of Arabia, joined with the name of Almighty Allah, was being called five times a day from thousand of minarets scattered over South Western Europe, Northern Africa and Western and Central Asia.\(^1\) Many countries conquered by Muslims and thus included in the flourishing Islamic Empire were earlier Christian. Moreover, not only Christian territories were brought under Islamic control, but also a vast number of Christians began to embrace the Islamic faith. This was a disturbing moment of history for Christian leadership. Church leaders, especially those living in the Muslim lands, began, mainly out of anger and frustration, to criticise the faith of Islam. Later on their unfounded criticism was passed on to the Christian West which were readily accepted as golden pillars of truth.

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Initial reaction against Islam and the Prophet came from a number of Christian scholars and church leaders. However, the most prominent among them was St. John of Damascus who popularized a number of fabricated stories about Islam and its messenger. The core of his criticism was that Muhammad was a pseudo prophet, inspired and guided by a Christian heretic or the Arian(1) Monk, Bahira who taught him the Old and New Testaments from which he picked up ideas and stories that he used as a source for manufacturing a so-called divine book, the Holy Quran in order to fulfill his personal ambitions. 'St John,' writes Norman Daniel, also introduced other elements that would long survive, he descended to ridicule, for example, of what he mistakenly took to be Quranic belief, the Camel of God, in a petty way, and he began the long tradition of

1. Arius was a presbyter in the Church of Alexandria. Extremely learned and intelligent he held views which were different from commonly held Christian beliefs. His ideas can be summed up as 'an absolute monotheism, according to which the son can not be an emanation of the Father, or a part of his substance or another being similar to the Father, for any of these three possibilities would deny either the immaterial nature of God or His unity'. Arianism as expounded by Gonzalez implies that 'although all things were made by him, he himself was made by the Father, and is therefore a creature, and not God in the strict sense of the word.' (Gonzalez, J.L. A History of Christian Thought vol I. pp. 270-71). Arius' theology is known as Arianism and his followers as Arians. Arianism was condemned as heresy by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325.
attacking Muhammad for bringing in God simulating revelation in order to justify his own sexual indulgence" (1)

It was under the influence of such unsavoury writings of St. John that the medieval Europe came to view Muhammad(s) as a cunning pseudo prophet' and the Arabs as pagans and idolators who were gullible enough to be deceived by Muhammad's (s) 'false claims'. Moreover the medieval European accounts depicted Mecca, the Holy City of Islam as a 'city of prostitutes', and the Muslims as extremely sensuous and lecherous. But most dangerously the Church leaders widely spread an exaggerated and unfounded story that the 'heathen Arabs' were profaning and polluting churches in Jerusalem and elsewhere and that Islam was a potential menace to the Christian West. Such a propaganda naturally poisoned the minds of European Christians and ultimately led to the emergence of the Crusading Movement which aimed at fighting the Arab 'infidels' and freeing Jerusalem from their occupation.

Whatever the political consequences of the so-called holy crusades they opened the door for cultural interpenetration and direct contact between the Arabs and the Europeans. The crusaders were told by their Church leaders that the Arabs were an inferior race who worshipped Muhammad as God and took pride in persecuting Christians every where in the Muslim world. For instance Pope Urban II who

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launched and preached the first crusade 'apparently stressed
the plight of Eastern Christians, the molestation of pil­
grims and the desecration of the holy places.'(1) Other
baseless stories widely circulated throughout Europe were
that the Crucifix was insulted by forcing Christian children
to spit upon it, that the Golden Cross was thrown down from
the Dome of the Rock and that the defenceless Christians were
being regularly massacred by Muslims on wide scales.

But when the Crusaders met their Arab enemies in the
battle fields they found that they (Arabs) were not barbarous
as they had been led to believe. Rather they possessed
chivalry, mercy and nobility of spirit, qualities which they
admired very much. Sultan Salah al Din (1137/38-1193) known
as Saladin in English literature especially impressed the
Crusaders. It was through verbal stories of the Crusaders
that Saladin became extremely popular in Europe mainly for
his chivalrous dealings with his defeated enemies.

The Crusades, inspite of being wars of conquest and
associated with ignominious plunder and destruction, were
important in the sense that they provided an opportunity
for direct relationship between European Christians and
Arab Muslims. Once the war was over many crusaders, instead
of returning back to their homeland, decided to settle

in the holy land. This inevitably gave them an opportunity to remove or correct many of their unrounded prejudices about the Arabs, their religion and culture. Moreover, with the passage of time, they came to realize the cultural superiority of the Arabs and were so much impressed by it that they began to discard their European dress in favour of the more comfortable and more suitable native clothing. They also 'acquired new tastes in food, especially those varieties involving the generous use of sugar and spices;' and began to like 'oriental houses, with their spacious open courts and running water'. (1)

But the Crusaders who went back to their countries, instead of carrying rich experiences and new ideas, took with them stories, probably taken from the Arabian Nights, which they circulated through the length and breadth of Europe and thus provided fresh material to reinforce old Christian prejudices and polemic about the Islamic faith and culture.

Along with the stories and legends that the Crusaders took to Europe, particularly England, there were produced some serious scholarly works which unfortunately could not become popular as source books. There were three great scholars in the twelfth century who knew the Arabic language and were highly impressed by Arab method of learning.

1. Hitti, **The Arabs** op. cit. p. 188.
They were, Robert of Chester, Daniel of Morley who, dissatisfied with the Frankish universities, went to the Arabs to learn philosophy, and Adelard of Bath who was most learned of the three and was regarded as the pioneer of Arab learning in the West. Adelard visited many Arab universities in Syria and Spain in early twelfth century in order to learn Arab sciences. Because of his wide knowledge and experience, he was appointed royal tutor to King Henry II.

But his worth remembering contribution was his translation of many Arabic works into Latin as well as his own works, _The Natural Questions_ in which he tried to prove the superiority of the Arab method of learning.

But Adelard's views could not get wide currency. The common people were more interested in spicy and juicy accounts of travellers like Mandeville who visited the Arab world in the later part of the twelfth century. In his book, _The Travels_ Mandeville portrayed the Arabs as evil, wicked and malicious. According to him, most Arabs were Bedouin, though some of them had settled in small towns and villages. The only admirable quality Mandeville could see in the Arabs was their strong sense of freedom and resentment of outside authority which not unoften led them to take arms against the Sultan.

The Venetian Voyager Marco Polo's travelogue, which was published at the end of the thirteenth century and
became widely popular in Europe, also contributed its bit to malign the image of Islam. In his accounts Polo narrated a strange story entitled the 'Old Man of the Mountain' which appears to have been a figment of his own imagination. According to Polo there was an old 'Saracen' prince, namely Ali-eddin and Muslim by faith, who lived in a paradise like valley in which he had built beautiful gardens and palaces with streams of honey, milk and wine flowing around and youthful girls entertaining the dwellers with song and dance. Polo further says that the old prince was not only lecherous but also a dangerous man. For he had hired young assassins to kill anyone he wished. His method of functioning was unique and was deliberately given a religious colour by Polo, that the Old Man would first give opium to his young assassins and throw them out of the paradise after they fell asleep. Then he would order them to assassinate anyone he liked, promising them a place in the paradise. 'We have the assurances of our prophet that he who defends his lord shall inherit paradise, and if you show yourselves devoted to the obedience of my orders, that happy lot awaits you'. (1) It is not hard to imagine that what a bad image of Muslims and Islam such baseless stories of widely read fanciful travelogues would have created in European minds.

As noted earlier direct contact between England and the Arab world was established in the twelfth century when some scholars of English origin visited Arab universities for the sake of knowledge. In the subsequent thirteenth to seventeenth centuries information about the Arabs, mostly baseless and fictitious, continued to reach England through various sources such as the accounts of merchants, travellers and the works of Arabic knowing scholars.

The English merchants began their trade with the Arabs in early fifteenth century. Cog Anne, commanded by Robert Sturmy of Bristol was one of the earliest vessels to reach the port of Jaffa. In 1457 Sturmy sailed another vessel, namely, The Katherine Sturmy, and reported on various ports of the Levant. In 1511 the famous Hakluyt recorded that numerous big and tall ships were engaged in trade with the Arabs of the Levant countries. (1)

In the sixteenth century the Arab countries were conquered by the Ottomans who in 1553 granted permission to the English merchants to trade in all Turkish dominions including the Arab territories such as Tunis, Algeria, Tripoli (all three known in England as pirate states), Syria, Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula.

Trade between two nations or peoples involves not only exchange of commodities but also provides opportunities for intercultural understanding. And if the travelling merchants are honestly eager to know about the host community with a view to disseminating knowledge among their countrymen they can richly contribute to the common fund of human knowledge and promote international understanding, but unfortunately the merchants of the sixteenth-century England who had little knowledge of Arabic language proved bad servants of knowledge. In the words of Samuel Purchas they brought home from their foreign journeys nothing but 'a few smattering terms, flattering garts, Apish cringes, uppish fancies, foolish guises and disguises, the vanities of Neighbour Nations...without furthering of their knowledge of God, the world or themselves'.

The seventeenth century saw more English merchants travelling to the Arab world whose accounts were eagerly read in England. However, in the same century some serious studies were also made to unravel the wealth of Arabic thought and the Arabs' intellectual richness.

William Bedwell (1561-1632) who became known as father of Arabic studies in England of his time was a

1. Purchas, Samuel. Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrims, Glasgow, 1905. (Vol. I) P.XIV.
great admirer of the Arabic language. He held that Arabic was the ‘only language of religion and the chief language of diplomacy and business from the Fortunate Isles and the China Seas.’ Bedwell is credited with having written a Lexicon, namely, *The Arabian Trudgman* in which he incorporated and explained mainly those Arabic words which could be used by English merchants and travellers in their day to day dealings with the Arabs.

Despite being highly impressed by the Arabic language Bedwell was not favourably disposed to Islam, the religion of the Arabs. His missionary connection compelled him to refer to the Prophet Muhammad(s) as 'impostor' and 'inventor' of the Holy Quran.

Edmund Castell (1606-1685) was another Arabist of the era. He became the first Cambridge Professor of Arabic Studies. He produced a useful dictionary of Semitic languages which was greatly admired in his time. He is also credited with having translated some Arabic poems in English which he dedicated to King Charles II.

Edward Pococke (1604-1691) was probably the most prominent Arabist of his time. Widely read and missionary

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minded, he was well-versed in Arabic language, history and culture. He spent five years in Aleppo where he made life-long friendship with a certain Sheikh Fathallah in order to learn Arabic and the Arabs’ contribution to knowledge. Pococke wrote numerous books. His pioneering work, however, was *The Specimen of the History of the Arabs* which was printed in Oxford in 1649. The book dealt with various aspects of Arab culture and history.

There were many other Arabists in the seventeenth century. However, their contribution to the making of the image of the Arabs in England was negligible. Indeed, it were still travellers' accounts which were popular with the common readers and thus remained the main source of information about the Arab people. Among numerous travellers of the period William Lithgow, George Sandy and Henry Blount were most prominent. Naturally their travelogues played a vital role in popularising a bad and maligned image of the Arabs.

Lithgow travelled in the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire in early years of the seventeenth century. In his travelogue, *Peregrination* he portrayed the Arabs

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1. The full title of the book, which was published in 1614, is as follows: *A Most Delectable and True Discourse of a Painful Peregrination*. 
as wild, savage, blood thirsty, robber, cruel and unmanageable who not unớten annoyed even their Ottoman masters. The reason behind Lithgow's hatred of the Arabs was that they were Muslim by faith. By the same token he also condemned the Turks as untrustworthy. His distrust of the Muslim Turks and Arabs led him to hire a Christian guide on his journey to Lidda who, however, proved to be in connivance with some three hundred Arab robbers and informed them in advance about the routes Lithgow's caravan was to follow and the valuable riches they possessed. In his travelogue Lithgow also depicted the Arabs, the Turks, and the Moors, all Muslim, as avowed enemies of Christ. When comparatively viewed the Turks in his eye were dangerous but somewhat tolerable. But the Arabs and the Moors were either thieves or robbers, even barbarous and inhuman, hence completely intolerable.

George Sandy journeyed among the Arabs of Egypt and Palestine in 1610. He recollected his experiences in his *Relation of a Journey*, he expressed both favourable and unfavourable views about the Arabs. On the one hand he described them as robbers and on the other as noblemen who keep their promise and accomplish their duties faithfully when they make any contract with foreign travellers. Sandy found Arabia both fertile and barren. But most Arabs,
according to him were nomads who used to dwell in movable tent houses. Sandy further describes the 'sons of the desert' as fiercely independent and proud people, who were fully conscious of their nobility or of having been emanated from pure stocks. The main profession of the desert Arabs, according to Sandy, was to raise camels and hawks, the mainstay of their economy. The camel, Sandy opined, was vitally important for the Arabs, especially for carrying loads when their masters wandered in the desert in search of pastures and springs of water. Sandy had reached the point when he alluded the Arabian camel to a ship and the desert as a sea.

Henry Blount, a contemporary of Sandy and Litigow, was another important traveller of the seventeenth century. In his Voyage into the Levant he made a comparative study of the Arabs and the Turks. He was all praise for the Turks, impressed especially by their good manners and by their big empire. But he portrayed the Arabs as unruly, malicious, treacherous and effeminate who can be ruled over only with an iron hand. Blount also recorded the methods of torture such as 'impaling, gauncing, flaying alive, cutting off the waist, hanging by the foot, planting in burning lime and the like'.(1) which the Turks used to

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employ in order to keep the Arabs under their control. Blount was not disturbed by these terrible tactics of torture but approved of them and was happy to witness two such torturing sessions.

In the later part of the seventeenth century the Arabs began to be depicted in the accounts of the English travellers and merchants, even in the works of poet who had never left England to visit a foreign country, as cruel pirates and slave-traders. Joseph Pitts who claimed to have been captured by Algerian pirates in 1678 was among the first writers who popularized this theme. In his so-called Faithful Account \(^{(1)}\) he recollected that how he was captured, sold twice and ultimately forced by his Algerian master to embrace Islam. The same master took Pitts to Arabia in order to perform the holy Pilgrimage. In his later life Pitts managed to escape.

Pitts described at length his experiences of Arabia, Egypt, and of other countries in his book, the Faithful Account. His portrayal of the Arabs, the Egyptians and the Algerians, as expected, was not favourable. He was especially bitter towards the Algerians and condemned them as pirates, slave traders, beggars, homo-sexuals and robbers.

Some of Pitts' accounts, however, were full of

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1. The full title of the book is as follows: A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans, With an Account of the Author's Having Been Taken by His Master on the Pilgrimage to Mecca. The book was first published in 1704.
knowledge. For instance his description of the inhabitants of the Arabian desert who were utterly poor, thinly structured, lean and swarthy. Besides, Pitts also met some travelling Dervishes whose entire possession was a sheep or a goat skin on which they lay when the time came for sleep or rest. He further claimed to have attended some discourses of the religious scholars who, sitting in high chairs, used to expound out the Holy Quran. He, like Italian traveller, Varthema dismissed the legend prevalent in Europe that Muhammad's tomb was suspended in the air. But, as a whole, his attitude towards Islam was hostile. He depicted the Arabs as natural mischievous mongers and Islam as a false religion invented by a 'vile and cebauched impostor'. He even accused Muslims of Mecca to be idolaters.

Pitts' so-called faithful Account became very popular in England in the first half of the eighteenth century. Meanwhile in 1712 the famous tales of the Arabian Nights were rendered into English from a French translation. The tales of The Nights not only reinforced previous images of the Arabs as presented in the accounts of the travellers but also introduced new themes. For instance Arabs began to be portrayed as inhabitants of a mysterious and magical world which was full of genies, flying horses, supernatural birds and replete with exotic scenes of harems, princesses,
slaves, eunuchs, along with the unbelievable stories of
dancing dervishes, Sindbad the Sailor and Ali Baba's rar us
Forty Thieves. Throughout the eighteenth century the
Arabian Nights was read by cor on Englishmen not as a book
of entertainment, but as a factual account of the Arab
history. The Nights not only made a lasting impression on
English literature but also played a vital role in shaping
the mental attitudes of cor on Englishmen towards the
Arabs. They had become so much infatuated with the tales of
the Nights that when Simon Ockley (1676-1720), Professor
of Arabic in Cambridge, wrote a serious work, The History
of the Saracens (first published in 1708) which presented the
cultural and political history of the Arabs as a very different
from that in the Arabian Nights it was received
by his contemporaries with less errant and disbelief. In
his book Ockley portrayed the Arabs somewhat romantically,
and with a book on such a as he his, with
in the field of knowledge or on the battle-grounds, were
spectacular by any star are. But such accounts of the Arab
history seem to have surprised many, shocked even the
serious minded Englishmen. Describing the general disbelief
and disbelieve Ockley wrote in his introduction to
the second edition of his book that 'a reverence dignit re-
ased me, if, when I wrote that book I had not lately been
reading the history of Oliver Cromwell. The implication was obvious. That the Arabs were incapable of any worthwhile and significant achievements, literary, cultural, political or otherwise. It was against this background that Ockley was compelled to complain that the English people entertain 'too mean an opinion of them (the Arabs), looking upon them as mere barbarians which mistaken notion of theirs, has hindered all further enquiry.'

But in spite of being impressed by the Arabs as a race Ockley could not free himself from the prevalent prejudices of his age against Islam and Muhammad(s). He dismissed Islam as a religion or superstition and Muhammad(s) as impostor. However, he gave full credit to Islam for eradicating idolatry from and uniting the warlike and jarring tribes of Arabia who later on became the 'first ruin of the eastern church.'

Although unfavourably disposed to the prophet Muhammad Ockley was highly impressed by one of his successors, Al Mamun:

3. Ibid. p. X.
At last, in Almamoun's reign, who was the twenty seventh after Mahomet, and was inaugurated Caliph in 108 year of the Hegirah (A.D.813), learning began to be cultivated to a very great degree, mathematicks especially, and astronomy: And in order to promote it, that noble Caliph spared no cost, either to procure such Greek books as were serviceable to that purpose, or to encourage learned men to the study of them. (1)

It was at Almamun's behest, Ockley further states, that the works of Greek philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers, botanists and physicians were translated in Arabic. Later the Arabs took their intellectual riches to Arabia and Spain where many great universities were established in the subsequent centuries. According to Ockley the Arabs' achievements in the field of knowledge were 'no less wonderful than that of their conquests.' (2)

Ockley had, however, one complaint, though not wholly true, against the Arabs. That they were little interested in history and historiography:

Had they... applied themselves to the historians, as they did to the philosophers, and studied Herodotus, Xenocrates, Xenophon,

1. Ibid, p. XI.
2. Ibid.
and such other masters of correct writing
as that language could have afforded them,
we might have expected from them a succession
of historians worthy to write those great
actions which have been performed among them. (1)

George Sale (1697-1736) was another important
Arabist of the eighteenth century. His greatest contribu­
tion was his translation of the Holy Quran in English
which was first published in 1734. Unfortunately it did
not prove as much an important event as did the publication
of the Arabian Nights and, due to little interest shown
by the then Englishmen to scholarly things and partly owing
to their bigotry, it made little impression on English
literature and sensibilities. As a result majority of
Englishmen continued to hold wrong opinions about the
Arabs.

Sale's translation was preaced by a learned
introduction, Preliminary Discourse to the Koran, in which
he elaborated the religion, learning and customs of the
Arabs.

Sale very intelligently explained that why foreign
civilizations, especially Islam need to be objectively
studied. 'If the religious and civil institution of foreign

1. Ibid. P. XII.
nations are worth our knowledge', he wrote, 'those of Muhammad, the law giver or the Arabian, and founder of an empire which in less than a century spread itself over a greater part of the world than the Romans were ever masters of, must need be so.'

Sale was first to point out that why the Arabs came to be known as Saracens? In his opinion the word, Saracen was in fact derived from the Arabic word Sharik meaning the East where the Arabs had been ruling elite for many centuries. Sale also directed many a disinterested person about Arabia by ancient travellers and writers. He rightly pointed out that contrary to the notion belief Arabia was not a rich country in olden times. In fact many riches associated with or supposed to be the produce of Arabia were brought from India and the coasts of Africa which the Arabs traders popularised in Egypt and Syria. Sale further stated that although Arabian society was primarily tribal, and most tribes always fought with each other, the Arabs as a whole never allowed foreigners to intrude and rule over them. Nothing has been more dear to them than liberty of which few nations can produce so ancient monuments, with very little interruption, from

the very Deluge'.

(1) Often great armies were sent against them but such efforts either themselves proved abortive or were frustrated by joint Arab action. The Turks, in Sale's opinion, succeeded to subdue the Arabs only when the Arabs had become weak and terribly divided because of their unending tribal warfare.

Along with virtues and merits of the Arabs, Sale also enumerated their vices and shortcomings. First, the constant inter-tribal fighting which the travellers and scholars have been writing down in their works since ancient days, has cultivated a notion among the people that the Arabs have a natural disposition for war and bloodshed. Next and no less important is the fact that 'frequent robberies committed by these people on merchants and travellers have rendered the name of an Arab almost infamous in Europe!' (2)

Sale's writing might have influenced and prompted Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) to declare that the Prophet Muhammad was not an impostor. Carlyle, though critical of some aspects of Islam, is well known for his somewhat good opinion about the Prophet. For instance he dismissed the nation of Muhammad being an hypocrite and boldly pronounced that the 'man's (Prophet Muhammad) words were not

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1. Ibid. P. 10.
2. Ibid. P. 22.
false... no Inanity and Simulacrum, a fiery mass of life cost-up from the great bosom of Nature itself. (1)

Sir William Jones was another important orientalist of the eighteenth century. He learnt Arabic from an Arab whom he had brought to London from Aleppo on his own expense. He was first to translate Almoallaqat, the seven odes written by the poets of the pre-Islamic period, and said to have been inscribed in gold and hung at the door of Kaabah in recognition of their literary excellence. He seems to have been greatly influenced by the beauty and precision of the language of the seven odes and as a result praised the Arab speech to be voluble and articulate. Moreover, he portrayed the Arabs as manly, dignified and freedom loving whose minds were always alert, attentive and quick to apprehend. (2)

Edward Gibbon, the famous eighteenth-century historian was not an Arabist. However, he learnt about the Arabs from Latin, French and English sources. He was greatly influenced by the Arabs' love for freedom and for this season alone eulogized them in the following manner:

The slaves of domestic tyranny may vainly exult in their national independence, but the Arab is personally free, and he enjoys, in some degree,

the benefit of society, without, forfeiting the prerogatives of nature...Their spirit, their steps are unconfined, the desert is open, and the tribes and families are held together by mutual and voluntary compact... In the more simple state of the Arabs the nation is free, because, each of her sons disdains a base submission to the will of a master....The gravity and firmness of the mind is conspicuous in his outward demeanour, his speech is slow, weighty, and concise.  

In the same period, that is, the eighteenth century, travellers also continued to visit the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In comparison with the travellers of the previous centuries the eighteenth-century travellers seem to have adopted a more serious approach to Arabia and the Arabs. Mainly there were three such travellers, Richard Pococke, a wealthy clergyman, Alexander Russell, a doctor, and James Bruce, an explorer who claimed to have successfully discovered the source of the river Nile.

Pococke spent three years, 1737-1740, in the Arab world studying Arab society and people. In his *Description of the East* published in 1743, besides repeating some old stereotypes such as thefts and robberies, he introduced some new themes like the Arabs' need for money. On several occasions, he claimed, his life was threatened because he refused to pay money or anything else demanded by the Arabs.

of raiding Arabs as ransom. However, every time he succeeded to save his life and, profitably for him, he learnt by such experiences how to handle the greedy Arab folks. In the first place he cautioned the travellers that they should not give in to threats and refuse to pay any ransom under any circumstance. Next, they should try to dissuade the Arabs from getting hostile by offering or coffee, a sign of hospitality and courtesy which was and is still widely respected in the Arab world.

Pococke, however, did not condemn all the Arabs as evil or greedy. There were no doubt thieves, robbers and xenophobes but a good many Arabs were brave, honest, trustworthy and hospitable whom he appreciated very much.

Pococke, unlike many of his predecessors, was not inimical towards the bedouins whom he described as ones who lived in tent houses earning their livelihood from the cattle they grazed. He, however, had no word of praise for the Egyptians whom he condemned as lethargic, idle and good for nothing. 'They delight', he wrote, 'in sitting still hearing tales and indeed seem always to have been more fit for the quiet life'.

made an exhaustive survey of the society and people of the Syrian city called Aleppo. In his work, *Natural History of Aleppo* published in 1757 he did not describe the inhabitants of the city and of the surrounding areas as one entity but made clear cut distinctions between various groups, the Turks, the Affendees and the Aghas. He divided the people of Aleppo, not merely on racial ground but also in socio-economic terms:

The Bashaw with his retinue, and all other immediately in the service of the Porte are called Osmanli, and either speak or affect to speak the Turkish language. The Affendees compose the body of the Ullama, or learned men. Their common language is the Arabic, for most of them being natives of Aleppo, but few can speak the Turkish with tolerable purity. The Agas or (in a restricted sense) those who rent the lands, have still some influence in the Diwan, or Council of the city, but their power and Splendour have been long on the decline, and most of the old families are now extinct. (1)

The Arabs, according to Russell, were the poorest class in the city. The Arab community consisted mainly of manual labourers and their women folk, in order to earn their livelihood, worked as house servants in the Harem.

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of affluent Turks and Aghas. However, in spite of their poverty, they maintained their identity intact. Moreover they married but among themselves and thus preserved the purity of their race. Russell further described the living style and dresses of the Arab menfolk and the jewels and the cosmetics of which their women were fond of, such as the powder used for giving the lips a dark bluish colour and the ring of gold and silver put on noses.

The Arabs, according to Russell, lived in two separate and distinct groups: the Bedouins, who claimed to be the true Arabs, lived in movable tent-houses and still wandered in the desert; the city dwellers who were despicably called the Moor by the Bedouins for having degenerated from good Arab virtues by settling in towns and adopting mean professions like trade and agriculture. Russell also referred to the Arabian Nights, then widely popular in England but scarcely available in Aleppo where Russell could trace out only two copies with great difficulty.

James Bruce, another traveller of the period, journeyed in several countries, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Egypt. He recounted his experiences in his work Travels which was first published in 1790. The purpose of his adventurous journey was to discover the source of Nile which, according to him, flowed from Lake Tana in Ethiopia to the sea.
In his travels Bruce has narrated a particular incident that shows both good and bad aspects of Arab character. According to his own accounts once his ship was broken, leaving him almost drowned. But somehow he managed to reach the shore where some Arab robbers were waiting for him. They beat him mercilessly and left the scene thinking he was dead. He lay there almost unconscious when another group of Arabs arrived there. When told in Arabic by Bruce that he was a Christian Dervish, out in Search of truth about God, they showed compassion and took him to their tents. Later in 1968 Bruce safely reached Cairo.

In Cairo Bruce found people utterly poor but of good manners, the Cairoites were passive and extremely tolerant to their rulers whom Bruce described as tyrant and oppressive set of miscreants. In Egyptian villages life was even wortest, the people were of poor health and in a state of extreme poverty, the women especially struck by poverty and looked sixty years old at the age of sixteen.

Bruce had little respect for Islam and the Holy Quran and was disgusted with certain studies of his age which tended to appreciate the faith of the Muslims. 'In my time,' he wrote, 'I have seen in Britain a spirit of enthusiasm for this book (the Quran), in preference to all others, not inferior to that which possessed Anomet's followers. Modern unbelievers (Sale and his disciples) have gone every length, but to say directly that it is dictated
Carsten Niebuhr, a Dane, was another traveller of the period. He was the member of a tragic expedition which was aimed at exploring and studying scientifically the interior of Arabia. The other members of the expedition were professor Friedrich Von Haven, a Danish philologist and the leader of the team, Peter Rorssnal, a Swedish botanist, Christian Carl Kramer, a Danish doctor and the expedition's medical officer, George Wilhelm Baurentdio, a German artist and engraver. Niebuhr himself was included in the team as a land surveyor and map maker.

The purpose of the expedition as mentioned above was to explore Arabian inland as well as to collect Oriental manuscripts on Arabian history and Geography, and the copies of the Holy Bible written in Hebrew and Arabic in ancient times. Besides this, all members of the expedition were individually assigned separate tasks in accordance with their particular fields of interest.

The expedition set out from Denmark in 1761 and reached Jiddah in 1762. Niebuhr, contrary to his expectations, found the Arabs friendly who allowed him to survey the land as well as to investigate the imports and exports of the town. From Jiddah Niebuhr and his companions went to

1. Bruce, James, Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 and 1773. London, 1813, (Vol. II) P. 436.
Yemen where they were struck hard by malaria. All, excepting Niebuhr and Kramer, died one by one either in Yemen itself or on their way to Bombay. In Bombay Kramer also died leaving Niebuhr alone to fulfil the purpose of the expedition. In December 1764 Niebuhr decided to sail to Muscat where he changed his name to Abdullah pretending to be a Muslim. He, then, travelled in Iraq, Syria and Asia Minor and ultimately returned back to his homeland in 1767.

Niebuhr recollected his experiences in his book, *Travels in Arabia*. The image of the Arabs he portrayed in the book was comparatively favourable. The Arabs, according to him, were an ancient people who held their age old customs very dear to them. The Arabs' love for freedom and their good simple manners especially appealed to Niebuhr.

If any people in the world accord in their history an influence of high antiquity, and of great simplicity of manner, the Arabs surely do... Having never been conquered, Arabia has scarcely known any changes, but those produced by the hand of nature. (1)

Explaining further the Arabs' 'Spirit of freedom' which rendered them 'incapable of servitude' Niebuhr wrote that the wide spread poverty in Arabia was due to their love for independence and voluntary preference of 'liberty to wealth'.

Niebuhr tried to dispel many a misconception widely spread in Europe regarding Muslims' treatment of women as slaves or inferior species. He informed his European readers that the Arab women were highly influential in the family and enjoyed a good deal of liberty in the society. Moreover, they had right to property. Polygamy was, no doubt, in existence but not to the extent it was believed to be in Europe. Niebuhr was greatly to the point when he wrote:

Polygamy is permitted, indeed, among Mahometans and the delicacy of our ladies is shocked at this idea, but the Arabians rarely avail themselves of the privilege of marrying four lawful wives, and entertaining at the same time any number of female slaves. None but voluptuaries marry so many wives, and their conduct is blamed by all sober men. Men of sense, indeed, think of this privilege rather troublesome than convenient. A husband is, by law, obliged to treat his wives suitably to their condition and to disperse his sources among them with perfect equality. (1)

By the end of the eighteenth century the Arab world, especially Egypt assumed increased political importance for Britain. In fact, until the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 the British were least interested in the region. But

1. Ibi., p. 149.
the occupation of Egypt made them realize that their trade route to India was under threat. Besides this, the British also realized the weakness of the deteriorating Ottoman Empire which was increasingly becoming unable to maintain the status quo. Canning, a British diplomat in Constantinople, was to the point when he remarked that the Turkish Capital was 'not a fit place for a gentleman to live in'. He further opined that 'destruction will not come upon the Empire either from the North or from the South, it is rotten at the heart, the seat of corruption is in the government itself.' (1)

Britain's political interest and involvement in the Arab world, particularly Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century is best reflected in William Eton's book, A Survey of the Turkish Empire which was published in 1799. Eton was hostile to both the Turks and the Arabs because both races were Muslims, hence, in his opinion, enemies of Christianity. However, he portrayed the Arabs somewhat favourably. The Arabs, according to him, patronized knowledge at a time - the Middle Ages - when entire world was immersed in ignorance. His praise of the Arabs, however, was not for nothing. In fact he wanted to use the Arabs, especially those

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segments of the Arab society who did not accept or greatly resented Ottoman sovereignty over themselves in order to disintegrate the Turkish Empire. He even advised the British Government to send an agent to watch over the French in Egypt and at the same time try to raise the Arabs both against the French and the Turks. He also delineated the qualifications that such agents were to acquire before embarking upon their mission. That they should be well acquainted with the manners and way of thinking of the Arabs and have such a command of temper and pliancy of Character as to adopt his language to their prejudices and to be able to conciliate and persuade. \(^{(1)}\) Over a century later Eton's agent was personified in Lawrence of Arabia who played an important role in destroying the Ottoman Empire.

As a whole the image of the Arabs as portrayed by majority of the eighteenth-century scholars and travellers was considerably favourable. Weaknesses were pointed out but virtues were more highlighted. Arabs as a nation, not as Muslim believers, were especially appreciated, both the scholars and the travellers were fascinated by the Arabs' love for freedom or their spirit of liberty. This was probably due to the concept of nationalism or national freedom which emerged and consolidated itself in Europe in the

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same age. The presence of the idea of national freedom in other ancient peoples was highlighted by Cckley, Sale and others with a view to vindicating the concept of nationalism in Europe.

The nineteenth-century travellers excepting Burckhardt, however, reversed the prevalent trend of the eighteenth century. As a result the image of the Arabs as a freedom loving nation who were 'incapable of servitude' disappeared from the nineteenth-century travel literature. John Ludwig Burckhardt, a Swiss who studied Arabic in England and visited many parts of the Arab world including Mecca and Madina in the first decade of the nineteenth century under the guise of Shaikh Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah, however, followed the eighteenth-century tradition and wrote about the Arabs on the pattern of his immediate predecessors. The Arabs, according to him, were free and hospitable. Burckhardt was especially fascinated by the Bedouins whom he called the pure Arabs and regarded them as an independent nation. 'The complete independence the Bedouins enjoy,' he wrote, 'has alone enabled them to sustain a national character.' Burckhardt, in fact, viewed the Bedouins as a distinct social group and made a deep study of the structure of their society. He tried to rationalize or find out the Bedouins' peculiar

reasons or rationale behind their various institutions and practices including raids or highway robberies. Raids, as explained by Barckhardt, were a condemnable crime according to European ethical code but for the Bedouins they were not an abominable or punishable offence but a part of their life, almost a widely accepted institution. It was on this ground that instead of punishing a good young raider the concerned tribe used to take pride in him.

Another exception, though in a different sense, was William Lane (1801-1876) whom Bernard Lewis described as the greatest Arabist of the nineteenth century, not only in England but in entire Europe. (1) Lane, known as Mansour Effendi among his Egyptian friends, was passionately interested in Egyptology. He first went to Egypt in 1825 and stayed there upto 1828. The apparent aim of his journey was to learn Arabic language and literature as well as the mores and manners of the Egyptian people.

Lane made a second visit to Egypt in 1833 and closely studied the Egyptian society for about three years. The method of research that he adopted was near to that of modern anthropologists, especially in the sense that he tried his best to understand the Egyptians as they understood themselves. To achieve this purpose Lane, as mentioned earlier, stayed for

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years in Egypt trying to live as an Egyptian Arab. In his own words,

I have associated, almost exclusively, with Muslims, of various ranks in society. I have lived as they live, conforming with their general habits, and, in order to make them familiar and unreserved towards me on every subject, have always avowed my agreement with them in opinion whenever my conscience would allow me, and in most other cases refrained from the expression of my dissent, as well as from every action which might give them disgust, abstaining from eating food prohibited by their religion, and drinking wine etc., and even from habits merely disagreeable to them, such as the use of knives and forks at meals. (1)

By applying such a scientific method of research Lane succeeded in presenting a realistic study of Egyptian society in his Modern Egyptians. In fact his Modern Egyptians, unlike the accounts of many of his contemporary travellers, is not a subjective discourse on religion, culture and civilization of the Egyptian people; it is rather an account of socio-religious and cultural realities of the then Egyptian society. 'Arab culture and religion,' writes Muhammad Ali-aha, 'were presented not as a set of beliefs to be intellectually apprehended, analysed, rejected, as an assortment of social

and political modes to be defined and criticized, but as a lived experience. In Modern Egyptians the authorial identity is subordinated to the demand of the subject matter.\(^{(1)}\)

Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, however, is not free from defects. In his enthusiasm to present exactly what the Egyptians think and say about themselves he often accepted irrational things or incredible claims made by certain persons without having subjected them to intellectual and critical scrutiny. As a result his *Modern Egyptians* contains things which fall under the category of the *Arabian Nights*.

Nevertheless, despite some shortcomings, Lane's *Modern Egyptians* was a valuable contribution to Arabic studies and rightly came to be regarded as a reliable historical document of the first importance\(^{(2)}\) on Egyptian Arabs.

Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, as mentioned earlier, was an expression of Arab realities. But other nineteenth century travellers to the Arab world presented, in varying degree, either their own world view or the peculiar ideologies of their age in their works, and not the socio-economic and religio-political realities of the Middle East. Their approach, as will be seen later on, was subjective rather than objective.


\(^{2}\) Lewis, Bernard, op. cit. P. 21.
As discussed earlier the eighteenth-century travellers were influenced by the prevalent trend of their age, that is, nationalism, and under its spell most of them tended to highlight the Arabs as a separate national group in the Ottoman Empire. But the nineteenth-century England was a different world where new ideas such as racism and imperialism were in circulation. The travellers of the period were greatly influenced by the ideologies of their age which in turn naturally affected their approach to the Arabs or the natives of the Orient as a whole.

The nineteenth-century Europe witnessed rapid progress both in natural and social sciences. Equipped with the weapon of knowledge and comparatively advanced military technology many European countries such as England, France and Holland acquired large colonial empires in Africa and Asia. The people of the above mentioned countries were conscious of their belonging to the nations which had become imperial powers. The feeling of belonging to an imperial power gradually gave rise to racist ideas about Europe's superiority over the Orient. As a result there arose a consciousness of 'we and they' that ultimately led to an erroneous pronouncement: 'we the civilized' and 'they the barbarians' which widely became acceptable in Europe.

Once the idea of Oriental inferiority, both on racial and intellectual planes, was established there developed a
philosophy in Europe that it was the whiteman's burden to
civilize the backward races of the Orient. According to the
said philosophy the Orient was to be civilized both politically
and religiously. The religious backwardness was to be removed
by Christian missionaries and the political backwardness by
the imperial rulers. The idea was that by adopting Christi-
anity and by accepting the imperial rule as a permanent
phenomenon the Orientals would become civilized.

Literature is the mirror of the age in which it is
born. This philosophy of literature can be fully applied, at
least, to the travel as well as imaginative literature of the
nineteenth century England, for instance, exhibiting the
religious trend of his age Sir Walter Scott, in his the Talis-
man recreated the medieval scene of the Crusades or the 'struggle between Muslim barbarians' and the 'civilized, holy'
crusaders. The message he wanted to convey was that Muslims
by virtue of their faith were avowed enemy of Christ and
Christian civilization. Disraeli's Tancred, likewise, expressed
the common political trend of his age in form of Oriental
desire to be occupied and ruled by the British. The idea of the
Orient's willingness to welcome and accept the British occupa-
tion was further strengthened by Kingslake, Burton, Warburton,
Doughty and Palgrave. Even blunt who journeyed among the
Arabs in 1880s with avowed anti-imperialism and a mission for
Arab independence could not wish away the idea of British
protection of the Arab Caliphate which he recommended to rule in Arabia.

But was it really the desire of the Orient to be conquered and ruled by the British or was it merely a figment of the imagination of British writers and travellers or Britain's own imperialist plan to rule the Orient which found expression in their works?

Infact in the nineteenth century deliberate and concerted efforts were made by the British travellers to justify Britain's imperialist designs on the Orient as well as to popularise the idea that the British were capable of managing the affairs of alien nations including the Arabs. The same mentality was at work behind their criticism of the Ottoman rule in the Arab world. Apparently these were their own ideas or sheer creation of their ultra imaginative minds which had little or nothing to do with the actual realities of the Middle East. Muhammad Al-Taha rightly points out that 'most nineteenth-century writers on the Orient, whether travellers, imaginative writers or politicians expressed in their texts most of their ideology in relation to non-European than the reality of the Orient.'\(^1\) Al-Taha further says that 'almost all victorian travellers present us with familiar

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Oriental themes but with variations supplied by the authors' different inclinations, psychological crises and class rank in society. They used the East as a means of self expression, a means of making heroes out of themselves, a mirror through which they see their superiority, and a means of giving credibility to their narrative. They went to the East with European ideological concepts of themselves and 'Others' which they confirmed with the slightest contact with Oriental populations.\(^1\)

Al-Taha's view that the nineteenth-century travellers were little concerned with the real conditions of the then Arab world can be further expounded by focusing on the specific ideas of certain important travellers of the period. The nineteenth-century saw a spate of travellers going to the Middle East with their peculiar ideas, prejudices and varying intentions ranging from imperial and missionary zeal to sincere love of knowledge and adventure. However, those who really contributed to the image of the Arabs in England were Warburton, Burton, Blunt, Doughty, Palgrave and Kinglake.

Elliot Warburton went to the Middle East in 1844 and visited many countries including Syria and Egypt. He was typical nineteenth-century traveller and approached the

\(^1\) Ibid. p.20.
Arabs with preconceived notions which prompted him to interpret the Arab realities accordingly rather than to depict them as they existed at that time. Moreover, he considered himself to be facially and religiously superior to the Arabs and as a result looked down upon them as inferior and backward. In fact he had some respect for the Arabs of history who lighted up the candle of knowledge in Spain or elsewhere but held a very poor opinion about the present inhabitants of the Arab world. He disliked both the Bedouins and the city Arabs and referred to them as impervious to change. 'Immutability' he wrote, 'is the most striking characteristic of the East from the ancient strife of Cain and Abel, to the present struggle between the Crescent and the Cross, its people remain in their habits of thought and action less changed than the countries they inhabit.' Warburton further says that the material things in Egypt including the valley of Nile have changed drastically down the ages but 'the Egyptian still cultivates his river-given soil in the manner practised by the subjects of Pharaohs.'(1)

In his book *The Crescent and the Cross* he expounded the racist ideology of his age that the English were superior to the Arabs and that the Christian civilization was more advanced than the Islamic one. Jubilant and happy with the British

occupation of Egypt and her growing influence in other parts of the Fertile crescent he described the then phenomenon as a victory march of Christian faith and British imperialism destined to conquer the Arab world, which in Harburton's opinion, was highly desirous of British occupation. Clearly he was little concerned with a faithful presentation of Arab realities and extremely eager to see his personal prejudices and ideas prevail in the Arab world.

Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) is probably the most important Victorian traveller who contributed more than any one of his contemporaries to the making of Arab image in England. His book, *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Mecca* was widely read in England and became a reliable source of information about the Arabs in his time.

Burton's attitude towards the Arabs was one of ambivalence. On the one hand he eulogized the desert and idolized her sons, the Bedouins, as hospitable, manly and freedom loving, especially highlighting their desire for independence from the Turks and on the other advised his government to occupy the Arab countries. He even suggested the ways as to how the Arabs were to be placed and ruled over. Burton's hypocrisy could not remain hidden from the eye of his contemporary, Wilfrid

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Scawen Blunt who criticised him as having little true sympathy with the Arabs he had came to know so well. 'He would at any time, I am sure', Blunt wrote further, 'have willingly betrayed them to further English or his own professional interests.'(1)

There is no denying the fact that occasionally Burton idolized the Bedouin Arabs and portrayed the Islamic faith in a somewhat realistic manner though without having understood its inner meaning and penetrated its spiritual depth. But a careful study of his works reveals beyond suspicion that he was 'a racist, imperialist and arch conservative, who was for ever developing ludicrous theories to support his prejudices.'(2) Burton believed that the Europeans or the white men were superior to non-Europeans and the coloured people, and it was with this view that he justified Britain's imperial designs on the Orient in general and the Arab world in particular. 'It requires,' he wrote, 'not the Ken of a prophet to foresee the day when political necessity...will compel us (the British) to occupy the fountain head of al-Islam.'(3)

Burton often gave, both direct and indirect reasons for his belief in Occidental superiority and Oriental inferiority. He even offered a phyciological explanation for Oriental inferiority by misinterpreting the Arab human nature as being

well fitted, even eager and aspiring of European rule:

Yet Egyptian human nature is, like human nature everywhere, contradictory. Hating and despising Europeans, they still long for European rule. This people admire an iron-handed and lion-hearted despotism, they hate a timid and grinding tyranny. Of all foreigners, they would prefer the French yoke, a circumstance which I attribute to the diplomatic skill and national dignity of our neighbour across the Channel. (1)

Burton, thus intact, expressed in his works, not the Arab or Oriental realities, but two very common ideologies of his age, racism and imperialism. He was greatly influenced by both the said ideologies which naturally prejudiced his outlook and attitude towards the Arabs and forced him to look down upon them as an inferior race that, according to him, deserved to be ruled by the superior races of Europe and with an iron hand.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), a contemporary of Burton, however, had quite different views about the Arabs. Blunt had thoroughly journeyed among the Arabs of Egypt and of Najd and found the inhabitants of the two countries different

from each other in nature and character.

The Egyptians, especially the peasants, according to Blunt were good and honest people having ‘every virtue which would make a happy, well-to-do society’. Blunt further described the Egyptian peasants as ‘cheerful, industrious, obedient to law and pre-eminently sober’. Moreover, they were ‘neither gamblers nor brawlers, nor licentious livers’ (1). They loved their homes, their wives and children and were extremely kind to their oldmen, beggars, even dumb animals. A people with so many virtues were brutally ruled and ill-treated for ages by the Ottomans, Long oppressed, impoverished and over-taxed they had developed a submissive character and lost all ambitions to aspire for political independence or revolt against the cruel system imposed upon them. Hence to put an end to the Ottoman oppression he advised his Government to occupy Egypt. But he soon realized that the British were even worse imperialists who had no regard and programme for Egypt’s political independence. As a result he started criticising the British imperial policies, and championed the cause of Arab independence throughout his life.

Unlike the Egyptian population the Arabs of Najd were independent and freedom loving. Blunt found the Arab society of Najd blessed with three great virtues, liberty, equality and brotherhood. The Najdis, according to him, were freer

and enjoyed true democracy. 'Here was a community' he wrote, 'living as our idealists have dreamed, without taxes, without police, without conscription, without compulsion of any kind, whose only law was public opinion, and whose only order a principle of honour.' \(^{(1)}\) Blunt pinned his hopes on these Arabs of Najd whom he expected to free the fellow Arabs oppressed by the Ottomans and the British in Egypt or elsewhere and, thus, regain their ancient glory.

Although a Christian by faith Blunt believed in regeneration of Islam, for a revitalized Islam, in his opinion, would help the Arabs attain their political freedom. In his book, *The Future of Islam* he urged the West to view Islam as a positive force which like its glorious past could still make rich contributions to human knowledge and civilization. Depending on the premise that Christendom has pretty well abandoned her hopeless task of converting Islam, as Islam has abandoned hers of conquering Europe; he argued that it was 'surely time that moral sympathy should unite the two great bodies of men who believe in and worship the same God.' \(^{(2)}\) What Blunt expected from this hypothetical compromise was that the West particularly England should help the Arab nationalist movements in their struggle against the Ottomans. Furthermore she should try to restore the Caliphate to Mecca under her

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1. Ibid. P. 58.
own protection. 'The Caliphate no longer an empire,' Blunt wrote, 'but still an independent sovereignty must be taken under British protection, and publicly guaranteed its political existence, undisturbed by further aggression from Europe.'

It is really surprising to see Blunt advocating British protection for the caliphate while himself was highly disappointed with the performance of his Government in Egypt where the so-called British protection had become a misnomer. He too was probably influenced, although to a lesser extent, by the prevalent ideology of his age that the British were superior to the Arabs, at least intellectually if not racially, and it was with this view that he suggested to the British Government to educate and prepare the Arabs for self rule.

Charles M. Doughty (1843-1926) was another Victorian traveller who visited Syria, Palestine, Egypt, the Sinai desert and the ancient city of Petra. His visit to the Middle East was motivated by biblical research. He was a missionary zealot and travelled in the Middle East, not under any disguise, but as a Christian and British national.

Doughty recounted his experiences in his book Travels in Arabia Deserta. His own impression of his travelogue was that:

1. Ibid. P. 44.
I have set down that which I saw with my eyes and heard with my ears and thought in my heart, neither more or less. (1)

But, in reality, his work is fraught with affectations, prejudices and misjudgements. He was not only influenced by the racist and imperialist ideologies of his time but also tired with a missionary zeal and bias that prompted him, in the words of Al-Taha, to call on the Christian countries to take the necessary steps whatever they be, including the occupation of the Islamic heat of Mecca to fulfil their mission which was, in his opinion, the stamping out of the Arab slave trade and in ensuring the safety of the Christians of Arabia. (2)

In fact Doughty saw the Arabs as an 'outgroup' who practised a different culture and religion which he not only detested but even desired either to eliminate from the face of the earth or subjugate it forever:

The Arabian religion of the Sword must be tempered by the sword; and were the daughters of Mecca and Medina led captive, the Moslemin should become as Jews. (3)

Doughty was, in fact, a racist, an imperialist and above all a missionary zealot. He believed in the racial superiority of the British and supported their imperialistic

2. Al-Taha, Muhammed op. cit. op. 18-19.
design on the Arab world. However, his imperialism was not merely political, it was cultural and religious as well. In his view political imperialism was appreciable only when it aimed at imposing Western culture and religion on the Orient.

Alexander William Kinglake was probably the most subjective travel writer of the nineteenth-century England. He journeyed among the Arabs of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Egypt and recounted his experiences or more aptly gave expression to his preconceived notions about the Arabs in his Eothen. He travelled in the Arab world mainly through the routes which had already been traced by European travellers and there was nothing left for him to describe as far the landscape, geography, maps of the region he visited, and manners and customs of the people were concerned. He, then, decided to present humorously in his Eothen the Arab realities in accordance with the then English attitude and with the ideas he had conceived before coming into actual contact with them.

By the time he wrote his travelogue, the Eothen, the British parliament was debating, for the first time, the so-called Eastern Question or the possible British policy and attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. There was a common feeling in England that Egypt should be occupied in order to safeguard their route to India. In Eothen Kinglake set out to prove that the occupation of Egypt was not merely a British necessity but it was something that the Egyptian people also desired.
In other parts of the Arab world also he traced out people who wished to be conquered by the British. The Lady Hester episode was introduced in *Eothen* with a view to giving expression to Kinglake's own mind that the Syrians were excited by the idea and 'possibility of their land being occupied by the English, and many of them looked upon Lady Hester as a Princess who came to prepare the way for the expected conquest.'\(^1\) Likewise in Lebanon Kinglake found an Arab chief in whose mouth he put his own words. He presented the chief as having 'sagacity to foresee that Europe would intervene authoritatively in the affairs of Syria.'\(^2\)

Kinglake had no word of praise for Islam, the religion of the majority of the Arabs. Islam, both as a religion and as a civilization, according to him, was inferior to Christianity. He, like countless Englishmen of his time, believed in the superiority and overall goodness of British institutions and wanted to impose them on Oriental nations which, according to him, were highly backward. It was with this view that he wished Islam wither away and disappear from the face of the earth.\(^3\)

William Gisborne Palgrave occupies a unique place among the nineteenth-century travellers to Arabia. He was an English

2. Ibid. P. 403.
national but accepted to be an agent of the French Government, the arch rival of the British Empire in the East. The French Government, in fact, had funded Palgrave's journey with a view to getting political information about eastern and central Arabia which they did not want to occupy but only to bring under their sphere of influence. Palgrave, however, had different views. He wanted the French to occupy Arabia in order to advance its political and his (Palgrave's) missionary interests. In fact, Palgrave, besides being a political agent of the French, was a devout missionary commissioned by the Society of Jesuits to embark upon his Arabian journey in order to fulfil a religious purpose. Thus Palgrave can be held as a glaring example of not a too rare cooperation between the missionaries and the European imperialists.

As a political agent of the French Government Palgrave studied the Arabs as a race different from and superior to other Oriental races including the Turks. In his opinion the French, in order to promote their own imperial interests, needed to raise the Arabs as a nation, encourage them to revolt against the Turks and form an independent Arab state. But this Arab nationalism, according to Palgrave, was not an end in itself, nor did it aim at establishing a genuinely independent Arab state, rather it was a means for the Europeans, especially the French to have
access to Arabia to fulfil their political aims. He, however, expected the French more than any other European nation to help Christian missionaries in their Arabian enterprise.

Christian mission of the nineteenth century was different from what it is understood today. In today's missionary parlance Christian mission stands for Agape, the love (of God), Kerygma, preaching about Christ and Diakonia, service extended to those in need which often amounts to coercion and psychotropic induction. But in the nineteenth century missionaries understood Christianity as to be a perfectly superior religion and civilization. To them Christianity was not merely a set of beliefs and rituals to be believed and practised by Christians, rather it was Christianity's World view, a theory of civilization as well as of history according to which they saw themselves, their civilization, culture and religion as superior to those of 'outgroups' or other religious entities. Their complex of religious and cultural superiority was further mixed up with the two dominant ideologies of the age: racism and imperialism. As a result they went to the Orient or reached the 'outgroups' with a feeling of racial, cultural and religious superiority. As members of the same group to which the European imperialists also belonged they saw Europe's imperialism and expansionist designs on the East as a means for converting Oriental nations, the followers of inferior and backward religions, to superior Christianity.
Palgrave was a typical nineteenth-century missionary. Naturally his approach to Islam and the Wahhabee revivalist movement of central Arabia, despite his claims of objectivity, was highly prejudiced and subjective.

As noted earlier Palgrave regarded the Arabs as a superior race among the Asian nations. However, the Arabs he admired were not the Muslim Arabs of his time but those of pre-Islamic period. The Arabs of his time, in his opinion, were degraded and pushed into a backward situation because of 'the Stirling influence of Islam', and due to 'the Mahometan drug which paralyses whatever it does not kill', and has 'kept them in intellectual race to be outrun by others more favoured by circumstances, though not perhaps by nature'. Having condemned Islam as to be the main cause of Arab backwardness it was natural for Palgrave to suggest that the Arabs had still potentials to become a master race in Asia if only they abandoned Islam. Naturally the next choice for them, at least in Palgrave's imagination, was Christianity which could help them in becoming a great nation.

The first half of the twentieth century saw many men and women of English origin travelling to the Middle East often with pre-conceived notions or with their peculiar ideas.

is about the Arabs. As well known this period is of vital political importance because the political map of world, especially of Asia changed drastically owing to the disintegration and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by Western nations. The travel-writers of the period, more or less, tried to partially mirror political as well as social realities of the age in their works. But in most cases the outlook with which the travellers looked at the Arab World was purely European. Many writers of the period, following the nineteenth-century imperialist tradition, often put their own words in the mouth of some native Arab and, thus, instead of dealing genuinely with the Arab realities, subtly gave expression to their pre-conceived notions and ideas. Gertrude Bell, for instance, mirrored Kinglake's imperialist mentality on the one hand and expressed a common English desire of her age on the other when she found a Syrian Arab to say that 'even the Muslim population hated the Ottoman Government, and would infinitely rather be ruled by a foreigner, what though he were an infidel-preferably by the English, because the prosperity of Egypt had made so deep an impression on Syrian minds'.

Other travellers of the period were also, more or less, like Gertrude Bell. For instance Lawrence and Captain Shakespeare were British political agents and spies.

hence bound to express only what they considered to be in the interest of Britain. The two travellers who became famous for their championing of the cause of Arab independence were in fact racist in the sense that they believed in political and intellectual inferiority of the Arabs who could be managed and manipulated by a few tactful agents to serve the British interests.

The theme of the Arabs' political inferiority was common to all travellers of the period. Even Philby, who is well known for his anti-imperialist views, believed, in the beginning of his political and administrative career, that the Arabs were yet not fully prepared for self-rule. For example he, by accepting and advocating the Anglo-French Declaration of 8th November, 1918, subscribed to the view that the Arabs needed Europe's political and intellectual assistance to stand on their feet and run their show independently. Infact, it was only after his resignation from the government service that he began to support the idea of complete Arab independence.

The twentieth-century British travellers, especially of its first half were nationalist as well as imperialist in their outlook. In the process of their political and literary career many of them became 'Arabophile' mainly by
advocating the so-called interests of the Arabs. However, a close scrutiny and anatomy of their approach to the Arabs and their problems would reveal that, with probable exception of Philby, their championing of the Arab cause was essentially a part of their overall strategy to serve the British interests.

It is with these views or the above-mentioned approach i.e. the Europe's political superiority and the Arabs' political inferiority, that the writer has dealt with the ideas of some important travellers of the first half of the twentieth century in this work. Obviously, and naturally it was not possible for him to discuss the views of all travellers of the period; rather one had to be selective. However, the travellers, Gertrude Bell, Captain Shakespear, Lawrence and Philby, who have been selected for this study were most representative travel-writers of their time and hence it is hoped that this study would cover up and truely represent the common social, political and religious trends which the travel-writers of the period under discusssion thoroughly discussed in their works.

Most of the above-mentioned writers travelled to the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century, and were connected, in one or another way, with the events of far-reaching consequences that took place in that period.
The most important event that changed the map of the Middle East was the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that the First World War brought about. This led to the creation of many Arab countries most of which were put under British and French mandates. The idea of an exclusively Jewish State which became a reality in 1948 was also conceived and put forward in the same period. Thus the present political map of West Asia was in fact carved in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, many of its present political realities are either a reflection of the then events or the consequences of the policies adopted and practised by the then British and French governments, the Arab leaders and the Zionists.

Bell, Shakespeare, Lawrence and Philby all played a role in the political drama of the period under discussion. It is, therefore, expected that a comprehensive study of their ideas would greatly help to understand not only the past but also the present realities of West Asia.
Along with male travellers there have been adventurous women of English origin who journeyed among the Arabs, lived and conversed with them in order to know their mores and manners or way of life. Among such travellers Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell (1868-1926) occupies a very prominent place. She was the beloved daughter of a rich industrialist, Hugh Bell. Hugh spent his personal fortunes rather lavishly to help his daughter become a scholar, historian, archaeologist, explorer, gardener and mountaineer. Although a historian by formal education Gertrude seems to have a special aptitude for learning various languages. 'She was', writes a biographer of her, 'fluent in English, French and German, and in addition she could speak and write Arabic and Persian, was passably proficient at Turkish and could hold a tolerable conversation in most part of India, and in China and Japan'.¹ She began to learn most of these languages at home but proficiency was acquired only through travels in the countries where they were spoken. It is hard to say if she travelled across the

¹ Winstone, H.V.r., Gertrude Bell, London, 1978, p. 90. Gertrude learned Arabic with some difficulty. She might have been able to speak and write as Winstone has claimed. However, her Arabic accent, according to Ameen Rihani who met her in Baghdad in 1922, was very bad. 'She speaks Arabic,' wrote Rihani, 'almost without an accent, often mixing it with her English, and emphasizing it with a dogmatic though graceful gesture' (Rihani, Ameen, Ibn Saooq, London, 1928, p. 6.)
globe with the sole purpose of learning foreign languages. However, there is no denying the fact that she was a travel enthusiast and fortunately had all the means required for such an indulgence at her disposal.

**Contact with Turkey**  
Gertrude was merely twenty years old when in December 1888 she embarked upon a tour to see Europe. Travelling across the continent she reached Constantinople in May 1889. It was in this city where she first came into contact with the believers of the Islamic faith and witnessed the Byzantine as well as the Islamic splendours which later on became her life-long obsession. Her feelings were mixed and impression mute. 'The people' she wrote in one of her letters, 'are so fearfully sophisticated, they address you in very bad English, and in order to gain your confidence assure you that they recognize you perfectly and remember having seen often in Glasgow or Liverpool or some other place you have never been to'.

Gertrude, however, did not pass as other travellers of the period usually did, any derogatory or favourable remark on the religion and politics of the Turks. The reason was probably her liberal outlook that had freed her from Christian bigotry. Or perhaps it was because of the fact...

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that by the time she visited Constantinople she was merely a young and passionate traveller, more concerned with sight-seeing than having any interest in religious and political affairs.

Visit to Iran In 1892 Gertrude found an opportunity to see another Muslim country, Iran which seems to have fascinated her very much. The letters she wrote from various cities in Iran to friends and relatives in England contain vivid pictures of Iranian life and society. She was fascinated by the veils of women, the flowing robes that men wore and the street beggars who wore their rags with a better grace than I my not becoming habit. The Iranian landscape—luxuriant vegetation caused by the water of flowing springs, rose gardens and corn-fields—also made a profound impact on her youthful imagination. 'It is refreshing,' she wrote, 'to the spirit to lie in a hammock strung between the plane trees of Persian garden and recite the poems of Hafiz.'

But even more fascinating was the barren desert. 'Oh the desert round Tehran, miles and miles of it with noting growing, ringed in with bleak bare mountains snow crowned and furrowed with the deep courses of torrents. I never knew what desert was till I came here, it is very wonderful thing to see.' And

2. Ibid. p. 27.
it becomes more wonderful and extremely pleasant when in its midst one meets a stranger who proves himself to be a magnanimous and well-mannered host. Gertrude had many such experiences and was moved to write: 'We have no hospitality in the west and no manners'. (1) In sum the charm of the East worked upon her so much that she felt herself a changed personality:

Are we the same people I wonder
When all our surroundings, acquaintances are changed? Here that which is me, which womanlike is an empty jar that the passer by fills at pleasure, is filled with such wine as in England I had never heard of. (2)

Safar Nameh

Before coming over to Iran Gertrude had some knowledge of Persian language. The visit gave her an opportunity to brush it up. She hired an amiable gentleman who insisted of his weak French, the medium of instruction, tutored her so competently that she was soon able to speak and write in Persian.

The immediate result of Gertrude's journey to Iran was a travel book, Safar Nameh: Persian Pictures that

1. Ibida.
she anonymously published in 1694. Although the book was favourably reviewed it failed to win universal acclaim, even though it had enormous charm. 'Charm but not actual achievement', (1) commented her friend Janet Hogarth, the sister of famous archaeologist Dr. W.G. Hogarth.

Divan of Hafiz

Three years later she produced a verse translation of some poems from the Divan of the famous Persian poet, Hafiz Shirazi. The work was well received and deservedly regarded as her first and foremost literary achievement. The introductory essay that mainly deals with the life and works of Hafiz who has been compared with his contemporary Dante, speaks of Gertrude's wide reading and her critical skill and vision. Her translation, especially when viewed in the light of the fact that she had begun to learn Persian just three years ago, was marvellous. Years later in 1947 Gertrude's brilliance as a translator was recognized by the distinguished oriental scholar A.J. Arberry in the following words: 'Though some twenty hands have put Hafiz into English, her rendering remains the best'. (2)

Arabic Language and the Jims

It was a practice with Gertrude to try to learn the language of a country she intended to visit thoroughly. It was in this perspective that she began to take lessons in Arabic before embarking upon a journey to the Nile. East.

1. Quoted in Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op. cit. P. 37.
2. Ibid.
However, unlike Persian, she found Arabic difficult to learn, especially its pronunciation. After arduous labour she was somewhat able to write and speak the language though without any accent.

Gertrude first saw the Arab world in 1899 when she visited Jerusalem. From this year onward she spent most of her life in the Arab world. She travelled widely in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and central Arabia from time to time. In such journeys she met people from all walks of life and attained enormous knowledge about the history of tribes, their relations with the Ottomans, inter-tribal relations, the sect of the Druzes socio-religious conditions and the Ottoman administration etcetera.

For a shrewd traveller journeys always prove to be keys to invaluable treasure of knowledge. Gertrude herself writes:

To those bred under an elaborate social order few such moments of exhilaration can come as that which stands at the threshold of wild travel. The gates of the enclosed garden are thrown open, the chain at the entrance of the sanctuary is lowered, with a wary glance to right and left you step forth and behold the immeasurable world. (1)

This 'immeasurable world,' as can be imagined, is inhabited by people with their own socio-political order, cultural traditions and religious beliefs. Gertrude saw all these during her journeys among the Arabs and described her experiences in her two travelogues, the Desert and the Sown and Amurath to Amurath. Besides the two books her letters also contain a great deal of information about the Arabs and their rulers, the Turks.

Gertrude has recorded many a witty conversation with both ordinary and notable Arabs which provide opportunities to look through the minds of the Arabs. For instance at the end of her Syrian journey, her cook, Mikhail, in a moving conversation gives her a piece of Arab wisdom. 'Listen, oh lady,' said the cook, 'and I will make it clear to you. Men are short of vision, and they see but that for which they look. Some look for evil and they find evil, some look for good and it is good that they find, and moreover some are fortunate and these find always what they want.'(1) Mikhail's philosophy seems to be true to a great extent. For most of the English travellers encountered the East with preconceived notions and as a result found only what they had intended to attain. Even Gertrude, who was neither missionary minded nor an ardent imperialist (at least before the

1. Ibid. P. 340.
First World War), was not an exception. As a result she saw the Arabs like many of her countrymen, though she differed from them in certain matters.

Gertrude found both merits and demerits in the Arabs. "The Oriental," according to her, "is like a very old child. He is unacquainted with many branches of knowledge which we have come to regard as of elementary necessity, frequently, but not always, his mind is little pre-occupied with the need of acquiring them, and he concerns himself scarcely at all with what we call practical utility. He is not practical, in our acceptation of the word, anymore than a child is practical."(1) Moreover, the acts of Arab people are guided by traditions of conduct and morality which are as old as human civilization and have remained so in all ages without having undergone any drastic change. Apart from these two shortcomings the Arab, according to Gertrude, is like European races and it is not impossible for foreigners to win his friendship and sympathy. In many respects Gertrude found the Arab better than Europeans. For instance his manners and habits are not fettered by artificiality. Moreover, he is more tolerant than the dwellers in Europe mainly because he lives in a society of diverse elements. There is no denying the fact that the Arab society was still tribal and in many regions they are divided on sectarian

1. Ibid (Preface) P. 1
lines. Many tribes, and sometimes even sects, are at loggerheads with each other. However, despite these drawbacks the Arabs, according to Gertrude, are basically a law-abiding race, they follow their own law and like other people to behave as their law and traditions permit them.

Her Impression of Islam Gertrude seems especially impressed by the religion of Islam. Once, when she was in Damascus, she went to see the city's Grand Mosque where 'men of all kinds, from the learned doctor of Damascus down to the raggiest camel drivewere standing in prayer. 'Allah, he (the Imam) cried, and the Faithful fell with a single movement upon their faces and remained for a full minute in silent adoration, till the high chant of the Imam began again... Allah, And as the name of God echoed through the great colonnades,... the listeners prostrated themselves again, and for a moment all the church (mosque) was silent.'(1) Highly impressed by the scene Gertrude was constrained to declare that 'Islam is the great republic of the world, there is neither class nor race inside the creed.'(3)

The Turks By the time, that is, the first decade of the running century, Gertrude visited the Arab world the Turks

1. Bell, Lady, The Letter of Gertrude Bell op.cit.P.198
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
were in control of the land. The Ottoman Empire was big but weak and hollow. Yet for military and political reasons its integrity was important for Britain and that is why they wanted to maintain friendly relations with the Turks. This British policy and desire is naturally reflected in the writings of the period. Most travellers who went to the Middle East in the early years of the present century have advocated even eulogized the Turks despite their numerous weaknesses. On the other hand, the Arabs especially those who aspired for national freedom have been degraded and portrayed as a people unfit for self-rule. For instance Sir Mark Sykes, before turning against Turkey after her entry in the First World War, was an ardent admirer of the Turks and wrote passionately of the achievements of the Ottoman Caliphs. On the contrary his attitude towards the Arabs was very harsh. He degraded them to the level of animals and wrote of them in such a contemptuous language that is hard to be equalled. For instance he describes the Arabs of the Shammar tribe as 'a rapacious, greedy, ill-mannered set of brutes....These animals are, unluckily, pure Badawin, and have not been tinctured with either Turkish or Kurdish blood, which always has a softening and civilizing effect on these desert tramps'.

1. Quoted in Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op. cit. P. 111.
Gertrude who was not as much biased or politically committed as was Mark Sykes and rather went to the Arab world without predilections has also admired the Turks, especially before they allied themselves with Germany in the Great War. Besides being impressed by the common Turks, especially the peasants who know 'how to lay down rules of conduct and how to obey them' (1) she seems to have a special word of praise for the polite Turkish officers in the Arab World who are always more than ready to help the travellers who possess proper certificates. They behave properly and bear no ill will even when the travellers provoke them by defying the Turkish law. (2) She even claimed that the best officers in the renowned British administration in Egypt were Turks who 'brought to bear under the new regime the good sense and the natural instinct for government for which they had not much scope under the old' (3) Turkish rule. It was only 'in the upper grades,' wrote Gertrude, 'that the Ottoman Empire' was weak and defective. And the upper grades were 'filled with Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, and personages of various nationalities generally esteemed in the East (and not without reason untrustworthy)' (4).

1. Bell, Ertrude, The Desert and the Sown, op. cit. P. 140. See
2. Ibid. P. 86.
3. Ibid. P. 140.
4. Ibid.
But politeness, patience and other qualities of the Turks apart, her travels in Arabia enabled her to become fully aware of the weaknesses of the Turkish government. In fact the Ottoman administration was so weak that it prompted Gertrude to prophesy that their Empire would disintegrate 'in the course of next ten years.' (1)

Compared with her view of the Turks Gertrude's attitude towards the Arab nationalists who wanted to throw off the yoke of the Turkish rule and push them out of Arabia was highly critical, even inimical. 'Of what value are' she wrote, 'the Pan-Arabic associations and inflammatory leaflets that they issue from foreign printing presses? The answer is easy. They are worth nothing at all. There is no nation of Arabs, the Syrian merchant is separated by a wider gulf from the Bedouin than he is from the Osmanli; the Syrian country is inhabited by Arabic-speaking races all eager to be at each other's throats, and only prevented from fulfilling their natural desires by the ragged half-fed soldier who draws at rare intervals the Sultan's pay.' (2)

1. Quoted in Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op. cit. p. 118

In a later work, *Amurath to Amurath*, published from London in 1911, Gertrude expressed more or less similar views in the following words: 'Nowhere will the Arab nationalist movement, she wrote, 'if it reaches the blossoming point, find a more congenial soil, and nowhere will it be watered by fuller streams of lawless vanity. Cruel and bloody as Ottoman rule has shown itself upon these remote frontiers (the Ottoman province of Mosul, presently in Iraq) it is better than the untrammelled mastery of Arab Beg or Kurdish Agha, and if the half exterminated Christian sects, the persecuted Yezidis, the wretched fellahin of every creed, who sow in terror crops which they may never reap, are to win protection and prosperity, it is to the Turk that they must look. He, only, can control the warring races of his empire.' (p. 247)
Gertrude and the Great War

Just a few months before the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 Gertrude had concluded an adventurous journey across the central Arabia. She had penetrated to Hail, the capital city of the once powerful but now decaying and strife-ridden Shammar tribe. Since the town was not visited by any European for over one and a half decades Gertrude's journey acquired increased importance in political circles. For the information she had gathered in central Arabia was vital for Britain's foreign policy makers especially at a time when they were engaged in hectic diplomacy to prevent Turkey from allying herself with Germany in the event of a war between the two imperial powers of Europe. In order to achieve this purpose Sir Edward Grey sent Sir Louis Mallet to Constantinople. He was busy in persuading the Turks when in early May, 1914 Gertrude arrived in the Turkish capital. Sir Louis seized the opportunity to interview her in order to collect fresh information about political conditions in central Arabia. According to Gertrude, Ibn Sauc, both politically and militarily, was stronger than Ibn Rashid, hence more important for both the Turks and the British. Later on she expressed the same view in a letter published in the Times (13th June, 1914):
My belief is that Ibn Saud is now the chief figure in central Arabia, although the Ottoman Government was still pursuing its traditional policy of subsidising and supplying arms to the Rashids.(1)

Captain Shakespear, a British spy who travelled across the central Arabia and reached Riyadh, the capital of Ibn Saud, almost by the same time Gertrude visited Hail was in full agreement with the views expressed by Miss Bell. However, the British Government, disregarding the views of Gertrude and Shakespear, decided to support and favour the Sherif Husain of Mecca rather than Ibn Saud in order to instigate an Arab uprising against the Turks who had decided to be a war ally of Germany.

When the War began Gertrude, exhibiting extreme patriotism, volunteered herself to be available to do any service to her country. She organized and ran successfully an office in London for the missing and wounded civilians. But being an Arabist and having widely travelled in the Arab world she was needed by the British Government to do some more important works. In September 1914, just before Turkey joined hands with Germany in the War, the British Intelligence

1. Quoted in Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op. cit. p. 146.
office in Cairo requested the Director of Military Operations (D.M.O.) to ask Gertrude to prepare a confidential report on Syria. Gertrude readily complied with the request and on September the 9th sent, through the D.M.O., the required report to Sir Edward Grey in which she had clearly stated that 'Syria, especially its southern part where Egyptian prosperity,' brought about by the competent British administration, 'is better known was exceedingly pro-British'. The French influence in the region, according to Gertrude, was growing but they were disliked by a great majority of the Syrians. In the same report she also assessed the situation in Iraq saying that 'the presence of a large body of German engineers in Baghdad, for railway building, will be of no advantage to Germany,' and that 'Iraq would not/willing to see Turkey at war with us (the British) and would not take an active part in it'.

This was the first of many official reports that Gertrude prepared for her Government. It is noteworthy that even though her journeys among the Arabs, unlike those of Shakespeare and Lawrence, were unofficial (perhaps she was the politically least committed English traveller of the period) she had acquired considerable knowledge about the

1. Ibid. P. 151.
the political realities of the host countries. Moreover by putting her knowledge at the service of the British Empire she indirectly accepted the peculiar tradition of Western scholarship which was current in her time that knowledge is the obverse side of power or that it is subservient to the State.

Gertrude was formally employed by the British Intelligence in November 1915 and from that time onward she proved herself to be one of the most dedicated servants of the British Empire. She reached Cairo on November 30, 1915 where she was welcomed by Dr. D.G. Hogarth and T.E. Lawrence who took her to the Grand Continental Hotel where her residence was arranged. Her immediate assignment was to fill in the intelligence files with information as to the tribes and Shaikhs'\(^1\) of Arabia.

Formation of Arab Bureau While Gertrude was busy in helping Dr. Hogarth her chiefs were preoccupied with plans to establish a special intelligence bureau which was to be responsible for tackling all Arabian affairs. On December 13, 1915, the Director of Civil and Military Intelligence in Cairo, Lt. Colonel Gilbert Clayton wrote to Sir Mark Sykes informing him that he had viewed it fit to create a 'Near East Office' with the sole purpose of handling the political suspects and

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countering the Turks' pan-Islamic propaganda. Clayton also sought Sykes's consent to expand the said office, both its staff and its functions.

In his reply Sykes not only agreed with Clayton's idea but also took labour to define the functions of the 'Arabian Bureau'. In his view the Bureau, first of all, should harmonize Britain's political activities in the north-east of Arabian peninsula and provide information about Turko-German policies to various departments of the Government - the War Office, Foreign Office, India Office, the Admiralty and the Government of India. In the second place, he proposed, the Bureau should conduct high level propaganda to win the Arab support for Great Britain without hurting the sentiments of Indian Muslims and the interests of the Triple Entente. Thus the 'Arabian Bureau' was formally created under the headship of Mark Sykes with Lt. Col. Parker as his deputy.

The Bureau immediately set down to its works, established its separate office with a telegraphic address for which the code name 'Intrusive' was chosen. The Bureau also began to establish its own espionage network.

But the formation of the Bureau seems to have caused a serious row between various departments of the British Government. On December 28, 1915 Sykes telegraphed to
Clayton informing him that while the War, Foreign and Intelligence offices were slow, the Admiralty was very quick to react and wanted to annex the Bureau as a part of its own network. Later on the Government of India also resented, especially when its activities were extended to Mesopotamia. To settle the dispute the British Prime Minister asked for an immediate meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee to consider the formation of an 'Islamic Bureau'. The Committee met on January 6, 1961 under the chairmanship of the Director of Military Intelligence, Brigadier General G.H.W. Macdonogh and approved of Clayton's original idea of the 'Near East Office' and of its aims as defined by Mark Sykes except that it was henceforth to be called the 'Arab Bureau'.

While the interdepartmental wranglings were going on Gertrude, quietly and busily, continued to work on Arabia, its tribes, shaikhs and geography. Being at centre of British Intelligence in Cairo she was naturally tempted to involve in and understand the complexities of Britain's Arab policy. Her grasp of political issues was amply exhibited in a long letter that she wrote to Lord Robert

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1. The 'Near East Office', 'Arabian Bureau', 'Islamic Bureau' were in fact terms used by various departments or officers of the British Government to indicate what finally came to be known as 'Arab Bureau'.

2. See the relevant part of the letter in Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op. cit. PP. 164–6.
Cecil on 20th December 1915 just after a month she had joined the Arab Bureau. In the letter she had, inter alia, referred to the nationalist aspirations of the Arabs whom Britain was encouraging through McMahon to rise against the Turks. Surprisingly she did not criticise the British stand on and support to the Arab nationalism while in an earlier work, *The Desert and the Sown* she had clearly stated that there existed no such thing as Arab nation.(1) The reason is not hard to find. In *The Desert and the Sown* she had criticised the Syrian nationalists because they were aspiring for freedom from the Turkish Empire, then an ally of Great Britain which she wanted to prevent from disintegration for its own reasons. But in 1914-15 the situation had drastically changed. The Turks were no more Britain's ally, rather had turned against her and become War-ally of Germany. The new circumstances brought about a change in Gertrude's own outlook. She had already picked the strings of an Arab rebellion 2 during her wandering in Syria and Iraq and now along with other members of the Arab Bureau, notably Hogarth and Lawrence, wanted 'to make them articulate.' Thus it can be justly concluded that her support to the so-called Arab awakening,


2. In her preface to *Amurath to Amurath*, published in 1911 she had written the following, 'The sense of change, uneasy and bewildered, hung over the whole Ottoman Empire; it was rarely unalloyed with anxiety; there was, it must be admitted, little to encourage unqualified confidence in the immediate future. But one thing was certain; the moving finger had inscribed a fresh title upon the page.' (P. VII).
contrary to the common belief, was aimed at serving the British interest rather than the Arab cause.

Gertrude's growing political understanding naturally impressed upon her superior officers at the Arab Bureau that instead of merely working on Arabian geography she was capable of being entrusted with greater political responsibilities. It has already been noted that the Government of India had objected to the formation of the Arab Bureau in Cairo and that its suspicions were somewhat removed only after the meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee held on January 6, 1916. However, India revived its opposition to the Bureau when the later decided to set up a branch in Iraq. The Government of India was aware of, and consequently thoroughly opposed to the Bureau's plan for the post-War Arab World: an independent Arab state as explained in Husain-McMahon correspondence.\(^1\) According to their approach it was irrational to include Iraq in the proposed Arab State mainly because the country was conquered by the Indian troops. India, in fact, wanted to form and run the future government in Iraq as an imperial power.

The Arab Bureau, on its part, was contemptuous of the Government of India approach and branded them as being

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1. The contents of Husain - McMahon correspondence will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.
ignorant of Arab realities. However, India was not to be written off so easily. She was to be cajoled into agreeing with the Bureau’s approach to Mesopotamia and its plan to set up a branch office in Basra. For this purpose Gertrude was asked to move to India.

Gertrude reached Karachi on 6th February 1916 and immediately moved on to Delhi to allay the fears of the Indian Government about the Arab Bureau. She played her role successfully in persuading the Government of India to agree with the setting up of a branch office of the Arab Bureau in Basra. However, the Indian Government had conceded only after securing the right of being represented at the Arab Bureau in Cairo by an officer appointed by them. Moreover, they persuaded Gertrude to be incharge of the Basra branch of Bureau. It appears as the Indian Government was still suspicious about the Bureau’s branch office in Basra, especially if it was to be headed by Lawrence or by some other staff member of the Bureau other than Gertrude. Obviously she was happy over her growing importance. ‘It is interesting, deeply interesting, but oh, it’s an anxious job. I wish, I wish, I knew more — and was more. And I am overwhelmed at meeting with so much kindness and confidence,’ she wrote exultantly.

1. Quoted in Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op. cit. P. 17.
Gertrude arrived in Basra on the first day of March 1916. With the mutual consent of the Arab Bureau and Sir Percy Cox, the Chief Political Representative in Iraq she was appointed the Bureau’s Correspondent in Basra. She carried out her responsibilities so skillfully and worked so energetically that Cox was prompted to appoint her as his Oriental Secretary in order to deal with local notables. Moreover, ‘She began to make the first of her major contributions to Hogarth’s Arab Bulletin,’ the secret organ of the Arab Bureau, ‘to assemble intelligence information from briefings with the army authorities and interviews with tribal sheikhs, to translate the Arabic correspondence of the office, and as was to become her increasing habit – to take on tasks which some of her colleagues considered to be the proper preserve of the Chief of the civil administration’, (1) such as writing a letter to Ion Hasnic, an ally of the Turks in central Arabia to win him to the British side. Besides, Gertrude also began to compile a gazetteer in which she tried to put together relevant and reliable information about the Arab tribes. In this regard she received ready and valuable help from Reverend John Van Ess, a missionary who had acquired enormous knowledge about

1. Iibic. P. 17v.
the Iraqi tribes by having travelled widely in the desert and marshes. Religion and missionary zeal were thus brought in to action to serve the British Empire.

*Gertrude and the Making of Iraq*  With the fall of Baghdad on March 1917 the war in Iraq was almost over. For the Turks were in retreat on every front leaving behind a vast territory to administer. Cox accepted the challenge and began to organize the British administration slowly but confidently. He gathered around him men of great abilities such as Philby and Arnold Wilson who, fortunately or unfortunately, had divergent ideas and the ability to stick to and pursue their respective policies. It was natural that such men will sooner or later at logger heads with each other. However, for the moment the war on other fronts both in Arabia and Europe prompted them to work as a coherent and united body.

Between the fall of Baghdad in March 1917 and the General Armistice of November 1918 Gertrude continued to perform her usual and routine works, gathering intelligence information helping the British administration in the country, writing propaganda articles and treatises on tribal shaikhs and Arabian geography etcetera. Besides she took it upon herself to lecture and couch vituperative and opinionated young officers such as Philby in 'right ideas'. She even
ventured to give advice to the future rulers of the newly
occupied Arab countries:

...men who have kept the tradition
of a personal independence, which was limited
only by their own customs, entirely ignorant
of a world which lay outside their swamps
and pastures, and as entirely indifferent to
its interests as to the opportunities it offers,
will not in a day fall into step with European
ambitions, nor welcome European methods. (1)

Only on one occasion she herself got out of humour.
In November 1917 Mr. Arthur Balfour made his famous announce-
ment(2) regarding the creation of a Jewish national home in
Palestine. For Gertrude it was an outrageous as well as an
unworkable plan, because Palestine was a 'poor land, incapable
of great development.' Moreover, since two-thirds of Pales-
tinian population was Muslim it was difficult, according to
Gertrude, to implement the Balfour Declaration which was
completely artificial and 'divorced from all relation to
facts.'(3)

However, she seems to have compromised on an equally
serious matter, the Sykes-Picot Agreement(4) which was
signed secretly by the Triple Entente in 1916 to divide the

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1. Quoted in Ibid. p. 194.
2. See the text of the Balfour Declaration in Europa, Pub.,
3. Burgoyne, Elizabeth, Gertrude Bell, From Her Personal
4. See the text of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in Antonius,
Arab world between France and Britain according to their imperial interests. As per the Agreement Iraq was to be given to Britain as a war booty in the event of an Allied victory. With the fall of Baghdad in March 1917 it was clear that Britain would rule over the country. However, as time went on, there arose differences among the officers on the spot with regard to the form of future government in Iraq. The main actors in the controversy, as will be discussed later on, were Gertrude Bell and Arnold Wilson who had become Acting Civil Commissioner after Cox was sent to Tehran in 1918.

It has already been discussed that Gertrude was thoroughly opposed to Arab nationalism and believed that the idea of nation-states in the European sense was foreign to the Arabs. It was with this view that she criticised the Anglo-French Declaration of November 8, 1918 (1) which promised the Arabs the right to self-determination. 'The Declaration whatever may have been its political significance elsewhere, was at best a regrettable necessity in Iraq,' (2) she wrote, in a memorandum, 'Self-Determination in Mesopotamia' that she submitted to the British Government in February 1919. In the same memorandum she further claimed, though erroneously,

1. See the text of the Anglo-French Declaration in The Middle East and North Africa 1988, op. cit. p. 64.
2. Quoted in Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op.cit. p. 207.
that the common Iraqis were content with the British rule. But the Declaration gave an opportunity to the politically ambitious and religiously 'fanatical' elements in the country to foment agitation and disrupt public tranquility. These men, according to Gertrude, were Arabs 'who had been in Turkish Civil or Military employment and thrown in their lot with the Turks after the occupation, active members of the Committee of Union and Progress (the party to whom the entrance of Turkey into the War against Great Britain was directly due) and others who had not ventured to remain in Baghdad on account of their well-known Turkish sympathies came back from Mosul early in November.'(l) in accordance with the terms of the General Armistice. These so-called 'anti-social elements' were further greatly encouraged to look forward to an ambitious political future when they learnt that Faisal had been invited to Paris to attend the Paris Peace Conference as a representative of an independent Arab state.

Wilson had gone through Gertrude's memorandum before it was sent to the India office in order to be submitted to London. He had no doubt certain reservations but in main his views at this stage were in agreement with those of

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1. Ibid. pp. 207-208.
Gertrude. As a result he dispatched her to France to present his as well as her views in the Paris Peace Conference. Later he also joined her to canvass for the retention of direct British rule in Iraq.

However, Gertrude's views that she had expressed in her memorandum of 1919, began to change during the Paris Conference. Infact her discussions with Lawrence and Hogarth caused a volte face in her thinking and approach to the Arab question. She began to think to form in Iraq a national government consisting of the former Turkish officials and Iraqi merchants loyal to Britain. Probably the rationale behind her approach was that such a government would either itself take care of or will be manipulated to serve Britain's imperial interests without invoking people's indignation to them or to the British.

But Wilson was thoroughly opposed to any such idea. He believed that the Arabs of Mesopotamia had no experience of government. Moreover they were not a coherent group rather divided between townsfolk who sought no greater freedom than that which allowed them to wrangle and double-deal to their heart-content, and tribesmen who asked nothing more than to be left alone to wage their reeds.'(1) He further argued that

1. Ibid. p. 206.
the Iraqi society consisted of the Sunni Arabs, the Kurds, the Arab-Iranian Shias and none of them was willing to accept any one's rule or hegemony. Hence, in his view, Britain will be well advised not to commit the folly of entrusting the Iraqi Arabs with self-rule but take the rational step of governing them in her own interest.

Obviously Wilson's attitude and approach was purely imperialistic. However, being the Acting Civil Commissioner he was better placed than Gertrude or anyone else to implement his ideas. He began to rule the Iraqis with an iron hand and in a ruthless authoritarian manner.

Contrary to the assessment of Gertrude as expressed in her memorandum of 1919 the Iraqis were not content with the British occupation of their country. She herself was later to realize, especially after the Iraqi Revolt of 1920, (1)

1. The Iraqi Rebellion started as spontaneous protests and agitations by the people of Iraq, both Sunnis and Shias, against the gradual consolidation of British rule with nominal Arab representation. These agitations became more frequent and widespread after the announcement of the San Remo Conference decisions. In the beginning the rebellion was led by the members of the pre-War al-Imam, a secret society of the Arab officers of the Turkish army who had supported and participated in the Arab Revolt, but it was later joined by the Shia Ulama or Mujahids who issued a Fatwa, a religious edict, calling people to wage a Holy War, Jihad, against the British rule. Towards the end of June 1920 the protests became more serious and in the following month turned out into an open revolt which the British brutally suppressed in September of the same year after spending over £ 40,000,000,000, killing ten thousand Iraqis and having lost 440 British lives. (See the details in Antonius George, The Arab Awakening, op. cit., pp. 312-316.)
that, in her opinion, was a rising against Wilson's authoritarian rule.

Although the Revolt was crushed by the superior might of Britain the policy makers in London were shaken and subsequently forced to adopt a new policy. The first step was to reinstate Cox.

Cox arrived in Basra in October 1920 and together with Gertrude and Philoy embarked upon establishing a Provisional Government. The main problem before them was to select 'suitable' men for various ministeries, who will be acceptable to the Iraqi people on the one hand and serve the British interest on the other. The 'suitable' men they picked up were those who had remained loyal to Britain in her hour of trial, that is, in the July-September Rebellion of 1920. This meant that the Shias who formed the majority (1)

1. Gertrude knew well as is evident from her letter of October 3, 1920 that the Shias were in a majority in Iraq and that the election for a truly representative assembly, if fairly held, will result in a Shia-dominated government. The relevant part of the letter is as follows:

'The Shia problem is probably the most formidable in this country....if you are going to have anything like really representative institutions you would have a majority of Shias. For that reason you can never have three completely autonomous provinces. Sunni Musul must be retained as a part of the Mesopotamian State in order to adjust the balance. To my mind it is one of the main arguments for giving Mesopotamia a responsible government. We as outsiders can't differentiate between Sunni and Shia, put leave it to them and they will get over the difficulty by some kind of hanky-panky just as the Turks did and for the present it is the only way of getting over it. The final authority must be in the hands of the Sunnis, inspite of their numerical inferiority, otherwise you will have a Kujtanic-run State, which is the very devil.' (Burgoyne, E. op. cit. (Vol. I) p. 169).
in Iraq and a good number of Sunnis who had taken part in the Rebellion would not be properly represented in the government.

The Provisional Government consisting of loyal Arabs—Britain's favourites and surrogates—was somehow formed on 25th October 1920. But this did not put an end to Britain's problems. The dilemma confronting Britain in the later part of 1920 and the fewer choices that were before her have been well depicted in the following letter that Gertrude wrote on 4th November 1920:

We are badly in need of the Iraqis who served with Faisal in Syria—men who have the solid Arab nationalism in them. If we can't get them as allies I believe we shall founder between a Shia theocracy and a pro-Turkish bureaucracy. The menace of the Turkish nationalists in alliance with Bolshevism is always with us.

1. A Shia minister was also induced in the Provisional Government. However, as a whole the Shia community was discriminated against by the Government. Gertrude's following letter is a testimony: 'The present Government which is predominantly Sunni, is not doing anything to conciliate the Shiias. They are now considering a number of administrative appointments for provinces, almost all the names they put up are Sunnis, even for the wholly Shia province on the Euphrates with the exception of Karbala and Nejd (Najaf) where ever they have't the face to propose Sunnis'. (Well, L. G., op. cit. P. 525).

Over two months later Gertrude wrote another letter (January 10, 1921) in which she mentioned the assessment of Jafar Pasha regarding the wishes of the Iraqi people and their Shaikhs. 'Most of the shaikhs', she wrote, 'didn't care a button what sort of government was set up but on the whole would prefer to have the Turks whom they knew rather than a devil they didn't know. When is our father returning they asked him, meaning the Sultan.'(1)

If public discontent is to be judged by the public slogans and folk songs the general Iraqi attitude towards Britain and the Provisional Government was one of hostility and animosity. In early 1921 the walls of Baghdad were not unoften decorated with such slogans:

Woe betide you O Ministers - rotten C prisoners
Does your conscience not trouble you?(2)

Some of the slogans were even written in Urdu expressing bewilderment on the Indian army men, both Hindus and Muslims, who had conquered Iraq for Britain and were loyal to her even after having been treated like animals by their arrogant masters.

But the British had not fought the Ottomans to establish a government in accordance with the wishes of the Iraqi

1. Ibid. P. 200.
2. Winstone, Gertrude Bell, op. cit. 232.
people. Their main intention, as indicated earlier, was to serve their imperial interests under the cover of a farcical native government.

The Provisional Government proved shortlived even though it was performing well the role the British had assigned to it. Just within two and a half month it was able to draft an electoral law which was finally passed on 8th January 1921 and sent to the High Commissioner's office for his approval. Soon after his approval the elections were to be held to convene a representative assembly, but this did never happen.

On 10th January 1921 Gertrude was summoned to the High Commissioner's Office where she was informed by Cox about a telegram from Winston Churchill (who had been recently appointed the Colonial Secretary) which contained a new policy that was shortly to be followed in Iraq. The new policy in a nutshell was to install Faisal King of Iraq.

The decision to establish Faisal as King of Iraq under British mandate was taken by Churchill and Lawrence well before they came to attend the Cairo Conference held in March 1921 details of which will be discussed in a later chapter. The Conference was in fact held to adopt a strategy in order to smooth Faisal's way to power. The strategy they
decided to follow was that Faisal will contest an election for the Iraqi throne. However, such an election was never held mainly because Faisal did not want it for fear of being rejected by the people. Cox, then, persuaded the Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government to proclaim Faisal King of Iraq. This was duly done in July 1921. Later on a farcical referendum was held in which Faisal was declared to have secured 96 percent of the total votes and eventually crowned on August 23, 1921.

Faisal's ascent to power in Iraq opened a new chapter in Gertrude's life. Years ago in March 1917 she had written about Iraq:

> We shall, I trust, make it a centre of Arab civilization and prosperity, that will be my job partly, I hope, and I never lose sight of it.¹

Now, in 1921 she was personal friend of Faisal the King of Iraq advising him on his domestic problems and looking forward to a great future for his country. "When we had made Mesopotamia a model Arab State," she told the King, "there was not an Arab of Syria and Palestine who wouldn't want to be part of it, and before I died I looked to see Faisal ruling from the Persian frontier to the

¹ Bell, Lady, op. cit. p. 466.
If Gertrude was really serious to build up a modern Arab Empire under Faisal she was doomed to disappointment from the beginning. In fact Faisal was not picked up by Churchill and Lawrence because he was a great leader able to command the following of his fellow Arabs and create a big country but because he was incompetent and had the ability to play the role of the puppet ruler perfectly in order to serve the British interests. Gertrude soon discovered it, in less than a year time after Faisal’s coronation, that he was a weak administrator. ‘Mr. Cornwallis and I’, she wrote on 4th June 1922, ‘had a long talk (with Faisal). I told him I was very unhappy over the King’s indecisive attitude, his refusal to contradict the statements of the extremist papers and the backing he was giving to the most ignoble extremists.’

There was much more to come in later days. She discovered that Faisal was vain, feeble, timid, hardly dependable and above all a master double dealer who sometimes even did not hesitate to conspire against his own ministers. Dismayed by the King’s mischievous activities she was forced to tell him:

‘I had formed a beautiful and gracious snow image to which I had given allegiance’

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and I saw it melting before my eyes.
Before every noble line had been
obliterated, I referred to go, inspite
of my love for the Arab nation and
my sense of responsibility for its
future. I did not think I could bear
to see the evaporation of the dream
which had guided me day by day. (1)

To escape from the frightening disappointment Gertrude
sought refuge in Baghdad Museum that she had begun to build
in her last years in order to preserve Iraq's archaeological
heritage. Her relations with Faisal remained cordial despite
her disillusionment with him, but there is reason to believe
that in her last days she had come to realize that King-
making was as difficult, even impossible, as building a
castle in the air.

However, her commitment to Faisal was one thing and her
dedication to her country another. She never swerved in her
loyalty to Great Britain as Winstone, her biographer has
proved it quoting from the records of Britain's Foreign
Office. That she never failed in sending 'her weekly intelligence report,' to the White hall, 'articles for the Colonial
Office's home propaganda machine and the annual reports which
summarized events with unfailing regularity and authority.' (2)

1. Ibid. pp. 271-272.
What her intelligence reports and propaganda articles were meant for except that she wanted to serve her country? She was, in sum, a traveller-scholar who used her intellectual abilities to promote the cause of the British Empire in the Arab World.

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Chapter - II

CAPTAIN SHAKESPEAR

Throughout the 19th century the Arabian desert, not only being arid and barren, but also from strategic point of view, had been of little importance for the competing colonial powers of Europe. Of course the British had won, through bribes and treaties, the small Arab states of the Persian Gulf, to their side in order to safeguard their sea route to India. But the tribes living in the hinterland were left free to run their show as per their wishes.

However, with the beginning of the 20th century the British, mainly due to military reasons included in their area of interest the Kuwaiti hinterland as well as central Arabia. As a result numerous explorers were dispatched to gather military intelligence from the Bedouin Shaikhs or tribal chiefs, to discover, if possible, new routes in the desert and fill in blanks on the Arabian map. Among such travellers William Henry Irvine Shakespear (1878-1915) stands prominent mainly owing to his audacious journeys in the Arabian desert and military and political services that he rendered to the British Empire.

Shakespear began his career as a military officer in 1895. He served the British army in various capacities
before embarking upon a political career in 1904. While
serving the British army and administration in India
Shakespear learnt many oriental languages including Urdu,
Arabic, Pushtu and Persian.

What persuaded Shakespear to abandon his military
career and switch to a political one is not clear. He was
a captain in the army and was all set for rapid promotion
when he decided to apply for transfer to the Viceroy's
political Department. His biographer, Winstone has tried
to rationalize his decision saying that he was not given
to the contemplation of such matters. His attitudes were
instinctive rather than rational. He was intelligent but
not intellectual, his skills and accomplishments were in the
fields of travel and enterprise."(1)

Contact With Persia Shakespear was first posted to the
Persian port of Bandar Abbas. He was to work as a consul
and assistant to the Political Resident in Bushire. Immedia-
tely after his arrival to Bandar Abbas he settled to his
works. However the office routine and file works bored him.
To escape the boredom he began to make frequent journeys
and as a result visited many Iranian islands such as Hormuz,
Larak and Henjam.

1. Winstone, H.V.F. Captain Shakespear: A Portrait, London
Before coming to Bandar Abbas Shakespeare had acquainted himself with the political realities of Iran. The dominant position of Britain in the region was unquestionable. However, the Russians had also their stakes in Iran. Their most important need was to have access to the warm waters. Since militarily they were not strong enough to challenge Britain's dominant position they resorted to diplomatic offensive to secure concessions in order to safeguard their interests. They disputed Britain's exclusive claims on many important ports including Bandar Abbas and sent their men to the disputed areas without having secured Britain's prior permission. The Russian representative for Bandar Abbas came in 1906. He and Shakespeare developed immediate dislike to each other. Sensing the undesirable development the British authorities promptly shifted Shakespeare to Muscat, a well-established British protectorate. Within a year of Shakespeare's departure Britain and Russia reached a compromise and signed an agreement which divided Iran into Anglo-Russian Spheres of influence. In principle Iran was a sovereign country but in the colonial bargain conducted by Britain and Russia she was not consulted.

Political Agent in Kuwait  In 1908 Shakespeare became first assistant to Cox who was Britain's Resident in Iran. By the time Cox was thinking to appoint a new political Agent in Kuwait. Kuwait was then, as is today, a small Shaikhdom. However, politically and strategically it was of vital
importance for Britain. Infact it was a British post, not only to deal with the intricate ruler of Kuwait, Shaikh Mubarak, but also to spy on and gather intelligence about the tribal chiefs of the Kuwaiti hinterland and the two rulers of central Arabia, Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid. Obviously in order to accomplish his duties Shakespeare had to familiarise himself with the history and politics of volatile Arabia, with the histories of ruling families, the desert princes, the rivalries and alliances of significant tribes and above all with the policies of his own country which were not free from contradictions. Shakespeare did take such lessons before taking up his office as political Agent in Kuwait in 1909. Besides working as a Political Agent he was also required to act as an agent of the Simla-based British Intelligence. (1)

Britain's Policy Towards Arabia Kuwait was nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire. But in reality its rulers had always enjoyed a good deal of independence. Shaikh Mubarak al Sabah, the ruler of the Shaikhdom in Shakespeare's time was unwilling to accept even nominal Turkish suzerainty. He had snatched power by murdering his half brother in 1986. By

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See
1./ Ibid. P. 94.
that time Kuwait was in a state of chaos and disorder and vulnerable to raids and subsequent plunders by the Bedouins from neighbourhood. The Turks did not help the ruling family to improve the law and order conditions hoping that its collapse might open the door for imposing their direct rule on Kuwait.

Mubarak, unlike his predecessor, was bitterly hostile towards Turkey. He either imprisoned or exiled those Kuwaiti inhabitants who were known or even suspected for their sympathy or any kind of connection with the Turks. Such an anti-Turk ruler would not have pleased Britain a few years ago when their policy was to keep cordial relations with Constantinople at any cost. But in the last decade of the 19th century the political climate had changed. For the Germans had won confidence of the Turks through active and intelligent diplomacy and by promising financial and technical assistance for constructing the Berlin–Baghdad Railways. This virtually forced Britain to conclude a treaty of friendship with Kuwait in early 1899 so that they will be able to counter the German threat to British interests in the Persian Gulf which had become a British lake. Five years later, in 1904, Britain set up a political Agency in Kuwait to strengthen its position in the Gulf. But the British were an accomplished double dealer. Within two years of their treaty with Mubarak they signed in 1901 a secret pact with the Turks according to which Britain was required to follow a policy of neutrality.
as well as to prevent Mubarak from attacking the Turkish ally, Ibn Rashid of central Arabia. The same agreement (which they called Anglo-Turkish Accord) required Turkey to persuade Ibn Rashid to cease hostilities against Kuwait. It was this agreement that prompted Britain time and again to warn Mubarak whenever he decided to take hostile actions against the Turks. And it was the same Anglo-Turkish pact that led Britain to adopt a lukewarm attitude towards Ibn Saud who was very keen to win British friendship and assistance in his battles with the Turks and Ibn Rashid. Knox whom Shakespear succeeded as political Agent in 1909 had once replied to Ibn Saud in response to a plea made by the later:

You say that you are under the protection of the British Government. But it is as well for me to remind you, O my friend that the Great Government does not accord its protection rashly or without much forethought. It is not-praise be to God!-of those who promise much and do not perform. Hitherto no reply has been vouchsafed by the Great Government to your petition.\(^1\)

Such were the political conditions of Kuwait and central Arabia and the British policy towards them which later on Shakespear was to oppose vehemently.

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1. Quoted in Ibid. pp. 67-68.
Shakespear's Works in Kuwait

Shakespear's work at the Political Agency was to carefully watch over the Shaikh of Kuwait, Mubarak who was a man of implacable determination and of great strength of character, hence difficult to be manipulated or handled in day to day affairs. Shakespear was thus rightly advised by his superiors to leave the Shaikh alone to run the Kuwaiti affairs and to avoid interference as much as possible. Mubarak, too, seems to have had little interest in the works of Political Agency. But despite such arrangements they were frequently at loggerheads with each other and in most cases they both were to be blamed for their tense relations.

But Shakespear's foremost task was to explore the Kuwaiti hinterland in order to establish relations with the tribal chiefs, and know their rivalries, loyalties and alliances. He was also expected to gather intelligence about the Amir of Najd, Ibn Saud who by then had emerged as a force to be reckoned with in eastern and central Arabia. The Political Agency was thus covertly converted into an intelligence centre.

A Spy Traveller

As a British spy Shakespear made several journeys in Kuwaiti hinterland, but by far the most adventurous journey he undertook was his crossing of Arabia from
Kuwait to Egypt. Douglas Carruthers aptly describes his achievement in the following words:

Shakespear's trans-Arabian journey covered about 1200 miles of unknown country. Only for one-third of the whole traverse between Kuwait on the Persian Gulf and Kontilla, the first Egyptian outpost on Sinai, was he on ground already covered by Europeans. For the whole distance, 1810 miles, Shakespear kept up a continuous route-traverse, checked at intervals by observations for latitude... routes which had hitherto been merely conjecture could now be drawn more or less correctly, many errors put right, and many a problem solved. (1)

Shakespear was not a gifted writer nor had he any literary ambition. It is therefore not surprising that he did not produce any travelogue and thus left no literary legacy. But in all his journeys he had made it a point to prepare intelligence report and take extensive notes which were vitally important from geographical and strategic point of view. The notes he had taken during his last and longest journey of 1914 were later handed over to the War Office whose experts used them to construct maps of the

1. Quoted in Ibid. pp. 183-84.
desert routes which were later to be proved of strategic significance for the British army's campaign in Arabia.

Unlike other British travellers Shakespear, while journeying among the Arabs, did not wear Arab dress nor did he pretend to be a Muslim. Instead he always put on the uniform of the Indian army. In fact he approached the desertmen in a direct and straightforward manner, without diffidence and disguise. Contrary to the common conception prevalent in England of his time he rarely encountered any hostility, rather he was accorded warm receptions by the Bedouins probably due to the fact that he had 'learnt and observed the strict etiquette of the desert, never imposing himself on them unless invited, and speaking to them about the things that were of importance to them - the weather, their flocks and herds, the gnaju or desert raids, their sport and their proof of manliness.' Further, unlike many European travellers, he did not see the Bedouins as inferior, rather liked them because in his opinion 'they were men'.

Friendship With the Desert King Besides being an intrepid spy-traveller Shakespear is known for his friendship with and support for Ibn Saud. He met the Desert King in 1910

1. Ibid. P. 75.
2. Quoted in Ibid. P. 76.
in Kuwait where the later had come to pay a visit to his old patron, Shaikh Mubarak. Shakespeare's report to Cox reaveled that he was highly impressed by Ibn Saud. 'Abdul Aziz, now in his 31st year,' he wrote, 'is fair, handsome and considerably above average Arab height... He has a frank, open face, and after initial reserve, is of genial and court­eous manner.' Of Ibn Saud's character Shakespeare further wrote that he 'is a broadminded and straight man... His reputation is that of a noble and generous man who does not descend to mean actions.' Apparently the two men did not discuss politics in their first meeting. However, Ibn Saud conveyed, though indirectly, his willingness to enter an alliance with Britain when he remarked that 'the English, as friends and brothers of Mubarak, were themselves his brothers and friends.'

But the most important result of their meeting, as Holden and Johns put it, 'was a cordial meeting of minds. Henceforth Shakespeare never wavered in respect, affection and support for Ibn Saud, and his feelings seemed to be reciprocated.' For he was most cordially invited to pay a visit to Riyadh, the capital city of the Wahhabi king.

1. Ibid. p. 84.
2. Ibid. P. 85.
3. Ibid.
An ambitious traveller like Shakespear must have desired very much to travel in Najd and visit Riyadh. But the Foreign office whose declared policy at that time was to keep friendly relations with the Turks, stood as an obstacle on his way. Their fear was that any visit to Riyadh by an English official would invite strong protests from the Turks who, with full British connivance, were actively busy with plans to bring Ibn Saud to the heel and force him to accept at least nominal Turkish suzerainty.

But Shakespear had quite contrary views. He sent reports after reports to Cox and other high officials urging them to fully realize the Arab politics and review their policy towards Arabia. In his opinion Ibn Saud was the strongest ruler in Arabia hence Britain would be well-advised to establish an alliance with him rather than the Turks who were disliked by all. In a report that he sent to his superiors in April 1911 and that he had written after his fourth major desert journey during which he had a chance to see Ibn Saud, he penned the following alarming passage.

All reports (hailing from central Arabia) point to increasing unrest and hatred of Turkish pretentions. If a combination were to take place between the principal leaders in Arabia—and the fact of a serious discussion of a simultaneous revolt between men of such divergent religious
tenets as the Imam Yahya and the Wahhabi ruler make such a union least possible - I am inclined to the opinion that a revolt is not only probable but would be welcome by every tribe throughout the peninsula. From all I can learn hatred of the Turk seems to be the one idea common to all the tribes and the only one for which they would sink their differences. The strength of the Turk has always been his ability to play off one tribe against another. Now this cardinal fact has begun to penetrate the unsophisticated brain of the Arab. (1)

As it appears Shakespeare had foreseen the Arab revolt, an idea which became a reality a few years later in the First World War. In a later report written in June 1914 after his longest journey from Kuwait to Egypt he even predicted the fall of the Turkish Empire:

I am convinced that present Turkish methods in Arabia, if persisted in, will end in disaster - Turkey has not the power to coerce Arabia and should matters... come to a head the probable result will be a combination of all Arab tribes, the expulsion of Turkish troops and officials... and the establishment of an independent Arabia with a loose form of confederation of which Ibn Saud will be the head....I can not avoid

1. Quoted in Winstone, Captain Shakespeare; A Portrait, op. cit. p. 106.
the conclusion that the Turkish Government is riding for a fall...(1)

But Shakespeare's vigourous arguments in favour of the Desert King as well as Ibn Saud's own zealous efforts bore no fruits. The British Government remained bound with its traditional policy of supporting the Turks.

However, a few months later Britain was at war with Germany and from all the reports coming from Constantinople it was evident that Turkey would ally herself with the Germans. Anticipating a Turko-German threat to Britain's sea route to India the Whitehall summoned Shakespeare in September 1914 who by then was in England in order to dispatch him to Ibn Saud. For many years Shakespeare had fought a lone battle, though without success, to change Britain's traditional policy of detente with Turkey in order to further his cherished scheme for a British alliance with the Desert King. His views were rejected as immature, but now the British Government had been forced to realize the wisdom of his scheme. He was sought by War, India and Foreign Offices for views and comments on Arabian affairs. He repeated his long-held opinion that Britain should recognize the independence of Ibn Saud under her suzerainty and give him sufficient

1. Ibid. pp.190-91
arms and money to deal effectively with Ion Rashid who had allied himself with the Turks and had received generous military and financial assistance from them. Moreover, in the light of his personal knowledge of Ibn Saud's personality and approach to world affairs Shakespeare rightly pointed out that it would be hard to persuade him to pursue a pro-British policy unless he is offered a treaty of alliance. For such an alliance would give Ibn Saud a sense of security and encourage him to rise in rebellion against the Turks who, inspite of being widely despised in Arabia, were the keeper of the Caliphate and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Despite Shakespeare's clear views Britain could not make her mind to introduce a radical change in her policy towards Arabia mainly because the newly appointed British ambassador to Constantinople, Sir Louis Mallet who was working hard to keep the Turks neutral in the war, had advised caution. Shakespeare was thus authorized to negotiate only a non-committal treaty of friendship with the Desert King and send the draft for approval by the Government.

Shakespeare arrived and met the Desert King on December, 31, 1914. Ibn Saud was not in a good mood and received his old friend with lukewarmth. Soon the cause of the King's anger was known to Shakespeare. That a few months ago the British Government through its political Agent in Kuwait,
Grey who had succeeded Shakespeare, had put immense pressure on Ibn Saud to accept Turkish suzerainty. In fact when Shakespeare was journeying in the desert to cross Arabia from Kuwait to Egypt, and thus away from the Political Agency in Kuwait, Ibn Saud received an urgent message from his old patron, Mubarak to reach Subaihiyah, a place near Kuwait. Ibn Saud expected to meet Mubarak and some British officials. But he was surprised to discover that instead of Mubarak and British officials Syed Talib, a Basra-based merchant and politician, was waiting for him with an entourage of Turkish officials. The Turks had brought a draft of treaty for cooperation and promised to give Ibn Saud an annual pension if he signed it there and then. The king refused to oblige until he had consulted Grey. The political Agent was informed of the King's request. Grey reluctantly arrived at Subaihiyah and told the Amir in a terse manner that he can expect no help from Britain if he refused to sign the treaty with the Turks. Ibn Saud then obliged. He was obviously to the point if he felt tricked and deserted both by Grey and Mubarak. And when Shakespeare arrived seeking his cooperation, he immediately sensed his growing importance and decided to capitalize on it. He demanded money and weapons as price of his cooperation with Britain.

Shakespeare was also greatly angered when he came to know what Grey had done in his absence. A few days after
his arrival on January the fourth, he wrote in a report to his superiors that Ibn Saud 'who is animated by an intense patriotism for his country, a profound veneration for his religion and a single minded desire to do his best for his people by obtaining for them lasting peace and security,' was bitterly angry with Britain for forcing him to accept Turkish suzerainty. In the same report he further wrote that despite of having been deserted by the British Ibn Saud 'trusted the British Government as no other' and 'as evidence of his desire to assist the British Government without hopelessly compromising himself he has kept Ibn Rashid to his ground and by his example and lead induced in the Arab world an attitude...distinctly sympathetic towards Great Britain.'(1)

But Shakespeare was not deputed to Ibn Saud just to report that in what mood the Amir was? Rather he was on a special mission to persuade him to help Britain against the lurks. He did so successfully and prepared a draft treaty in which Ibn Saud was recognized as 'independent ruler' of 'Najd, alHasa, Katif and their surrounds and the ports appertaining to them on the Persian Gulf.'(2)

The draft of the treaty with a covering note from Shakespeare was sent early in January 1915 for the approval of the British Government. In his note Shakespeare had written

1. Ibid P. 201.
that Ibn Saud will not move a step further towards making matters either easier for us or more difficult for the Turks as far as the present war is concerned, until he obtains in that treaty some very solid guarantee of his position, with Great Britain practically as his Suzerain.\(^{(1)}\) After securing such a guarantee, Shakespear further wrote that the Desert King will not only use all his resources and influence in Arabia on Britain's side during the war time but also in the post-war period.

Shakespear, while waiting for an answer from his Government went on talking with Ibn Saud of Arab freedom and of the ambitions of the Amir who wanted to drive the Turks from central Arabia and restore the Kingdom of his forefathers which was once stretched over the whole of the Arabian peninsula. In such conversations Ibn Saud often spoke of the two hundred years old history of the House of Saud, the spread of its power and influence and the intervention of the Turks which brought about the fall of the Saudi dynasty in the nineteenth century. Shakespear reported all these secretly to his superiors along with the news about the preparations of the Saudi army which was getting ready to attack Ibn Rashid. The war eventually took place at a

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1. Ibid.
place called Jarab on January 24, 1915 in which not only the Saudi army was defeated but Shakespeare was also killed.

Commenting on Shakespeare's death, St. John Philby has written that it was a great disaster to the Arab cause. Philby further opines that 'had he survived to continue a work for which he was so eminently fitted it is extremely doubtful whether the subsequent campaigns of Lawrence would ever have taken place.'

Philby was prompted to make the above remark because of Ibn Saud's military prowess and superiority over his rivals. He further believed that had Ibn Saud received enough British support in the early phase of the war he would have eliminated Turkish ally Ibn Rashid and moved on to destroy the Hijaz Railway or to Syria to harass the Turks in order to relieve pressure on Kut in Mesopotamia where the British army was under siege.

Philby seems to undermine the importance of Britain's alliance with Sherif Husain of Mecca. But his was a wrong stand. Had Philby access to Shakespeare's secret dispatches he would not have made such a remark. There is no

2. Ibid. P. 234. David Howarth in his The Desert King (London, 1964) has expressed more or less similar views. See p. 87.
denying the fact that Ibn Saud was militarily stronger than Husain, and if viewed in this perspective alone, one is thoroughly right to say that Britain had backed the wrong horse. But, as Antonius George has pointed out, Husain, both militarily and politically, was better placed than any other Arab leader of the time to render a great service to Great Britain. (1) Shakespear also appears to have been conscious of at least political and religious importance of the Sherif as is evident from some of his dispatches sent from Arabia to the British Government. In fact while Shakespear in early January 1915 was working hard to win Ibn Saud's support for Britain there came an emissary with a letter from Abdullah, the son of the Sherif of Mecca. Abdullah had sought Ibn Saud's opinion regarding Turkish pressure on his father to endorse the call for Jihad or the holy war. Ibn Saud promptly consulted Shakespear who, having been fully conscious of the dangers of Jihad for Britain, expressed the following opinion:

Jihad, proclaimed by the Sherif, by the man believed by millions to be the descendant of the Prophet, would have the most terrible consequences. You, Abdul Aziz, must work for England's victory as the best way to secure Arab freedom. (2)


2. Quoted in Winstone, Captain Shakespear A Portrait of...
Shakespear further explained to Ibn Saud that Britain had no designs on the holy places of Islam and advised him to tell Abdullah to bide his time, to promise as little as possible, until the wishes of the Great Government are made clear.\(^{(1)}\) Clearly Shakespear not only foresaw the dangers that might have resulted from the proclamation of Jihad but also tried to use Ibn Saud's influence to the benefit of Britain as is evident from a secret dispatch that he sent to the Political Resident in Persia.

Jihad... is a contingency of which the consequences are unforeseeable and incalculable. Such a proclamation would at least raise the whole Arab world and Bin Saud himself would be compelled by the circumstances of his faith, his prestige and position as an Arab leader to follow with all his tribes....Fortunately through Bin Saud's commanding influence in Arabia...we are in a position so to limit the danger as to make it negligible.\(^{(2)}\)

Shakespear, of course, succeeded to do so. For it is on the record that some of the Wannabee Ulema who were in favour of accepting the Turkish call for Jihad and were

\(\text{1. Ibid. P. 22.}\)
\(\text{2. Ibid.}\)
openly preaching the holy war were put behind the bars by Ibn Saud, probably on the advice of Shakespeare. There is a reason to believe that had Shakespeare failed in his mission or had Ibn Saud participated in the holy war proclaimed by Turkey the British plan for the disintegration and subsequent dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire would have been foiled.

To sum up the discussion it can be said that although Shakespeare died at an early age he did render great services to his country, not only through his extensive travels for spying on the tribes in eastern and central Arabia but most importantly by preventing Ibn Saud to join hands with the Turks. It is also clear that he was primarily and finally dedicated and loyal to the British Government and that his support for Arab national independence was nothing but a means for promoting his country's interests in the Arab world. Moreover, he seems to have been influenced by the racist and imperialistic ideologies of the nineteenth century that were in currency in his time as well and regarded the Arabs as incapable of self-rule. It was only because of this that he envisaged an Arab independence conditioned by their acceptance of British suzerainty or protection.

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Chapter -III

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

Thomas Edward Lawrence, commonly known as Lawrence of Arabia, became a legend as well as an enigmatic personality in his lifetime. Works about his life and career began to be produced when he was still alive and since then there has been a spate of volumes representing a wide divergence of opinion about his literary, political and military achievements. Lawrence himself, as will be discussed later on, indulged in activities or issued statements which, it appears, were intentionally done in order to surround his personality with an aura of mystique. His admiring biographers later on proved more unscrupulous and published materials without having subjected them to critical scrutiny. As a result facts and fiction about Lawrence became so much indistinguishably mixed and closely interwoven that Harry Broughton was prompted to write

On the 16th August 1888 Thomas Edward Lawrence was born.
This is one of the facts we can be sure of among the legion of legends that have been written and told about him. (1)

However, in 1969 Knightley and Simpson were able

to bring Lawrence's real face in to focus when they produced their illuminating study: The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia. The two writers have proved beyond doubt that Lawrence in reality was a British spy. But inspite of this incontrovertible revelation Lawrence enigma continues to exist.

Lawrence the Legend Like all legendary men Lawrence has both his admirers as well as detractors. The list of his critics is headed by Richard Aldington who in his Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry has left no stone unturned to prove him merely an ordinary person who tactfully managed, mainly thanks to his unscrupulous biographers rather than his 'marvellous' achievements, to become a legend. But on the other hand there are a number of writers who have portrayed Lawrence as an 'Arabian Knight' or a 'King without Crown'. However, it was Lowell Thomas, an American journalist who first idolized Lawrence throughout the English speaking world. In 1917 he was sponsored by a group of pro-Allied Americans to write propaganda articles which could be published in the American press with a view to winning public opinion in favour of the Allies and thus putting pressure on the reluctant American government to enter the war against Germany. Thomas first went to France where he saw hair raising scenes of pillage
and plunder which were scarcely suitable to serve his purpose. He was, then, advised to go to the Palestine front where General Allenby's campaign, well supported by the Arab Revolt, was in full swing. Thomas was introduced to Lawrence by Ronald Storrs, then Governor of newly occupied Jerusalem. In Lawrence and the Arab Revolt Thomas found what he really wanted to write/his pro-War articles. Fortunately for him Lawrence was cooperative and told him somewhat exaggerated stories of the Arab Revolt and of course a highly coloured account of his own role in it, Thomas was credulous enough to believe all that Lawrence put in his ears. He returned to America and not only wrote his pro-War articles but also, after the general armistice, organized a series of lectures, first in New York and then across the United States, England, Australia and New Zealand. The lectures were made to appear more impressive and convincing with the help of lantern slides and a cinematograph film entitled 'With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia'. In the lectures, as can be imagined, Lawrence was projected as a shining hero, pure, perfect, and without blemish. In England alone these lectures were attended by over a million people including politicians, diplomats, men of letters and above all by King George the Fifth for whose convenience a private show was arranged. *(1)*

Lawrence is also reported to have watched some of Thomas's shows. But later on he became disgusted with the 'wild American,' Lawrence's own appellation for Thomas who had turned him into a matinee idol haunted by the press and fair ladies proposing marriage.

It is puzzling that why Lawrence became disgusted with the man whom he himself had encouraged to propagate his 'heroic exploits' in Arabia. His admiring biographers have offered many explanations. However, one plausible reason seems to be his habit of mystifying things about himself. In the following passage Kathryn Tidrick seems to subscribe, though partly, to the same explanation:

Lawrence was, firstly, a liar and secondly, a mystic whose talent for introspection led him to believe that a man can never know his own soul. He sometime did things for no other reason than to see what his action might reveal about himself. His own discussions of his motives, while of the greatest interest, are dangerous props for a biographer to lean on: they are all too easily to be the product either of a desire for mystification or of an effort to impose some sort of intellectual coherence on the past. (1)

Lawrence the Arabophile

To many people Lawrence was a great Arabophile. But this claim has been disputed by others. As far Lawrence's own depiction of his personality in the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is concerned it is either spurious or at least doubtful. In fact he portrays himself as one who is serving two masters: the British and the Arabs. Moreover he has depicted his inner self as a battleground where the feelings of loyalty to his national cause were pitted against his sense of betrayal to the Arabs. But whenever such a conflict arose in his mind or in the actual life he preferred to remain loyal to the British empire rather than the Arab people. This speaks out the whole truth. That he was less an Arabophile and more an English, a faithful servant of the British Crown. His friendship with Faisal and involvement in the Arab Revolt, as will be discussed later on, was merely a tool to advance the interests of the British empire by disintegrating the Ottoman Empire, an ally of Britain's hated enemy, the Nazi Germany.

Lawrence: A Life Sketch

Lawrence was illegitimate by birth and came to know about it when he was ten years old. Illegitimacy was highly scandalous and disgraceful according to Victorian Social morality. Lawrence was naturally perturbed by this fact of his life. However, instead of being
frustrated for ever he decided to secure a respectable place in the society by doing extraordinary and novel things, which were generally of no or little interest for the students of his age. He began to take interest in medieval military archaeology when he was merely a school boy at Oxford High School. He also became notorious among his friends for his omnivorous reading. His unquenchable thirst for knowledge and interest in novel subjects led him to study *Arabia Deserta*, a well written classic of Charles Doughty who explored Arabia in the 19th century. The book, in fact played a significant role in the shaping of Lawrence's future outlook.

But it was in fact D.G. Hogarth, a celebrated archaeologist and Oriental scholar- later on Lawrence's lifelong friend and principal guide - who directed his attention towards the architecture of the Crusaders' castles, in Syria and Palestine. As a result he decided to write a thesis on the same subject in order to receive his bachelor degree from the Oxford University. He acquired working knowledge of Arabic and went to Palestine and Syria in 1909. Throughout his stay in the land he made it a habit to lodge with local Arab inhabitants. The immediate results of the journey was his thesis for getting his B.A. degree which was later published under the title: *Crusader Castles*. During the same journey, mainly because of his lodging
with the local Arabs, he also came to know the then Arab realities. Apparently he was pained at the miserable Arab conditions and, as his biographers say, developed a sense of sympathy for them and a strong feeling of hatred for the Turks, the oppressive rulers of the Arabs.

After having passed his B.A. examination Lawrence, on the recommendation of O.G. Hogarth, was granted a small research stipend (which was barely sufficient to bear his living expenses) in order to join the British Museum's mission at Carchemish on the bank of Euphrates to excavate an ancient Hittite city. Lawrence first went to Lebanon to attend an American missionary school at Jebail in order to improve his knowledge of Arabic. It is not clear if he was impressed by the religious zeal of American missionaries. By it was, however, at Jebail that he was joined by O.G. Hogarth and together with him embarked upon another journey across Syria. They reached Carchemish in March 1911. Lawrence worked there for three years. His main work was to direct and supervise the Arab and Kurd workmen. He freely mingled with them, learnt their customs, various Arabic dialects and the history of various Syrian Tribes.

Just before the outbreak of the first World War Lawrence joined another exploration expedition in the Sinai peninsula which in fact was a spy mission. In early 1914, sensing that Turkey, long exploited by the imperialist Britain, might take side with Germany in the event of war,
Lord Kitchener, the British Resident in Egypt, preoccupied with the defence of the Suez Canal, decided to spy out and gather information about the activities of the Turks and the Germans along with the Hijaz Railway in Sinai peninsula which was virtually unmapped till then. To cover up the espionage mission the Palestine Exploration Fund was asked to send an expeditionary party consisting of Woolley, Lawrence (both archaeologists with working knowledge of map-making) and Captain S.F. Newcombe, a military engineer, to discover the routes the biblical Israelites had used in their famous forty years' wandering in the wilderness. Evidently politics, scholarship and military intelligence were brought together to serve the imperial interests of Great Britain.

Lawrence and his two companions completed their expedition successfully and were preparing their report when the World War First broke out. Lawrence rushed to Egypt and put his services at the disposal of the Army's Information Service in Cairo. Initially he had three main functions to perform: to extract information by interrogating Turkish war prisoners regarding the position and distribution of Turkish troops, to write a manual for the benefit of the British officers and to draw up military maps for the use of the army.
Lawrence was later shifted, mainly because of his impish behaviour, lack of respect for authority and constant refusal to wear full military uniform, to the Arab bureau, a branch of the British Intelligence Service which was specially set up to deal with and look after the Arab affairs, particularly the Arab Revolt. It was the Arab bureau that, acting on order from the high authorities, sent Lawrence to join Faisal's Arab Army in October, 1916. The story of the Arab Revolt and Lawrence's role in it has been described at length, though not always with accuracy, in the Seven Pillars of Wisdom.

Seven Pillars of Wisdom. 'The story of the production of Seven Pillars of Wisdom,' writes Richard Aldington, 'is long and complicated, and highly characteristic of Lawrence's pretentious egotism.' (1) Aldington further describes the book as a 'kind of verbal dodging' which according to him is the 'virtue of politician and intriguer', and concludes that Lawrence 'might have written much better if he had


Lawrence himself has left a detailed note as to how the Seven Pillars of Wisdom was written, revised and redrafted time and again. The note was sent by the author to those who had either bought or were given gift copies of the 1926 edition. This note can be seen in the preface of the final edition of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, published after Lawrence's death by his younger brother, Arnold Wilson Lawrence.
not striven so painfully to write too well." (1) Stanley Weintraub refers to Lawrence's masterpiece as not a very good piece of literature. 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom - as literature -' he wrote in 1963, 'does not approach so great a work as the Iliad, but rather has the inaccuracies, extravagances, diffuseness, artificiality - and sustained genius for language - of a Miltonic epic, misplaced in time.' (2)

But there are other writers who regard the Seven pillars of Wisdom as a great literary work. For Robert Graves 'it is, beyond dispute, a great book.' (3) Winston Churchill ranked it 'with the greatest books ever written in the English language.' (4) He further calls it an 'epic, a prodigy, a tale of torment, and in the heart of it - a Man.' (5) Anthony Nutting refers to it as an 'epic and a classic.' (6) He further adduces his point by quoting J.B. Villars:

The profundity of the introspection and the nakedness of the confessions make one think

1. Ibid. P. 330.
5. Ibid. P. 127.
of Rousseau or rather of Proust or Gide. Though a book on war it contributes to our researches in to the obscurities of the human heart. In the course of a painful quest into a rent and complex self, and behind a screen of dignity and gravity can be perceived some very dangerous problems, few authors have described the troubled twistings of the serpent with so much penetration and sincerity. (1)

Whatever the literary merit or demerit of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, it seems appropriate to make at least one observation. That Lawrence first began to write his book during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, probably after having foreseen his failure to defeat the French by pushing them out of Syria and get a 'fair deal' for his Arab friends. It may be reasonably concluded that the circumstances in which he decided to write his mind would not have been objective. He was obviously committed to a cause and as a result produced only what was suitable to serve his purpose, that is, eulogizing his role in the Arab Revolt and that of the Revolt itself in the final victory of Britain in the First World War. This point is further vindicated by the fact of many revisions and redrafting of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom which do not only show Lawrence's preoccupation with producing a literary masterpiece but also speak of

his concern about what be included in and what be left out from the final text of the book. This is not a mere figment of imagination, rather a fact which becomes crystal clear when one makes a comparative study of the Oxford as well as the final edition of the book published by Arnold Wilson after Lawrence's death in 1935. Besides the evidence inherent in the book Knightley and Simpson have proved it beyond suspicion that Lawrence, being a member of British Intelligence, was bound by the Official Secrets Act not to write the whole truth. As a result he either exaggerated or twisted some events and suppressed some inconvenient facts of his life and of the Arab Revolt.

The title Seven Pillars of Wisdom is somewhat puzzling. It seems to have been derived from a Biblical verse:

Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn her seven pillars.(2)

In a letter to H.H. Banbury Lawrence tried to unravel the mystery saying that the phrase means 'a complete edifice of knowledge,' for 'the figure seven implies completeness in Semitic languages.'(3) But there is certainly more than what Lawrence has offered as a possible explanation. The phrase,

infact, deserves to be interpreted in the light of two other biblical verses, Deuteronomy 1:3 and Exodus 18:21 which enumerate seven qualities of the leaders of the people of Israel: fear of God, Wisdom, honesty, understanding, good reputation, ability and incorruptibility. Perhaps Lawrence wanted to suggest that great leaders must possess the above qualities in order to achieve success in their mission. This, on the one hand, partly explains the cause of Lawrence's own failure to prevent the injustice done to the Arabs as a result of which he portrays himself as a failed prophet between the covers of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, and, on the other, conspires to suggest that the Arabs and other eastern nations can be controlled and lorded over only by leaders equipped with the above mentioned seven qualities.

Besides the title of the book there are other things which are equally puzzling, even confusing. For instance it is not easy to decide the genre of the book. Is it an autobiography, fictionalized or real one, a memoir, a travel book or a history of the Arab Revolt? To a lay reader it appears as the book is about all these but experts have discussed it either as an autobiography or as a book of history. However

1. The two Biblical verses respectively read as follows:
   a) 'Choose men of wisdom, understanding, and repute for each of your tribes, and I will set them in authority over you.'
   b) 'But you must yourself search for capable, God fearing men among all the people, honest and incorruptible men, and appoint them over the people as officers....'
in reality it is both: an account of the Arab Revolt as Lawrence viewed it and his role in it which occasionally has been highly exaggerated. Winston Churchill appears to express the same opinion when he says that 'as a narrative of war and adventure, as a portrayal of all that the Arabs mean to the world, it is unsurpassed.'

In the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* Lawrence has also subscribed to the same view:

> It seemed to me historically needful to reproduce the tale, as perhaps no one but myself in Feisal's army had thought of writing down at the time what we felt, what we hoped, what we tried.

Apparently what the Arabs including Lawrence felt, hoped and tried was nothing but the Arab Revolt which in the author's own words was 'waged and led by Arabs for an Arab aim in Arabia.' But just after a few lines Lawrence seems to contradict this conclusion:

> In these pages (of the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*), the history is not of the Arab movement but of me in it.

The contradiction seems to have been deliberately created or it might be regarded as yet another example of Lawrence's habit of mystification. In fact the book, as

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. P. 22.
stated earlier, is both a history and an autobiography.

Lawrence and the Arabs. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is a mirror in which various faces of the Arabs, their history, culture, and their struggle for freedom from the Turks are well reflected. Understandably they have been portrayed as Lawrence liked or viewed them.

Europeans - intellectuals, writers, travellers and politicians - have always felt privileged and regarded it as their inalienable right to discourse upon Oriental peoples, their religion, civilization and history. In all such discourses they, by and large, have been prisoners of an ethnocentric outlook. That Europeans, racially and intellectually, are superior to other races, especially the Arabic speaking Asians. As a result it rather becomes natural for them to regard their civilization and religion as normative of other civilizations and faiths. They further believe that their Eurocentric standards - religious and cultural - are not only a fitting scale to judge other people but also universally applicable. Obsessed with this erroneous attitude and approach they have always failed to fully understand 'other people' in an objective manner. As far/Islam is concerned they have not only failed
to apprehend it but also impudently disfigured and distorted its own image.

Lawrence's view of the Arab race, like those of countless European travellers and explorers of Arabia, is purely ethnocentric. Moreover, it is racial and divides humanity into inferior and superior classes. His approach to Arab civilization is not objective, rather he tries to understand it with priori norms, prejudices and preconceived notions. Moreover, many of his statements are mere assertions, without any argument or proper and rational justification. Besides being ethnocentric and fully conscious of his racial superiority Lawrence, while discoursing upon Semitic religiosity, appears to represent a typical spiritual dilemma that the Englishmen of Victorian era were confronted with, mainly because of some scientific discoveries which had greatly disturbed the calmness of the 'Sea of faith'. This faith versus science conflict was a problem peculiar with the Romanized, Hellenized and paganized Christianity of Europe. But the people taking side with the claims of modern science were eager to propagate this controversy as a universal phenomenon. Lawrence seems to have been somewhat influenced by the doubts raised by science and as a result feels free to criticize the Semites as a simple believing folk, 'despising doubt, the modern
crown of thorns. (1) It is quite incomprehensible that why Lawrence, or anyone for that matter, should become critical of a people whose beliefs are free from metaphysical complexities and far away from shadows of doubts.

Lawrence is sympathetic, to some extent, towards the Arabs with whom he worked during the Arab Revolt and is bitter towards his own nation, Britain, for betraying them by breaking the promises made to Sherif Husain of Mecca. But as a whole he had a very poor opinion of the Arab race, their place in history, their faith and civilization, and their achievements in art, literature, philosophy and metaphysics. The Arabs, according to him, 'had no half-tones in their register of vision. They were a people of primary colours, or rather of black and white, who saw the world always in contour. They were a dogmatic people.... They did not understand our metaphysical difficulties, our introspective questionings. They knew only truth and untruth, belief and unbelief, without our hesitating the retinue of finer shades.' (2) This is not the end. Lawrence further portrays the Arabs as a narrow-minded people whose 'imagination were vivid but not creative.'(3) He accepts the fact that in their time of glory the Arabs patronized

1. Ibid. P. 36.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
art and literature but insists that they themselves made no worthwhile or original contribution. Nor did they handle great industries: they had no organizations of mind or body. They invented no systems of philosophy, nor complex mythologies. Moreover, they were either fanatics or sheer materialists; they 'hovered between lust and self-denial'. Their 'beliefs were mere assertions, no arguments, so they required a prophet to set them forth'.

In sum they were incorrigibly children of the idea, feeble and colour-blind, to whom body and spirit were forever and inevitably opposed. Their mind was strange and dark, full of depressions and exaltations, lacking in rule, but with more of ardour and more fertile in belief than any other in the world.

Lawrence's perception of Arab civilization was almost negative. He depicts it as of 'abstract' nature, moral and intellectual but unpragmatic and non-applied. Arab civilizations undoubtedly produced excellent qualified individuals but they ended in futility for they had no public spirit or sense to put their finer abilities at the

1. Ibid. PP 36-37.
2. Ibid. p. 40.
3. Ibid. P. 37.
4. Ibid. P. 41.
5. Ibid. P. 42.
service of humanity at large. Moreover, the Arab civilizations, according to Lawrence, 'were fortunate in their epoch. Europe had fallen barbarous, and the memory of Greek and Latin learning was fading from men's minds. By contrast the imitative exercise (and no original contribution?) of the Arabs seemed cultured, their mental activity progressive, their state prosperous.' (1) The only real and worthwhile service they rendered to human kind was that they ably preserved 'something of a classical past for a medieval future.' (2)

Such were Lawrence's Arabs of history and so sterile and colourless their civilization which produced no original thinkers, philosophers and writers but only imitators. And the Arabs he was sent to work with were even worst, long oppressed by the Turks and waiting for a prophet to deliver them. However, their ordeal of waiting was about to end for the long awaited prophet had emerged on the Arabian scene in the person of Lawrence.

A prophet, according to Lawrence, must do some thing extraordinary and wonderful. And things look more astonishing if done in a greatly difficult situation. it was with this view that, before portraying himself as a

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
prophet of the Arabs, he felt it necessary to degrade, as he has done in the passages quoted above, the Arabs to a level of unmanageable humanity. For raising such a primitive people to the status of a civilized nation, instilling in them a sense of 'freedom', (1) self respect, and preparing them for self-rule was so splendid and extraordinary as to perform a near miracle. Indeed such was the great dispensation that Lawrence felt he was summoned to administer in Arabia:

I meant to make a new nation, to restore a lost influence, to give twenty millions of Semites the foundations on which to build an inspired dream-palace of their national thoughts. (2)

But the Arabs, according to Saint John Philby, were a xenophobic people, (3) hence cannot accept an infidel as their prophet. Lawrence must have been aware of this reality since his wandering in Syria and Palestine during the summer of 1909. Moreover, he himself had seen the Arabs and the Turks who, before the outbreak of a war, used to accuse each other of being friends of Christian infidels, the English and the Germans, who had their

1. By freedom Lawrence never meant what the term implies in our time. He simply wanted to end the Turkish rule and bring the Arabs under British control. See Knightley and Simpman, op. cit. P. 62.

2. Lawrence, l.c., Seven Pillars of Wisdom, op. cit. P. 22.

own colonial designs and were in fact serving their imperial interests by helping the Arabs and the Turks respectively. Besides, he was once reminded of the same fact when he, in a discussion with Faisal and his men, indiscreetly extended his regards to the Arab nationalist leaders executed by Jamal Pasha in Damascus. He was taken up sharply by Faisal's men for sympathising with those leaders who, in their eyes, had disgraced themselves by agreeing to 'accept French or British suzerainty as the price of help.' (1) On the same occasion Faisal made it clear to him that

> We are...of necessity tied to the British. We are delighted to be their friends, grateful for their help, expectant of our future profit. But we are not British subjects. We would be more at ease if they were not so much disproportionate allies. (2)

Apparently in such circumstances Lawrence would not have expected to accomplish openly his self-proclaimed prophetic mission in Arabia. Rather, in order to achieve his purpose, he, in fact, needed an Arab leader or a puppet prophet, submissive and amenable who could be easily manipulated whenever needed to serve Britain's imperial interests. This point becomes further clear when one cores

2. Ibid.
across Lawrence's criteria for selecting an Arabian prophet. He rejected Sherif Husain, the founder, initiator and undisputed leader of the Arab Revolt as being too aged to lead a rebellion. He then met Abdullah and within minutes 'began to suspect him of constant cheerfulness.'

In the eyes of the Arabs Abdullah was a 'far-seeing statesman...an astute politician,' and was widely regarded as to be 'the brain of his father and the Arab revolt.' Even Lawrence seems to have been impressed by his astuteness and political wisdom but doubts his sincerity, for he, though as eager as anyone else in the Arab Army, to make the rebellion a success and establish thereafter an independent Arab State, wanted his family to be recognized as the ruling Arab House. Moreover, he lacked the enthusiasm that can 'set the desert on fire.' In sum, he did not fulfil Lawrence's criteria to become the leader of the Arab Revolt.

As our conversation continued, I became more and more sure that Abdullah was too balanced, too cool, too humorous to be a prophet, especially the armed prophet who, if history be true, succeeded in revolutions.

1. Ibid. P. 67
2. Ibid. 67
3. Ibid. p. 68.
4. Ibid.
Lawrence then interviewed Ali, another son of the Grand Sherif, at Rabigh and found him a pleasant gentleman, conscientious, direct and dignified in manners. But he also fell short of Lawrence's high standard, because he was 'without great force of character, nervous and rather tired';(1) furthermore he was a religious scholar, literal and bookish, pious but fanatical, conscious of his high heritage hence, according to Lawrence's standard, unfit to be ambitious or to be a great leader. But in spite of all these there was something in him that prompted Lawrence to consider him at least a choice of necessity.

If Feisal should turn out to be no prophet, the revolt would make shift well enough with Ali for its lead.(2)

Zaid, Husain's fourth son from a Turkish mother 'was a shy, white, beardless lad of perhaps nineteen, calm, flippant, no zealot for the revolt.'(3) Hence there was no question of making him the leader of the Revolt.

Lawrence then went to Wadi Safra to meet Faisal. He was impressed by the later at first sight:

I felt at first glance that this was the man I had come to Arabia to seek the leader who would bring the Arab revolt to full glory.(4)

1. Ibid. P. 76.
2. Ibid. P. 77.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. P. 92.
It is not clear from Lawrence's portrayal of Faisal that what impressed him so much. He describes him as 'tall and pillar like and very slender.'\(^{(1)}\) He is not depicted as possessing any of the seven qualities of the leaders of the Biblical jewery which have been stated elsewhere in this chapter. Nor is he portrayed as 'learned in law and religion' as was Ali, nor as a far-sighted statesman and astute politician as was Aucullah. He is rather presented as a simple soul, a plain personality, without a thinking brain, in sum, a perfectly suitable puppet to play the game of the real prophet that was Lawrence.

Perhaps it would not be impertinent here to enquire that what motivated Lawrence to search for an 'Arabian Knight' or an 'armed Prophet'. The Arab Revolt was started well before Lawrence's coming to Arabia by King Musain. He was undisputed leader of the Revolt with his sons fully loyal and dedicated to him. Was Lawrence's gesture aimed at sowing differences among them as the later events such as Faisal's independent military and political initiatives at his advice which resulted in a rift between him (Faisal) and his father proved it? There is reason to believe that Lawrence might have done it deliberately in order to help Britain play its imperial game in post war period thinking

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1. Ibid.
that a divided Sharifian House would be easy to handle than a well-united Arab leadership.

Lawrence praises Faisal occasionally, sometimes of course in a highly flowery and exaggerated language. However, after a careful study of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom the reader is left with no choice but to regard Lawrence as the real protagonist of the Arab Revolt. Not only laymen but even clever and well-informed readers, such as Winston Churchill, have been prompted to believe that it was not Faisal or anyone else in his army but Lawrence who ably accomplished the prophetic mission of 'rousing the fierce peoples of the desert, penetrating the mysteries of their thought, leading them to the selected points of action and as often as not firing the mine himself.'(1)

Besides the medium of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Lawrence seems to have adopted other means to promote his self-image. In an article written in 1917 for the Arab Bulletin, an intelligence newsletter circulated


An Arab historian, George Antonius has disputed, not only Lawrence's accounts of the Arab Revolt as presented in the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, but also his projection of himself as the real leader of the rebellion. See the details in his valuable book, The Arab Awakening, PP. 319 - 324.
among Cairo-based British officers, he conceived of himself as the main brain behind the Arab movement. After explaining a technique that he believed he had perfected in order to control the Arabs and bend them to his end, he indirectly suggests that he was more than a mere adviser to Faisal, that is, the real leader of the Arab Army:

Wave a Sherif in front of you like a banner and ride your own mind and person. If you succeed, you will have hundreds of miles of country and thousands of men under your orders, and for this it is worth laboring the outward show.

Naturally there arises a question that what purpose Lawrence wanted to serve by participating in and leading the Arab Revolt to full glory and success. Did his ideas tally with those of King Husain and his sons who had raised the banner of rebellion against Turkey? It is difficult to answer this question in 'two plus two is four' terms, for Lawrence as well as his old rakeshers have successfully created a legion of legends mystifying his personality.

1. Lawrence, T.E. 'Twenty Seven Articles' in Hart, Liddell, I.E., Lawrence in Arabia and After, London, 1945, P.144.
and have written so many contradictory things about him as to make it difficult for investigators to find out the real truth. However, as will be shown later on, the real prophet, that is, Lawrence, contrary to the common belief, had no special passion for Arab independence. Rather his aim was to bring the Arabs of the Fertile Crescent under British suzerainty.

But, contrary to Lawrence's intention, the Arabs who participated in the Arab Revolt, especially those who led it, were mighty clear in their perception, as is evident from the Husain - McMahon correspondence, that it was a national movement to get independence from the Turks. To have a better understanding of the Arab case it is necessary to fully understand the implications of the Husain-McMahon correspondence.

Husain-McMahon Correspondence Any discussion on Husain McMahon Correspondence will be incomplete unless the circumstances which led to it are briefly taken into account. The British felt the need for an Arab uprising only when they decided to breakup the Ottoman Empire after the latter's entry in the First World War which had started in August 1914. Infact with the outbreak of the War Turkey though weak and degenerated, had become strategically
important for the warring European countries. The Germans, well before the flare-up of the war, were trying hard to win the Turks on their side. The British however, wanted to keep them neutral. The factors behind Britain's desire or policy were numerous. First by neutralizing Turkey, they thought, they will be in a position to concentrate their whole strength on the German front, second to safeguard and keep the Black Sea Straits open in order to enable the Russians to continue their grain trade which was immensely vital or their economic solvency, third they feared that a war with the Caliph of Islam would overtax India's loyalty and disturb Egypt; fourth they were afraid that the Turko-German cooperation in the war would endanger their military and economic interests in the Persian Gulf and pose a potential threat to the Suez Canal which was not only vital for a 'quick passage of Indian troops' to the war fronts in Europe, especially France but also to defend India, the Jewel of the British Empire. The price the British were willing to pay for Turkish neutrality was a mere promise to guarantee and maintain the integrity of the Ottoman

2. Ibid.
Empire during the war. But the Germans, on the other hand, were generous enough and ready to waive, at the expense of Egypt and Greece, the judicial and financial privileges enjoyed by foreigners - the Capitulations - against which the Turks had been battling for two generations.¹

The Turkish cabinet was divided on the question of the war. Whereas a few advocated a policy of neutrality others favoured a full fledged entry on the side of Germany. The reason was simple, they did not trust the Triple Entente. Moreover, their feeling was very strong about the humiliation they had suffered time and again at the hands of the Entente. Next, the Turks were greatly impressed by the fact that Germany had not occupied any territory of their empire while, on the contrary, the British had taken Egypt and Cyprus, the French Algeria and Tunisia and the Russians Crimea and portions of Caucasus. Turkey's mistrust was further strengthened when Britain, just before the outbreak of the war, impounded for cash two cruisers built in her shipyards on an order placed by Turkey. The Germans were quick to capitalize on this hasty British action and generously offered two of their cruisers, Goeben and Breslau to Turkey and thus succeeded to persuade them to side with them in the war.

¹. Ibid.
Turkey entered the war on 29, October 1914. It was certainly not a happy news for Britain. However, they were not perturbed greatly, for they had anticipated it and were making secret plans for an Arab uprising to counter it effectively. They knew the activities of alFatat and Al-'Ahd, the secret societies of the nationalist Arabs working in Syria and Iraq respectively. But they were not strong enough to cause any potential threat to Turkey. However, they were also aware that a strong Arab leader, Sherif Husain of Mecca whose relations with the Sublime Porte were not cordial, was thinking for some time to revolt against the Turks in order to assert his authority in the Hijaz. His son, Abdullah, while on his way to Turkey, had met Lord Kitchener, the British Agent in Egypt in the first week of February, 1914. His aim was to know whether Britain would support an Arab uprising against Turkey? Kitchener discouraged the idea saying that Britain's policy was to maintain friendly relations with Turkey. Two months later, in April 1914, Abdullah met Ronald Storrs, the then secretary at the British Agency in Egypt and sought British help for an Arab revolt. But he was again discouraged on the old ground of Britain's friendly relations with Turkey.

Although Kitchener and Storrs had discouraged Abdullah's ideas because Britain's official policy did
not permit them to do otherwise, their individual thinking was more or less similar. They became more inclined to the idea of an Arab Revolt when the war broke out in August 1914 and it became imminent that Turkey would become a war ally of Germany. As a result Kitchener, now Secretary of State for War, instructed Storrs to enquire from Abdullah whether his father would take side with Britain in case Turkey joins hands with Germany. Storrs immediately conveyed this message to Sherif Husain through Abdullah.

Storrs' letter put Sherif Husain in a delicate position. There were only two options open for him and the Arabs:

'to stand by Turkey in her hour of trial and earn her grateful recognition, or to rise against her and seek their freedom at the point of the Sword'.

He consulted his two sons, Faisal and Abdullah. Faisal was in favour of remaining loyal to Turkey and cautioned his father about French and English designs on Syria and Iraq respectively. Moreover, he feared that the Arabs were unprepared for a revolt against Turkey. But Abdullah, already a member of a secret nationalist society, favoured an alliance with Britain and assured his father of support from the nationalist elements in Syria and Iraq. He suggested further negotiations in order to seek an absolute and clear-cut guarantee of Arab independence from Britain.

1. Antonius, George, op. cit. p. 131.
After hearing the views of his sons Sherif Husain decided to play his game cautiously. On the one hand he would try to know the State of national feeling and Arab preparedness for a general revolt by writing letters to principal Arab rulers and sending emissaries to nationalist leaders in Syria and, one the other, he would keep Kitchener in the play by expressing his willingness, through a letter to Storrs, to reach an understanding with England and hinting at a possible Arab uprising in the Hijaz on the condition that England would give him a firm promise to support it.

Storrs received the letter before the end of October 1914 and immediately conveyed its content to Kitchener in London. Kitchener wasted no time and, on 31 October, 1914 ordered the British Agency in Cairo to write back to Abdullah informing him that if his father along with his followers was ready to ally himself with Britain against the Turks he would get all the support from Britain and that his claims in the Hijaz would be duly recognized. The letter contained a further promise of support as well as encouragement for a general Arab uprising and hinted at Britain's ready recognition of Sherif's Caliphate in case he proclaimed it.

It was November the sixteenth of 1914 when Abdullah received Kitchener's message. He was happy and satisfied.

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1. In a later declaration made by Sir Henry McMahon in June 1915 Great Britain promised to make Arabia fully independent and expressed her willingness to welcome and recognize the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate. See Antonio, George, op. cit. P. 160.
for it not only promised what his father had demanded: the recognition of his autonomous position in the Hijaz but also opened the prospect of liberating other Arab provinces such as Syria and Palestine from the Turks. He immediately informed his father who, after a careful study of the letter, directed him to write back to Kitchener through the British Agency in Cairo that he (Husain) was willing to enter into an alliance with Great Britain. Husain, however, expressed his inability to raise the banner of revolt immediately. With this letter the first round of Anglo-Arab conspiracy against the Turks was over. The second phase was to begin in July 1915 when Sherif Husain sent first of the ten important letters to Henry McMahon, the then British High Commissioner in Egypt.

During the ensuing eight months, between December 1914 and July 1915, Sherif Husain, as mentioned already, was engaged in secret correspondence with the principal rulers of the Arabian Peninsula and the nationalist societies of the Arabs in Syria and Iraq. Besides Husain, there were five other rulers in the Arabian peninsula. Shaikh Mubarak Ibn Sabah was the ruler of Kuwait. He was in alliance with Great Britain since 1899 and had concluded a fresh treaty after the Turks had entered the Great War. Another ruler was al-Idrisi, fiercely anti-Turk, hence a natural ally of Husain. Moreover, he had signed a treaty of friendship with the
Government of India in April 1915. Ibn Saud of Najd was also approached by the Government of India in 1915 and consequently was assured of his independence. Ibn Saud was a far-sighted statesman. He saw in Husain's overture an ambitious plan to rule over entire Arabia. As a result his answer to Husain was cautious. He commended his luke warm attitude towards, and his abstention from endorsing the Turkish call to Jihad but refused to extend his unconditional support to him. The two other rulers, Ibn Rashid and Imam Yahya, however, decided to stand by Turkey in her hour of need.

But by far the most encouraging response Husain received was from al-Fatat and al-Ikhah. The two societies had their reservations about the intentions of the Triple Entente; they were especially suspicious of the French designs on Syria. In this regard their mode of thinking and approach were near to that of Faisal. That although very eager to throw off the Turkish domination they were unwilling to accept Europe's occupation of the Arab lands. Their aims and intentions are well-reflected in the resolution passed by al-Fatat Society just before Turkey's entry in the War:

In consequence of Turkey's entry into the War, the fate of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire is seriously imperilled, and every effort is to be made to secure their liberation and independence; it being also resolved that, in the event of European designs appearing to materialize, the society shall be bound to work on the side of Turkey.
in order to resist foreign penetration of whatever kind or form.\(^{(1)}\)

However, the members of AlFatat, after intramural deliberations, drew up the famous document known as the Damascus Protocol in which they defined the conditions on which they were prepared to cooperate with Great Britain. The Protocol not only reflects Arab desire for freedom from all kinds of foreign influence and domination, Turkish or European, but also delineates the boundaries of a future independent Arab state. AlFatat sent this Protocol to Sherif Husain for his kind perusal. It was this Protocol that later formed the nexus of Husain's correspondence with Henry McMahon.

Thus after having known the inclinations and intentions of the main rulers of the Arabian peninsula through his emissaries and received the Damascus Protocol from AlFatat, Husain was now (July 1915) in a better position to resume his correspondence with the British High Commission in Egypt. This time, instead of using Abdullah as a tool, Husain wrote directly to Henry McMahon. They exchanged among themselves ten letters\(^{(2)}\) which later became famous as Husain-McMahon correspondence.

1. Quoted in Antonius, George, op. cit. P. 153.
2. See the text of Husain-McMahon correspondence in Antonius, George, op. cit. PP. 414-427.
Husain was straightforward in his very first letter. He spelled out his terms and conditions for waging a revolt against Turkey in order to promote the Allied cause. That Great Britain, in event of victory in the war, would support the creation of an independent Arab State as well as recognize the declaration of an Arab Caliphate for Islam.

But McMahon, unlike Husain, was evasive on the question of the boundaries of the proposed Arab State. However, when Husain in his second letter complained of hesitancy and lukewarmth on the part of the British Government McMahon, in his reply to this letter, accepted Husain's proposal subject to certain modifications in the boundaries demarcated by him. In McMahon's view the districts of Mersin and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, were not purely Arab, hence can not form a part of the proposed Arab State. McMahon also clarified that the territories of the Arab chiefs with whom Britain had concluded treaties of friendship will also be excluded from the Arab State.

McMahon's reservations regarding 'certain areas' later on caused a great deal of controversy. To be brief, two diametrically opposed interpretations are offered. The British Government as well as the Zionists interpret McMahon's reservations as to exclude Palestine from the proposed Arab

1. Antonius, George, op. cit. P. 419.
State. But objective and unprejudiced historians have categorically rejected the Anglo Zionist interpretation. For instance Arnold J. Toynbee who, on a request by the Foreign Office in 1918, prepared a memorandum, namely, 'British Commitments to King Husain', wrote the following:

With regard to Palestine, His Majesty's Government are committed by Sir H. McMahon's letter to the Sherif on the 24th October, 1915, to its inclusion in the bounaries of Arab independence.¹

Toynbee further wrote in the same memorandum:

Palestine was implicitly included in King Husain's Original demands and was not explicitly excluded in Sir H. McMahon's letter of 24.10.15. We are therefore presumably pledged to King Husain by this letter that Palestine should be 'Arab' and 'independent'.²

The controversy, in fact, arose because of Britain's contradictory pledges, first made to the Arabs through McMahon's letter of October 24, 1915 and second, to the Jews through the Balfour Declaration.³ of 1917 which precisely meant to establish a Jewish state in Palestine that according to Arnolo Toynbee, as explained above, was

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² Ibid. P. 211.
already included, as per McMahon's promise, in the Arab State. Added to these contradictory promises was the Sykes-Picot Agreement secretly signed by the Entente which precisely aimed at dividing the Ottoman Empire among themselves after its disintegration.

Britain's treacherous dealing with the Arabs is obvious and open for all to see. Had the Arabs come to know it before they started their revolt, they, as is evident from the resolution passed by alFatah Society, might not have sided with Great Britain. Instead it is possible that they would have supported the Turks making it difficult for General Allenby to conquer Palestine and Syria.

Since the Sykes-Picot Agreement was secret hence unknown to the Arabs until 1917 when the Bolsheviks, after seizure of power in Russia, made it public the Arabs on the basis of McMahon's promise were justifiably right to understand that in event of an allied victory there will emerge an independent Arab State. Having no semblance of doubt about Britain's sincerity they began their revolt on June 5, 1916 in Madina. Five days later, on June 10, 1916 the rebellion was started in Mecca. The Arabs quickly occupied Mecca, Jiddah, Rabigh and Yenbo.

1. See the text of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in Antonius, George, op. cit. PP. 427-430.
However, the revolt afterward began to falter. Several attempts to capture Madina were successfully reversed by the Turks that demoralized the Arab Army. The situation further deteriorated from bad to worse, raising the fear that the Turks might march on Mecca and put the revolt to an end by hanging its leader, Sherif Husain. Infact the Turks had made such a plan and were all prepared to act accordingly. But fortunately for Husain the British discovered the plan and acted swiftly to counter it.

Ronald Storrs was immediately dispatched to Jedda to meet the Arab leaders and get first hand knowledge of their difficulties and requirements. Storrs was accompanied by Lawrence who frankly as well as critically talked with Abdullah, Faisal and two other sons of Husain. Later he personally got involved in the Revolt.

What was Lawrence's intention behind his involvement in the Arab Revolt? Was he really a champion of Arab freedom or a prophet bent on delivering the Arabs from the yoke of the Turkish oppression? The answer, if one is ready to believe his accounts of the Revolt as recorded in the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, is in affirmative. Husain had raised the banner of Revolt for an 'Arab aim in Arabia', and the purpose of Lawrence's participation in it was to help him restore the lost Arab glory. And when he (Lawrence) discovered his country's double-dealing with the Arabs he became critical of his Government.
The Arab revolt had begun on false pretences. To gain the Sherif’s help our Cabinet had offered, through Sir Henry McMahon, to support the establishment of native governments in parts of Syria and Mesopotamia, saving the interests of our ally, France. The last modest clause concealed a treaty (Kept secret, till too late, from McMahon, and therefore from the Sherif) by which France, England and Russia agreed to annex some of these promised areas, and to establish their respective spheres of influence over all the rest.¹

Lawrence, then, proceeds to say that when the ‘rumours of fraud reached the Arab ears’, they ‘asked me a free agent to endorse the promises of the British government’. He also claims that he ‘had no previous or inner knowledge of the McMahon pledges and the Sykes-Picot treaty’.² However, he was not a ‘perfect fool’ as not to understand that after the victory the promises would become meaningless like a ‘dead paper’. He also accepts

1. Lawrence, T.E. Seven Pillars of Wisdom, op. cit. P. 282.

2. Lawrence, T.E., Seven Pillars of Wisdom, op. cit. P. 283. Lawrence might not have been aware of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, at least until Henry McMahon was kept in the dark. However, his protestation of ignorance about McMahon correspondence seems implausible. Knightly and Simpson have proved beyond suspicion that he was not only aware of but even ‘had been involved in the correspondence between Hussain and Cairo’. (See The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia, op. cit. P. 60).
that had he revealed the whole truth the Arabs would have parted company with Great Britain and realigned themselves with the Turks. But to remain loyal to his country, he spoke a blatant lie to reassure his Arab friends that his Government was sincere in its promise. The Arabs were thus reassured and 'performed their fine things, but', says Lawrence, 'instead of being proud of what we did together, I was continually and bitterly ashamed'. He, however, 'vowed to make the Arab revolt the engine of its own success as well as a handmaid to our Egyptian campaign and vowed to lead it so madly in the final victory that expediency should counsel the Powers a fair settlement of the Arab's moral claim'.

The overall picture that emerges from Lawrence's self-portrayal in the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is that he was a conscientious man and fully committed to the cause of Arab independence. But in reality he was a political intelligence officer of Great Britain and as much insincere and double-faced as his Government. His double-dealing has been proved beyond doubt by Knightley and Simpson who have quoted extensively from the records of the Foreign Office to clarify their stand-point. According to the two writers, Lawrence

1. Not only Lawrence but the British Government also made false statements to reassure King Husain that Britain was bound to keep her word. See the details in Knightley and Simpson, op. cit. pp. 70-71.
2. Lawrence, i.e., *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, op. cit. p. 287.
3. Ibid.
was attached to Faisal in order to watch over his activities and advise him to lead the Arab Revolt the British way and not to let it run in France's favour, so that his country's interests in Arabia will be easily served in the post war period.

Lawrence, in fact, contrary to his protestations in the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* or elsewhere, never intended an independent Arab State. Rather, as is evident from *The Politics of Mecca*, (a confidential paper that Lawrence as a member of Cairo-based General Staff Intelligence prepared in January, 1916) his purpose behind instigating an Arab insurrection was, on the one hand, to break the Ottoman Empire which even in its decadent state was a power to be reckoned with, and, on the other, to establish numerous Arab States under British tutelage and keep them constantly at loggerheads with each other through a policy of divide and rule and by promoting jealousy and rivalry among them.

(Husain's) activity seems beneficial to us, because it marches with our immediate aims, the break up of the Islamic 'bloc' and the defeat and disruption of the Ottoman Empire, and because the State he would set up to succeed the Turks would be as harmless to ourselves as Turkey was before she became a tool in German hands. The Arabs are even less stable than the Turks. If properly handled they would remain in a state of
political mosaic, a t s sue of small jealous principalities, incapable of cohesion, and yet always ready to combine against an outside force. The alternative to this seems to be the control and colonization by a European power other than ourselves which would inevitably come into conflict with the interests we already possess in the Near East. 1

In the same paper Lawrence further suggests to create two Caliphates and keep them embroiled in rivalry and hostility towards each other:

(Husain) has a mind to taking the place of the Turkish Government in the Hejaz himself. If we can only arrange that this political change shall be a violent one, we will have abolished the threat of Islam, by dividing it against itself, in its very heart. There will then be a Khalifa in Turkey and a Khalifa in Arabia, in theological warfare, and Islam will be as little formidable as the papacy when popes lived in Avignon. 2

Lawrence not only proposed to divide Islam against itself but also suggested ways and means to achieve

this purpose. In a secret memorandum: *The Conquest of Syria If Complete* that he prepared in early 1916, nearly a year before he practically got involved in the Arab Revolt, he urged the British Government to utilize the opportunity that the war with Turkey had offered to end the religious supremacy of the Ottoman Caliph. According to his analysis it was not possible for Britain to appoint a Caliph on her own as she had installed a Sultan in Egypt. The Sultan of Egypt, in his view, was 'loose-mouthed' and because of his special relationship with Britain was unlikely to be accepted or proclaimed as Caliph by Arab Muslims. However, Sherif Husain, he opined, would be Britain's best choice. The Sherif had considerable influence in the Hijaz and Syria. But his relations with the Turks were tense, He was even suspected by many as being disloyal to the Ottoman Caliphate. In fact, he was being held down by the Turks with the help of a Turkish corps and money. Lawrence proposed to buy the Sherif either through the Government of India or of Egypt. And to free him from the clutches of the Turkish army, he chalked out a detailed programme to destroy the Hijaz Railway that was used by the Turks for civil and military purposes and upon which they were heavily dependent for maintaining their control over Arabia. In the said paper Lawrence also evolved the tactics that he was later to use in order to cut the Pilgrim Railway.
It should, however, be clear that Lawrence's aim was not to install the Sherif as ruler or Caliph of entire Arabia as the later had demanded to be in his first letter to McMahon. Syria and Mesopotamia, in his view, should certainly be excluded from Hugain's domain or Kingdom. In 'The Conquest of Syria' he emphatically states:

If we wish to be at peace in S(cuthern) Syria and S (outhern) Mesopotamia as well, and to control the holy cities, it is essential that the owner of Damascus should either be ourselves or some non-Muhammadan power friendly to us.¹

It is thus crystal clear that Lawrence's aim, quite contrary to Arab expectation and McMahon's promise, was, first of all, to eliminate the Ottoman rule from Arabia and, second, to replace the Turks by various Arab rulers hostile to each other and, third, to establish British rule in Syria and Mesopotamia or put them under control of some friendly non-Islamic nation.

However, Lawrence's ideas underwent a drastic change when, after the publication of the Sykes-Picot Agreement by the Bolsheviks, he intelligently realized that Britain was more than ready to hand over Syria to

¹. Quoted in Knightley and Sirpson, op. cit. P. 62.
the French, an idea that he hated. It was this realization that led him to think of an Arab government in Damascus under British tutelage. And to strengthen the Arab position or their 'moral claim', (not their right) as he referred to it in the Seven Pillars of Wisdom (P. 283) he exhausted all his energy to lead the Arab forces to occupy Damascus before General Allenby’s army could do the same. He succeeded in his plan, entered Damascus triumphantly and established an Arab government under Shukri Pasha hoping that his country would appreciate the Arab contribution and, as a result, renounce the hated Sykes-Picot Agreement.

But when Allenby, in spite of this great Arab contribution to the Allied Victory, told Faisal at a conference not to do anything with the civil administration of Damascus, Lawrence realized at once that he had lost. Bitter and frustrated he exchanged hard words with Allenby. But, realizing that it would not work, he, all of a sudden, left for London.

Lawrence’s sudden and abrupt departure from Damascus has been thoroughly misunderstood by many of his biographers as having been a result of his disgust with

1. For Lawrence's hatred of the French and his endeavours to keep them out of Syria See Ibid. PP 4-5 39, 75 and 228.
the Arabs and himself, especially with his role of
double-dealing. This is quite untrue. In fact his move
was well-calculated. After his conversations with Allenby
he had come to the conclusion that Britain meant to
implement the Sykes-Picot Agreement in spirit and letter.
This precisely meant his defeat. But he was not the sort
of person who could accept his defeat so easily. The
battle for post-war settlement, he realized, would be
now fought on negotiation tables in London or elsewhere
in Europe. And he decided to be there in order to get into
contact with men who were to fight the political battle.

1. In fact there is a passage in the Seven Pillars of
Wisdom that appears to have misled some of Lawrence's
biographers to reach such a conclusion. But when
carefully studied the same passage seems to justify
our stand. That with the fall of Damascus Lawrence
felt his work in Arabia was finished and the scene of
battle for deciding the future of Arabia was certain
to be shifted from Arabia to London. The passage is
quoted here in full:

'I was tired to death of these Arabs; petty
incarnate Semites who attained heights and depths
beyond our reach, though not beyond our sight. They
realized our absolute in their unrestrained capacity
for good and evil; and for two years I had profitably
shammed to be their companion.

To-day it came to me with finality that my patience
as regards the false position I had been led into was
finished. A week, two weeks, three, and I would insist
upon relief. My nerve had broken; and I would be lucky
if the ruin of it could be hidden so long.' (P. 607).
A few days after his arrival in London, Lawrence became active, devised a plan and submitted it to the British Government. The plan urged Britain, first, to abandon the Sykes-Picot Agreement and, second, to divide Arabia into four states. The Hijaz was to be fully independent under King Husain. But Syria and Mesopotamia were to be cut into three states: Syria under Faisal, upper Mesopotamia under Zaid and lower Mesopotamia under Abdullah. Although Faisal, Abdullah and Zaid were to be installed kings of their respective domains they were to have limited freedom and work under British control and tutelage.

As can be seen this plan reflects more of Lawrence's super patriotism than his love for Arabs' right to self-determination. Moreover, it was in complete consonance with his pre-war plan about Arabia that he had first formulated in The Politics of Mecca and The Conquest of Syria: instead of creating one Arab nation he proposed to set up four states.

Strikingly Lawrence's plan was similar to the Sykes-Picot Agreement in the sense that it also did not take into account the Arabs' desire for full independence and self-determination. Naturally the pro-French elements were quick to attack him saying that his championship of the Arab cause was dubious. But he remained unperturbed and replied bluntly:
Self-determination has been a great deal talked about. I think it is a foolish idea in many ways. We might allow the people who have fought with us to determine themselves. People like the Mesopotamian Arabs, who have fought against us, deserve nothing from us in the way of self-determination.\(^{1}\)

But in spite of Lawrence's best efforts, the plan could not be pushed through. Lawrence, undeterred by his failure, then switched to a new scheme. He successfully convinced his country that a pro-British government in Syria and Palestine would be in Britain's favour, especially to safeguard her interests in the Suez Canal and Egypt. It was with this view that while speaking before the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet he proposed to install Faisal in Syria and Palestine under British tutelage. As regards the Balfour Declaration he informed the Committee that American Zionist Jews will be acceptable to the Arabs as adviser and financier. Convinced about the utility of the scheme the British Government asked Lawrence to persuade the Arabs and the Jews to sign an agreement of understanding and cooperation.

Lawrence had always viewed the Balfour Declaration as favourable to the Arabs and Britain. With this very view

\(^{1}\text{Quoted in Knightley and Simpson, op. cit. F. 99.}\)
he had arranged a meeting between Faisal and Chaim Weizmann on June 4, 1918 near Aqaba, now a port city in Jordan. Weizmann had offered Faisal the Jewish help, financial and technical, in order to build a prosperous Arab Kingdom provided he would raise no objection to the Jewish immigration into Palestine. Faisal is reported to have agreed with Weizmann's idea in principle. They remained in contact with each other till the final agreement was reached at around two weeks before the Paris Peace Conference. By the time Faisal was in London, on 11 December 1918 Lawrence arranged a meeting between Faisal and Weizmann at Carlton Hotel and helped them sign the document which later came to be known as Faisal-Weizmann Agreement. According to the Agreement the British were accepted as trustee power over Palestine; the Jews were given the right to settle in Palestine and to have a say in the government.


It is interesting to note that in the Carlton Hotel only the outlines of the agreement were discussed. The final draft was to be prepared later on. However, when the final document reached Faisal on January 4, 1919 for his signature he found that certain new words - Jewish state and Jewish government - were included in it which Faisal refused to accept and insisted that they be altered to Palestine and Palestine government. This was done accordingly. But Faisal became a little more cautious and inscribed a stipulation on the draft document in Arabic which was immediately translated by Lawrence. (See Lawrence's translation in Knightley and Simpson, op. cit. P. 118). But the translation was faulty even misleading. There is remarkable difference between Lawrence's translation and one that was later done by George Antonius. (See the Arab Awakening, P. 438). Some historians have accused Lawrence of misleading both, Faisal and Weizmann, to aspire for and believe what they never intended to. It is possible that Lawrence might have deliberately kept them in the dark by not telling them the whole truth, for he needed their full cooperation at the Paris Peace Conference to counter French designs on Syria.
and Faisal was to get money and financial advice from the Jews in order to keep his government solvent and initiate development programmes in his country.

This was precisely the policy which Faisal, The Zionists and the British were to pursue at the Paris Peace Conference. But this plan, as well known now, did not work. However, what is more pertinent is knowing the fact if Lawrence was really interested in promoting the Arab cause? If one goes by his so-called pro-Arab activities the answer is assuredly in affirmative. But his real intention, as revealed in a letter to Allan Dawnay that he wrote on 20 September 1919, (and obviously after the signing of the Anglo-French Agreement in this very month which, in fact, aimed at implementing the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In accordance with the Agreement the French troops replaced the British army in Syria giving the indication that they wanted to rule the country at any cost) was not to help the Arabs achieve their goal of independence but to push the French out of Syria:

The French will be on their best behaviour for months, and give Faisal his money unconditionally. Then they will try to turn the Screw. He'll say he doesn't want their money, because by then the Zionists will have a centre in Jerusalem, and for concessions they will finance him. (This
is all in writing, and fixed, but don't put it in the Press for God's sake and the French). Zionists are not a Government, and not British, and their action does not infringe the Sykes-Picot agreement. (1)

On the surface it was a cunning but in reality a foolish scheme. Cunning because it aimed at abolishing the Sykes-Picot Agreement without involving Britain, and foolish because it failed to comprehend France's emotional as well as imperialist attachment with Syria. In fact, it was superficial for Lawrence to think that the French would readily leave Syria on just having been told by Faisal that they were no longer needed in his country.

However, historically speaking, such an occasion did not arise. Lawrence's plan, as indicated earlier, was successfully frustrated by consumate, clever and somewhat aggressive French diplomacy. The San Remo Conference, held in April 1920, ratified the Anglo-French Agreement of September 1919. As a result Britain was proclaimed mandatory power over Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan and France over Syria.

Lawrence, depressed and disheartened, had already retired to Oxford and got engaged in completing his unfinished *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Likewise Faisal, after

1. Quoted in Knightley and Simpson, op. cit. P. 120.
the Paris Peace Conference, had gone to Damascus to rule his country. But a few months after the San Remo Conference, in July 1920 France ousted him at gunpoint. Neither Lawrence nor Great Britain came to his rescue. On 28 July 1920 he passed through Palestine which had come under the British mandate. Ronald Storrs who had been involved in the Arab Revolt since its beginning was present on the occasion to describe the pathos of the moment:

We mounted him (Faisal) a guard of honour a hundred strong. He carried himself with dignity and the noble resignation of Islam... though tears stood in his eyes as he was wounded to the soul. The Egyptian Sultanate (under British protection) did not recognize him, and at Quantara Station he awaited his train sitting on his luggage.¹

Lawrence's activities at the Paris Peace Conference and after have led many people to believe that he was an Arab partisan. On the contrary he was a British through and through. In fact he was associated with Faisal in order to use his influence with him to serve the interests of his country. This is evident from the remark that Arthur Balfour made about him in response to a concerted effort made by the Pro-French elements in the Foreign Office to get rid of him:

If there is a settlement, the only way of reaching it - without bloodshed - is through Faisal. And if it would be a mistake to keep him from here, I consider it would be an equal mistake to keep Lawrence from Faisal.\(^1\)

As regards his media campaign against Britain's high-handed rule in Mesopotamia it is pertinent to note that it was mainly aimed at criticising certain policies and had nothing to do with Arab aspiration for establishing an independent State. This is amply clear from the secret records (now made public) of the British Government. That he had voluntarily offered his services and free advice to quell the Iraqi rebellion against British imperialism. His one suggestion, inter alia, was to establish 'a native (but not fully independent) state with English advisers only'.\(^2\) It is interesting to note that while on the one hand Lawrence, the so-called champion of Arab cause, was giving the impression, especially through his media campaign, that he was sympathetic towards the Iraqi people and on the other, he was secretly engaged in devising a scheme to frustrate the Arab aspiration and desire for complete freedom.

2. Quoted in Ibid. P. 139.
Lawrence, with his expertise and insight in the Arab affairs, was a great asset for the British. Viewing his renewed interest Winston Churchill, who by then had become the Colonial Secretary, asked him to join his staff as his personal adviser. Lawrence accepted the offer seeing in it an opportunity to actualize his old dream: to bring Arabia under British control and suzerainty. But the first problem was to suppress the rebellion. On his advice the Royal Air Force carried a series of brutal bombings and brought the rebellion to an end.

Lawrence's next step was to find out an amenable Arab ruler and devise a system of government that, without hurting the Arab nationalist feelings, would ensure the British domination and safeguard her interests in the region. In complete harmony with Churchill he devised a plan which conceived of establishing Faisal in Iraq and Abdullah in Transjordan as King and Amir respectively. Both the brothers were coerced into accepting their respective thrones through 'fast, brilliant and cynical diplomacy, complete with promises, threats and pay offs'.

However, their father, King Husain refused to toe the line. Lawrence tried hard to persuade him to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, accept French and British mandate over

Syria and Palestine respectively and approve of the new arrangements in Iraq and Transjordan in return for a subsidy of £100,000 a year that will enable him to rule in the Hijaz. But Husain refused to budge, insisting on British withdrawal from Palestine, lamenting on their betrayal and bitterly regretting to having raised the Arab Revolt.

King Husain was, nodoubt, nonplussed and betrayed by the British. But Lawrence had quite a different view. Having installed Faisal in Iraq and Abdullah in Transjordan he was satisfied and declared that Britain was 'quit of the War-time Eastern adventure, with clean hands'. Was it really true or a travestical assertion? Indeed it was ridiculous for Lawrence to make such a claim, especially in view of the fact that the British had made many a pledge to the Arabs and fulfilled none of them. For instance they had promised them an independent Arab state but created three petty Kingdoms, one in the Hijaz, second in Transjordan, third in Iraq and imposed an undesirable mandatory system upon Syria and Palestine. Moreover in the Anglo-French Declaration they had recognized the Arabs.

1. Ibid. P. 151.
2. This declaration was announced by France and Britain a few days before the general armistice with Germany. See the text of the Declaration in Europa Pud. The Middle East and North Africa 1958, op. cit. P. 64.
right to self-determination. But instead of doing so they placed men of their own choice in Transjordan and Iraq. Viewed in this perspective Lawrence's claim of having fulfilled all Arab promises appears to be highly absurd.

However, he had reason to feel satisfaction. Well before the beginning of the Arab Revolt he had dreampt of dividing Islam against itself, to weaken the world Islamic ummah beyond recovery and by doing so to eliminate the so-called threat of Islam to Europe. With the Ottoman empire having been broken, the Arabs divided and pitted against each other (such as the conflict between Husain and Ibn Saud) Lawrence had indeed achieved his purpose. His dream had really come true.

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Chapter IV

SAINT JOHN PHILBY

Although not a general truth, it just so happens that men with eccentric idiosyncrasies are mostly born in countries where conformism is de rigueur. It is, therefore, not surprising that India, a country notorious for its conformism, especially in the past, has been more fertile than any other single country in producing eccentric men and women, a breed which seems to have departed forever after the death of Philby in 1960. These eccentric personalities generally revolted against the established way of thinking, social norms or general rule of their time.

Philby (1885-1960) is often ranked with Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) for they both loathed imperialism and supported the cause of Arab independence. He is also compared with T.E. Lawrence (1888-1935) for they both had a unique fascination for the Arabs and worked to promote their (Arabs) 'interests' in their peculiar style. But in many respects, as will be seen later on, Philby was different from the other two. He was in fact a class by himself or, as many people would prefer to say that he was a glaring example of a paradoxical personality by any standard. For, while claiming to be a socialist he often flirted with conservatives or despite being a declared pacifist he approved of or at least showed indifference to Ibn Saud's bloody wars.
It is, however, undisputed that he was highly adventurous, studious, intelligent and a prolific writer. Moreover, he was an excellent Arabist and knew the Arab realities from primary sources. But despite these qualities, he was not a suitable man from the standpoint of British imperialism. For he was an opinionated person, a non-conformist and lacked the tact and poise of Lawrence and Miss Bell to win the favour of the men in power and persuade them to act as he liked or advised. As a result, he, unlike Lawrence and Bell, could not perform well on Britain's political stage.

Bell, Lawrence and Philby all have written extensively about the history and civilization of the Arab people. But their aims and intentions were different. Bell and Lawrence were committed imperial agents and the purpose of their academic career was to provide information to the British imperialists in order to exploit the economically poor and politically backward nations and prolong their imperial presence in the Arab world. Philby, however, was made of a different stuff. He criticised imperialism as out dated which in his opinion was inimical not only towards the colonized people but also did a real disservice to Britain's image abroad. His image of Britain as a world power was that it should help underdeveloped or less advanced nations
to achieve and enjoy independence and stand firmly on their feet. He further pinned that such a gesture of British generosity would enhance its international image on the one hand and serve its economic and political interest on the other. In sum he was anti-imperialist and not anti-Britain.

Philby, unlike Bell and Lawrence, has not been given due scholarly attention mainly owing to his anti-imperialist stand. His contribution to Arab studies, however, is enormous. He has written on a variety of subjects such as history and the classics, the literature of several modern languages, archaeology and the sciences, politics, economics and finance, geology and the animal Kingdom. But mainly he was concerned with cultural and political aspirations of the Arab people and presented their case in a prudent intellectual manner. His aim, unlike that of Lawrence and Bell, in knowing the Arabs was not to rule them. In fact due to his long association with the Arabs of all kinds, especially with one of their most powerful leaders, Ibn Saud which ultimately led him to embrace the faith of Islam he was more fitted and better placed than others to underst and write about the Arab aspirations for unity and their desire to throw off the yoke of infidel imperial rule. He also showed courage and

candour to condemn the imperial policies and the brutalities committed by his country, Great Britain, an outstanding contribution which is rarely found in the writings of his prominent contemporaries. On the basis of the reasons stated above it would not be improper, rather useful and appropriate, to make a comprehensive study of Philby's ideas and views on various Arab issues and problems which were commonly known in his time and some of them still remain unresolved.

Throughout his career, academic, political and administrative, Philby was bold and outspoken. He never hesitated from airing his view on any given question and problem even if it went against his own interests. Instances of his boldness are numerous. For example it was not impossible for him and obviously it would have been in his best interest to confirm to instead of opposing and criticising the official British policy while he was serving in Iraq and Jordan. Had he done so no pressure could have been exerted on him to resign from his government post and face economic hardship. Likewise it should have been possible for him not to criticise the vagaries of the Saudi regime, as most of his European contemporaries based in Arabia did, in order to avoid the wrath of King Saud who banished him from the country though for a short period.

But there is another aspect of Philby's character. Obviously he was human, hence not free from shortcomings.
Whether amidst his family members and friends or in the company of outstanding personalities he used to make his presence felt and liked, even tried to project himself as being a dominant and extraordinary figure. Moreover, his aversion to opposition or opposite views was so strong and vehement that he used to become almost intolerant when things did not go the way he liked. Any thing that went against his will or tended to challenge his dominant position was bound to irritate him and invite his indignation. Infact he was the sort of person who could be easily pleased and even more easily could be incited to grouse and groan. This habit seems to have become his second nature. It will be frequently witnessed in this chapter that he was very fond of forming an opinion on every issue and always tried to play a role accordingly.

Independent thinking is an asset, an admirable quality which merits to be appreciated by one and all. However, the moment it makes one regard himself as an expert par excellence whose opinion or policies must be appreciated and adopted by all it becomes alarmingly dangerous. For 'his bloated' ego makes him behave with others in a way as they were academically and intellectually inferior to him. Moreover, it is in the nature of such men that they always try to prove themselves to be right and others wrong. They find a
certain kind of psychological and emotional satisfaction in doing so that makes them blind even to highly genuine criticism. While going through Philby's works one is often compelled to think that he is engaged in such a business. Sometimes he even appears to have indulged in self-aggrandizement.

Philby had, however, some characteristics and virtues which were shared by the Arabs and hence bound to bring him closer to them. In the first place his approach was highly individualistic and it was probably because of this that he became so deeply attached with the Arab people who are 'individualist in the highest degree', and in their 'lands the Trinity of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is worshiped more frequently than even it was in France'.

Similarly, as Freya Stark has put it, Philby was 'gregarious and pugnacious, open in his enmities and warm in his friendship'. Stark was probably prompted to pass the above remark after having been inspired by a famous Arab saying that in fact reflects a peculiar Arab characteristic: the enemy of my friend is my enemy and the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Another characteristic of Philby was that he used to see things in black and white and had courage to call

a spade a spade. It is a quality which is widely appreciated and admired by the Arabs, especially by the Bedouins. But in his native Britain it was regarded as a major flaw in any personality. To a considerable extent it was this aspect of Philby's personality and character that deprived him of many rewards and marred his chances of success in British politics and civil service. Elizabeth Monroe, Philby's biographer, was to the point when she remarked.

Philby is often bracketed with Lawrence because they both worked in the Arab World, but they were opposites in their handling of its arbiters. Where Lawrence rightly judged the tempo that suited the men in power, and was able to cajole them into doing as he advised, Philby, hectoring, intemperate and opinionated, provoked their wrath and lost his case. All through his life he saw himself as acting from the highest motives, and with a right, in a free country, to think what he liked and say what he thought about broken British promises or his conscientious objection to war. The flaw in him was not the creeds he preached but his immoderation in expounding them.

Monroe further says that Philby after having failed in achieving fame and success in his native country 'sought abroad the fame he reckoned he deserved.'

1. Monroe, ... Philby of Arabia, op. cit. p. 296.
2. Ibid.
extent her remark was not off the mark. However, it should also be kept in mind that Philby had after all some qualities and characteristics which were similar to those of the Arabs and thus it was natural for him to seek their companionship. Birds of the same feather flock together.

Philby's Conversion to Islam

Philby's conversion took place in 1930. His conversion, as expected, became a big news both in Arabia and abroad. Many prominent Muslims including Ibn Saud welcomed him to the fold of Islam. However, there was no dearth of men who had reservations about his sincerity. Some of Ibn Saud's high-ranking officials were also critical of him and continued to suspect even after his conversion that he was an agent of Great Britain sent to Saudi Arabia for the purpose of espionage.

Philby's conversion was not the result of a sudden and hasty decision. In fact he was contemplating to adopt Islam since his resignation from his government post in 1924. Many a time he felt like doing it. So were many Arabs who expected that one day he would surely embrace Islam. For instance in 1917-1918 when he was journeying among the Arabs of Najd a certain Ion Hawwat, when requested by Philby to consider him a Najdi, replied piously that by the grace of God he (Philby) will become a Muslim by adopting the true faith. (1) But that opportune time came only after twelve

years in the summer of 1930 when he was invited by Ibn Saud to Mecca to enter the fold of Islam.

In early years of the running century Christendom was not as much liberal and irreligious as it appears to be in its closing quarter. Likewise people, not only missionaries but also common folk, were of the opinion mainly owing to their imperialist and racist outlook that their religion, Christianity, was superior to world religions including Islam. Even non-practising Christians used to become greatly perturbed and upset whenever a Christian gave up his faith in order to embrace an oriental religion. They simply could not understand and failed to see any merits in the belief systems of their subject races. Obviously for men having such a mentality and outlook Philby's conversion was bound to be a shocking event. His family members and friends were especially upset. After hearing the 'sad news' Dora, Philby's wife, wrote to the later's mother, Mary:

I've had the most disturbing letter from Jack (Philby). So he has taken the step at last. It does not matter really, I suppose. I don't know quite what to think of it and on the whole I am sorry.(1)

Philby's friends and acquaintances such as Percy Cox and Arnold Wilson were also shocked and criticised his conversion.

1. Quoted in Monroe, E. Philby of Arabia, op. cit. P. 169.
decision to embrace Islam. But from all such accounts it does appear that both his family members as well as his close friends, unlike Ibn Saud's officials, had no semblance of doubt about his sincerity. However, Elizabeth Monroe who in 1973 wrote Philby's biography has expressed the opinion that he had not sincerely converted to Islam. She has quoted extensively from Philby's unpublished diaries and from men close to him in order to prove her point. In fact she was of the opinion that Philby adopted the Islamic faith, firstly, to have easier access to the King in order to get business contracts in the country and, secondly, to fulfil his desire of being the first European to cross the desert tract commonly known as the Rub al Khali or the empty quarter.\(^1\)

Monroe, however, accepts that Philby's conversion was not unexpected, for he was contemplating to embrace Islam for quite a long time. According to Philby's unpublished diaries from which Monroe has extensively quoted he himself divided his life into two phases. In his first phase he was a deeply religious and devout Christian. The second phase began with his mission to Trinity College, Cambridge, in his mind underwent a drastic change. He gradually became a socialist, anti-

\(^1\) See Ibid. p. 163.
imperialist and even an atheist. The third phase started when he resigned from the British Government and began to think of adopting the Islamic faith. Monroe finds it difficult to believe that how a man 'to whom the existence of God had been intellectually incredible since 1907' would all of a sudden embrace Islam 'a religion that hung upon His oneness, as if God could be switched on and off like a light'. In her final opinion Philby embraced Islam not because of some inner or spiritual urge inside him but for the sake of convenience. She further supported her stand by quoting the following words of an Englishman:

'I saw him once alone (wrote Hope Gill, in charge of the British Legation in the summer of 1930). He made no pretence whatever, that his conversion was spiritual. He had been deliberating the step for years, ever since the first hot moments of his rage against HMG's Arab policy. This had now cooled, and the process had left him without rancour, but his disassociation from British ideals remained and he felt increasingly cutoff from things British and drawn to things Arabian. 

The main thrust of Monroe's argument, as evident from the above discussion was that there was no spiritual

1. Ibid. P. 164.
2. pp. 164-165
motivation behind Philby's conversion. This might have been true to some extent. However, her comment that how an agnostic person can suddenly become a devout religious man seems ridiculous. Because if it is possible for a man to abandon his faith and espouse agnosticism it should not be difficult or impossible for him to give up his agnostic ideas and start believing once again in the existence of God.

It will be unfair if Philby's own explanations and reasons for his conversion that he offered on various occasions are not taken into account. Soon after his conversion he was requested by Ibn Saud to explain what prompted him to embrace the Islamic faith. Complying with the King's request he wrote a brief/in Umm al Qura in which he categorically stated that 'Allah has opened my heart to the acceptance of Islam and has guided me to accept this religion in the root-a belief and full conviction of my conscience.'(1) But this was, more or less, a declaration of faith rather than an explanation of the reasons which led him to embrace Islam. However, in another article he offered a somewhat convincing explanation. His main argument was that like Cromwell's puritanism the Wahhabee movement led by Ibn Saud was a source of strength and power in Arabia:

1. Ibid. P. 168.
The present Arabian puritan movement harbinger an epoch of future political greatness based on strong moral and spiritual foundations. Also, I regard the Islamic ethical system as a real democratic fraternity, and the general conduct of life, including marriage, divorce and the absence of unjust stigma of bastardy, resulting in a high standard of Arabian public morality, as definitely superior to the European ethical code based on Christianity.... I consider an open declaration of my sympathy with Arabian religion and political ideals as the best methods of assisting the development of Arabian greatness.(1)

Philby's friends, as mentioned earlier, were not happy with his acceptance of Islam. To many of them he wrote letters explaining why he had espoused the Islamic faith. In his letter to Donald Robertson with whom he was very close and frank he offered probably the most convincing reason. 'My future', he wrote, 'is irrevocably bound up with Arabia and Ibn Saud.'(2) He further explained that had he embraced Islam a few years ago, especially when he resigned from the Government he might have been accused of acting out of anger and frustration. But he hoped that now

such an imputation would not be laid against him for he had taken the decision after due deliberation. In the same letter Philby also complained that now his genuine aspirations were frustrated in his native Britain while on the contrary he was warmly welcome by Ibn Saud and his people in Saudi Arabia. At the end of the letter he declared that his decision was well considered and final.

Any way the deed is finally and irrevocably done, and I shall die in perfect equanimity in the Muslim faith for which (especially on its ethical side) I have a very real admiration.

Apparently Philby seems to have been impressed by the ethical aspect of Islam and that he was more concerned with its political aspect, most especially with the political future and greatness of Ibn Saud's Kingdom than anything else. This gives credence to Monroe's charge that his acceptance of Islam was not a result of some spiritual crisis that he was confronted with but he did so for reasons purely ethical, political and material. However, whatever may have been the motivations behind his conversion, material or spiritual, once he adopted the religion of Islam he stood by it till his final breath. Quite understandably

1. Ibid.
his conversion brought him closer to the Arab people. He now identified himself with the Arab nation, their Islamic culture and civilization, and shared their hopes and aspirations for political independence and regarded their achievements and failures as his own.

Philby's writings, especially his travel books which he produced both in his pre and post conversion life are rich in the sense that they mirror cultural and socio-religious conditions of the Arabian peninsula of the first half of the twentieth century. Especially his two books - The Heart of Arabia (two volumes) and the Arabia of the Wahhabis, which were written before his conversion, reflect very clearly the Arab realities but according to the vision with which Philby saw them during his journeys in Najd in 1917-1918. In these travelogues Philby seems to be concerned with a variety of subjects. But more particularly he deals with the living realities of the then Arabian society. It is this aspect of his travel books that merits a thorough and comprehensive study.

Islam In his travelogues Philby frequently refers to Islam, the religion believed and practised by the Arabs. As his works were written in two phases of his life, Christian and Islamic, naturally they are divided into two kinds reflecting two different attitudes. The first may be described
as one of interest and the other as one of indifference. In his pre-conversion works he seems taking interest in the subject of Islam and his attitude towards it is sometimes objective and sometimes negative. That he has meticulously and objectively described certain aspects of Islam as understood and practised by the followers of Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab. But on many occasions, as will be seen later on, his attitude or approach appears to have been highly negative.

As far Philby's post conversion travelogues are concerned he seems to have deliberately maintained an attitude of indifference. That he does consciously avoid any reference to Islam which might be regarded as negative or derogatory. As a result his post-conversion travelogues, with the sole exception of A Pilgrims in Arabia are little or not at all concerned with the religion of Islam. It is, therefore, reasonable to discuss his overall attitude towards Islam, as reflected especially in his travelogues, without dividing it into two: One of his pre-conversion and the other of his post-conversion life.

Philby was a prolific writer and produced many books about Arabia. However, throughout his long academic career he did not produce even a single intellectual and academic work that specifically dealt with Islamic thought, its belief
system and ethics. In fact it is mainly in his travel books that he wrote about the Islamic faith. His travelogues, as can be ascertained from the above discussion, do not present a completely disfigured picture of Arab realities, nor are blindly hostile towards the Arab people, their religion and aspirations for independence and progress. In fact his narrative of his experiences in Arabia, as mentioned above, is objective in many respects. But it does not mean that his works are completely free from subjectivity and contain no ill-will towards the Arabs and their religion. Despite a great deal of objectivity that he successfully maintained in all his works, travelogues or serious books, his outlook was still ethnocentric and European, if not Christian. He seems to be obsessed with a sense of belonging to the superior culture and civilization of the West. Naturally his superiority complex not only affected, here and there, his objectivity but also prejudiced his judgements on many counts. Moreover, this sense of belonging to the Christian West was aroused, rather heightened to the maximum when he felt that it was threatened by a strange culture. While travelling with the 'Wahhabee fanatics' in Najd, many of whom openly expressed their dislike of him for being a Christian infidel, Philby intensely felt that his British self and Christian identity were under a serious threat.
I had scarcely been conscious
of the fatigue and worry which
had accompanied my task
in a land of fanatics who,
by studied aversion and often
by unconcealed expression of
their hatred of the infidel in
their midst, had made my
life a lonely and depressing one.\(^1\)

The so-called 'Wahhabi fanaticism' not only made
him feel alienated but also helped him regain his Christian
identity which he had forgotten since his days at Cambridge.
His resurrected Christian identity prompted him even to
speak like an over zealous Christian missionary.

Irresistably my thoughts carried
me back over nineteen hundred
years and more to just such
a scene (a Christmas occasion
which he celebrated among the
Bedouins) as this, when simple
herding folk received the first
tidings of an event destined to
change the history of the world.
Should one come this night with
word that Isa Ibn Miryam had
returned to earth to gather the
true believers to their God, the
Ataiba shepherd folk would arise

and follow him, believing and 
fearing not. (1)

Excessive missionary zeal, whether in a Christian
or in the followers of any other faith, makes its upholder
look down upon the faith of other people. So happened with
Philby. His resurrected and revitalized Christianity forced
him to raise objections and pass unsavoury remarks on Islam.
In doing so he showed little regard for fair justice. In a
balanced criticism the views and arguments of the opposite
side which they might offer in defence of their position
are duly taken into account. On the contrary in a lop-sided .
criticism this basic principle is completely ignored, hence
it amounts to a one sided speech, a monologue which bothers
not about the opponents' stand and thus involves the risk
of verging on folly. Such follies and superficial remarks
about Islam and its various tenets and practices are recurrent
in Philby's early works:

It was a winter month that the
Prophet, perhaps scarcely
conscious of the inherent defects
of the lunar calendar, selected
for the first Ramdhan. It
was moreover for Arabia that
he legislated, little realizing

perhaps that his creed would ever penetrate beyond its frontiers, but certainly ignorant that the span of day light differed at different latitudes.(1)

'He legislated' clearly implies that Islam according to Philby, was not a divine religion. Apparently he subscribes to the common Christian stand that Muhammad was not a real prophet but a cunning impostor. But even more erroneous is his assertion that the Prophet had no idea and foresight if his teachings would ever cross the frontiers of Arabian peninsula. For scholars well versed in Islamic history and traditions are fully aware of the fact that long before the virtual fall of the Roman and Persian empires the Prophet Muhammad had prophesied of their conquest by his followers. Moreover, had Philby made a serious attempt to comprehend the message of the Prophet he would have fully realized that Islam by its nature was incapable of being confined in boundaries. It is a universalist and missionary religion, hence bound to transcend all frontiers, geographical, religious and cultural.

Philby's remark that the Prophet Muhammad was unaware of the 'inherent defects of the lunar calendar' is equally

1. Philby, Arabia of the Wahhabis, op. cit. P. I.
erroneous and smacks of typical Western prejudice against things oriental. The West scarcely blames itself for its failure and inability to understand the East. On the contrary it condemns the East of being intricate and incomprehensible.

Infact this attitude or mentality stems directly from the superiority complex that the West has always been obsessed with. Philby, though a bitter critic of many Western ideals, was a victim of this common Western malady. As a result he failed to see the benefits inherent in the lunar calendar, especially in the case of fasting. Since the span of daylight is different at various latitudes it is possible only in this system that the people of various regions would not enjoy the blessings or suffer the hardship of the seasons permanently. And above all Philby ought to have understood that religion is not a mathematical calculation but a spiritual experience and moral obligation.

Blind hostility knows no end and can go to any extent. Philby, after having once subjected the Prophet to his bitter criticism seems determined to spare no opportunity that came his way to downgrade and belittle his personality. He even tried to malign and disfigure his personality through indirect comments. For instance in a passage to be quoted
shortly he stereotyped the Kinsmen of the Prophet whom he called a 'Primitive' savage race but the target of his ridicule and criticism was the Prophet himself. Infact a traveller is a highly privileged personality. He describes in his travelogues what he and in many cases only he sees and comes across. For a common man it is difficult, even beyond his capacity, to confirm his accounts which not unoften amount to sinister stereotypes from reliable sources. The poisonous effect of such stereotypes and impudent portrayal on a lay readership can be easily imagined. The following passage falls in the same category of stereotype:

Arabs they doubtless are, but with little in common with the nomads of the desert, with their coarse features, their wild hair and bridge-less noses, they seemed to me to be of some primitive savage race descending unregenerated by mixture with higher types from the remotest antiquity, and these are the Quraish, the Kinsmen of the Prophet.\(^{1}\)

Occasionally Philby seems to be highly impressed by the simplicity of Ibn Saud's creed, his hospitality and

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generosity and admires his efficient administration that enabled him to give both religious and political leadership to his people. But in his discussions with Ibn Saud, his companions and the governors of his various provinces he frequently makes a mockery of their religious zeal, political inexperience, their ignorance of modern science and their poor knowledge of the world. For example he narrates in a ridiculous manner that Ibn Saud, the Amir of the Najdi Arabs was ignorant of the fact that the Americans were of English stock and spoke the English language. The King as well as his people still believed that America was inhabited by the Red Indians. Philby revealed to Ibn Saud that how the Red Indians were subjugated by European especially British immigrants and asked if there was any mention of the American continent in the Holy Quran. A companion of the King replied in affirmative. Philby ridiculed him saying that how it could be possible for the said continent had not been discovered in the time of the Prophet to whom the Quran was revealed. However, Ibn Saud came to Ahmad's rescue and said 'God knows everything and the Quran is His Word'. Philby was not convinced by Ibn Saud's answer.

Philby narrates another incident as yet another example of Ibn Saud's ignorance in a similar mocking tone:

"Do you know, I asked, that you can reach America both by travelling westward and travelling eastward? Ibn Saud was puzzled, but Ahmad reminded him of the 'Kurriyat' or 'orbicularity' of the earth, though even that failed to satisfy him or my complete sanity."(1)

However, sometimes Philby engaged in serious conversations and discussed various subjects with Ibn Saud and other Arab notables. These discussions, to some extent, reflect the socio-religious and cultural realities of Arabia as they existed in Ibn Saud's time.

There is no denying the fact that in a truly Islamic society free mixing of men and women is not permissible. However, the fair sex has full right to education and can freely engage in all kinds of intellectual pursuit. But in Wahhabee Arabia which proclaimed to be truly Islamic women were not allowed to enjoy this fundamental right. Philby laments that they were thrown behind the closed doors 'without education or training for the service of society.'(2)

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. p. 255.
The condition of Arabian women, according to Philby's perception, was pathetic and lamentable on several other scores. For example polygamy and divorce, both abominable and greatly detested in the West in the early years of the running century were widely practised in Arabia. Philby often discussed these issues with Arab notables including Ibn Saud. Understandably he presents their arguments and his own counter-arguments in a way which tends to substantiate his stand on the one hand and put the Arabs on the offensive on the other. A remarkable feature of these discussions which Philby has recorded in his works is that while he himself felt at liberty to pass a sweeping remark on Arab culture and criticise their socio-religious norms he asked for concrete evidence if any of his Arab hosts ever ventured to make a generalized comment on English society and their social customs. For instance when a certain Dr. Abdullah remarked that at least ten percent Englishmen practised bigamy Philby asked him to give a concrete evidence and when his host failed to do so he forced him to take back his words. But when he himself alleged that fornication, adultery and many other social evils were common in Najdi society he felt no need to offer any evidence but did so on the petty pretext that he was told so and so by unknown Arabs. (1)

Philby's objection to the practice of polygamy and divorce was not new but a reflection of age-old and common European outlook. However, it is clear from the discussions recorded in his works that his Arab hosts were intellectually incompetent to satisfy his questioning mind in a rational way. For example Dr. Abdullah, instead of explaining that in what circumstance and with what conditions and restrictions the Islamic law allows the practice of polygamy, tried to justify it in the following manner:

Europe's losses of men during the War would compel her to abandon her monogamous basis both in order to make good the actual deficiency in the population and also in fairness to the women otherwise deprived of all chance of marriage. (1)

Philby's doubts were not to be removed by such hypothetical arguments. Instead he felt embolcened to raise objections against many other Islamic practices. Some lax Wahhabees of his time also strengthened his belief that Islam was hardly compatible with the modern age. He has described at length that how some Wahhabees used to malign the image of the Islamic law by their silly and foolish action. For instance he has cited the case of a certain Ibn Maiman who was very old and had two old wives. As

1. Ibic.
it was not enough, he decided to have a third wife and married a pretty young girl. The new wife immediately asserted herself and forced Ibn Maiman to divorce his two old wives. As a result the two women were divorced and thrown out of the house without having been provided with any provision to spend their life comfortably. Often such divorced women, as Philby has noted, were taken care of by their sons or other close relatives. But if they were not fortunate enough as to have obedient sons and responsible relatives they had to face a miserable future. Probably it were Philby's such experiences which prompted him to raise objections against the Islamic law of marriage and divorce.  

It is also pertinent to note that Philby's understanding of the Islamic law of marriage and divorce was pitifully poor. In his defence it might be said that his understanding of the Islamic law was not based on a study of some relevant scholarly treatise but he had come to know them, as mentioned above, from the Wahhabee way of living and their observance of Islam. Indeed, if one is ready to believe Philby's accounts, it appears that he was led to form a poor opinion of the Islamic law by Ibn Saud himself. According to Philby once Ibn Saud argued with him in the following manner which clearly suggested that the Islamic law

law of marriage and divorce was lax and irrational.

'Why is it,' asked Ibn Saud, 'that you English allow divorce to be so difficult? Among us when a wife no longer pleases we get rid of her by thrice repeating a simple word. Taliq, taliq, taliq, that is enough, Wallah, in my life time I have married five and seventy wives and, Inshallah, I have not done with wiving yet, I am yet young and strong. And now with the great losses caused by the War assuredly the time will come when the people of Europe shall take more wives than one.'

This was obviously a travestical interpretation of the Islamic law which might be considered as Ibn Saud's personal opinion. However, it must have made a bad impression on Philby's mind who belonged to a monogamous society. Nevertheless Philby appreciates Ibn Saud for taking proper care of his divorced wives. Indeed according to royal tradition those of the divorcees who bore him children were entitled to special consideration. They were provided with provisions and facilities to lead a somewhat happier

life. Moreover, they had to bring up the royal children and were not married away to other men as was the case with the childless divorcees of the King.\(^{(1)}\)

According to Philby other practices of Ibn Saud pertaining to marriage and divorce were equally disgusting. Usually he would have three wives at a time and ‘keep the fourth vacancy open to be filled temporarily by any girl to whom he may take a fancy during his expeditions abroad’.\(^{(2)}\) Such marriages did not last long and were broken at his convenience. Often a newly married girl was returned back to her parents with gift and provisions when he needed her no longer.

Although Philby had some misconceptions in his mind either under the influence of age old prejudices against Islam or because he was led to do so by some silly Wahhabee traditions, it is, however, crystal clear that he had a keen desire to understand at least the Najdi society

1. See Ibid.

2. Ibid. It might be pertinent here to note that in the Arabian tribal society it was a common practice to establish a political bond between two tribes through mutual marriages. It was regarded as highly immoral and disgraceful to break such a bond by waging war or rising in rebellion against the person concerned. Perhaps it will be appropriate to conclude that some of Ibn Saud’s marriages were of this nature and were conducted to serve one or another political purpose.
and the pristine form of Islam they claimed to practise at the time of his journey. Moreover, he observed a good deal of objectivity while writing down some of his experiences in his works. Although his account of the Wahhabee creed is not free from errors his objectivity is beyond suspicion which must have greatly influenced the English readers for whose benefit he had primarily produced his travel books.

Salah or Islamic prayer Philby's objectivity is at its best when he describes the Wahhabee mode of prayer and other related practices. Minute and vivid description is especially remarkable. However, there are some mistakes in his accounts which will be pointed out in their proper place.

As well known Islamic prayer, the Salah in Arabic is prefaced by Adhan, the call to prayer. The Wahhabee formula of Adhan, says Philby, is identical with that of other sunni schools except one additional phrase —La Ilaha Illa Allah — which the Wahhabees pronounce at the end of Adhan. (1) It is to be noted that this is not an additional phrase used by the Wahhabees alone but is an essential part of Adhan practised by all Sunni Schools.

Aahan is followed by Salah or the prayer. According to Philby the congregation assembles in a Masjid, a specific place where prayer is offered. The prayer is usually led by an Imam or the leader who is chosen either on account of his age or social standing or because of his religious knowledge. Philby is again wrong when he says that the second Achan (Iqamah) ends at Qad Qamat al Salah (the prayer has begun)\(^{(1)}\). In fact this phrase is followed by two more phrases which imply oneness and greatness of Almighty God. These two phrases are proclaimed by all Sunni schools including the Wahhabees who basically follow the school of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

Philby's description of the Muslim prayer is remarkably minute and meticulous. But as mentioned earlier it does contain a number of mistakes or things which might mislead a layman. For example about the end of the sunset prayer (Maghrib) he writes,

The sunset prayer, which is almost identical with the Asha is gone through, and at its conclusion the Imam, first turning his head to the right and then to the left, repeats in each direction the formula, Salam Alaikum wa rahmatallah. There follows a slight pause and a general clearing of throats.\(^{(2)}\)

2. Ibid.
In a similar manner Philby writes that at the end of the Isha prayer also people used to murmur and then recite the ninety nine attributes of God. The way Philby describes all these, almost in the same breath, one may get the impression, especially those who are not well versed in Islamic theology, that even throat clearing or whatever follows the Salam that marks the end of the prayer are essential part of Muslim prayer. It also needs to be clarified that even the attributes of God which many prayer-sayers recite silently after the Salam are not a part of the prayer. However, there is no denying the fact that it has a religious significance and is done in accordance with the Sunnah or practice of the Prophet.

Philby rightly says that the Wannabee prayer is almost identical or in consonance with that of other Sunni Muslims. But some of his observations are highly ridiculous and reflect a typical attitude of travellers who generally accept things at their face value and do not realize that one or two incidents that they have come across, may be, instead of being common, might have been rare individual acts. For example once or twice he saw a few individuals who suddenly rose from their prostration and ran after an unruly camel to bring him back to his proper place, and then returned to the prayer without any
hesitation as there had occurred no interruption. Philby took such rare incidents as typical of all the Wahhabees and, as a result, made an erroneous comment that the Wahhabee prayers are conspicuous by absence of 'empty formalities' and of single hearted concentration, things generally 'left to individual predilections'. Equally incorrect is his remark that haste, inattention, lack of devotion and other deviations of the kind are immaterial in Islamic worships and prayers. (1)

However, Philby has described some other aspects of the prayer with considerable insight and accuracy. 'When journeying,' he writes, 'they are permitted from motives of convenience to telescope the five appointed times of prayer into three, but not thereby to shorten... the prayers themselves.' (2) Philby has, however, not elaborated whether the number of Rakat is reduced by the Wahhabees or not. By Taqsr he understands that a traveller can unite Zuhr and Asr, the midday and afternoon prayers respectively, at a time roughly midway between the two or at some time before the later (Asr) prayer. Likewise he can unite the Maghrib and the Isha at a time immediately after the sun sinks below the horizon or at a time, as

2. Ibid. P. 251.
some stricter Wahhabees insist, when the light attributable to the sun becomes completely invisible. As far the dawn prayer (Fajr) is concerned it will be said at its usual hour, whether the prayer-sayer is at home or in a state of journey.\(^1\)

The Wahhabees of the northern Najd, according to Philby, differed from those living in the south on certain matters. For example in southern Najd the *Adhan* or call to Maghrib prayer was proclaimed immediately after the sunset and for the morning prayer well before the sun was risen. However, in northern Najd the practice was slightly different; the morning call was proclaimed just before the actual dawn or at a time when the sun is near to rise, and the sunset call well after the sunset when every vestige of the Sun's light became invisible.\(^2\) Philby says that the northern Wahhabees considered their southern coreligionists as having deviated from the right course of things. They viewed strict time keeping as being very important in matter of prayers. They were further disgusted with their southern brothers on the question of Qadha (making good an omission to pray at the correct moment). According to them Qadha was permissible only when it was caused by no mistake of the individual concerned. It is not meant for those

1. See Ibid,
people who deliberately avoid to say prayers at their specified time. These squabbings, according to Philby, were in fact the beginning of 'theological hair splitting among the simple Arabs of the desert'.

Ramadan or the Month of Fasting: Besides the prayer Philby has also dealt with various aspects of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. His narrative of the holy month like that of the Seerah or prayer is minute, objective, and reflects his keen power of observation, understanding, and insight into various Wannabee practices. Remarkably his narrative in this regard is free from egregious mistakes. Moreover, he is not merely concerned with theological aspects of the holy month but also he is keenly desirous of knowing that what the Wannabees do or what special prayers they say in order to achieve spiritual cleanliness and success. Viewed in this perspective his narrative of the holy month seems to have become a mirror of the socio-religious realities of the then Najdi society.

Philby rightly observes that Ramadan occupies a prominent place in Wannabee scheme of things. It is as important for them as the Passover to the Jews or Lent to the followers of Christianity. A fast, as Philby rightly defines, is to abstain from eating drinking, smoking and to avoid sexual

1. Ibid.
intercourse. He further opines that the Wahhabees are in agreement with the Muslims of other schools regarding the above matters. However, they, according to philby, differ from other Muslims in the sense that they strictly observe all precepts related with the holy month. Even in the hottest days when the midday's scorching sun makes it almost impossible to perform even normal works, they, instead of sleeping and taking rest, prefer to say additional prayers, contemplate and recite verses of the Holy Quran. Most especially they manifest extraordinary religious fervour in the last ten days of the holy month in order to be fortunate enough to find and subsequently spend in prayer the Lailat al Qadr, the Night of Glory which is better than a thousand months.\(^{(1)}\)

Ramadhan is a special month of prayer and its all days and nights are vitally important in the eyes of all Muslims including the Wahhabees. But the final ten days, especially the nights of the odd dates are religiously more significant than others. For any of the five odd nights may happen to be the Night of Glory. Here Philby appears to be a typical Western Christian whose view of the Prophet Muhammad is highly prejudiced and as a result he passed a derogatory comment on his personality. He wrongly thinks that Muhammad could not exactly specify the Night of Glory because he was not able or competent to do it. Philby perhaps wanted to

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\(^{(1)}\) See, Philby, Arabia of the Wahhabis, op. cit. p. 3.
suggest that the last messenger, unlike Muslims' clear claim, was not inspired by God, received no revelation from Him and that he was not a prophet in the class of Jesus and other biblical prophets. Had he been so he must have specified the exact date. Whatever the reason it shows Philby's disrespect and prejudice against the Prophet. In fact if one studies carefully the sayings and traditions of the prophet which deal with this subject, the Night of Glory, he would come to a definite conclusion that the purpose of leaving the date unspecified was not to keep the believers in suspense but to encourage them to say additional prayers in order to attain consummate spirituality and win the favour of God. Perhaps the Wahhabees of Najd understood this point very well. The uncertainty pertaining to the exact date of the Night of Glory meant more prayers and more worship for them. Because this uncertainty is rendered even more uncertain, especially in view of the fact that every month in the lunar calendar begins with the actual sight of the moon. And it is common knowledge that occasionally the sighting of the moon becomes very difficult, even impossible either due to bad weather or because of some other reasons. It means there is always a possibility of an error regarding the actual day of the beginning of a lunar month. In plain words it is quite possible that the twentieth in actual fact is twenty first or the vice versa. In such a situation one can not be sure
of the exact date of the Night of Glory which may fall in any of the odd nights of the last ten days. Keeping this possibility of error or uncertainty in view the Wahhabees spend rigorously all the nights in prayer and other religious exercises from twentieth of the month to its end. It ensures that they will not miss the Night of Glory any way.  

(1)

The Wahhabees spent in prayer not only nights but also devoted a considerable portion of the day to various kinds of religious services. During the whole month of Ramadhan every 'Wahhabee day', according to Philby, was marked besides regular prayers, by meditation and extensive reading of the Holy Quran. He cites the example of a certain Abd al Rahman who had made it a habit to recite the Holy Quran as many as thirty times in as many days. Even Ibn Saud who being ruler of his country had to attend to the affairs of the State was often able and fortunate enough to make atleast four or five reading of the whole Quran. These rigorous and stundenous religious services of the Wahhabees, according to Philby, were infact a test of their fortitude and capacity, both moral and physical, to suffer and endure. Endurance, in his view, is a great quality and the month of Ramadhan gives it to those fortunate people who observe it. Philby rightly observes

1. See Ibid. p. 4.
that since the purpose of the great fast is spiritual edification or purification of soul it is believed by the Wahhabees that only abstinence from eating and drinking would not work. Rather it should be accompanied by extensive religious services such as recitation of the Holy Quran, additional prayers besides the regular ones and by a total distraction from all bad habits, evil deeds and wickedness.(1)

Philby has given a full length account of other practices related with the great fast of Ramadhan such as Suhur, Iftar, Tarawih and Gham et cetera. The Wahhabees, according to Philby, woke up well before the time prescribed for Suhur (pre-dawn meal). This extra period was usually utilized to say 'private' prayers (probably Thahajjud). After this, that is, before the true dawn (al Fajr al Sa'diq) they used to take Suhur as enjoined by the Prophet and went on doing so until the call for morning prayer was proclaimed from the minarets of various mosques. The Adhan as usual was followed by the morning prayer.

The prescribed time for Iftar, the breaking of the fast was sunset Adhan or the call to Maghrib prayer. A great majority of the Wahhabees, according to Philby, broke their fast at hearing the very first sound of the Adhan. However, some people did so only when the Adhan was over.(2) There

1. See Ibid. p. 5.
2. See Philby, The Heart of Arabia (Vol. II) op. cit. p. 25C.
were also some differences between the Shias, known as Rafidhees in Najd, and the Wahhabees regarding the exact timing of the call for *Maghrib* prayer. According to Philby the Shias proclaimed the *Adhan* only after the appearance of the first star on the horizon but the Wahhabees did so immediately after the sunset or when the last vestige attributable to the sun disappeared.

Philby has not mentioned that how the common people used to break their fast. The regular practice with Ibn Saud, however, was to repair to the roof of the private apartments of the palace, where he would be joined by various members of the royal family. Thus assembled they would await the first sound of the *Adhan* announcing sunset, each man holding a date between his forefinger and thumb while repeating the phrase *Astaghfir Allah* again and again in accordance with the practice and precepts of the Prophet(1).

Water, date and sliced melons, interalia, were the usual items of the royal *Iftar*. Immediately after the

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Iftar the sunset prayer was said.

The evening prayer (Isha) was usually said when the night was gone over an hour. The Isha prayer was followed by _Trawih_, a special supplication or a further course of service. In the last ten nights of Ramadhan, _Trawih_, after a short interval, was followed by the _Qiyam_ or the resurrection prayer as Philby called it. The _Qiyam_ in fact marks the culmination of the holy month. This special prayer was said through the whole night until the time came for _Suhur_. The _Qiyam_, according to Philby, was not an easy service, but an exhausting one. The inclinations and prostrations along with prolonged standing in this service are terribly long which all men, especially the weak and the old, find very difficult to bear. Hence, keeping in view the human frailty and weakness a few short intervals were observed in which the participants were provided with light refreshments such as tea and coffee within the precincts of the mosque.

The long 'ordeal' of Ramadhan, as Philby put it, comes to an end with the sighting of moon for _Id al Fitr_ which is a kind of thanks giving celebration. _Id_ is a day of happiness and rejoicing, and fasting on this day, according to the Islamic Shariah, is not permissible. However, after the _Id_ day one may observe six additional fasts as the Prophet and his companions used to do it. 'It is held,' writes Philby, 'that those whose
fortitude is equal to this extra penance are practically assured of admission into paradise in due course(1).

Philby accepted Islam in 1930 and from then onward he was very particular in following its various precepts especially when he used to live in Arabia. He was, however, little concerned with things spiritual and wrote rarely on spiritual aspect of Islam. Even in his book A Pilgrim in Arabia which is a record of the holy pilgrimage, he talks only of the spiritual experiences of other people and gives no hint if he himself underwent any such experience. For example he saw people thoroughly busy in various religious services such as prayer, meditation, recitation of the Qur'an and often found them weeping out of the fear of God and asking His favour and forgiveness. Moreover, once he found an opportunity to spend a night in the royal camp. Soon he was asleep. He, however, woke up around middle of the night and discovered, to his surprise, that Ibn Saud was engrossed in prayer(2). But these extraordinary religious and spiritual scenes seem to have aroused no such feeling in his heart. He was seemingly content with performing only the prescribed rituals of the pilgrimage.

Although it is not a part of the pilgrimage most pilgrims go to the holy city of Madīnah to pay

1. Ibid., p. 14.
their homage to the Prophet. The Green Dome of the Prophet is special attraction of the holy pilgrims. Moreover, they feel privileged to say prayers in the Grand Mosque of the prophet which is located in the sacred city. The scene in and around the Mosque is very moving. For the memory of every pilgrim is taken back to those glorious moments of history when his beloved Prophet was alive, struggling day and night against the widely prevalent ignorance of his time and happily suffering mental and physical ordeals to save humanity from falling in the deadly pit of Hell. Naturally his heart is moved and filled with love and devotion to the Prophet. He is thoroughly enraptured with great delights and undergoes an indescribable spiritual and emotional experience. But Philby's accounts of the holy city are presented in such a way as he did not have any spiritual experience and had no special love for the Prophet. It also speaks of his general attitude towards thing spiritual.

However, Philby has described the Haj rituals with amazing accuracy. Infact, after embracing Islam he had made a thorough study of Islam, its various aspects including the Haj. It placed him in a good position to write a travel book entitled: A Pilgrim in Arabia which, unlike the accounts of Christian travellers, is unprejudiced and free from glaring errors. Moreover, he used his first hand knowledge
to serve his newly adopted faith. For example once when he was speaking before an English audience in London he tried to correct a 'Strange error so common among novelists and other fanciful writers, who so often represent the Muhammadans as turning daily in prayer towards the grave of their Prophet at Mecca. As you all know, it is the House of God at Mecca they face at prayer time and not the Prophet's grave at Madina.'

Besides the prayers, the holy pilgrimage and the fast of Ramadhan Philby has also dealt with the Wahhabee attitude towards religious books and their practice to listen to reading either from traditional literature or from the Holy Quran after every evening or Isha prayer. The passages selected for such readings usually dealt with the pangs and torments that the sinners were to suffer in the life hereafter. Philby has also written that the Hanbali school of thought which the Wahhabees follow considered only two commentaries of the Holy Quran as authentic: Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Al Baghawi which were in twelve and six volumes respectively. Philby further says that the Wahhabee position on the succession of persons who are entitled to interprete the divine law is as follows: first the Prophet himself, second the Sahaba or the Prophet's companions, third alTabi'in

or the associates of the Prophet's companions and finally Tab'e Tabi'in, that is, the associates of the associates of the Prophet's companions. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal whose school of thought is followed by the Wahhabees was of the last category. (1)

Philby has also written about Ibn Saud's exposition of the true Islamic faith which in his opinion remained unchanged or unadulterated in the first three centuries of the Hijra calendar. However, in the next thousand years Islam, according to Ibn Saud, was polluted as a number of heresies were included in it. The purpose of Wahhabism was to eradicate all innovations like paying visit to the tombs of the Saints in order to seek their intercession with God either to find salvation or to fulfil some worldly needs.

As is evident from the above discussion Philby wrote extensively about Wahhabism and various Wahhabee practices, religious, social or cultural. But surprisingly nowhere in his works he dealt with the main tenets of the Wahhabee movement as explained by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the intellectual founder of the movement. Even in his book Arabia which deals, interalia, with ups and downs of the Wahhabee movement that

it witnessed at various junctures of its history he refers only in passing to the principles and teachings that Ibn Abd al Wahhab upheld and preached. For instance the above mentioned book contains a short statement which was in fact made by a delegation deputed by Ibn Abd al Wahhab himself to the Meccan ecclesiastics in order to clear his position and explain the message and philosophy of his reform movement. The statement is quoted here in full:

The imputation of heresy to us (the Wahhabis) is a subterfuge and a calumny against us, while the destruction of domes is an act of piety and virtue, as is recorded by other writers and not challenged or questioned by the learned, and the learned Imams (i.e. the Imams of the four orthodox schools of Sunni Islam) have given their verdict on recourse to the Saints for the purpose of intercession, and have condemned those who do so as guilty of infidelity, and no one maintains that it is right except ignorant infidels. (1)

Obviously it is merely a statement of faith and does

not sufficiently explain that what Wahhabism really means? Philby ought to have studied all the works of Ibn Abdal Wahhab in order to discuss the Wahhabee movement in detail. Had he done so, he would have been able to present a more illuminating, as well as interesting, study of the Wahhabee sect and the society that he saw during his journeys in various parts of Najd in central and eastern Arabia.

Philby in Iraq Although a civil servant hence a pillar of the British Empire Philby, as will become evident from the ensuing discussion, often opposed his country's imperial policies. There is no denying the fact that in the early days of his service in Mesopotamia he was basically a government of India man and believed in the virtue of Britain's imperial administration. However, after his meeting with Ibn Saud in late 1917 his ideas began to change. When in Iraq he had hardly met an Arab of exceptional character, ability and strength, authoritative and ambitious enough to impress upon his mind that the Arabs were competent as well as prepared to rule themselves without foreign interference. But his desert adventure of 1917-18 brought him into contact with the Arabs who were born and brought up in an atmosphere of freedom and were able to run their own without foreign help. He was especially impressed by Ibn Saud whom he later
described as 'beyond all price.'(1) In Ibn Saud's charming and powerful personality he found an ideal Arab who, in his earnest opinion, had the ability to give a dynamic and able leadership to the Arabs.

Philby was in such a state of mind when in November 1918 France and Britain issued a statement about their future policy in respect of the Arab territories occupied by the Allied forces. The statement which later became known as Anglo-French Declaration was aimed at allaying the Arab fear that the governments of Britain and France intended to establish their imperial rule in Iraq and Syria respectively. It further promised that future governments in Arab countries will be formed by the free choice of native people which in fact was a clear cut promise for Arabs' right to self determination. Philby was particularly happy with the declaration and became rather over optimistic about its consequence, for it not only tallied with but also stimulated his newly acquired ideas about Arab independence. This so-called Anglo-French Declaration later became the bedrock of Philby's bitter but well founded criticism of Europe's imperial designs on the Arab world.

The Anglo-French Declaration was in fact a meaningless document and was never intended to be fully implemented. This is the reason that the British Government continued with its imperial policies in Iraq ignoring the Arab desire for independence, a wrong decision for which they later paid dearly. Because in 1920 the Iraqi people rose in rebellion against the British occupation of their country. The rebellion was quelled at a heavy cost. But it forced the British policy makers in the Whitehall to adopt a new policy. As a result Sir Percy Cox was recalled from Iran to replace Arnold Wilson. Cox, an admirer of Philby's great energies invited him to join his staff.

The new British policy was to grant semi-independence to the Iraqi people. Cox, Philby and Gertrude Bell 'in perfect union and harmony' devised a system in accordance with the new policy. The idea was to 'set up in Baghdad a provisional Government that would meet with universal approval and acceptance'.

The Provisional Government was to work with the help of a Council of Ministers. It was decided that suitable as well as amenable Iraqis will be selected for various ministries and that every minister will be assisted by a competent British adviser. The role of the advisers was

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clearly defined as only to give advice, when needed, to the ministers and not to run the country. It appears that Philby, in full collaboration with Cox and Miss Bell, was determined to prove that Wilson's policies were thoroughly wrong.

In fact Wilson was a pure imperialist and was not happy with the Anglo-French Declaration. He, after hearing the news of the Declaration, had contemplated to set up only city councils in which the elected Iraqis were to be allowed to discuss but to have no right to vote or take a decision. For he believed that the Iraqis were yet unprepared for self rule and incapable of managing their affairs without Britain's imperial presence. But on the contrary Philby had quite liberal views and believed that the inhabitants of Iraq should be allowed to run their show independently. In his opinion the only role left for the so-called advanced Britain was to help the Iraqis in their new role.

Cox shared some of Philby's liberal ideas for the time being. His main problem, however, was to find out suitable Iraqis for various ministeries and to pick up wise British advisers to help them in administering the affairs of the country. Moreover he had to prepare a set of guidelines that were needed to maintain a balanced and working relationship between the Ministers and their advisers. Cox, with the help of Philby and Miss Bell, overcame these problems
and at last set up a Council of Ministers with Syed Abd al Rahman, the Naqib of Baghdad as its first and last president. Syed Talib, an ambitious and shrewd politician, was appointed the Interior Minister with Philby as his adviser. Philby soon started to couch him in right ideas.

The main task for which the Provisional Government was set up was to draft an electoral law for holding general election in the country. After much discussion, arguments and controversies the Naqib Government was able to pass such a law and sent it to the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, for promulgation. But it could never be promulgated. Because Winston Churchill, along with Lawrence and other officers of the Colonial Office, was thinking on quite a different line. In fact their intention was to install Faisal King of Iraq.

However, most Iraqis, according to Philby, were against the installation of a puppet Hashimite Kingdom in their country. Philby was also against Faisal's installation in Iraq. The success of the Provisional Government under the Naqib of Baghdad had further strengthened his long cherished idea that the people of Iraq, if given a chance and properly couched in right ideas, will ably run their own independent government. It was in this perspective
that he, more than any other British adviser, had assured the Naqib of Baghdad and Syed Talib who were naturally perturbed at hearing the news of Faisal's installation that Britain had no intention to impose its own man on Iraq and that she sincerely wanted to give a chance to the people of Iraq to decide their destiny. It had not occurred to him even in his wildest dream that Britain would break its word and betray his as well as the Arabs' good faith. Naturally he was upset when he learned that the Cairo Conference (held in 1921) had decided to install Faisal in Iraq ignoring the Anglo-French Declaration which had promised the Arabs the right to self-determination.

The news of Faisal's installation caused personal frustration as well. Since his meeting with the Wahhabee monarch, Ibn Saud, in 1917 he had been constantly thinking of an independent Arab government. While working in Iraq as an adviser to the Provisional Government he had often thought that circumstances were probably favourable to realize his dream. But his aspirations were frustrated by the Cairo Conference. He upbraided his country for disregarding the Anglo-French Declaration and betraying a 'sacred trust for civilization.'

But imperialism has no respect for 'civilization' for the legitimate aspirations of the subject people. On
Cox's order Faisal was farcically elected King of Iraq. Philby refused to reconcile with the new arrangement and as a result had to go. He resigned in protest.

In Transjordan However, he was reemployed and sent to Transjordan as Chief British Representative in November 1921. His main task was to watch over the Amir Abdullah, prevent his spending spree, establish an independent and efficient administration and suppress nationalist elements who had come from Syria when the French dismantled Faisal. In a year's time he was able to bring back the country on the right track. The good performance of Abdullah's administration prompted the British Government to invite him to London in October 1922 where he was promised to be granted independence. The so-called 'document of independence,' however, was handed over to him by Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner for Palestine at a function in Amman in May 1923. The main points of the document, according to Philby, were as follows:

That His Majesty's Government, subject to the approval of the League of Nations, recognized the existence in Trans-Jordan of an independent administration under the Amir Abdullah,
provided that such administration
should be conducted on democratic
and constitutional lines, and should,
by an agreement to be negotiated
thereafter, place His Majesty's Government
in a position to discharge its international
obligations in respect of the
territory in question.(1)

Naturally Philby was happy and became rather sanguine
about the consequences of the so-called 'document of inde­
pendence'. But his happiness proved short lived. Gradually
Abdullah again became autocratic, tyrant and extravagant.
In keeping with the so-called 'document of independence'
which Philby regarded as a solemn declaration by the British,
and also in the interest of the Amir himself Philby advised
to convene a representative assembly by holding free election

1. Philby, 'Trans-Jordan' in Central Asiatic Society
in the country. He tried to convince Abdullah that such a representative Government, on the one hand, will help him run his administration effectively and, on the other, it will dispel the widespread impression that he (Philby) always collected on his rounds both among the wandering Bedouins and the sedentary city-dwellers that he (Abdullah) was merely a figurehead appointed by the Christian Britain to serve their purpose and that the old Turkish Government was preferable, not because it was good and effective but because it had not been subordinated to a Christian or any infidel power. He further explained to

1. It is important to note that while Philby was encouraging Abdullah as well as doing his own bit to win the British support for the independence of Transjordan, he did also advise and encourage the Amir either to expel or suppress the activities of the Syrian nationalists who had sought refuge in Abdullah's country after the French dismantled Faisal and occupied their country in July 1920. These nationalists were of the view that all Arab countries should be freed from the clutches of European imperialism in order to run their independent governments. Philby who claimed to be a supporter of the Arab independence never encouraged or extended his support to the nationalist elements. He never explained that why he did so. However, there are two possible explanations. First, Philby perhaps did not agree with the aspirations of the nationalists who wanted complete freedom and were not satisfied with the idea of limited independence under nominal British control which he himself favoured. Second, he probably realized that the Syrian nationalists were mainly active for and interested in Syria's independence. Moreover, they were merely individuals and had little influence with the natives of Transjordan. Next, they were an anathema to both, the British authorities in Palestine and the French Government in Syria. Philby perhaps thought that in the given circumstances his alliance with encouragement of the Syrian nationalists would not be helpful to promote Transjordanian independence. For their presence in the country was bound to invite the wrath of the British authorities in Palestine who, he feared, might create obstacles in the way of Abdullah's independence.
to Abdullah that the convening of a representative and democractic government will benefit him greatly for it will gain the support and favour of those high ranking British officers and politicians who matter most in respect of Britain's colonies in Asia and Africa.

But Abdullah was not in a mood to heed to Philby's advice. He went on enjoying his unrestricted and autocratic powers, without showing any desire to curtail it by convening a representative government in the country. His ministers and higher officials were also against the establishment of a democratic government in the country. For they feared that the elected representatives of people will deprive them of their lucrative services. In fact it were these ministers and officers who exploited Abdullah's weaknesses to the maximum in order to serve their personal interests. As a result the treasury of the country, in Philby's words, was 'robbed right and left'. Moreover, 'essential services were allowed to suffer by non-payment of the salaries of their personnel, Government's lands were distributed among the Amir's favourite Shaikhs without any corresponding advantage to the public exchequer, even private owners were expropriated for the benefit of those who coveted their holdings. Badawin Shaikhs were allowed to remain, in fact, immune from the payment of due taxes, while the poorer agricultural classes
and some of them are very poor indeed - were forced to pay not only current taxation, but all uncollected arrears of taxation dating back to 1918. (1)

It was not only Abdullah who committed mistakes every time but sometimes Philby also acted hastily and foolishly. On one such occasion when he learned that an ancient Byzantine basilica was destroyed on Abdullah's order he lost his composure, upbraided the Amir in strongest words and even declared that he was unfit to rule his country. The relations between the two became so tense that Herbert Samuel was forced to intervene. But to Philby's annoyance and chagrin he favoured Abdullah. Philby was intelligent enough to read the writing on the wall. Samuel's intervention in favour of Abdullah convinced him that the High Commissioner was a Zionist Jews and wanted to include Transjordan in the area of Jewish settlement. Realizing that he was no more needed either by Abdullah or by his Government he handed in his resignation in 1924. In a letter to Harold Dickson he explained his reasons for resigning from the Government service:

"I have resigned this job for many, very many reasons, the chief of them is that I can no longer go on"

working with the present High Commissioner who, being a Zionist Jew, can not hold the scales even between Zionist and Arab interests. Besides this, Abdullah has rather let me down by his personal extravagance, which is on such a scale that he is simply inviting interference, and getting it in full measure from H.M.G., which means the Zionist element. So I am off. (1)

Before leaving Transjordan Philby warned Abdullah that his (Philby's) successor, however friendly, will be in fact his master. (2) His warning was proved right by the subsequent events. Cox who succeeded Philby soon realized that Abdullah was not only incompetent but also unmanageable. As a result he reported to his Government that the Amir was a "disease which was rapidly destroying the country." (3) Peake, a British officer was earlier asked to prepare a report on the history of Abdullah's administration. Peake's report had indicted Abdullah for many lapses. He had also stated that Abdullah was not a good and efficient administrator and opined that it was advisable to get rid of him on a suitable occasion. The British authorities knew that

1. Quoted in Monroe, E. Philby of Arabia, op. cit. p. 132.
2. See Philby, Arabian Days, op. cit. p. 236.
Abdullah was due to visit the holy city of Mecca in June 1924 in order to perform the holy pilgrimage. They decided to warn the Amir when he was due to return back from the holy land. An ultimatum to this effect was duly drafted and delivered to him on August 14 1924. In the ultimatum it was made clear that Abdullah would be allowed to enter the country and continue as its ruler only when he agreed with certain British demands such as 'military inspection and control, the expulsion of undesirables (nationalist elements), the conclusion of an extradition agreement with Syria and the abolition of the department of tribal administration.' Helpless and ejected, Abdullah conceded all the demands. It is clear that Cox, as Philby had predicted, was the real master and that the so-called independent Abdullah was merely a puppet ruler installed by the British to play their game.

His Political Ideas: After his resignation from the Government service in 1924 Philby became thoroughly engrossed in Arab as well as international politics, mainly through his speeches and writings. His outlook especially in respect of Arab politics was one of a devoted admirer and supporter of Ibn Saud. It is a fact that Ibn Saud had ably established peace in his volatile desert country where chaos and anarchy were order of the day before his emergence on the scene. In almost

1. Ibid. p. 24.
all his books which contain accounts of his travels in various parts of Arabia he paid glowing tributes to the Wahhabee monarch for his great contribution to the unity and integrity of his country. He even goes to the extent of saying that people beyond the Wahhabee dominion had also real respect and admiration for Ibn Saud because of his great achievements.

For instance he was told in Hadhramaut whose inhabitants were somewhat content, though not happy, with the British Protectorate that they would accept with open hands Ibn Saud's cooperation to establish peace in their land. The inference, according to Philby, was obvious that the so-called British protection had failed to put an end to anarchy and disorder in Hadhramaut. In Philby's opinion it was only Ibn Saud who could bring peace to Hadhramaut as he had achieved it remarkably in his own country. (1)

As regards international politics Philby always, especially after his resignation from the Government service sided with and supported the cause of Arab independence against European, particularly British imperialism. His stand was based on the principle that every individual as well as nation is entitled to freedom. Independence in itself is an inestimable and priceless asset which is a matter of pride for all people.

and is held in high esteem by every nation in the world. But in Philby's age or in the early years of this century imperialism which aims at depriving individuals as well as nations of their freedom was in full swing in Asia and Africa. As an Arabophile Philby, however, was concerned with the presence, practice and effect of imperialism in the Arab world. He criticised all things and acts which tended to harm the cause of Arab independence.

It was, however, only after his resignation that Philby became a die-hard critic of Britain's imperial policies. Moreover, he also began to advocate the idea of complete Arab independence while earlier when he was in Government service he had conditioned it with British protection or wanted some kind of Anglo-Arab alliance in order to realize Arab aspiration for freedom.

The first target of Philby's criticism after his resignation was British as well as French mandate granted to them by the League of Nations which, in the absence of the United States, was under full control of the two imperialist powers. Philby's main charge was that the mandates were undesirable because they denied the Arabs their inalienable right to self determination. Moreover they deprived the Arab people of their national freedom which was promised to them in the Anglo-French Declaration of the eighth November,
1918. Philby’s criticism, however, proved to be a cry in the wilderness and failed to convince and persuade the policy makers of his country to change their imperial policies and grant independence to the Arabs.

Philby never spared any opportunity that came his way to criticise British imperialism. And such opportunities were not rare to occur, especially at a time when Britain was determined to consolidate its imperial presence in the newly occupied Arab territories of Iraq, Jordan and Palestine. He had hardly finished his campaign against the mandates and Anglo-French betrayal of faith (which they had committed by refusing to implement their solemn declaration of eight November), when in July 1925 the British Government annexed to Transjordan the districts of Aqaba and Maan which were a part of king Husain’s Kingdom at the time of its fall to Ibn Saud. Infact when a conflict started between king Husain and Ibn Saud for domination in Arabia Great Britain categorically announced to follow a policy of neutrality. They also believed that Ibn Saud’s irregular army will be annihilated by Husain’s well trained soldiers. But they were greatly alarmed and consequently changed their policy when they realized that Ibn Saud, contrary to their expectation, would out clay the Sherif and put an end to the Hashmite Kingdom in the Hajaz. The reason for Britain’s volte face was not difficult to understand. Infact Transjordan was of vital importance for Britain
in order to safeguard its economic and strategic interests in the Suez Canal and Red Sea zone. But this was to be done effectively only when Transjordan had free access to the sea through the port of Aqaba. Britain saw no clearer when its two allies, Husain and Abdullah, were ruling over the Hijaz and Transjordan respectively. But the moment Ibn Saud, who was also a British ally but less amenable than the former two, threatened to bring down Husain's Kingdom, the British Government promptly decided to annex Aqaba and Maan so that the port of Aqaba will come under control of its reliable ally, Abdullah, the Amir of Transjordan, Ibn Saud protested to the British Government and refused to give his recognition to the British mandate in Palestine and Iraq, but it proved of no avail.

Philby was, however, quick to condemn the British Government and flooded the radical press in Britain with letters and articles in which he criticised the annexation as illegal. The core of his arguments was that the annexed districts, Maan and Aqaba, were a part of Husain's Kingdom when it fell to Ibn Saud, hence they belonged invariably to his country. In his opinion the British action was yet another example of aggression against a weak nation.

Imperialism and expansionism are twin sisters. Once Britain took the decision to make imperialism the cornerstone of its foreign policy it was natural for her to pursue a policy...
of territorial expansion. Expansionism means to encroach on the legitimate rights and national independenee of unprivileged people and to subject them to sheer economic exploitation and worst kind of political oppression. These were the realities that Philby witnessed during his travels in Hadhramaut, its valleys, towns and villages.

In fact in 1935 Philby had travelled in Shabwa which he considered as independent and out of the jurisdiction of the Aden Protectorate. But Britain, on the other hand, regarded it as its own territory. Philby however, disputed their claim and competently exposed the weakness of their case.

In the first place he rightly questioned the legitimacy of the Aden Protectorates Order of 1937 that enabled Britain to encroach upon the territories which were originally included in the area where an independent Arab state was to be established as defined in the Husain-McMahon correspondence. In fact the Aden Protectorate was stretched over an area of 3,000 square miles only to which, after the implementation of the Aden Protectorates Order, Britain annexed about 7000 square miles of the Aden hinterland. Philby's objection was that it was illegal as well as immoral to snatch the areas of Arab independence under one or another pretext. (1)

Britain's annexation was illegal not only in Philby's opinion but also in the eyes of the people of the annexed territories as is evident from the interviews that he had with them. When journeying in Hadramaut and Shabwa once he was told by a certain Salih that the British claim over his territory was ridiculous and without any substance.

By the by, I said to Salih, the British authorities in Aden informed me by telegram when I was at Mukallah that Shabwa and the Karab country lie within the jurisdiction of the Aulaqi Sultan. Tell me if that is correct. 'Nonsense,' he replied, 'the pack of liars, this is our country and we own no ruler but ourselves.' The Sultan of Shibam had also scouted the idea, and considered Shabwa within his sphere of influence, though not under his rule.\(^1\)

Philby, then, rightly scoffs at the so-called British protection that had badly failed to establish peace in the Aden Protectorates. Wherever he went he saw but chaos and anarchy. The maladministration was especially evident in the areas under British protection. At the time of Philby's journey there was not a single wireless station in the area, nor was there any telegraph office, nor any postal organisation. Moreover the British made no special effort to bring

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1. Ibid. p. 236.
prosperity to the Aden Protectorates. Of course a few landing grounds were constructed but they were not meant for public transport but were used by the Royal Air Force in order to bomb and terrify the so-called 'unruly' tribes so that they will not create law and order problems. (1) Philby rightly questioned that how far legitimate it was to employ such barbarous methods to secure the allegiance of the tribes who detested British occupation and wanted to regain their independent status. He was right to remark:

British protection is surely a misnomer. So far as the Aden Protectorate is concerned, it is ineffectual even to protect its own nominees from insult or injury if they stray from the beaten paths.... The simple fact is that these Arabs, independent since the days of the old Himyarite empire, have no desire to be lorded over by foreigners - aliens by race and aliens by religion. To them foreign penetration is synonymous with exploitation. To them their wretched salt is riches, the antiques buried in their earth are a source of fabulous wealth. The foreigner comes to spy out their land and to annex it if it is worth his while. (2)


Another instance of Philby's anti-imperialism was his outright condemnation of the British, French and Israeli invasion of Egypt on the occasion of Suez Canal Crisis. Nasser and his associates brought about their revolution in 1952. But to bring about a revolution is one thing and to make it a success and harbinger of a new era of peace, stability and prosperity is another. The leadership of the revolution soon realized that the challenges facing their country were not easy to handle. Nasser's major problem was to raise the living standard of the common Egyptians by improving and stabilizing the economy of the country. His mind was teeming with ideas but he could not put them into action because of financial distress. Hard pressed for funds he decided to resort to generous foreign assistance that he hoped to come only from the Western block. His first major programme for improving the country's economy was to enlarge the Aswan High Dam in Upper Egypt in order to increase its irrigating capacity so that additional lands will be brought under cultivation. To accomplish this work he needed over a million dollars. The United States and Great Britain, in collaboration with the World Bank, made arrangements to lend the required funds to Egypt. But Nasser, instead of accepting the offer, decided to use the rivalry between Russia and the West in order to get a better deal for Egypt. As a result he issued a statement saying that the
Russians had offered him a better deal. In reality the Russians had made no such offer to Egypt. In fact the purpose of Nasser's statement was to get more concessions from America and Britain. Besides this, he took several steps such as arrangements for training special commandos to attack Israel, flirtation with Russia and China and cultural and commercial pacts with the communist block which irritated the Western block. Moreover he indulged in anti-Americanism which seemingly prompted the United States to cancel the deal. However, the main intention behind the cancellation of the deal was to humiliate and force Nasser to accept political, economic and military hegemony of the West.

But Nasser refused to budge. His reaction was swift and bold. He nationalized the Suez Canal and thus gave a direct blow to the economic interests of the West, especially Britain and France. Their reaction was expectedly hostile which also smacked of their imperialistic mentality. It was intolerable for them to allow a third world country like Egypt to put its thumb on 'Europe's wind pipe'. They complained that Egypt had not enough competent personnel to run the Canal and that it lacked decorum and wisdom to behave responsibly in the comity of nations. Since the nationalization had hit hard the economic interests of Britain and
France they put a heavy pressure on Egypt to toe the line by freezing Egyptian assets in Western banks and ordering their ships to refuse to pay the regular dues to the Egyptian Government. Moreover, they began to build up their forces near Egypt in order to invade it. Viewing the tense situation, the Security Council of the United Nations was prompted to intervene in the matter. On October 5, 1956, a resolution was passed to run the Canal properly which all the concerned parties immediately accepted, but in spite of this, Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt to topple the Nasser regime. Both America and Russia promptly condemned the invasion which forced the aggressors to cease hostilities against and withdraw their forces from Egyptian territories. Within a month after the withdrawal, the Egyptian engineers cleared the Canal of the ships sunk in it during the invasion, thus they showed the world and proved their ability to run the Canal properly and competently.

Philby's stand, as expected, was to condemn the Anglo-French and Israeli invasion on the one hand and to justify Nasser's bold stance on the other. He wrote letters and articles in Arab and Western press in which he supported Nasser's right to nationalize the canal in the name of Egyptian pride and dignity, and denounced the three-cornered...
invasion as a sinister imperial design to embarrass an independent Arab state. Moreover he greatly praised the Egyptian engineers for their ability to run the Canal without any foreign help, technical or financial. Extremely happy and sanguine he took it as a further vindication of his long cherished stand that the Arabs were competent enough to run their independent states.

The Palestine Problem. Ph lively's stand on British imperialism and Arab independence was no doubt worthy of praise and appreciation. However, sometimes his views in regard to some of Arab problems such as the question of Palestine became highly embarrassing not only to himself but to his Arab friends as well.

The Palestine problem, as well known, originates from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in which it was announced that the British Government will view 'with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'. The Declaration further said that Britain will use its endeavours 'to facilitate the achievement of this object'. In the same Declaration it was also made clear that 'nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.'(1) But the subsequent events proved the

reverse. That while nothing was done to prevent the Jews from implementing their unjust plan for establishing a Zionist state in Palestine, every effort was made to harm the interest and suppress the just aspirations of the Arab population living in the land for centuries. Infact the Balfour Declaration manifests the worst kind of colonization. Arthur Koestler had rightly remarked that 'one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third nation.'(1)

Philby's stand on the problem seems to have been inconsistent. On the one hand he condemned the Balfour Declaration as an act of betrayal and on the other tried to justify the Jewish immigration into Palestine. Addressing an English audience once he said:

I hope I may be permitted in all seriousness to dispel the notion that I am in any sense hostile to the ideals of Zionism.(2)

In the same address he further said that the right of immigration into Palestine was open to all persons and that for the Jews that right was particularly guaranteed by international engagements, but surprisingly in a book


published in 1952 he declined to have ever justified the Jewish immigration into Palestine:

I have always held, and still hold, that the Jews, in whose favour the Balfour Declaration and the mandate were drafted, have no shadow of legal or moral right to go to Palestine. (1)

It is difficult to reconcile between the two statements for the contradiction is too obvious to be ignored or refuted.

Philby's support to the Jewish claims in Palestine stemmed directly from his failure to understand the racist nature of Zionism as well as the real intention of the Zionist movement. It was this failure that led him to proclaim 'that the advent of the Jews to the scenes of their father's exploits will be advantageous to themselves and to their Arab neighbours.' (2) In fact he was thinking on the line that the Jews had both skill and financial resources to bring prosperity to Palestine. But what he failed to realize was that the Jewish expertise in modern technique and their financial prowess, instead of being a means for peace and prosperity, may also become a tool for economic and political exploitation of the technologically and

politically backward Arabs.

But the Arab leaders, unlike Philby did not fail to comprehend the real intentions and aims of the Zionist movement. They understood from the very beginning that the Zionist wanted to establish a Jewish state and not merely a national home as mentioned in the Balfour Declaration. It was because of this that the then Arab leader, King Husain denounced the Declaration as a breach of promise. Viewing his strong denunciation the British were quick to assure him that the Zionist state will be created only if it were 'compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political.' But the leaders who came after Husain were consistent in their opposition to the Balfour Declaration and refused to accept empty British promises and assurances. Philby's own friend, Ibn Saud with whom he had many conversations on the subject was a great critic of the idea of a Jewish state for, in his opinion, it threatened to eliminate the Palestinian Arabs from their homeland.

But in Philby's opinion the basis of Arab opposition to Jewish settlement in Palestine was their xenophobia or their dislike of the people of non-semitic origin. He rightly pointed out that the European Jews were not Semites but

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probably those who had embraced Judaism at one or another time. Philby's claim has been supported by other writers as well. For instance Maxime Rodinson is of the opinion that the Arabs of Palestine 'have much more of the ancient Hebrews' 'blood' than most of the Jews of Diaspora'.

Another writer, Thomas Kiernan has also subscribed to the same view:

Anthropologists concluded...that the eastern European Jewish inventors of Zionism had little or no biological connexion to Palestine.

However, Philby's charge that it was Arab xenophobia that led them to oppose Jewish immigration into Palestine was thoroughly wrong. In fact it was their fear of being or rendered a minority of being rooted out from their homeland that formed the basis of their opposition to the British and Zionist plan to create an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine.

But in spite of Arab opposition the Jews, with full support of Britain, continued to come to and settle in Palestine. Expectedly, with the passage of time, the Arabs and the Jews began to clash with each other. Within two decades the problem became so complex and serious that the British Government was prompted to set up a commission in

1936 under the chairmanship of Lord Peel with a view to finding out a just and enduring solution after a comprehensive study of the problem. The Commission submitted its report in 1937 in which it had recommended to terminate the mandate in favour of some other arrangement. This 'other arrangement' in view of the Commission was to create two sovereign independent states, one for the Arabs and the other for the Jews, and to institute a new Mandate 'to execute the trust of maintaining the sanctity of Jerusalem and Bethlehem and ensuring free and safe access to them for all the world'.

The Commission's recommendations were rejected both by the Arabs and the Jews. Philby, however, accepted them for the Commission's report, in his opinion, was highly favourable to the Arabs. According to him the Arabs, instead of rejecting the Commission's recommendations, should accept them with slight modifications. He presented his arguments with boldness and clarity:

The Arabs are bad bargainers. In this case nine-tenths of their full demands have been conceded. They reject the concession in the hope of getting ten-tenths. It is inconceivable that they should get that. It is conceivable that they may lose what is now offered. Yet

they persist in their obstinate refusal. By accepting the scheme in principle they could secure substantial modifications in their favour. By opposing it tooth and nail they may find themselves confronted with the choice between the scheme, as it stands and noting at all.\(^{(1)}\)

Philby's suggestion, as he himself put it, 'was based on expediency rather than on the legal or moral merits of the Arab case against the admission of Jews into Palestine'\(^{(2)}\).

In his opinion the Western countries, especially Britain and the United States, either did not understand the Arab case or had no sympathy with their cause. And the Arabs were hardly in a position to change the minds of the Western countries. Hence in Philby's opinion it was better for them to accept the compromise that the Peel Commission had offered to them.

But the Arabs were greatly angered by Philby's stand and accused him of being pro-Zionist and insensitive to their emotional attachment to their mother land, the whole of Palestine. Even Ibn Saud felt embarrassed by his activities in this context. He made it clear through a press statement that Philby was not authorized by him to speak or write on his behalf. 'Some may think', he said, 'that Philby's


\(^{(2)}\) Philby, Arabian Jubilee, op. cit. P. 162.
opinions reflect our own... As far his personal opinions, they are his own and do not reflect our thoughts at all.(1)

Philby, too, hastened to issue a statement in which he clarified that he was not a spokesman of Ibn Saud or the Saudi Government.

Philby, however, continued to take interest in the Palestine problem. In early 1939 he attended the Palestine Round Table Conference as interpreter of the Saudi delegation. During the Conference he conceived a so-called 'Philby plan' which, he hoped, would solve the problem for ever. He discussed his scheme with Weizmann and Fuad Hamza, a Saudi delegate, in a meeting. The main points of his scheme were as follows:

I had a secret lunch party at Acal Road – Dr. Weizmann and Bengurian to meet Fuad Hamza. We are to have another meeting at Acol Road to continue the talk, the idea being roughly to get Faisal in as King of Palestine with some quid pro quo in the way of Jewish immigration. Say 50,000 in the next five years.(2)

Weizmann supported Philby's scheme as it was obviously in favour of the Jews. Understandly Fuad Hamza was not enth-

1. Qouted in Monroe, E. Philby of Arabia, op. cit. p.214.
2. Ibid. p. 219.
siastic probably because the scheme did not take into consideration the main Arab demand, the prevention of Jewish immigration into Palestine. Due to his lukewarmth no second meeting, unlike Philby's expectation, was held.

Philby's opinion of the Arab leaders seems to have been very poor. He believed that they were easily purchasable. With this view in mind he prepared a new 'Philby plan' to solve the Palestine problem. The plan, as he explained in his Arabian Jubilee was that:

The whole of Palestine should be left to the Jews. All Arabs displaced therefrom should be resettled elsewhere at the expense of the Jews who would place a sum of £20 millions at the disposal of king Ibn Saud for this purpose. All other Asiatic Arab countries, with the sole exception of Aden should be formally recognized as completely independent in the proper sense of the term, these arrangements were to be proposed to king Ibn Saud, as the principal Arab ruler, by Britain and America, and guaranteed jointly by them in the event of their acceptance by him on behalf of the Arabs.\(^1\)

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Dr. Weizmann has also recorded the minutes of his meeting with Philby in his autobiography, Trial and Error. In Arabian Jubilee Philby contradicted some of Weizmann's accounts. But these are minor differences which figure only in the details and do not affect the main content of their discussions.
Philby discussed his scheme with some important Jewish leaders such as Weizmann, Moshe Shertok and Professor Lewis Namier who readily accepted it. They, then, decided between themselves that while Philby will go to Saudi Arabia to get the approval of Ibn Saud Weizmann would visit the United States to win the support of President Roosevelt.

In January 1940 Philby broached his scheme to King Ibn Saud who did not answer in 'yes' or 'no'. He also asked Philby not to discuss it with any one else. It is not clear that what Ibn Saud had in his mind, whether he wanted to accept the scheme or did not like it at all, Philby, however, interpreted the King's silence as his consent. Meanwhile Dr. Weizmann discussed the so-called 'Philby plan' with President Roosevelt in the same year, 1940. But he received no encouraging response from the American President. In 1943 he, however, again raised the matter and suggested to convene a conference to discuss the scheme. The conference was to be attended by America, Britain, Saudi Arabia and the representatives of the Zionist movement. America agreed to dispatch an emissary, Colonel Hoskins, to Saudi Arabia to know their mind. He was, however, rebuked by Ibn Saud who flatly refused to meet Weizmann for he had tried to bribe him through Philby in 1940. It is now clear that Philby had misinterpreted Ibn Saud's silence as/royal consent to his scheme.
Thus the so-called 'Philby plan' could not take off the ground. But both Philby and Weizmann continued to believe in the utility and practicability of the scheme. But in reality they both were wide off the mark. The basic flaw with their scheme was that it viewed the Palestine problem as a purely commercial matter while for the Arabs it was an emotional one. It is hard to find a people in the world that can give up their homeland and settle in some other country for the sake of money. Infact the so-called 'philby plan' was not only absurd but also humiliating and greatly unfavourable to the Arabs.

Philby and His Arab Guides Philby was a traveller of great stature. He explored Arabia both on the back of camels and by car. Understandably a travel by camel in the Arabian desert is a difficult enterprise to undertake. Most especially a journey across the waterless desert tract, known as Rubal Khali, the Empty Quarter, is the kind of adventure which can be accomplished only by men endowed with great courage, and with the help of the best of Arabian guides. Philby had both. His adventurous nature, spirit and courage were beyond question. Moreover, he had friends like king Ibn Saud who could provide him with guides, camels, and above all protection from the desert robbers and unruly tribes.
Journeying with Arab guides, as Philby's experiences reveal, is both pleasant and frightening. In all his travel books, especially in the Empty Quarter he has recorded events which bring forth the fact that what kind of relationship, cordial or unpleasant, he had with his guides. On the one hand it reveals Philby's image of the Arabs and on the other his own unique character and personality as viewed by the Arabs. It is natural that when two or more persons meet with a view to living together for a considerable period of time, first of all, they try to understand each other.

Philby's Arab guides always found him a difficult man to handle with. For he, unlike other travellers, had some habits rather obsessions which were peculiar only with him.

A guide is generally supposed (or was held so before the emergence of mechanized transport in Arabia) to help a traveller cross the desert from one particular point to another. But for Philby a guide should be more than this. He must know and tell the traveller the names of oases, hills and places etcetera they pass by. Moreover, particularly in Philby's case, he must have patience and ability to accommodate with his habit of mapping or collection and preservation of insects, snakes and birds etcetera found in various parts of Arabia. These were Philby's usual activities on every

desert journey which were of course beyond the comprehension of his companions who regarded such indulgences as useless, something that caused delay and discomfort. But a journey, according to Philby, must serve human knowledge. Hence he never bothered about the resentment of his companions regarding his 'extraordinary obsessions'. However, once he explained to Ali, one of the guides who served him during his adventure across the Empty Quarter:

> It is knowledge I seek which is better than wealth. I will take them (shells) to my country, where they will put them in treasure houses for people to see and study. You see, I too am a tracker like you. When you ride you read the sands and know what men and women have passed upon them a month ago or more or less. But when I see shells like these I understand what was happening a thousand years ago or more. (1)

Philby was the sort of man who could pay a glowing tribute to anybody who pleased him or acted as he liked. But when angry, irritated and provoked, he would curse even those people such as the guides whose services were hard to be denied. But Philby, 'hectoring, intemperate' and

determined to dominate and dictate his will angered his men on numerous occasions during his various explorations in Arabia. As a result there occurred serious rows between him and his companions or guides, especially during his journey across the Empty Quarter.

At a certain place called Shanna occurred the most serious of all squabbles. Philby wanted to go up to Sulaiyil, a far away place on the other side of the desert, about 360 miles from Shanna according to Philby. In between the two places lies the famous but frightful and waterless part of the Empty Quarter. By the time Philby's party was at Shanna, they were completely exhausted, began to show faint heartedness and refused to go ahead with Philby's plan. But Philby enlivened their spirit by distributing the money that he intended to give them at the end of the journey and thus succeeded to make up their mind to try his plan. On 22 February 1932 they began their march toward Sulaiyil. But within five days they were again exhausted and began to complain of Philby's inconsideration. Furthermore they wanted to travel in the nights in order to be safe from the scorching sun. But Philby insisted on journeying in the day light so that he could easily dispense with his usual works such as mapping or collecting insects etcetera. Besides these, there was acute shortage of water, rice and
other eatables. In such an unfavourable circumstance they suggested to get back to Shanna. But Philby would not accept their demand. He cursed Zayid, the leader of the party, or 'the evil genius...the Devil incarnate'. Philby got so much out of temper that he criticised not only Zayid but the entire Arab race:

In such circumstances the Arab does not show up to advantage. He clings frantically, desperately, to life, however miserable, and, when that is at risk, loses heart and head....It was the waterless desert, the fear of thirst and death that made women of those men. I could not, would not yield. We had come 140 miles (since Shanna). A third of the journey was behind us and a steady effort would carry us through if only they would play the man. They were, of course, weak and disheartened with hunger for we had had nothing but dates since Shanna. I felt like Moses in the wilderness when the multitude clamoured against him.

But Philby had only the above-quoted outburst to offer.

1. Ibid, P. 271
   It can be noted that at the end all was right. As true Muslims they forgave each other at Naifa when some of Philby's companions, in accordance with his own plan, left for their homes. In his The Empty Quarter Philby records the event as follows: "As they rose to follow in the tracks of the baggage train each of them saluted me with a Kiss on the forehead. Forgiveness for our failings! Said Ali. There is nothing to forgive, I replied, but I thank you for your services. In the keeping of God! And so I parted from eight of the companions of two months of wandering in the wilderness. The farewell of the Arab is manly indeed. With fair words on his lips he strides off into the desert and is gone. He never looks back". (P. 299).

2. Ibid, P. 261.
Unlike Moses he could not strike on the rock to get water for his thirsty companions and as a result lost his case. They retreated to Naifa for recuperation. At this place Philby decided to send back the baggage train to Hufuf where from they had originally started their journey, and then to cross the desert with a selected band of people. They tried this plan successfully and reached Sulaiyil on 14 March 1932. Just in 9 days they had covered 375 miles, from Naifa to Sulaiyil, a great achievement indeed.

Whatever weaknesses with Philby’s character and personality, he was after all fair and just for he has recorded faithfully what his companions thought of himself. This gives the reader an opportunity to know that how a foreign traveller was viewed by his Arab hosts:

We notice (remarked a certain Farraj) two things in you. Firstly you are hot-tempered and easily get angry if we do not as you please. And secondly you are ever ready to disbelieve what the guides say.... Surely you know that the guides do not lie deliberately, and this is their own country where they know every bush and every hummock, why then should you suspect them of lying.\(^1\)

\(^1\) However, when the journey ended Philby, and his

1. Ibid. P. 221.
companions, were too happy to 'forget the evils of our strange association in an enterprise.' Philby thanked every member of his party, men and animal alike, and gave them all the credit for accomplishing the great feat:

To them and the great beasts that bore us - hungering and thirsting but uncompaining - the credit of a great adventure. (1)

As it appears Philby had, as a whole, a favourable image of the Arabs. He was especially fascinated by the desert and liked its free and careless inhabitants. Furthermore unlike many English travellers he avoided, barring a few occasions, to pass a sweeping remark on the Arab race, its religion and culture. Infact, owing to many reasons such as his long association with Ibn Saud, his early liberalism and later on his conversion to Islam which enabled him to see the Arab society as an insider, he was better placed than many other Englishmen to depict a real and true image of the Arabs. As a matter of fact he stands very prominent among his contemporary English travellers, mainly because he sincerely championed the cause of Arab independence against British imperialism and tried his best through his realistic free writings (which are although not completely free from errors and inconsistencies) to improve the badly tarnished image of the Arabs among his countrymen. It was really a great contribution, especially when viewed in the perspective of the common trend prevalent in England in the first half of the running century.

1. Ibid. p. 211.
CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is concerned with the views and ideas of four major travel-writers of the first half of the twentieth century. Besides, it is prefaced by an introduction in which an attempt has been made to provide a historical background to the present study. That how in different ages English men and women came to know about the Arabs and how far their ideas or traditions were inherited and followed by the travel writers discussed in this work. It has been found that rarely any serious and objective attempt was made to understand the Arabs the way they understood themselves. In most cases they were viewed from Western point of view in a highly subjective manner. There is no denying the fact that a few travellers admired the Arabs as a noble race highlighting especially their hospitality and love of freedom. But a great majority was unfavourably disposed towards them and portrayed them as a rapacious savage lot who had no sense of culture and civilization.

Islam, the religion of the majority of Arabs has always been a special target of Western criticism. Most travellers had a very poor opinion of Islam. Even those who had a somewhat lenient attitude towards the Arab
race were highly critical of their religion. Not only the faith of Islam the personality of its messenger, Muhammad has also been subjected to unsavoury and bitter criticism. He was widely believed to be a pseudo prophet, an impostor who laid the foundation of the heresy of Islam.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries travel literature underwent drastic changes. Most travel-writers of the two centuries, instead of presenting Arab realities in their works, tried to give expression either to their personal views or to the peculiar ideologies of their age. As well known the eighteenth century saw the rise of nationalism in Europe which naturally influenced the academic and literary tradition of the age. As a result the travellers of the said period who visited the Middle East viewed the Arabs as a separate national group within the Turkish empire. The emphasis on the Arabs' consciousness of their separate national identity was laid with a view to justifying the concept of nation states in Europe by highlighting the fact that the idea of nationalism was present in other ancient nations as well.

The nineteenth-century travellers, like wise, were influenced by the two dominant ideologies of their age: imperialism and racism which made them look down upon the
Oriental races who, being inferior and uncivilized, deserved, in the opinion of most travellers, to be subjugated and lorded over by superior and civilized races of Europe.

The two ideologies, that is, racism and imperialism were passed on to the running century and, more or less, continued to exist till the end of the Second World War. Even those travellers who had a liberal outlook were racist and imperialist, at least, in their sub-consciousness. For instance Gertrude Bell and Philby were outwardly liberal, even atheist, but they both believed in the virtue of imperial administration which in fact was a reflection of their feeling of belonging to a culturally and politically superior nation. Captain Shakespear and Lawrence, the two other writers discussed in this work, were dedicated servants of the British Empire, hence imperialist in the highest degree. Gertrude Bell also became a faithful servant of her imperialist nation when the First World War started and remained so till her death. It was only Philby who criticised imperialism after his resignation from the British Government because the later did not subscribe to his views on the role of imperial powers in the Arab world.

Most of the writers discussed in this thesis were concerned with the politics of the Arab and Islamic world.
As a result their works reflect the complex political realities of their age. Invariably they all were critical of the Turkish Empire and favoured the concept of Arab national independence under British tutelage. Philby, however, especially after his resignation, became a bitter critic of Anglo-French imperialism and started advocating complete independence for the Arabs.

As well known the Palestine problem came up during the First World War when the British Government gave a promise to the Jews to create a Jewish state in Palestine. Gertrude Bell got out of humour when she came to know about the Balfour Declaration. She criticised it as impractical, for Jewish immigration into Palestine, in her opinion, was bound to create problems leading ultimately to open rebellion by the Arabs. However practically she did nothing to correct the wrong policies of her country. Lawrence and Philby, unlike Bell, were in favour of the Balfour Declaration for they both believed that the European Jews, with their expertise in modern technology and huge financial resources, will be advantageous to the Arabs in the sense that they will help bring prosperity in the Arab world on a tremendous scale. In his later life Philby, however, denied to have ever supported the Jewish immigration in to Palestine. But, as explained in the fourth
chapter of this thesis, he was wrong. In fact his overall stand on the Palestine problem was nearly scandalous and brought him a bad name.

Philby, unlike Shakespeare, Bell and Lawrence, wrote extensively on the religion of Islam. His approach to Islam, especially before his conversion, was both negative and positive. Surprisingly after his conversion he rarely wrote on Islamic subjects. It appears as he had deliberately adopted an attitude of indifference towards Islam. However, Philby's main contribution in this regard was his study of the Najdi society and their attitude towards religion and religious practices. Despite some glaring errors he was successful to grasp the socio-religious conditions of the then Najd. It is this aspect of his writings on Islam that merits appreciation.
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