

PART I
ANALYSIS

1. THE NARRATIVE AND ITS BACKGROUND

Précis of the Narrative

The long Šammari oral narrative text presented in the second part of this work relates the raids and adventures of Hiḍlūl aš-Šwēhri, a member of as-Swēd branch of Sinjāriḥ division of the Šammari tribal confederacy. Hiḍlūl was eventually slain by ʿGāb al-ʿWāji, the chief of Wild Slēmān lineage from the tribe of ʿAnazah. The death of Hiḍlūl was avenged by Hāyis al-Gʿēt, a Šammari warrior.

The narrative opens by recounting the circumstances surrounding a conflict that broke out between Hiḍlūl and Fāliḥ ibn Gdūr, the chief of as-Swēd at the time. Mḥammad al-Hirbīd sought the protection of Hiḍlūl when ibn Gdūr insisted that Mḥammad give a camel he had taken from aš-Šarārāt tribe. When Hiḍlūl tried to intercede on behalf of al-Hirbīd, he was rebuffed by ibn Gdūr. Hiḍlūl became incensed and retaliated by launching raids against aš-Šarārāt, the clients of ibn Gdūr.

Hiḍlūl's repeated raids against aš-Šarārāt led to the humiliation and final overthrow of ibn Gdūr. Returning from one of his raids, Hiḍlūl and his men were intercepted at Kiḥliḥ, a watering place, by a contingent of ʿAnazah warriors, the traditional enemies of Šammari. In the ensuing battle, Hiḍlūl and his kinsmen were victorious. A number of ʿAnazah men were slain, among them members of al-ʿWāji lineage, a division of al-Jaʿāfriḥ section of the Wild Slēmān branch of ʿAnazah.

Hiḍlūl alternated his raids between aš-Šarārāt, northern neighbors of as-Swēd, and Wild Slēmān, their western neighbors. This incessant harrying of Wild Slēmān and the slaying of al-ʿWājis at Kiḥliḥ so enraged ʿGāb, the son of Siʿdūn al-ʿWāji, the chief of Wild Slēmān, that he vowed that, should Hiḍlūl fall into his hands, he would slaughter a camel, kill Hiḍlūl on the spot and mix the warm blood of the camel with that of Hiḍlūl.

In one of his forays against Wild Slēmān, Hiḍlūl and his men were, through a ruse, surrounded and routed by °Anazah troops. Hiḍlūl was pursued by ibn Nōbān who, not knowing that he was pursuing Hiḍlūl aš-Šwēhri, the very man °Gāb had sworn to kill, urged him to submit his spear and surrender, promising to spare his life. Hiḍlūl complied.

When °Gāb discovered that Hiḍlūl was captive in the tent of ibn Nōbān he sent someone after him in order to kill him and fulfill his vow. °Gāb turned a deaf ear to the protestations of ibn Nōbān. Even the attempts of Hiḍlūl to ransom himself were of no avail.

Seeing that death was imminent, Hiḍlūl started to invoke the names of the various clans and famous warriors of the Šammar. He earnestly implored them not to let the shedding of his blood go unavenged.

He began by calling out the name of Hāyis al-G°eṭ, a renowned Šammari warrior who was camped in al-Jizīrih (Mesopotamia) at the time, and finished by calling out the name of °Abdih, the principal and leading division of the Šammar confederacy. It so happened that there was a Šammari man at the camp of °Gāb when all this was taking place. He was beseeched by Hiḍlūl to ride to Hāyis al G°eṭ in al-Jizīrih and tell him what had happened and how it had happened.

As soon as Hāyis al-G°eṭ received the news of Hiḍlūl's death and knew that his name had been invoked, he immediately gave orders to his kinsmen to ride with him to Najd and avenge the blood of their Šammari kinsman. Along the way, three youths from °Abdih attached themselves to Hāyis' party in answer to Hiḍlūl's invocation of the °Abdih's name. Before reaching the territory of the Wild Slēmān, Hāyis stopped to call on Ṭalāl ibn Rmāl, his maternal uncle, to borrow a fresh horse to replace his weary mount. Ibn Rmāl had only one horse available, which was about to foal, and Hāyis took it.

Before the day of the attack, Hāyis divided his men. He separated the horsemen from the cameleers who were carrying water and provisions. The horsemen were to launch the attack the next day, while the cameleers were to go in a different direction and wait for them at a designated place.

On the night before the attack, ʿGāb was forewarned of Hāyis' raid. The only strategy Hāyis could resort to, in order to force ʿGāb out of his camp and into the open desert, was to surprise the camel herds of al-Jaʿāfrih in their pastures. Knowing this, ʿGāb and his brother Ḥjāb led a sizable squadron of horsemen and headed for the pastures. At the break of dawn the two parties met.

Hāyis laid out the plan for his men. He told his marauders to attack the enemy's camels and drive some of the faster ones before them. This stratagem would lure ʿGāb and his troop to follow them. Hāyis' men would keep on spurring the camels for a long distance in order to separate the ʿAnazah horsemen from each other. Nags would be left behind. Only fast thoroughbreds, ridden by men of the stature of ʿGāb and Ḥjāb would be able to keep up with Hāyis and his men. These Anazis had fine horses that could keep close to the heels of the fleeing Šammari. Also, given the topographical nature of the land, Hāyis and his men would soon be on top of the hill, while ʿGāb and his men would be at the bottom. Turning around and going downhill would make the Šammari horses run faster; thus, making the spear-thrusts more forceful. Taking advantage of this, Hāyis and his men would turn to meet the enemy.

The plan worked. ʿGāb and Ḥjāb were surrounded. Hāyis chased ʿGāb, but the latter's thoroughbred mare, Falḥa, was much faster than the pregnant horse of ibn Rmāl. The honor of killing ʿGāb fell to Mfīz ibn Habdān, one of the ʿAbdi youths. Ḥjāb was also killed that day.

The cameleers of Hāyis, being strangers to the land, had meanwhile lost their way. Instead of going to the designated spot, they went a different direction, into the territory of ʿAnazah, and fell in the hands of Ḍbēb al-ʿWāji. After the news came that ʿGāb and Ḥjāb were killed by the Šammari raiders, Ḍbēb killed the captive cameleers.

The story of Hiḍlūl aš-Šwēhri is interspersed with poetic testimonies that highlight the focal episodes. For example, Ḥsēn aḍ-Ḍnēb, Hiḍlūl's kinsman and lieutenant, was an excellent marksman and an outstanding poet. He participated in the Kiḥliḥ

raid and recorded it in two poems. The death of Hiḍlūl was lamented by two of the most prominent poets of Šammar at the time: Ršēd ibn Ṭoḥān as-Swēdi, a close kin of Hiḍlūl and Mbērīc (dimin. of Mbārak) at-Tbēnāwi from aš-Šrēhih section of al-Yḥaya branch of ʿAbdih. After the slaying of ʿGāb, the praises of Hāyis al-Gḥeṭ and Mfīz ibn Habdān were sung by these three bards, as well as a fourth, Falāḥ ibn Faḍīl al-Ġēṭi, from al-Ġyīṭih section of al-Yḥaya branch of ʿAbdih.

A Historical Background

The story of Hiḍlūl aš-Šwēhri is only a chapter in the long, complex history of intertribal conflicts between the two neighboring tribes of Šammar and ʿAnazah of Northern Arabia. The events related in the story took place nearly over one hundred and fifty years ago, around the beginning of the establishment of the Rašīdi Dynasty in Jabal Šammar by ʿAbdallah ibn Rašīd and his brother ʿBēd around 1835 (1).

By the close of the 18th century, the Šammar tribe experienced increasing military pressure from the Saudis of Dirʿiyyah. When the political strife between the Saudis and the Šarīf of Mecca intensified, the tribes and regions of Arabia were compelled to take sides. Miṭlag ibn Mḥammad al-Jarba, the paramount chief of the Šammar Bedouins, sided with the Šarīf. Al-Ḥōdīlih ibn Ṭwālih, the chief of al-Aslam division of Šammar, took the side of ibn Saud (2).

In the summer of 1791, the Saudi forces under the leadership of Saud ibn Abdulaziz attacked Miṭlag al-Jarba at al-ʿUdwah near Ḥāyil and killed his son Miṣlaṭ. In the year 1789, Miṭlag al-Jarba himself was killed in another encounter with the Saudi forces. By the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the bulk of the Šammar nomads migrated to Mesopotamia under the leadership of Fāris al-Jarba, younger brother of Miṭlag (3).

The Šammar folk who did not migrate with Fāris were left behind in Jabal Šammar, weak and leaderless. This temporary weakness coincided with other unfavorable circumstances. Around that time, sections of the ʿAnazah tribe were being pushed by other tribes from their traditional territories in Central Najd and

moved northward towards the Šammar territory. The Wild Slēmān division of ʿAnazah, under the able leadership of Siʿdūn al-ʿWāji and his brave son ʿGāb, overran the Šammar territory and were able to occupy some of its most coveted grazing areas and wells. As the two hostile tribes came into proximity of one another, raids and counter-raids became almost a daily affair. As has always been the case throughout the history of the Arabs of the desert, these intertribal feuds were recorded and celebrated by tribal poets. These recountings supplied the material for oral-historical narratives. Aside from that of language there is hardly any difference, between these narratives and the narratives of *ayyām al-Šarab* which were transmitted by the ancient *rāwis* and recorded by ancient Arab philologists.

The inhabitants of Jabal Šammar are mostly nomads. Settled people constitute only a small minority in this area and they are mostly from Tamīm and other non-Šammari origins. The chieftainship of the nomads was traditionally kept in the hands of al-Jarba lineage from the al-Xriṣih division of Šammar. Ibn ʿAli, who hailed from al-Jʿafar section of the Ribīʿiyyih branch of ʿAbdih, was the Amir of the settled folk, a minor position compared to that of al-Jarba. After al-Jarba left for al-Jizīrih with his Xriṣih kinsmen, ibn ʿAli was unable to fill the political vacuum. He could not unite the Šammar in order to halt the encroachment of the ʿAnazah. As a matter of fact, ʿAnazah moved so deep into Šammar territory that the firing of shots against the Šammar nomads were heard by the citizens inside the walls of Ḥāyil. Despite the insistence of the leading men of Ḥāyil, ibn ʿAli refused to meet the ʿAnazah in the field and help the beleaguered Šammari nomads. ʿAbdallah ibn Rašīd and his brother, ʿBēd, also from al-Jʿafar section, were unable to stand this humiliation and led a revolt against their kinsman ibn ʿAli. They eventually overthrew him and took the seat of government in Ḥāyil. As a result of the aggressive and able leadership of the Rašīdi house, Šammar came to be one of the mightiest tribes in Northern Arabia. Thus, the migration of al-Jarba and his Xriṣih kinsmen to al-Jizīrih prepared the ground for ʿAbdih to assume the leadership of Šammar.

To conclude this part of this chapter, a few words about the divisions and genealogies of Šammar may prove helpful. This is a rather rich and complex subject and authorities differ widely concerning its details. We can only touch on the matter lightly here, giving a bare minimum of information necessary for illuminating the more obscure parts of our story (4).

Written and oral sources do not tell us much about the chronological development of the tribal structure of Šammar, how Šammar came to be Šammar, or how its various groups came into alliance with each other. Synchronic analysis shows that the tribe is divided into four principal groups: al-Aslam, al-Xriših, Sinjārih, and ʿAbdih. The first three descend from the ancient Qaḥṭānite tribe of Ṭayy. The Ṭayy tribe had occupied Jabal Šammar (called Jabal Ṭayy in ancient sources) since pre-Islamic times. On the other hand, ʿAbdih, also Qaḥṭānite in origin, migrated into the area from Yemen only seven centuries ago at the most. Around the time that the ʿAbdih moved into the area, a war broke out between the division of Ṭayy called Šammar and the rest of the tribe, called Bihīj and Sinbis. Since both Ṭayy and ʿAbdih descended from Qaḥṭān (*vis à vis* ʿAdnān), Šammar sought the help of their distant cousins, ʿAbdih, against their closer cousins, Bihīj and Sinbis. Thus, through the help of the newly-arrived and vigorous tribe of ʿAbdih, Šammar was able to expel Bihīj and Sinbis to the North. Since that time, ʿAbdih became an integral part of Šammar.

Genealogically, the three divisions of Šammar that descend from Ṭayy, that is to say, al-Aslam, al-Xriših and Sinjārih, are closer to each other than any of them to ʿAbdih. Some authorities go so far as to lump the three together under the single name of aṣ-Šāyih. Geographically, al-Aslam is somewhat separated from the rest of Šammar. Its territory lies to the south of the others, around Jabal Salma.

The territories of al-Xriših, Sinjārih, and ʿAbdih lie in the northern part around Jabal Aja. Their pasture areas and water wells are intermixed. This regional arrangement resulted in closer political cooperation between these three divisions and the existence of a certain degree of tension between them and

al-Aslam in the south. This partly explains the siding of al-Ḥōdilih with Ibn Saud against the rest of the Šammar under Miṭlag al-Jarba. It might also explain the noticeable absence of any mention of al-Aslam in the narrative under consideration here. Except for the casual mention of ʿAdwān ibn Ṭwālih <64> (5), one of its principal chiefs, al-Aslam played no role whatsoever in the events of the story. Hence, we need not be concerned with its various divisions.

ʿAbdih is mentioned several times in our story. Its name was uttered by Hiḍlūl in his invocations when ʿGāb drew the sword to kill him. In answer to this invocation, three youths from ʿAbdih attached themselves to the party of Hāyis al-Ḡʿeṭ during his raid against ʿGāb. Two of the youths were from al-Mfaḍḍal sub-tribe, whose chief was ibn Jibrīn, and the third was from al-Jiri sub-tribe, whose chief was al-Fidīd. Both sections belong to al-Yḥaya branch of ʿAbdih. Al-Yḥaya was made up of many sections, most prominent among them al-Fiḍīl. From al-Fiḍīl descend the chiefly families of ibn Šrēm, ibn ʿIjīl, and aba-l-Mēx. The other branch of ʿAbdih is ar-Ribīʿiyih. This branch is divided into various sections, one of which is al-Jʿafar. From al-Jʿafar descends the lineage of al-Xalīl. In turn, from al-Xalīl hails the princely families of ibn ʿAli and ibn Rašīd.

Of all the four principal divisions of Šammar, al-Xriṣih and Sinjārih were considered to be the closest to each other. They were frequently lumped together under the name of Zōbaʿ. The grand ancestor of al-Xriṣih is Sēf, who begot four sons: ʿAli, Mʿalla, ʿLayyān, and Xamīs. Each of these sons fathered many lineages. The lineage of al-Jarba originated with ʿAli. Hāyis al-Ḡʿeṭ, who avenged the death of Hiḍlūl aš-Šwēhri, came from al-Brēc lineage, descendants of Xamīs.

The grand ancestor of Sinjārih, the largest division of the Šammar, is Mḥammad al-Ḥārṭi who begot four sons: ʿAli, the ancestor of al-Ġfēlih, whose principal chief is ibn Rmāl; Zmēl, the ancestor of az-Zmēl, whose principal chief is ibn Ṭnayyān; Ṭābit, the ancestor of āl-Ṭābit, whose principal chief is al-Ḥadab; and Zāmīl, the ancestor of al-Faddāḡih, whose principal chief is

abu-Wtēd. Each of these branches is broken down into various sections and sub-sections, of which we shall be concerned only with al-Faddāgih.

Zāmīl, the ancestor of al-Faddāgih, begot three sons: Mḥammad, Ġaniyyih, and Ṣagīr. Each fathered many lineages. Ṣagīr begot two sons: Nābit and Tābit. Nābit begot Mḥammad, ancestor of al-^ĊŠēš lineage, and ^ĊAzzāz, ancestor of al-^ĊAzzāz lineage. Tābit is the ancestor of as-Swēd. He was nicknamed "Swēd" because he used to ride a black horse and attack neighboring tribes, looting their camels.

The various groupings of Šammar are each designated by its own collective *šizwih*, or, what we may translate loosely, as "war cry", "rallying cry", or "cry for collective action." The collective *šizwih* of a group may refer to a noble stand, a heroic deed, or in most cases, to an ancient common ancestor. The kith and kin of a man are his *šizwih*. The *šizwih* is a device used to rally members of the group by reminding them of their consanguineal bond and mutual commitment to help and defend each other. By its very nature, tribal organization consists of moieties and groups within groups. It is governed by the principle of fission and fusion. In such a system, a group becomes more and more inclusive as one moves up on the scale of tribal hierarchy, from the sub-lineage to the all-inclusive tribal confederacy. Thus, the collective *šizwih* changes depending on how inclusive one wants to be. For example, when two tribes met in battle, each would use the all-inclusive tribal *šizwih*. But, in an encounter between the two clans of the same tribe, each clan would use the specific *šizwih* which distinguishes it as an independent entity separate from the other clans of the same tribe.

The collective tribal *šizwih* of Šammar is *aṭ-Ṭanāya* (from *ṭana* "to swell with anger") because its warriors swelled with anger when attacked. Šammar are also called *sūdan ar-rūs* (black heads), a reference to the pride and power exhibited by them when, unlike the other Arabian tribes, they refused to comply with the Wahhabi practice of cutting their long hair and shaving their heads. The collective *šizwih* specific to ^ĊAbdih is *Ḍayāgim*, after their ancient

ancestor, *Dēgam*. They are sometimes also called *Sanāfīs*. Legend has it that *Sana* was the pasture land of ʿAbdih when they were still in southern Arabia before migrating to Jabal Šammar. One day, *Sana* was trampled (ʿīṣ) by the herds of enemy tribes, ʿAbdih warriors rushed to defend their pasture land, encouraging each other by shouting "*Sana* is trampled, *Sana* is trampled" (*Sana ʿīṣ*, *Sana ʿīṣ*). They drove away the multitudes of the enemy. Since that time their adopted ʿīṣwih was *Sanāfīs* (sing. *Sinʿūs* or *Sinʿūsi*).

The ʿīṣwih of as-Swēd is *Ōlād Ṣagīr*, i.e. "Sons of Ṣagīr" (an ancient ancestor). Their cousins, the *āl-Ṭābit*, are called *hal al-Jadṣa* in reference to their valiant stand in retrieving a camel with cut ears (*jadṣa*) from enemy raiders that belonged to a woman who was their neighbor. Al-Aslam, famous for their hospitality (the progenies of Ḥātam at-Ṭāʿi), are called *hal al-Lḥēsīh* (people of the little morsel) because an Aslami would slaughter a fat camel for a guest and invite him to eat, saying, "partake of this little morsel" (*dūnak ha-l-lḥēsāt*).