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TITOLO

**Wahhabism as the
ideological roots of Isis**

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
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Chapter 1: The two obscurantist Muhammad: Ibn Wahhab and Ibn Saoud...5

1.0 Brief account of the primary and secondary sources used.....	5
1.1 Life of Mohammad Abd-Al Whahhab.....	6
1.2 The Pact of Najd and the rise of the Wahabys.....	9
1.3 Wahhabism: a totalitarian ideology.....	13

Chapter 2: Isis: The Legitimate son of Wahhabism.....18

2.0: Introduction	18
2.1: Isis Destruction of Palmyra and the Idolatry argument: Parallel with Wahhabis modus operandi.....	19
2.2:Ideology of Violence.....	22
2.3: Totalitarian control of Private and Public life: Wahhabis and Isis comparison.....	25

Chapter 3: Western's alliance with fundamentalism.....29

3.0: Introduction.....	29
3.1: The treaty of Darin.....	30
3.2: The pact of Quincy.....	31
3.3: Controversies after 9/11.....	32
3.4:Saudi Arabia's linkage with modern fundamentalism.....	33

Conclusion: Who is our enemy ?.....35-36

Introduction

15 years have gone by since the World Trade Centre Terrorist attack. Western democracies, along with the so-called “international community”, are threatened today, by another “number one” enemy who seems contesting the roots of the values and way of living that has prevailed after the second world war. It is a form of radical anti-mondialisation backed up by a strong *diktat*: Total submission and obedience to a unique God.

15 years ago, the western world, under the leadership of the U.S, has reacted to fundamentalism through a war against the aggressors (Al Qaeda) and the Taliban, which offered hospitality and support to Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Eventually, This war quickly evolved into a campaign against the “Rogue States”, those who defied the mondialisation of rights and the globalisation of trade, supposedly supporting international terrorism. These Rogue States: Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libia Cuba, North Yemen, Syria composed a unique set of old and new enemies of the United States, and the White House asked for the mobilisation of all the other states in order to neutralise these potential outbreak of tension.

It did not work. At least, it did not work against islamic terrorism: The self proclaimed Islamic State conquered city such as Mosul, imposing its law, its administration, its own fundamentalist ideology, precisely in the same area where the U.S sent three hundred thousand soldiers in 2003. The contagious radical islamic ideology soon involved Syria, creating the basis for the birth of Isis (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). The orders for the terrorist attacks which have spread blood throughout the old continent, were given from these regions.

Consequently, also today (or maybe finally today), we ask ourselves who this enemy might be. Obama in his famous Cairo speech in 2009, was concerned in telling to the world that America did not consider the islamic region as an enemy, on the contrary, he advocated a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect¹. The 31 of July, on the airplane heading back from Cracovia, Pope Francis said: “I think it is not right to identify Islam with violence” and “ If I speak of Islamic violence, I have to speak of

¹ see the full speech at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/NewBeginning/transcripts>

Catholic violence. Not all Muslims are violent”. Discarding then, the ridiculous and senseless assumption that “not all muslims are terrorist but all terrorist are muslim”, But acknowledging that fundamentalism islamic terrorist was born as a cancer inside the islamic religion, who exactly is our enemy ?

This thesis will analyse the similarities between the ideology of the wahhabite sect and Isis terrorist group, and how the western alliance with Saudi Arabia has helped the spreading of wahhabism throughout the world. The key of Abd Al-Wahhab doctrine, who lived in the XVII century, in the same years as Montesquieu, Voltaire, consists in the reformation of Islam to its origins, depriving the religion from any cultural mediation, reflection on its own history or acknowledgement of the personalities who contributed to study and interpret the Quran throughout the centuries. According to this ideology, Every man must die as an anonymous, nothing can be reminded of his life on earth if not his devotion and service towards Allah. Thus, the wahhabis used to destroy shrines, monuments and tombs, which were seen as cult sites departing from the adoration of God. Not even the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad was spared from the wahhabi’s fury. Any civilisation is considered as corrupted, and traces of its past are deemed iconic blasphemy: And so we have witnessed to the destruction of Palmyra by the self proclaimed islamic state. The schiites are apostates, they deserve death. The Yazidi are marked as polytheist and so Isis is conducting a genocide of this population by killing their boys and man and enslaving their girls and women. The radical submission to God and the absence of a cleric in sunni islam, provides a complete obedience to a military chief which is also a religious authority, “sword” of the true believers. From these premises was born the idea of building a new caliphate between Syria and Iraq, under the guidance of Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi.

Is this the same Islam as the one envisaged by the prophet Muhammad in the VI century ? It will be discussed for a long time. This research tries to prove that Wahhab’s and Isis message are far from being unitary and constituent such as Islam at the times of the prophet. Isis preaches, first of all, a war against muslims and find its ideological roots in the XVIII century personality of Mohammad Abd- Al Wahhab who undertook an important alliance the first king of the Saudi family in 1745.

1st Chapter

The two obscurantist Mohammad: Ibn Wahhab and Ibn Saoud

“[...] Oh Sheikh ! This is undoubtedly the religion of God and his Prophet; Rejoice for your victory; we will comply to your orders and do the jihad against those who separate themselves from the unicity of God [...]”²

—*Ibn Saoud to Ibn Wahhab (Le Pacte de Nadjd, H.Redissi, 2007)*

1.0 Brief account of the primary and secondary sources used.

Mohammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab was an islamic preacher of the 18th century. Throughout the centuries he has been depicted in many contradicting ways: As the leader of a deviant sect -the Wahabbis- to the protector of the Quran's purity. What is certain, is that his beliefs questioned every aspects of the prolific islamic world since the death of the Prophet.

Muhammad Ibn Saud not only was the founder of the first Saudi State, but also the “sword” which made sure that Wahhab's precepts were respected in the conquered lands. It is very difficult to find reliable accounts of their lives: unfortunately very little has been written about Wahabb and the first Saoud, despite their historical importance. However, by the beginning of the 21st century, especially after the the World Trade Centre terrorist attack in 2001, academics shifted their attention a little bit more towards the understanding of islamic fundamentalism, hence, also towards the foundation of the first Saudi State and Wahhabist ideology. In order to reconstruct Abd Al-Wahabb's life, scholars have mostly relied on the works of Ibn Ghannam³ and Ibn Bishr⁴ who were supporters of the preacher living in the same years as Abd Al-Wahhab , or a generation later in the case of Bishr. Other than Ghannam and Bishr, I used other two very important primary sources coming from

² Ibn Ghannam, Tarikh, 81 ; Ibn Bishr, Unwan, vol.1, p.16; Ibn Ghannam and Ibn Bishr are one of the very few primary reliable sources regarding the life of Al-Wahabb, Mohammad Saoud, and the creation of the first saudi state. Since I was unable to translate the original text from arabic to english, i relied on the french translation of Hamadi Redissi, Political science professor at the university of Tunis: H.Redissi; Le pacte de Nadjd; p39

³ see Ibn Ghannam's “history of Najd”;Tharik Najd

⁴ see Ibn Bishr's Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd. <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/wahhabi.html>

Louis Alexandre Olivier de Corancez and *Johan Ludwig Burckhardt*. While the former was a french orientalist who took part in the French campaign of Egypt and Syria (1798-1801), he wrote through his travels, “Histoire des Wahabis”, the latter was a swiss traveller, and also an orientalist, who wrote more than four hundred pages in the form of notes, on the bedouins and the Wahabys⁵ during his middle eastern travels in the first half of the nineteenth century. These two sources are of crucial importance because they give us the opportunity to understand the history of wahabbism and the creation of the first Saudi State not only through the eyes of its supporters or historians coming from a precise islamic school of thought, but also from a more neuter point of view of two western “outsiders”.

An excellent account of these primary sources has been made by professor Hamid Algar in his book “Wahhabism: A Critical essay”⁶, by Professor Hamadi Redissi with “*Le Pacte de Najd: ou comment l’islam sectaire est devenu l’islam*”⁷, along with many other scholars which are cited in the bibliography. I directly looked through primary sources such as *Corancez* and *Burckhardt* myself, while I had to rely on secondary sources regarding arabic texts of *Ghannam* and *Bishr*. However, most of the secondary sources I have analysed, do not differ much from each other when it comes to the translation and interpretation of these passages. In this thesis, there will be letters or passages of Ghannam and Bishr which contain descriptions of Mohammad Abd-Al Wahhab and the Wahhabis. In order to avoid wrong translations or unreliable interpretations of these ancient texts, I used the book of Hamadi Redissi, distinguished scholar of the university of Tunis, where these letters are already translated by the professor himself.

1.1 Life of Mohammad Abd-Al Whahhab

From the sources we see that the arabic preacher was born in 1703 in the region of Najd, more precisely in the oasis town of Al U’yayna, which is now part of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He was part of a family of ulama (islamic religious scholars) and his father, also called Abd Al-

⁵ see: 'Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys Collected During his Travels in the East, by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt' [298v] (323/470), British Library: Printed Collections, W 2259, in *Qatar Digital Library* <http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100026748005.0x00007c> [accessed 5 June 2016]

⁶<https://www.amazon.it/gp/product/B013H3MC6G/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?ie=UTF8&btkr=1>

⁷https://www.amazon.it/Pacte-Najd-comment-sectaire-couleur-ebook/dp/B00DV0PRXG/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1470150082&sr=1-1&keywords=Redissi

Wahhab, was a Qadi (judge of a Shari'a court). These acquaintances lead us to believe that his entourage was not completely unfamiliar to the prolific system of interpretations of the Quran which characterises the dynamism of the islamic religion . It would be hasty to affirm that Mohammad was born in a pluralist environment, but we can be certain of the fact that his interpretation of the religion was intolerant and extreme: He had to flee from his hometown, Al U'yayna, in 1744, because he confessed a women to death by stoning after she confessed to adultery, cut down one of the sacred tree's of the city and demolished a shrine belonging to Zayd ibn al-Khattab (one of the Companion of the Prophet)⁸. These actions were not casual at all, they well represented Wahhab's obscurantist doctrine whereas many crimes against religion such as adultery had to be punished by death, idolatry had to be condemned if the idol was not God himself (even the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad was considered a sin) and any kind polytheism was to be banned from the lands of Islam. By 1740 he managed to gather a considerable amount of followers but his ideas where rejected everywhere and more than once, even by his brother, Suleyman.

Both his father and his brother, detected signs of extreme doctrinal deviance in him at a quite early age⁹. In 1726, Wahhab father is expelled from Al'Uyayna because of his son's doctrinal activities, in 1727 it is the turn of the preacher, expelled from the actual Iraqi city of Basra where he stayed four years in a row, and refused to comply to any of the schiite precepts as he considered schism too far away from the sunni tradition and the Quran. Another reason behind his expulsion from the schiite city of Basra, according to the sources, was his complete rejection of the Prophet's family cult: most of Mohammad Abd Al-Wahhab's¹⁰ doctrine is based on the unicity of God¹¹ and the banning of anything that is associated to God such as saints and the Prophet itself.

One of the main differences between schiite and sunnis is that the former believe in the return of the Prophet Muhammad to guide the Umma (islamic community), thus, depicting the Prophet with a sort of divine aura which the sunni do not associate. It would be logical then, to interpret Wahhab's preaching as an 18th century war revival between sunni and schiite but it is too simplistic to only

⁸ Encyclopedia of Islam; Juan Eduardo Campo; p325

⁹ Hamid Algar; Wahabbism: A critical essay; p4

¹¹ His most famous work is called "Kitab Al Tawhid": "the book on the unicity of god"

focus on this aspect. Wahhab was certainly a sunni, but what he sought was a total war against Kafirs (disbeliever), a category where substantially anybody not compliant with wahhabism would fall, be it sunni or schiite.

It is worth noting that through his stay in the holy city of Medina, Mohammad Abd Al-Wahhab did extensive studies of Ibn Taymiyya, an hanbalite theologist of the fourteenth century, considered by many as a key figure for the understanding of islamic fundamentalism. In 1740, Wahhab is thirty seven years old and has already written one of his ideological manifesto: *Kitab Al-Tawhid*: “the book of the unicity of God”. Around the year 1744 he is once again expelled, but this time from his hometown Al’Uyayna, for the stoning to death of a woman and the other reasons we have seen earlier.

His fundamentalist preachings shocked the religious and political sphere of the Ottoman Empire , pushing hundreds of ulemas and muftis to write letters of confutations or simple critique over Ibn Wahhab’s interpretation of the Quran. Here is one of these letters written by Ibn Suhaym, a mufti (islamic scholar) of Ryad, between 1740 and 1745¹²:

- I bring to your notice that an innovator has appeared in our country, an ignorant, a mislead who, in turn, misleads, without science and without compassion; He has committed terrible misdeeds [...] I want to inform the ulemas, the prophets heirs, in order that they put an end to his preachings and his ignorance. He has destroyed tombs and burned books of popular prayer; he pretends that, if he could, he would destroy the black Kaaba Stone; He believes that the people have been living in ignorance for the past six centuries... But from where does he get these considerations? has he received them by revelation ? or is it the devil who whispers in his ears ? I beg you ! Reveal the truth to the poor people he has seduced with his tricks, and treat this matter with urgency before it is too late !

Consequently to being exiled from his hometown Al Uyayna, Wahhab found refuge to the Saud house in Derayah, where he encountered Ibn Saoud and eventually created the first Saudi State.

¹² I found this letter in H.Redissi book: *Le Pacte de Nadjd* p99, and then translated it from french to English. Originally, the letter was reported by Wahhab’s biographer, Ibn Ghannam.

Muhammad Ibn Abd Al Wahhab dies in Derayah in 1792 but his figure and preachings will remain central for the House of Saoud. The wahabbist religious movement has still today a predominant role regarding Saudi policies and towards the implementation of the Unitary Islamic absolute monarchy,. The Wahhabi legacy is is not at all implicit. These are the words of Prince Khaled al Faisal, governor of Saudi Arabia Mecca's region, during the annual conference to discuss the Haj Pilgrimage in September 2016: "The kingdom is founded on the teachings of 18th century Sunni preacher Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab, whose ideas have themselves been decried by critics as a driving force behind sectarianism and an inspiration to violent jihadists." ¹³ We shall see, later on in the second chapter, how Mohammad Wahhab's precepts are, in reality, very similar to those imposed by modern jihadists.

1.2 The Pact of Najd and the rise of the Wahabys

Around the year 1745, In Derayah, a current town of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Abd-Al-Wahhab and Ibn Saud reached an alliance. Their encounter was described by Wahhab's biographer and supporter Ibn Ghannam ¹⁴ :

Saoud- Rejoice yourself for being hosted in a more pleasing city than the one you have just left, I guarantee honours and protection.

Wahhab- Rejoice as well of the honours, the glory and the power which awaits you, provided that you adhere to the belief of God's unicity proclaimed by all the prophets, from the first to the last (it is of god only God); Him who believes it and applies it is assured to dominate the land and mens.

Saud-Oh Sheikh ! This is undoubtedly the religion of God and his Prophet; Rejoice for your victory; we will comply to your orders and do the jihad against those who separate themselves from the unicity of God. However, I have to set two conditions: I very well fear that once we will bring you our support and fight in the name of God [...], you may quit us and seek an alliance with someone else; For what is the second condition, according to a regulation, my subjects owe me a part of their harvest, and I fear that you may tell me, that I am not allowed to take anything from them.

Wahhab- For what is the first condition: Reach out your hand : blood for blood and destruction for destruction; For what is the second condition, maybe god will allow you to acquire a much greater loot. [...]

¹³Prince Khaled al-Faisal, governor of Saudi Arabia Mecca's region; SEP 14, 2016 news conference to discuss the annual Haj Pilgrimage.

¹⁴ I have translated this text from French; Hamadi Redissi, *Le Pacte de Nadjd*, pp39-40. Original arabic text of *Ibn Ghannam: Tarikh*, 81; *Ibn Bishr, Unwan*, vol.1, p.16

The encounter between Wahhab and Saud turned out to be among the most well sorted alliance in history. Mohammad Saud was part of the Mrudah clan, a branch of the ancient arab tribe of Banu Hanifa. Once united, the warlord and the preacher conquered almost all of the Arabian peninsula starting from the region of Najd and Hedjaz, but also managed to extend their territories through modern Bahreïn, Syria,Kuwait,Qatar,Yemen, Iraq. In 1805 and in 1806 they conquered the holy cities of Mecca and Medina¹⁵, thus depriving the powerful Ottoman empire of his crucial title of “Custodian of the two holy cities”.



The spiritual dimension was one with the political and military lead, and the subjects of Saud were soon called the Wahhabis. Their fame was directly related to the atrocity they committed. In 1801, the Wahhabis entered a town of six to eight thousand people and slaughtered approximately three thousand, without making any distinction between civilians, soldiers, men, women or child. It is recalled as the massacre of Karbala, not to be mistaken with the battle of Karbala, which occurred

¹⁵ A 1786 map of the Arabian peninsula; Author:Dunn, Samuel, d. 1794; The New York Public Library, digital collections.

in the 7th century. Another indelible event in the Islamic world is the sack of the Prophet's Treasure: From 1805 to 1813, The wahhabis held power over Mecca. During these years they destroyed various sacred domes and mausoleums, the tomb of Khadijah, the first Prophet's wife, as well as those of his uncle Abu Taleb, de Hassan and Hussein¹⁶.

According to Olivier Louis de Coran ez, the wahhabis principal military asset was a geographical advantage: they were a set of bedouin tribes living in the very centre of the Arabian peninsula which is circled by deserts that only tribes such as the one forming the wahhabis, accustomed to the harshness of the weather, were able to cross without considerable losses. Thanks to their knowledge of the deserts, the wahhabis were also able to attack the enemy by surprise and then quickly retreat in the wild in the case they were outnumbered.

However, their military success is mostly due to wahhabism: the totalitarian ideology which began with the preaching of Muhammad Abd-Al Wahhab, succeeded in bringing together bedouin tribes which used to make war to each other for centuries. The dogmas of this ideology were simple and revolved around strict morality principles. Coran ez argues over the fact that wahhabism was so appealing to the bedouin tribes of the 18th century, because it pursued to bring back Islam to its former essentialism and simplicity by refusing to acknowledge any different practice of the religion than that of the Prophet and his followers. The french orientalist writes about certain "denaturations"¹⁷ occurred after centuries of interpretations of the religious duties, such as the five daily prayers, which are at the core of the islamic religion: "the most praiseworthy prayer consists in crying out loud the name of God for hours , and the most saint will be the one who repeats this name the fastest during the highest amount of hours". Coran ez also reports the custom of some Arabian villages to "divinise" the ridiculous acts of men which were probably mad, but respected and venerated by the people because believed to be under the influence of God. Thus, an ideology such as wahhabism, wanting to reform these "abuses" of the religion, perfectly matched the exigence of a bedouin world which was essentialist for definition since they lived in the harsh conditions of the deserts, where materialism and *otium* do not find their place between the struggle for survival.

¹⁶ Hamadi Redissi; *Le pacte de Nadjd*; p55

¹⁷ Louis Olivier de Coran ez: *Histoire des Wahabis* pp3,4

The same call for essentialism is present in any other fundamentalist interpretation of Islam through the centuries until the present times. If we look for a moment (we will further discuss this question in chapter 2) at a passage of Dabiq, isis main propaganda journal, we can note similarities between the Wahhabis reformers of the 18th centuries, and the jihadis of the new millennium: *“describing many of the people of this era as Muslims because they say “lā ilāha illallāh” should not be an obstacle to seeing something the way it is or describing the situation as it deserves to be described. That is because many of those who say “La ilāha illallāh” (Shahada, common islamic prayer) have fallen into different shades of shirk (polytheism) at all levels, including shirk in tawassul and du’ā’, shirk in obedience, ruling and legislation, and shirk in love, support and allegiance.*¹⁸ The claim is the same and the mission of the new jihadis still is to reform islam and eliminate any form of obstacle in the way of the “true” veneration of God

Eventually, from the year 1808 until 1818 the khedive of Egypt Muhammad Ali, following ottoman orders, managed to take back the two holy cities and crush all of the wahhabis temporary and fragile conquests. Abdullah bin Saud, the third king of the Saud House, was publicly mocked for three days through the streets of Istanbul, until he is executed, with his remains given to the dogs. This is an important anecdote because it gives us an insight on how much the wahhabist ideology was despised and feared at the same time, by the ottomans and the muslim world in general.

A member of the Saud family, Faïçal Ibn Saud, established a second Saudi State from 1821 to 1834 without the territorial ambitions of the previous Saudi kings. The new state would only be sovereign in the desert regions of Hejaz and Najd, nevertheless, the wahhabist doctrine lived on and is still cherished and promoted today, by the current Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Much more important, in relation to the present Saudi Arabian territorial divide, is the wahhabis reconquest of the region of Nejd between 1902 and 1932. At the beginning of the 20th century, the region of Nejd is still under ottoman control. In 1902, Abdelaziz Saoud conquers Ryad and leads, a few years later, a series of military campaigns in the Al-Hasa and Al-Qassim regions¹⁹, in 1914 he is named *wali* (governor) of Nejd by the Ottomans. In 1918, Derayeh, the city where the first Wahhabi and the first Saoud met, was under siege and eventually reconquered by the Saoud family. The reconquest of the Hejaz and

¹⁸ Putting Dabiq in the footnotes of a thesis might be controversial, since it is an horrendous magazine, preaching and depicting all sorts of violent messages. However, I believe it is necessary to look through these sources in order to truly understand the extent of the jihadi phenomenon. Dabiq; 2nd edition; part 5 p10.

¹⁹ both region are part of the current Saudi Arabian kingdom

Nejd region was truly completed after Mecca fell, once again, under Saudi rule in 1924. Abdelaziz chased Sharif Hussein from the holy city and proclaimed himself, two years later, as King of the Hejaz. It is important to note that in 1915, during the outburst of the first world war, Abdelaziz Saoud reaches an important agreement with the United Kingdom known as the Treaty of Darin. The Treaty *de facto* transformed the lands of the House of Saoud as a British Protectorate and attempted to define its boundaries, However, the Saudi lands were mainly conquered by the saudi themselves, a factor which makes the current Saudi Arabian kingdom one of the few middle eastern states where borders were not artificially delimited by western forces during the outcome of the first world war.

In order to fully understand Saudi power and the reason behind the Wahhabi-Saudi successful duality, we must take step back to the creation of the first Saudi state in 1745: The alliance between the two Mohammad, Ibn Wahhab and Ibn Saoud, was tremendously complementary; it is clear that this is a case where the spiritual power needed a very strong military and political authority and vice versa. The wahhabist precepts could never have been implemented if Saoud had not been imposing fear and constrictions over the cities and town he conquered and, at the same time, The House of Saoud would have never been able to call so many different tribes to fight for them without a persuasive, simplistic but also powerful ideology such as Wahhabism. The precarious loyalty of these tribes is evident even in Saoud's words when, at their first encounter, his primary concern towards the preacher Wahhab was to make sure that the latter would not betray him:

"I very well fear that once we will bring you our support and fight in the name of God [...], you may quit us and seek an alliance with someone else"²⁰

1.2 Wahhabism: a totalitarian ideology

According to *J.Lewis Burckhardt*, by the time Saoud was proclaimed emir of Derayeh his force was then so small, that in his first skirmish with some enemies, he had only seven camel-riders with him.²¹ How come, then, that the House of Saud became so powerful to conquer both the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, respectively in 1806 and 1805 ? There are, of course, many tactical-military reasons behind the successes of Wahhab's and Saud's soldiers. *Corancez* has put a lot of emphasis, as we have already seen, on the bedouins ability to use their environment as an advantage, by surprising the enemy, relentlessly attacking him by surprise and

²⁰*Hamadi Redissi, Le Pacte de Nadjd*, pp39-40

²¹ John Lewis Burckhardt; "Notes on the bedouin and wahabys"; p275

suddenly making a retreat in the desert. However, for the sake of this thesis, I am mostly concerned on the alliance's ability to gather many different tribes all under the same umbrella. It is no secret that Arabian tribes have constantly been in conflict between each other. In fact, even the tribes following the Prophet Muhammad, fell immediately in war between them after his death in 632. Because they no longer felt obliged to follow orders from people that were not the Prophet himself. Saud's fortune was the intransigent doctrine of Abd Al-Wahhab. It is through the simplistic doctrine of the preacher that Saoud was able to glue together so many different tribes which were at war for centuries.

Wahhabism was essentially a '*J'accuse*' against all of the islamic world of the 18th century. It is worth noting that the Ottoman empire represented a rather enlightened view of Islam. Already in 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by Mehmet II, the world was astonished by the pervasive tolerance and pluralist character of the new born Istanbul. The Ottoman empire welcomed and protected the Iberian jews prosecuted by the Inquisition; the bazaars were a melting pot of civilisations, and commerce was flourishing thanks to the venetian and genovese ships. Freedom of faith was guaranteed and the byzantine christians were not discriminated by the islamic judicial power of the Sharia'a. It was certainly not always that easy: the history of the Ottoman empire stretches over six centuries and the cohabitation of so many different cultures sparked a few fires. The Ottomans were the enemies the wahabis despised the most. The latter could not stand how religion was handled by the Sultans, they thought of the ottomans as the main responsible for the spreading of paganism throughout the empire.

Wahhabism supported an extremely offensive oriented interpretation of Jihad. In Ibn Ghannam's account of Saud and Wahhab encounter, the warlord says: "We will comply to your orders and do the jihad against those who separate themselves from the unicity of God". In the muslim sphere, the Jihad stands for personal interior improvement of the believer, especially through the studies of the sacred texts: this is the "Greater" Jihad. While the war waged for Allah and the expansion of the *dar al Islam* (The islamic territory), is accountable for the "Lesser" Jihad. The representation of Jihad as an holy war was the consequence of the Prophet and his followers difficulty to maintain order in Medina after the Hegira.

We have to mention two important aspects: first of all, events in Medina took place in the 7th century AC; secondly, the years of the Prophet Muhammad were those of the constituent muslims,

not the constituted. On this second aspect lies the Wahhabist controversy: Abd Al-Wahhab and his followers believed to be in the same exact era of the Prophet, and they felt the categorical duty to use jihad as a war to clean the *Dar al Islam* from non believers. However, who they called kafir (non-believer) were actually muslims, but unfortunately for them, not wahhabis.

Abd Al-Wahhab never considered himself part of a specific school of thought, on the contrary, his goal was to completely reform islam in order to restore its purity. In *Kitab Al Tawhid*, the book on “the unicity of god”, Wahhab constantly reminds the muslim world that absolutely nothing can be associated to God since the Prophet himself revealed the unicity of the Almighty. He emphasised the unicity question in all of his public works, noteworthy is a passage of one of his letters addressed to the muslims: ²²

*God has sent Muhammad through the unitary
message that nothing is to be invoked outside of
Allah, not even a Prophet !*

Wahhab’s obsession with the unicity of God was evident whatever land the wahhabis soldier put foot on. Their conquest of Mecca was followed by the destruction of anything that recalled saints or was praised outside of God. The desecration of the Prophet’s tomb in Mecca shocked the world but was not a surprise for those who knew the precepts of Wahhabism. It is interesting to note that *Corancez* in his *Histoire des Wahabis* always refer the muslims and the Wahhabis as two different entities which collide: The Wahhabis cannot be muslim in Corancez’s perspective, because they accused all of the Muslim to be ignorant of their own religion. It was clear to him that the Wahhabis were waging an ideological war against the muslim world, which most of the times despised this newly established doctrine. On this matter professor Hamadi Redissi gives a brilliant remark, analysing wahhab’s letter to the muslims: ”[...] How is it possible to address the muslims when you accuse them to be unholy a the same time ?²³”. It is a doctrine of exclusion: Whoever is not a wahhaby is a kafir, a non believer. Not surprisingly, by the time the Wahabys conquered the holy cities of Islam, hundred of ulemas wrote their refutations against this newly established doctrine

²² *les lettres personnelles* de M.Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. published by the university of the imam M.Ibn Saud, Riyad,s.d. (n°29)

²³ H.Redissi: *Le Pacte de Nadjd*; p87

which had the audacity to question everything, be it in the juridical or social field, that the islamic world had produced since the death of the Prophet.

There are four major juridical school of thought in the Islamic world: The Hanafites, Malikites, Shafi'ites and Zahirites, they differ from each other on the very interpretation of the Quran. The powerful and dangerous message of Wahhab, was to deny the validity of any of these schools of thoughts and anything that can be considered an intermediary between the men and his total dedication towards God. It is a totalitarian message which was very well suited the illiterate bedouin tribes of the region of Najd, who were far away, both culturally and geographically, from the frenetic life of Istanbul or Damask.

Moreover, advocates of Wahhabism never considered themselves as preachers of a new doctrine, they claimed to enlighten the world and save it from universal paganism²⁴. An epistle of Ibn Ghannam is very clear on this matter:²⁵

The majority of Muslims, at the beginning of the XVIII century, fell back in the pre-islamic darkness. Ignorants, at the mercy of unholy rulers, deprived of the light which leads to the right direction, they have turned their back on the book of God, and by doing so, imitate the costumes of their ancestors. They adore sorcerers, dead and alive, they worship trees and replaced God with new idols. [...] They fell in an associationism [shirk] worst than the one of the Christians. [...]

The Wahhabis wanted to drag back the muslim world to the costumes and way of life of the Prophet's followers in the seventh century. Since no interpretations of Islam was tolerated by the wahhabis and the Saud, the holy Book had to be obeyed word by word, without adapting its teachings in relation to the mutability character of society. It can be said, looking at the problem with a different perspective, that the Wahhabis's interpretation of Islam was an obscurantist one which sought to transform in a medievalist way, an islamic civilisation of the 18th century , and pretend absolute obedience to antique religious rules which were not usually implemented anymore.

J.Lewis Burckhardt wrote about Wahhabys precepts in Mecca: "[...] The people of Mekka now became Wahabys ; that is, they were obliged to pray more punctually than usual, to lay aside and

²⁴ H.Redissi: Le Pacte de Nadjd;p85

²⁵ Written by Ibn Ghannam in his Rawda; H.Redissi; Le Pacte de Nadjd; p49

conceal their fine silk dresses, and to desist from smoking in public. Heaps of Persian pipes, collected from all the houses, were burnt before Saoud's head-quarters, and the sale of tobacco was forbidden [...]"²⁶ He goes on describing life under Saud's orders in Medina: "[...] Here the Wahabys enforced, with great strictness, the regular observance of prayers. The names of all the adult male inhabitants were called over in the mosque after morning, mid-day, and evening prayers; and those who did not obey the call were punished. A respectable woman, accused of having smoked the Persian pipe, was placed upon a jack-ass, with the pipe suspended from her neck, round which was twisted the long flexible tube, or snake: in this state she was paraded through the town [...]"²⁷.

With Mecca in the hands of Saud and the Wahabys, the pilgrimage was interrupted. The decorated Caravans accompanied with music that used to pay tribute to the tomb of the Prophet were no longer tolerated by the reformers. The "Mahommedan" so despised by the Wahabys because they associated the Prophet with God, were chased from Mecca, with people throwing stones at them and shouting: "Leave, idolatrous, flee far from the holy places, you who give a companion to God !" "²⁸

Wahhabism was taking its place in history as one of the father of islamic extremism. Intolerance, fear, restriction, and fanaticism are keywords which perfectly stand for what the wahabites have done during the second half of the 18th century. Intolerant, regarding other religions and all of the muslims who did not comply with their beliefs. Fear of being sinful and thus placing uncountable restrictions to people's daily life, both social and private . Fanatics, because the Wahhabis claimed their way of life as to be the the only model for the rest of the world.

The Quran has always been used by the Qadi as a manual in order to solve problems related to the present, it has been interpreted in different ways through the centuries because of the mutable character of society. Wahhab envisioned a completely absolute world, absolute comes from the latin word Absolutus which also means perfect, pure, and simple. It also comes from the verb absolvere which means to free from bonds, release. In this aspect, wahhabism is no different from 20th

²⁶ J.Lewis Burckhardt; Notes on the Wahabys; p329; can be consulted in the Qatar digital library; <http://www.qdl.qa/en>

²⁷ J.Lewis Burckhardt; Notes on the Wahabys; p331

²⁸ Corancez; Histoire des Wahabys; p103

century european totalitarian ideologies, it has the same presumption to control every aspect of people's life and to pretend complete obedience towards a *credo* which is eternal and forever true. But Wahhabism certainly has more evident similarities with international islamic terrorist groups, the self-declared Islamic state has proven through its action to be the legitimate son of Wahhabism.

2nd Chapter

Isis: The Legitimate son of Wahhabism

*"You can't understand ISIS if you don't know the history of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia"*²⁹

-Alastair Crooke, 2014

2.0 Introduction

The words in quotes are taken from an article of Alastair Crooke, published on the The World Post in 2014. Alastair Crooke is a former MI-6 agent and currently a British diplomat. The article focuses on the same points I have broadly explained in the Wahhabism paragraph of chapter one: The complementary Saudi duality between the spiritual and political power resulted in the complete military obedience of Wahhab's and Saoud's subjects on one hand, and on the conformity to strict religious-moral precepts on the other. War was always conceived as an "holy war" (offensive Jihad) against the *takfirs* (misbelievers). The conquered population of the Arabian Peninsula could either convert to the deviant Wahhabist sect, or die in mass slaughters which well characterised Saoud's military campaigns in the second half of the 18th century.

Then, Alastair's assumption for which Isis is very similar to Mohammad Abd-Al Wahhab sect logically stand as both the Wahhabis and Isis consider their main goal to "enlighten" the muslim world as it is ignorant of its own religion just as the Pre-islamic people ignorance before the revelation of the Prophet.

At the time of the Wahhabi conquest of the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, Saoud's main order was to destroy any monument that was deemed to be "idolatrours" according to the sect's ideology.

²⁹ The World Post;Alastair Crooke; "You can't understand Isis if you don't know the history of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html; 08/27/2014 11:56 am ET | Updated Jun 03, 2016

Consequently, the tomb of the prophet and his familiars had been sacked, provoking astonishment and indignation in all of the Muslim world. Comparatively, two years ago, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, Caliph of the self proclaimed saudi State, has made a call for destruction of the Kaaba Stone ³⁰ because it supposedly belongs to the ancient pagan rituals and is considered an idolatrous worship of images. Moreover, Isis, just as the wahhabis doctrine, has been having an extremely offensive interpretation of jihad. A title of the seventh edition of Dabiq, Isis propaganda magazine, is evocative on this matter: “Islam is the religion of the sword, not pacifism”.

For these reasons and many others Isis can be considered as the legitimate son of Wahhabism. This chapter will look through these similarities by comparing their actions. From the destruction of the prophet’s tomb between 1805 and 1813 to the destruction of Palmyra in 2014 and from restrictions imposed to the inhabitants of Medina in 1811 to the strict religious precepts imposed to the inhabitants of Raqqa today.

2.1- Isis Destruction of Palmyra and the Idolatry argument: Parallel with Wahhabis modus operandi

“[...] I wonder if the wide world presents a more singular landscape. It is a mass of columns, ranged into long avenues, grouped into temples, lying broken on the sand or pointing one long solitary finger to Heaven. Beyond them is the immense Temple of Baal; the modern town is built inside it and its rows of columns rise out of a mass of mud roofs. And beyond, all is the desert, sand and white stretches of salt and sand again, with the dust clouds whirling over it and the Euphrates 5 days away. It looks like the white skeleton of a town, standing knee deep in the blown sand.[...]”³¹ This is how Gertrude Bell (1869/1926), an american archeologist who played a secret role in the Arab revolt of 1916, describes Palmyra. The city was founded around the 2nd millennium BC and it remained in a relative good shape until Isis fighters destroyed a large part of its temples as well as the temple of Baal and many statues³².

The destruction of Palmyra is just one of the many cases where Isis has decided to erase ancient sites from middle eastern lands, the same happened to the Assyrian city of Nimrod. Isis even

³⁰<https://www.jihadwatch.org/2014/06/islamic-state-if-allah-wills-we-will-kill-those-who-worship-stones-in-mecca-and-destroy-the-kaaba> J UNE 30, 2014 9:17 AM BY ROBERT SPENCER

³¹ Gertrude Bell; Letters; Sun 20. [20 May 1900] Palmyra [Tadmur]

³² Photograph: Joseph Eid/AFP/Getty Images, Palmyra before and after Isis destruction



established a “settlement battalion” called *Kata'ib Taswiyya* whose fighters have the explicit order to identify and raze any sites that may be subject of idolatry and devotion. It is important to stigmatize the pervasiveness of those destructions: The soldiers of Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi have been bombing christian, shiite and sunni shrines without distinction. An extensive variety of muslim and other religion sites are considered to be symbols of shirk (polytheism) because they give an associate to God. The most extremist proof of this fundamentalist tendency is found in Abu Bakr al Baghdadi words when he claims that “The Black Stone should be destroyed to put an end to this ancient

pagan ritual and idolatrous worship of images”³³ referring to the sacred Kaaba Stone in Mecca revered by muslims since the times of the Prophet.

Taking a step back to the first chapter, specifically about the wahhabis, one of the many letters of critique towards Muhammad Wahhab preachings, went on like this: “If he could (Wahhab) he would destroy the black Kaaba Stone”³⁴. It is clear then, that both the past and present islamic fundamentalism causes, before anything else, an intra-islamic conflict, where muslims are to be considered such, only if they adhere to the reformers *credo*.

³³<http://worldnewsdailyreport.com/isis-leader-calls-for-destruction-of-kaaba-stone/>

³⁴ see letter in page 4

The parallel with Wahhabism is also self evident when Louis Olivier de Coran ez writes in *Histoire des Wahabis* : “The Wahhabis consider idolatry a crime. They punish this crime by death. The Muslim are idolaters in their eyes, because these reformers accuse them of giving a companion to God”³⁵ The dichotomy between Muslim and Wahhabis used by Coran ez, is emblematic and useful to understand today’s war between the interpretation of the Quran by Isis *vis a vis* the rest of the muslim world.

The french orientalist keeps on describing wahhabism extremism by their obsession against tombs: “this respect muslims have for tombs, is the only reason we can think of, in order to explain the wahhabis fury in destroying them. In every area where they became sovereign, they have destroyed the sepulchre of sheiks or prophets”. Another passage testifying Wahhabis intransigence towards the religious cults comes from Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, a swiss orientalist and explorer who travelled in the Arabian peninsula at the end of the 18th century: ³⁶

-[...]The Wahabys declared, that all men were equal in the eyes of God; that even the most virtuous could not intercede with him ; and that it was, consequently, sinful to to invoke departed saints, and to honour their mortal remains more than those of any other persons. Wherever the Wahabys carried their arms, they destroyed all the domes and ornamented tombs ; a circumstance which served to inflame the fanaticism of their disciples, and to form a marked distinction between them and their opponents, which it has always been the policy of every founder of a sect to establish [...]

with a similar behaviour, In July 2014 Isis destroyed the tomb of prophet Jonah³⁷, a key figure in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Again, even a tomb, in this extremist view of the Quran, is seen as a crime against the dogma of God’s unicity.

Another source testifying the wahhabis hatred towards what they considered idolatry, comes from a declaration of the son of Ibn Abd-Al Wahhab, Abdallah Wahhab (1751-1865) where he describes Saoud’s conquest of Mecca in 1803:

³⁵ “L.O. Coran ez; Histoire des Wahhabis; p5; translated by me in English.

³⁶ J.L Burckhardt; Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys p278; Qatar digital Library; www.qdl.qa

³⁷<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/24/world/iraq-violence/> Updated 2104 GMT (0504 HKT) July 25, 2014

- [...] Yes, we have demolished the house of Khadijah [wife of the Prophet] and the dome of the Prophet's birth in order to avoid associationism, an even worst crime than that of attributing a son to God [...] All innovations are bad when they stray from the adoration of God[...]

In this passage³⁸ other than the idolatry argument, we see how the sect despised the concept of “innovation” . We shall see in another section of this chapter how the wahhabis but also Isis and modern islamic terrorist group in general, use religions an attempt to reform people's life in order to bring them back to non-well defined “essentialism” were many costumes and habits are considered sinful innovations.

The shocking sack of Mecca is also described by Burckhardt:

-[...] At Mekka, not a single cupola was suffered to remain over the tomb of any renowned Arab i those even covering the birth-place of Mohammed, and of his grandsons, Hassan and Hosseyn, and of his uncle, Abou Taleb, and his wife, Khadydje, were all broken down. While in the act of destroying them, the Wahabys were heard to exclaim, “God have mercy upon those who destroyed, and none upon those who built them !”[...]

2.2 Ideology of Violence

Ever since its consolidation between 2011 and 2014, Isis has been at the very centre of the news flow, be it on the web, television or newspaper. The macabre reason behind this overwhelming media attention is Isis violence strategy: Despite its military forces being surprisingly marginal relatively to the presence of international powers in the middle east, Isis has been using executions, terrorist attacks and other forms of violence to provoke political mayhem outside of the middle east and terrorise populations stretching from Syria to Iraq. By executing James Foley and attacking the western hemisphere, be it in Paris or Bruxelles, the terrorist group was first of all coherently fulfilling the horrendous precepts of its ideology,.But it was also shifting the world's attention towards an hypothetical Islamic State, born from the vacuum of power in Syria ever since the beginning of the civil war.

³⁸ H.Redissi; Le Pacte de Najd p58

Military speaking, Baghdadi's soldiers do not have the sovereignty they claim in Iraq and Syria. The caliphate often lost cities which they used to consider their strongholds, such as Fallujah and Kobane. However, Isis propaganda has never stopped pushing the idea that a powerful Islamic State does exist in the Middle East and that every "true" muslim should populate the lands of the Caliphate. Isis worldwide call for muslim to join their cause has created the premises for a new generation of Muslims, born and raised outside of the middle East, to travel to Syria or Iraq³⁹ to become foreign fighters after a radicalisation process which often starts on the internet

The use of violence as a propaganda tool is not something new if we consider the history of modern terrorism. But the peculiarity of Isis is that violence is encouraged in every aspect of the organization. If we take, for example, the Yazidi question, we realise that the Caliphate's intention towards this community is to erase the Yazidis through killings; sexual slavery, enslavement, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment⁴⁰. The Yazidis have been targeted by Isis only because of their simple existence: the terrorist group began a campaign which aims to "purify" the Iraqi lands from non islamic influences

This ideology of violence also resulted in another wave of disputes between sunni and shiite. While it is true, as we have said earlier, that Isis (as well as the wahhabis) categorise both the majority of sunnis and shiite as takfirs (misbelievers), there are several events which suggest that the self proclaimed islamic state revitalised a war against schiism. One of these events is the Camp Speicher massacre: Isis fighter executed more than 1500 shiite unarmed Iraqi soldiers after dividing them between sunni and shiite, in a military camp near Tikrit. Navi Pillay, the U.N commissioner for Human rights also denounced the targeting of people for their ethnicity in the Iraqi regions: "They are systematically targeting men, women and children based on their ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliation and ruthlessly carrying out widespread ethnic and religious cleansing in the areas under their control."⁴¹ Another massacre of shiite supposedly took place in Mosul while the Caliphate's militia were taking the control of the city. The U.N said that the self proclaimed Islamic state sorted inmates in two groups of sunni and shiite and allegedly killed 670 shias in lands near Mosul.

³⁹These articles are useful in order to understand the process of radicalisation of young men and women raised in western countries <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jun/24/isis-british-muslims-reality-war-fight-extremism> Tuesday 24 June 2014 15.48 BST <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/09/sophie-kasiki-isis-raqqa-child-radicalised> Saturday 9 January 2016 19.51 GMT

⁴⁰http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54247#.V9_rn5N96Aw

⁴¹<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/25/isis-ethnic-cleansing-shia-prisoners-iraq-mosul> Monday 25 August 2014 19.24 BST

Here, again, the parallel with the wahhabis modus operandi between the 18th and 19th century is evident. In 1802 the muslim world was shocked by the massacre by the hands of the wahhabis of more than three thousand shiite in the city of Karbala, 100 miles from Baghdad. Corançez describes in the following way: ⁴²

- [...] six thousand dromedaries mounted by twelve thousand wahhabis suddenly appeared, and easily crushed the weak resistance. Furious of this resistance, they strictly followed the intolerant precepts of their law. Everyone found in Imam-Hussein (Karbala) was massacred without distinction; the pregnant women were disemboweled and their son slaughtered, to be certain that no one had escaped [...]

The religious dispute between sunni and schiite exists since the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 633 A.C, while there have been examples of coexistence and reciprocal tolerance, what is certain is that the wahhabist interpretation of the islamic religion, radically rejects schism as a part of the muslim world. A clear example of this issue is the recent dispute between the prevalently schiite Iran and sunnite Saudi Arabia, over the control of Mecca's pilgrimage. In September 2015, a massive stampede caused more than 2000 deaths in Mina, an intersection of the usual Mecca religious itinerary. It is the deadliest Hajj disaster in history and many states, as well as humanitarian organisations, blamed Saudi Arabia for the lack of preventive measures. The debate became by far more ferocious the 6th of September 2016, when Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stated: "The heartless and murderous Saudis locked up the injured with the dead in containers — instead of providing medical treatment and helping them or at least quenching their thirst. They murdered them,". the accusation were not only of organisational nature, but implied also an active role of Saudi Arabia's officials in "murdering" muslims who came to the annual pilgrimage. Khamenei kept on heavily accusing Saudi Arabia even by calling them "satans": "Those who have reduced Hajj to a religious-tourist trip and have hidden their enmity and malevolence towards the faithful and revolutionary people of Iran under the name of 'politicising hajj', are themselves small and puny satans who tremble for fear of jeopardising the interests of the Great Satan, the US,".⁴³ the Saudi responses are particularly interesting. While a top Saudi official moderately said "These accusations are not only unfounded, but also timed to only serve their

⁴² L.O Corançez; *Histoire des wahabis* pp27-28

⁴³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/06/iran-accuses-saudi-arabia-of-murdering-pilgrims-during-hajj-stampede> Tuesday 6 September 2016 03.35 BST

unethical, failing propaganda,” the Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul-Aziz of Saudi Arabia, publicly declared that Iranian are not muslims: "We must understand these are not Muslims.

"They are the son of the Magi and their hostility towards Muslims is an old one, especially with the People of the Tradition [Sunnis]."⁴⁴ These words are in line with the ideology of violence and hatred Muhammad Ibn Wahhab has preached two centuries ago. The first wahhabis showed no mercy at all towards non islamic populations of the 18th centuries and especially despised non-abrahamic religions such as Zoroastrian (Saudi Grand Mufti accused Iranians of being Zoroastrian) and Yazidism.

2.3 Totalitarian control of Private and Public life: Wahhabis and Isis comparison

. We have already looked through the consolidation of the Saudi-Wahhabi duality, but it is important to emphasise, once again, an important concept: The political power of the Saud family has always been accompanied by the strong spiritual presence of Wahhabism in the Arabian Peninsula. Without the strict religious control, provided by the precepts of Wahhab's ideology, the Saud, who were merely warlords, would have never had the ability to unite such a high number of tribes. These bedouin tribes, often ignorant and illiterate, were convinced or forced to adopt wahhabism which was presented as the only true and faithful interpretation of the Quran. An excellent account of this conversion process is described in a passage of "Notes on the Bedouins and the Wahabys" by J.L Burckhardt :⁴⁵

-[...]If farther proof were required that the Wahabys are very orthodox Muselmans, their catechism would furnish it. When Saoud took possession of Mekka, he distributed copies of this catechism among the inhabitants, and ordered that the pupils in public schools should learn it by heart. Its contents are nothing more than what the most orthodox Turk must admit to be true. Saoud entertained an absurd notion, that the town's-people were brought up in entire ignorance of their religion, and therefore wished to instruct those of Mekka in its first principles. Nothing, however, was contained in this catechism which the Mekkans had not already learned. [...]

⁴⁴<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-grand-mufti-iran-sunni-muslims-hajj-a7229416.html> Matt Payton Wednesday 7 September 2016

⁴⁵J.L Burckhardt; Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys p281; Qatar digital Library; www.qdl.qa
25

The Wahhabis were convinced to be living in a time where Islam had to be implemented in the same exact way as it was during its constituent phase in order for the muslim world to wake from its ignorance of the religion. Isis preaches the same, and systematically accuses muslims of not knowing their own religion and thus, of being misbeliever. There have been many terrorist attacks, such as the Garissa College massacre in Kenya, where terrorist asked people to recite verses of the Quran in order for their lives to be spared. In this way, terrorist could identify the muslims from the non-muslims and the “good” muslims who knew the Quran from the “bad” muslims who did not.

These are some reports of eyewitnesses and analysis by journalist of The Guardian on living standards inside Mosul and Raqqa under the self proclaimed Islamic State rule:

“Women rarely venture out for fear of being reprimanded by Isis police, known as the Hisbah, and the female unit, the Khansaa Brigade, even for the slightest transgression, such as carrying a brightly coloured handbag.”

-“Mobile phones are banned, people are not allowed to smoke cigarettes and those caught listening to music are punished. The militants punish people who use the internet and mobile phones, fearing that they may provide intelligence to their enemy.

-“About a month ago, a man was found with a mobile phone in his possession and punished with 45 lashes. As he was being whipped, he cried out, swearing at the Isis leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and for that he was executed, according to locals in the city.”⁴⁶

A similar description of religious totalitarianism was made by Burckhardt two centuries ago, which we have seen previously in the first chapter, explaining the Wahhabis rule over Medina after the city was conquered in 1805 :⁴⁷

[...]-Here (Medina) the Wahabys enforced, with great strictness, the regular observance of prayers. The names of all the adult male inhabitants were called over in the mosque after morning, mid-day, and evening prayers; and those who did not obey the call were punished. A respectable woman, accused of having smoked the Persian pipe, was placed upon a jack-ass, with the pipe suspended from her neck, round which was twisted the long flexible tube, or snake: in this state she was paraded through the town. [...]

⁴⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/09/life-under-isis-raqqa-mosul-giant-prison-syria-iraq>

Wednesday 9 December 2015 07.41 GMT

⁴⁷J.L Burckhardt; Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys p331; Qatar digital Library; www.qdl.qa

Both the wahhabis and Isis envisage a theocratic world where religion and morality totally coincide, and where the political and military power is necessary to deepening and spreading the strictness of their fundamentalism. Their declared goal is to bring back the islamic world to the “glorious” days of the Prophet, as they consider all of the muslims who do not adhere to their ideology, to be living in “ignorance”, similar to the ignorant (ignorant of the religion) condition of the pre-islamic people who used to venerate many Gods, saints and stones in Mecca, before the Prophet revealed the true religion to them.

By preaching a return to the costumes of the 6th century AC, both these fundamentalist sect brought back many religious rules which either were abolished or not respected in the same strict fashion as in the constituent phase of Islam. It is the case of the dhimmi, a rule of the Quran which in arabic literally means “protected person” and was referred mainly to the protection of the christians and jews. minorities by the Umma (islamic community) if the former accepted certain restrictions and the payment of a special tax. The Dhimmi, as well as other islamic customary laws, has been subject of different interpretations due to the mutation of the muslim society through the centuries. The Ottomans, for example, under the rule of Mehmet II and many other sultans, not only protected minorities such as christians of Constantinople and iberian jews, but also integrated them in the muslim society. By doing so, and also due to other cultural factors, the Ottoman empire has had an important Renaissance period in between the 15th and 16th century. The wahhabis and Isis interpretation of the dhimmi can only be understood through the obscurantist assumption for which the rules of the Quran have to be respected in the same way they were applied in the medieval society of the Prophet. The Middle East Media Institute published in 2015, an exhaustive article explaining Isis implementation of the Dhimmi in the conquered lands. The article reports that subjected Christians have to follow these 11 rules in order to be protected by the Caliphate:⁴⁸

- 1) They are forbidden to build new churches or rebuild destroyed ones.*
- 2) They must not showcase crosses or religious books, and they are forbidden to use megaphones to broadcast their prayers.*
- 3) They must not read their books out loud in front of Muslims or sound their bells.*
- 4) They must not carry out any hostile actions against ISIS, or provide refuge to spies or persons wanted by ISIS. They must inform ISIS of any "conspiracy" against it.*
- 5) They must refrain from any display of worship outside their church.*

⁴⁸<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/7859.htm>; February 28, 2014

- 6) *They may not prevent any member of their community from converting to Islam.*
- 7) *They must honor Islam and the Muslims, and not offend their religion in any way.*
- 8) *The Christians committed to pay a poll tax of "4 golden dinars" i.e. 17 grams of gold for the wealthy, 8.5 for middle income owners, and half of that for the poor.*
- 9) *They are forbidden to carry weapons.*
- 10) *They are forbidden to sell pork or wine to the Muslims or publicly consume them.*
- 11) *They must comply with any additional restrictions that ISIS may impose on their dress, trade or other matters.*

These rules are almost the same as the Dhimmi implementation under Umar Ibn al Khattab power. the second the second islamic caliph after Abu Bakr who ruled in the year 634 to 644 AC. The wahhabis made sure that the same dhimmi regulations were strictly respected. Corançez writes about how Yusuf Pasha, an ottoman vizier of the 18th century attempted to reconcile ottoman differences with the wahhabis by publishing the dhimmi proclamation of Umar Ibn al Khattab, which is one of the most radical interpretation of the Dhimmi in the history of Islam.

3rd Chapter

Western's alliance with fundamentalism

3.0 Introduction

The present Saudi Arabian kingdom is as far from tolerant and progressive societies as it is close from the constituent precepts of Mohammad Abd-Al Wahhab which is at the core of the foundation of the Saudi state. A Saudi Arabian woman cannot drive cars and is not even allowed to ride a bicycle⁴⁹. The kingdom refuses and infringes almost all of the values and principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many of these infringements have been highly publicised by the media recently. For example, the case of Raif Badawi, a Saudi blogger arrested and sentenced to a decade of prison and one thousand lashes for having criticised the kingdom's clerics



⁴⁹ *Wadjda*, a 2012 Saudi Arabian drama film written and directed by *Haifaa-al Mansour*, narrates the life of a 11 year old Saudi girl dreaming of owning a bike. It is a wonderful which gives a good insight on the lack of universal human rights in Saudi Arabia

through his website.⁵⁰Moreover, the Human Rights Watch denounces Saudi Arabia for having carried out 158 executions, 63 for non violent drug crimes only in 2015, and 47 men for terrorism-related offenses,including the Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr, in 2016⁵¹. Nevertheless, economical and political bonds with the “democratic” western world have been strong since the first world. The saudi arabian kingdom is still today an important partner of the United States of America and a member of NATO. Incredibly surprising was the choice by the U.N of electing Saudi Arabia to oversee an important U.N panel on Human rights. U.N Watch, a non governmental watchdog organization based in Geneva expressed its anger on the matter: ”U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power and EU foreign minister Federica Mogherini should condemn and work to reverse the appointment of Saudi Arabia as head of a key UN Human Rights Council panel that selects top officials who shape international human rights standards and report on violations worldwide”⁵²

This chapter will analyse the controversial partnership of western countries, declaring to be at war with islamic radicalism, with one of the most fundamentalist islamic country in the world: Saudi Arabia. The chapter will look through the Treaty of Darin between the United kingdom and Saudi Arabia in 1915, as well as the 70 years of treaties, alliances, and partnership between the U.S and the wahhabist kingdom.

3.1 The treaty of Darin

The Treaty of Darin came to existence during the beginning of the First World War. On december 26 1915, Abdelaziz Saoud and the British Colonial Office administrator in the middle East, Sir Percy Cox, reached an agreement for which Saudi lands became a protectorate of the United Kingdom. The agreement also provided that Abdelaziz would not attack other british protectorates and would declare war against the Ottoman Empire.

The Treaty was of mutual convenience: the British could secure the sovereignty of Kuwait and Qatar, in which they had political interests as well as using the Saouds in a anti-ottoman perspective. The House of Saoud, instead, with this treaty resulted in the winning side of the war and gained international recognition for its territorial ambitions. A recognition that was forever

⁵⁰<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/raif-badawi-saudi-arabias-supreme-court-reviewing-case-of-jailed-blogger-10451793.html> Wednesday 12 August 2015

⁵¹ www.hrw.org

⁵²<http://blog.unwatch.org/index.php/2015/09/20/saudi-arabia-wins-bid-to-behead-of-un-human-rights-council-panel/>

contested by the Ottomans in the 19th century. The Wahhabis could finally secure a solid territorial sovereignty under a area they have been fighting in for one century and a half. In order to understand Saudi power and its unitary character, we have to take into account that it is one of the very few Middle Eastern states, along with Turkey and Iran, which have not been artificially created by the winning powers of the First World War. The arbitrary borders delimitations of country such as Syria and Iraq, during the outcome of WWI, proved to be problematic and its consequences are still felt today in various ethnical conflicts, especially the schiite and sunni Iraqi question.

3.3 The pact of Quincy

On february 14th 1945, king Abdelaziz Saoud and the U.S President Franklin D. Roosevelt meet on board of the U.S navy heavy cruiser USS Quincy. This encounter is a turning point for the Saudi Arabian political history: Saudi Arabia from this point on, will forever remain largely dependent of the american policies in exchange of the superpower's protection.

Despite what has been said about this encounter, both the heads of state never discussed about oil during their meeting on the U.S navy. the outcome of the alliance certainly was the trade off between protection for the House of Saoud and oil for the U.S, but american businesses were already involved in the petrol extraction on Saudi lands since 1933.

U.S companies were preferred to European drillers operating in Iraq and Iran because Abdelaziz was wary of colonial powers that controlled much of the region at the time⁵³. During the meeting, Roosevelt was much more interested in resolving the jewish colonisation of Palestine, hoping that the Saudi King would have been at his side. However, the Saudi King refused Roosevelt's ideas and discarded the option of allocating the jewish population in Palestinian lands. Nevertheless, the meeting resulted in a solidification of U.S-Saudi Arabia relationship. William A.Eddy, an american expert on Arab culture who had been acting as the U.S minister to Saudi and who was present at the meeting gives a first person account of their encounter suggesting a reciprocal sympathy between Saoud and Roosevelt: ⁵⁴

⁵³<http://www.cfr.org/saudi-arabia/us-saudi-relations/p36524> updated: April 21, 2016

⁵⁴William A. Eddy; F.D.R meets Ibn Saoud

[...] The King and the President got along famously together. Among many passages of pleasant conversation I shall choose the King's statement to the President that the two of them really were twins: (1) they were both of the same age (which was not quite correct); (2) they were both heads of states with grave responsibilities to defend, protect and feed their people; (3) they were both at heart farmers, the President having made quite a hit with the King by emphasizing his rural responsibilities as the squire of Hyde Park and his interest in agriculture; (4) they both bore in their bodies grave physical infirmities—the President obliged to move in a chair and the King walking with difficulty and unable to climb stairs because of wounds in his legs. [...]

⁵⁵Economic partnership between the two countries is testified by ARAMCO, Saudi Arabian Oil Company, formerly known as Arabian-American Oil Company born during oil exploration operation driven by the U.S during the 30's. While today the company is fully of Saudi property, U.S petrol companies such as Chevron, Dow Chemicals, and ExxonMobil are still influencing actors in Saudi Arabian petrol business. Saudi Arabia is the world's largest owner of crude reserves and exported, according to the Joint Organisations Data initiative, approximately 7.55 million barrels only in 2016. This Oil supremacy gives Saudi Arabia an extensive power in influencing worldwide policies. In the 2009, for example, President George W Bush made his case for having OPEC, and particularly American ally Saudi Arabia, increase oil production as the price of gas hovers around \$3 a gallon.⁵⁶

3.3 Controversies after 9/11

Protecting Saudi Arabia has always been a priority for U.S Foreign policy. However, their partnership was at risk quite a few times in the new millennium. This gradual deterioration of Saudi-American relations begins with the 9/11 terrorist attacks: in 2002, the Congressional Inquiry published the so-called “28 pages”⁵⁷ discussing the possible involvement of Saudi Arabia in the World Trade centre attack. The document was declassified by the Obama administration, causing tensions between the two countries. Even if, Saudi Arabian involvement in the terrorist attack is not clear, the distrust of americans in relation to the Saudi Arabian government is growing. On

⁵⁵Official U.S. Army photo USA-C-545 from the U.S. Navy Naval History and Heritage Command ; the photo was originally in black and white, but was recently enhanced in colours. King Saoud and President Roosevelt are both sitted in this picture.

⁵⁶<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/GasCrisis/story?id=4141964> Jan. 16, 2008

⁵⁷ The inquiry is available on this website: <https://28pages.org/>

september 9 2016, the american Congress approved a legislation allowing american families of September 11 victims to sue the government of Saudi Arabia . On september 23, Obama vetoed the Bill, but a congressional override is expected.

3.4 Saudi Arabia's linkage with modern fundamentalism

The Saudi Arabian has economically contributed to the U.N anti terror programme and its officials have explicitly declared that Isis remains “enemy number one”. However, it is impossible not to associate wahhabism with the creation and solidification of modern islamic terrorist groups. Osama Bin laden himself was saudi and used a lot of Wahhabi terminology. The Al Qaida terrorist used to call for a war against the “hubal-America”: Hubal was a moon-God worshipped in pre-islamic arabia and thus especially despised by wahhabist fundamentalist who focused in eliminating anything that could recall shirk (polytheism) as we have already largely seen in the previous two chapters. While there may be substantial differences in the political intent of Saudi wahhabism and Terrorists inspired by wahhabism, the problem is the doctrinal differentiation between the two. In Chapter two we thoroughly analysed how Wahhabism divided people between Mujahiddun (unitarians) and Polytheist (those committing shirk), or more simply between Wahhabist and non Wahhabist. We also have seen that for what concerns the first wahabis living the 19th century, the *modus operandi* characterising their military campaigns and religious mission had several similarities with the expansionist goals of the Self Proclaimed Islamic State: the destruction of shrines, massacres of yazidis and shiite and the ideological war against nonbelievers.

Saudi has been largely financing Wahhabi schools throughout the world. In 2015 indian religious leaders and representatives of Muslim community urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to liberate all Waqf boards from radical Wahabi influence. Imam Tandem Mohammed Hamid said: "We reminded the Prime Minister about his commitment to fight terrorism. The religious leaders sought his help to check spread of Wahabi terror in the country," ⁵⁸

A more preoccupying document came out from Wikileaks and in depicting the recruitment of terrorists groups around 2008 in Pakistan, implied a direct economical involvement by Saudi Arabia: “Locals believed that charitable activities being carried out by Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith organizations, including Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the Al-Khidmat Foundation, and Jaish-e-Mohammad were further strengthening reliance on extremist groups and minimizing the importance of traditionally moderate Sufi religious leaders in these communities. Government and non-

⁵⁸<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/End-Wahabi-influence-on-Wakf-boards-PM-told/articleshow/46843607.cms> Apr 8, 2015, 01.13 AM IST

governmental sources claimed that financial support estimated at nearly 100 million USD annually was making its way to Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith clerics in the region from "missionary" and "Islamic charitable" organizations in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates ostensibly with the direct support of those governments.” Moreover, A CRS report to the American congress ⁵⁹, in 2004, argues over the effects of Saudi-funded Madrasa (religious school which have historically existed in the muslim world). The CRS report emphasises the threatening view of Wahhabism which could jeopardise the existence of more moderate interpretations of Islam throughout the world.

The problematic remains substantial: How can the western world cooperate against international terrorism with a country that endorsing a view of Islam which is medieval, violent, and intolerant ? The question does not revolve around the possibility whether jihadists are directly or indirectly related with Wahhabism, but on the similarities between Mohammad Abd-Al Wahhab’s actions and preachings and what Isis, Al Nusra, Bhoko haram and modern fundamentalist terrorists are doing worldwide.

⁵⁹ See Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force on Terrorist Financing, “Update on the Global Campaign Against Terrorist Financing,” June 15, 2004, p. 20.

Conclusion

Who is our enemy ?

If Allah is the God of Isis and Al Baghdadi, the man who calls himself a Caliph and pretends to be the “sword” of God, there should no be doubts over the fact that the “prophet” of this religion is Muhammad Abd-Al Wahhab, who has lived in the XVIII century.

This sectarian version of Islam originally waged a war against the “Mahommedans” the ones who gave a companion or many companions to God, consequently disturbing the wahhabis vision of the religion for which the unicity and importance of God is absolute, up to the point that life on earth is considered obsolete.

This war waged by the mens of the Caliph, as well as the wahhabis, pretends to hold the necessary unitary character which, eventually, will bring stability to the Umma. It is a war against the schiite Yazidis and curds considered “apostates”, “pagans” by the terrorists and not worthy of being in the islamic community. Thus Isis is preaching unity while excluding, killing and dividing. The unity of all muslims if they are willing to adopt a fundamentalist ideology, give flesh and soul to the Almighty and fight the holy war. It is the Wahhabist contradiction and the Saudi Arabian credo, even if the Saud family is well integrated in the American interests and capitalist globalisation today.

Isis strength and its abilities to seduce western and sometimes well educated muslims, is due to its oversimplified interpretation of Islam, to the ability in convincing people no to think but to obey, because what is written in the Quran is not to be interpreted but just implemented. Another contradiction, since societies change and Isis view of the Quran is itself a fundamentalist XXI century interpretation of the religion, based on XVIII century roots.

Supposing that the rise of Wahhabism (it would be extremely interesting to deepen this aspect) is a conservative response to a first wave of mondialisation brought by british imperialism, napoleonic wars, rise of Enlightenment and the french “*esprit des lumières*”. It would then be possible to observe that today, Isis is part of a process of radical anti-mondialisation. Which proposes, by using a simplified and universal language, to reverse the process of “progressive” capitalist mondialisation, and advocate a return to the origins, to the palingenesis of a supposed state of nature where law and wisdom are only conferred to God leaving no other right to the people than submit themselves to the will of something “perfect” and absolute.

A submission to God but also to the Caliph. The idea of a military chief to follow in order to implement the will of Allah has been a very helpful tool for modern terrorists. Yesterday it was Bin Laden and today, Al Baghdadi. It is a military/political chief who has to be respected and followed not as a prophet but for his ability in holding together the community of God. This was the role of the Saud family in the wahhabist perspective.

In this way, the wahhabist terrorism is transforming frustration and hate into an instrument of appropriation and oppression of the subject, until the subject dies as a martyr, which symbolically is appropriation of God and an act of suppression of the enemies of the faith. It uses the hate of many sunni Iraqis towards schiite Iraqis, sunni yemenites towards schiite yemenites, muslims syrians towards christians and alawites, the hate toward the curds, the frustration caused by american wars and occupations in the middle East, the hate of european, american, australian and radicalised muslims from many other parts of the world, towards modernity and a society which is changing at an impressive speed: Hate and frustration which become the fuel for the extremist jihadi engine and gives blood to the wahhabist ideology.

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- **List of Figures**

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Riassunto

Da 15 anni, dall'attentato alle torri gemelle, le democrazie occidentali e la cosiddetta comunità internazionale sono sotto i colpi di un nuovo nemico che sembra contestare alle radici il modo di vita e il sistema di valori che ha prevalso dopo la seconda guerra mondiale. Una forma di anti mondializzazione radicale che compie azioni di guerra dimostrative e feroci proponendo il ritorno a valori che sarebbero naturali e universali e che si sublimano in una idea forte, quella nella obbedienza a un unico solo dio.

L'occidente, sotto la leadership degli Stati Uniti, ha reagito con una guerra contro gli aggressori (Al Qaeda) e i Taliban che ad Al Qaeda offrivano ospitalità e supporto in Afghanistan. Questa guerra si è poi evoluta, o involuta, sicuramente trasformata, in una campagna contro gli Stati Canaglia (Rogue states), quelli che sfidavano la mondializzazione dei diritti e delle merci sostenendo in qualche modo il terrorismo internazionale. Questi stati canaglia: Iraq, Iran, Corea del Nord, Libia, Cuba, Yemen del nord, Siria riunivano in un unico mazzo di carte, vecchi e nuovi nemici degli Stati Uniti e la Casa Bianca chiedeva a tutti gli altri stati di mobilitarsi per chiudere la partita con questi potenziali focolai di tensione.

Non ha funzionato, almeno non ha funzionato contro il terrorismo islamico: proprio là dove gli Stati Uniti avevano mandato 300mila uomini nel 2003 e poi ne avevano lasciato a lungo 150-200mila, si è affermato il sedicente stato islamico, conquistando città come Mosul e imponendo la sua legge, la sua amministrazione, la propria ideologia fondamentalista, ben presto il contagio islamista radicale ha coinvolto la Siria, fino alla nascita dell'Isis (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Da lì sono partiti gli ordini per gli attentati terroristi che hanno insanguinato il vecchio continente, fino alla strage del Bataclan.

Così ancora oggi (o forse oggi finalmente) ci chiediamo chi sia il nemico. Obama già il 4 giugno del 2009 si preoccupò di dire all'Università del Cairo che l'America non considerava l'Islam un nemico, anzi che bisognava "cercare un nuovo inizio fra gli Stati Uniti ed i musulmani nel mondo, basato sul mutuo interesse e sul mutuo rispetto". Il 31 luglio del 2016 Papa Francesco, tornando in aereo da Cracovia ha detto: "L'Islam non è terrorista. Non è vero e non è giusto. Ci sono gruppetti fondamentalisti. Ad esempio il cosiddetto Isis, lo Stato Islamico, che si presenta come violento. Ma non voglio parlare di violenza islamica, perché allora dovrei parlare anche di violenza cattolica".

Ma al tempo stesso molte personalità politiche, che si dicono cristiane e si muovono nell'ambito delle democrazie liberali occidentali esprimono un potere opposto: da Donald Trump a Marine Le Pen, per non citare che due candidati alla presidenza dei rispettivi paesi. Ma molti sono gli intellettuali che invitano l'occidente giudaico cristiano a una riscossa contro l'Islam. Scriveva Oriana Fallaci (morta nel 2006 ma che molti considerano come un profeta della lotta contro l'Islam) "Non esiste un Islam moderato il corano è il loro Mein Kampf". Michel Houellebecq ha scritto nel 2015 "Soumission", un romanzo che racconta la capitolazione di una Francia che si arrende all'Islam.

Compito di questa tesi non può essere il lavoro di ricostruzione del percorso millenario dell'Islam per vedere quali somiglianze e quali differenze ci siano tra l'ideologia del fondamentalismo terrorista odierno e l'Islam del profeta Maometto, o invece quello dell'anno mille, quando la cultura islamica ha improntato su di sé oltre la metà delle terre bagnate dal Mediterraneo. Più semplicemente mi propongo di esplorare le consonanze tra l'ideologia dell'Isis e la setta wahabbita. E di illuminare le alleanze e la convergenza di interessi che ha consentito al wahabbismo di estendersi come una macchia d'olio nel mondo d'oggi.

Ora la chiave del pensiero di Al Wahhab, che visse nel XVII secolo, un tempo relativamente recente, e fu quindi contemporaneo di Montesquieu e Voltaire, consiste nella rifondazione di un Islam delle origini deprivato da ogni mediazione culturale, della riflessione sulla storia, del ricordo delle personalità che ne hanno guidato la marcia. Ogni uomo deve riposare nella nuda terra: a servizio di Allah, niente altro deve essere ricordato di lui. Di qui l'ordine di distruggere i monumenti, anche le tombe dei saggi e persino quella del profeta. Ogni civiltà è corrotta, i suoi retaggi sono icone blasfeme: e abbiamo assistito alla distruzione di Palmira. Gli sciiti sono apostati, meritano la morte. Sono apostati gli Yazidi, adoratori del pavone. E l'Isis ha programmato e consumato lo sterminio dei maschi Yazidi e lo stupro collettivo delle loro donne. Al tempo stesso la sottomissione radicale a dio e l'assenza di un cleso nell'Islam sunnita, postulano l'obbedienza a un capo militare, che è al tempo stesso capo religioso, spada dei veri credenti. Nasce da qui l'idea di far risorgere tra Siria e Iraq, a due passi da Bagdad, un nuovo califfato. Con un capo unico politico e militare al Bagdadi.

È questa idea dell'Islam in consonanza con il dettato coranico e con l'interpretazione che se ne dava al tempo di Maometto? Se ne discuterà a lungo. Tuttavia, nel nostro lavoro di indagine, ci siamo

imbattuti in un testimone d'eccezione, quasi coevo di Abd Al Wahhab, Corancet, il quale dà per scontato che gli wahhabiti intendessero portare una guerra a morte contro quelli che egli chiama i Maomettani, cioè contro gli islamici sunniti del 700. In ogni caso l'ideologia che sembra aver ispirato il terrorismo islamico contemporaneo comincia a irradiarsi in un momento preciso della storia, a metà del secolo diciottesimo. E subito trova la sua forza nell'alleanza tra l'ideologo Al Wahhab e un capo militare Al Saud, fondatore della dinastia saudita.

È facile dimostrare come quella ideologia si sia diffusa grazie a questa sintesi di fede e spada. E grazie al controllo dei sauditi sui luoghi sacri dell'Islam, la Mecca, Medina. Una diffusione che si limita per 150 anni alla penisola arabica e ai paesi circostanti, ma che diventa potenzialmente globale quando nel xxesimo secolo, prima l'imperialismo inglese, poi quello americano si alleanza con i Sauditi, considerandoli alleati necessari per il controllo del medio oriente. È allora che il destino della mondializzazione capitalista e dell'antimondializzazione islamista si legano in modo indissolubile.

Se Allah è il dio a cui fa riferimento l'Isis e Al Baghdadi l'uomo che si fa chiamare califfo e pretende di essere la spada di dio, non dovrebbero sussistere dubbi che la versione dell'Islam di cui si nutrono i terroristi di oggi si è manifestata per la prima volta a metà del secolo XVIII e che Al Wahhab ne è stato il profeta.

Questa versione "settaria" dell'Islam si è rivolta dall'origine contro la tradizione musulmana, contro i "maomettani", accusati di innalzare semplici uomini al rango di semidei, onorandone la memoria, e di adorare oggetti o prodotti culturali, distraendo i fedeli dal compito assoluto che è di servire il solo dio.

Questa guerra, gli wahhabiti come gli uomini del califfo, la conducono tuttavia, ogni volta che ne hanno la possibilità, non direttamente contro i sunniti ma arrogandosi il ruolo di difensori della vera fede, e quindi dell'unità della Sunna, innanzitutto colpendo gli apostati. Sciiti e Yazidi, anzitutto, gente che ai loro occhi si pretende musulmana ma è pagana, avendo contaminato la fede con l'immagine del pavone o il ricordo del martirio di Ali. Colpendo sciiti e yazidi, ma anche i curdi che li attaccano e gli europei che li bombardano, i terroristi wahhabiti evocano dunque l'unità della sunna. L'unità con l'Arabia Saudita, pure se i nipoti di Al Saud sono in realtà ben integrati nel sistema di potere americano (e quindi nella ruota della mondializzazione capitalista. L'unità con

ogni musulmano che viva in occidente, a condizione che egli sia pronto a rinascere nella fede e a unirsi alla guerra santa.

La forza del Daesh e la sua capacità di provocare l'emulazione in molti paesi dell'occidente deriva, come al tempo di Corancet, dal proporre una versione semplificata dell'Islam, dalla scelta di rifiutare ogni interpretazione del Corano per osservare alla lettera ogni versetto che parli -con il linguaggio del settimo secolo- della guerra santa, della punizione per gli apostati, della subordinazione della donna all'uomo, e dell'obbedienza assoluta all'unico solo dio.

Se il sorgere dell'utopia di Al Wahhab -sarebbe bello approfondire questo aspetto- ebbe qualcosa a vedere con l'affermarsi in quel tempo della prima mondializzazione (imperialismo britannico, guerre napoleoniche, diffondersi dell'esprit des lumieres), si potrebbe osservare che il credo wahhabita può considerarsi oggi un'antimondializzazione radicale. Che usa un linguaggio semplificato e universale, che si propone di rovesciare la mondializzazione capitalista, pubblicitaria e progressista nel mito del ritorno alle origini, nella palingenesi di un presunto stato di natura, dove l'unica legge e la sola sapienza sono di dio e al fedele non rest aaltro diritto se non quello di sottomettersi.

Sottomissione a dio, ma anche al califfo. Aiuta molto il diffondersi del terrorismo islamico questa unicità del capo in terra, ieri della guida Bin Laden, oggi del califfo Al Bagdadi. Un uomo che può e deve essere obbedito non per la sua qualità di profeta -sarebbe blasfemo se si atteggiasse a profeta- ma per l'essere riuscito a far vivere in terra, la città di dio, a far applicare in qualche dove la sharia. Nell'Afganistan dei talebam, all'inizio del millennio, tra Iraq e Siria, nel Daesh di oggi. I fedeli, coloro che si votano al martirio, non vanno a sentire la parola del capo, ma a costatare il risultato della sua opera. È cruciale il viaggio iniziatico nei paesi "liberati" e quindi soggetti, nel modo più brutale, obbedienza a dio.

Sappiamo come lo strumento ideologico e l'arma militare più efficace dell'odierno terrorismo islamico sia la rinuncia alla vita, il fedele che si uccide uccidendo. È probabile che qui le vergini promesse da Maometto dopo la morte c'entrino poco. Per carità, sono un riferimento quasi obbligato nella celebrazione del martire, ma si tratta di una formula rituale, come il riferimento alla madonna, materna e consolatrice dei cristiani. In realtà -come sostengono molti studiosi- Il rinato alla fede già vive in terra un'esistenza speciale, al di sopra delle possibilità che gli erano state

consegnate dalla spirito del tempo. Egli ha rinunciato al consumo promesso dal capitalismo - le donne nude e i motori che sono sbucati fuori dal telefono di uno degli attentatori del Bataclan. ma per un altro modo di consumare. Nel nome di Allah e con gli strumenti della mondializzazione. Vive collegato alla rete per propagandare la guerra santa e diventa spesso un esperto di internet. Fa sesso estremo in nome del diritto “naturale” del maschio di prendersi la femmina e dell'autorizzazione divina alla femmina a farsi prendere per una superiore causa, il successo della jihad. Si rimpinza di droghe, brucia la vita e prende a considerare la morte, esito necessario e invocato della sua gloriosa rinascita.

Così il terrorismo wahhabita si nutre dell'odio e della frustrazione per trasformarli in strumento di appropriazione e sopraffazione, fino alla propria morte che è, simbolicamente, appropriazione di dio e sopraffazione dei nemici della fede. L'odio di tanti sunniti iracheni per gli sciiti e i curdi, colpevoli, a loro modo di vedere, di essersi approfittati delle guerre americane, l'odio saudita contro l'Iran sciita, quello delle tribù sunnite dello Yemen contro gli yemeniti sciiti, dei musulmani siriani contro cristiani e alawiti: odio e frustrazione che diventa il motore della jihad estremista e dà sangue all'ideologia wahhabita. Ma non è possibile dimenticare il reclutamento di sunniti mondializzati: giovani le cui famiglie sono immigrate in Europa e in America, spesso passabilmente integrati ma che vivono la frustrazione di cittadini di serie B, consumatori a cui sono negate delizie del consumo promesse, ragazzi che mitizzano le loro origini islamiche per farne uno status che li renda uguali e potenzialmente superiori a coetanei più ricchi e fortunati. Su questo genere di frustrazione lo wahhabismo sta avendo un'influenza crescente.