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Lupin Conference and the Tensions between Ikhwan and Ibn Saud

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ABSTRACT

The Lupin conference was held in 1930 to reach a peace treaty between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. This study aims to highlight the issues and concerns that compelled the Saudi authorities to demand the extradition of Farhan bin Mashhour from Iraq. This study is based on the review and consolidation of secondary data regarding the rebellion of the leaders that was discussed at the Lupin conference in 1930. The sources mentioned in the country library were reviewed, particularly those records were focused that mentioned the rebellious attitudes of foreign politicians to affect the sovereignty and stability of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study found that the peace treaty in 1930 at the Lupin conference was a win-win situation for Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as it paved the way for future beneficial associations. British officials also agreed to the extradition of Ikhwan leaders from Iraq and handing over to Ibn-Saud.

INTRODUCTION

The Lupin conference was held in 1930, and the key agenda of this conference was to reach a peace treaty between the two countries (Britain, 1974). The key participants in this conference were King Faisal of Iraq and King Ibn-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The conference discussed the concerns and reservations regarding Farhan bin Mashhour. He was found to be involved in various rebellion acts against Ibn Saud, due to which authorities in Saudi Arabia had cast aspersions regarding his motives and intentions. The conference took place in a friendly and cordial environment, and the Iraqi authorities acknowledged the rebellion acts of Farhan Bin Mashhour. King Faisal agreed to hand over the family of Ibn Mashhour to the Saudi authorities so that the family could be tried under Saudi laws and regulations. It was regarded as a goodwill gesture from Iraq to the KSA. The kings agreed to a peace agreement on Lupin, the British naval ship. The treaty was signed in the Persian Gulf, and the landmark month and year were February 1930 (UCA, 2021).

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of disposing of the rebellion leaders, also known as Fitna Ibn Mashhour. The findings of the study are based on historical records and the review of the country library. The study finds out how the rebellion leaders were a potential threat to the sovereignty of KSA and how the leaders of Iraq and KSA entered into a mutual agreement to end this rebellion act.

METHOD

This study is based on the review and consolidation of secondary data, which was obtained from the country library. The records and sources extracted produced 87 sheets that formed the foundation for developing key themes in the current study. These themes were derived, consolidated, and summarized by using the approach of

thematic analysis (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

The following sections highlight each of these themes under the relevant headings.

Historical Development

The modern state of KSA came into being in 1932. The leader of the Al-Saud family Abdul-Aziz Al Saud spent a significant portion of his life in exile in Kuwait. In 1902, this exile ended, and the leader aimed to face the conflicts (Ryan, 2018).

King Abdul Aziz had been successful in making the Al-Rashid family out of Najd, and this victory was followed by the triumph of the Ottoman Empire in 1913. KSA got hold of the sizable area of the Persian Gulf and also got possession of vast reserves of oil. This resulted in the economic stability and prosperity of KSA, and the country took the lead among the oil-based economies (Ryan, 2018).

King Abdul Aziz had not attempted the invasion of Hijaz before 1923. It was because he knew that then King Hussein bin Ali enjoyed huge support from Britain and Britain had a colossal power at that time, influencing different countries and geographical boundaries. King Hussein bin Ali requested military assistance from the British, but the British government declared its impartiality in the dilemma. However, a conference was held in Riyadh in July 1924, stating complaints against the Hijaz. At the time, Ikhwan units made advancements toward Mecca and promoted the notion of reformed practices (Sinani, 2022). Ikhwan were renowned warriors and nomadic Bedouins. They were passionate Wahhabi Islamic puritans who wanted their interpretation of Islam to conquer the Middle East. Hijaz was conquered by them in 1925.

Britain recognized the rule of King Abdul Aziz in May 1927 through the Treaty of Jeddah. This was a landmark achievement by the Saudi authorities, and they wanted

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to continue with their current geographical boundaries because abundant oil reserves and the custodianship of sacred places had ensured the economic viability and sustainability of the region. However, Ikhwan leaders were interested in advancements and further expansion of the territory by promoting the notion of Wahhabism. King Abdul Aziz did not agree with this idea of expansion. The King anticipated that these motives of advancements might end up with direct tussles with the Britain authorities, which would not be in the interest of KSA. It is because Britain had just recognized KSA in 1927, and it would not be a prudent strategy to invite anger from Britain (Safran, 2018). Therefore, the two kingdoms of Hijaz and Najd were together announced as KSA in 1932. Two neutral zones were also created, one associated with Kuwait and the other with Iraq (Demmelhuber, 2021).

Rebellion Acts Of Ibn Mashhour

The rebellion acts of Ibn Mashhour were aimed at destabilizing KSA and increasing the influence of Wahabism in the country. The fitna was promoted by projecting false information about the concepts and beliefs of the population. The aim and intent of Ibn Mashhour were to create a distaste regarding the current ideological approaches of KSA. Since the Ikhwan had led the triumph of KSA, the Kingdom was influenced by the belief system of Ikhwan, which was highly influenced by Wahabism. The ideological war against these concepts was manifested by Fitna Al Mashhour (UCA, 2021).

The authorities in KSA had to take this matter seriously. Since Farhan bin Mashhour was based in Iraq, KSA authorities couldn't contain his efforts and motives directly. The Lupin conference is considered a milestone and achievement for KSA. It is because the modern KSA was formed in 1932, and the year of the Lupin conference coincided with this event. At that time, there was a risk and fear that the Iraqi authorities might not cooperate with KSA. However, the leadership of KSA was successful in realizing the harmful potential of the rebellion acts on King Faisal of Iraq. As a result, when the Iraqi authorities agreed to hand over the Ibn Mashhour family to KSA (UCA, 2021), the government was in a better position to address the ideological movements of Farhan bin Mashhour against the concepts and beliefs of the Saudi population.

Ikhwan Revolt

The Saudi authorities discussed the concerns and reservations regarding Farhan bin Mashhour at the Lupin conference because he was involved in various rebellion acts against Ibn Saud. The rebellion motives of Farhan bin Mashhour can be analyzed in the larger context of the Ikhwan revolt. This revolt by the Ikhwan group started in 1927 (Silverfarb, 1982). Three tribesmen that were actively involved in this rebellion were Otaibah, Mutayr, and Ajman. They challenged the authority of Ibn Saud because the Saud family was gaining control in Saudi

Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia gained independence in 1932, the Saud family was gaining control of different territories by that time, and Ikhwan believed they were losing their influence over the population. They believed they were key participants in the freedom struggle, but in the power dynamics, they exercised little control. The tactic used in the Ikhwan revolt was to engage in cross-border raids that made it difficult for Ibn-e-Saud to contain their movements with their efforts. The cross-border raids were extended to the territories of Iraq, Jordan, and Kuwait. December 1928 was a time when tensions increased between Ibn Saud and Ikhwan leaders, and the attacks resulted in the loss of many valuable lives. Ibn Saud had acquired a stronghold and power by that time in Saudi territories, and the main instigators in Ikhwan were defeated successfully by Ibn Saud in March 1929. This battle is popularly known as the Battle of Sabilla (Shayan, 2017). It was a big blow to the Ikhwan leadership, and in the aftermath of this battle, Faisal Al Dawish assumed the leadership of Ikhwan. However, he also left for Kuwait in the last months of 1929. Since the British authorities were enjoying a colonial power at that time, the problems and issues did not end for Faisal Al Dawish, and he was eventually detained by the British authorities. At the request of Ibn Saud, Faisal Al Dawish was also handed over to the Saud family. The detention of Faisal Al Dawish also paved the way for the surrender of other Ikhwan leaders, including Farhan bin Mashhour. The Ikhwan revolt highlighted the conditions of Saudi Arabia before independence when the territory faced different tribal wars. All tribal leaders had sensed that the road to independence was near, and it was high time to gain the maximum share of the power. When Ibn Saud was successful in dealing with the revolt of Ikhwan leaders, the unification of Saudi Arabia turned into reality under the leadership of Ibn Saud. Ikhwan leaders had played a key role in different conquests before independence. Ikhwans had also established the Wahhabist-Bedouin army and the main leaders in this army were Faisal Al Dawish and Sultan bin Bajad (Al-Fahad, 2004). However, the conquest of Hijaz is seen as the turning point where the approaches of Ikhwan leaders differed significantly from the Ibn Saud. Ikhwan leaders did not contend in the victories so far, and they wanted further expansion in their territories under the ideology of Wahabism. Their expansion plans also included Iraq, Kuwait, and Jordan. One of the reasons King Faisal of Iraq agreed with King Ibn-Saud regarding the extradition of Farhan bin Mashhour was that the Ikhwan leaders also threatened the Iraqi territory. King Faisal believed that if necessary cooperation was not extended to the Saudi authorities and Farhan bin Mashhour was not handed over to them, Ikhwans may also become a threat to the sovereignty of Iraq.

Historical Context

Ibn Saud got control of Saudi territory in 1902 in Riyadh. A significant development was made in 1912 in that area when there was the establishment of the Ikhwan

(Brotherhood). The establishment of Ikhwan was made to promote the Wahabist approach to Islam, which is close to the Sunni sect of Islam (BBC, 2019). After its establishment, Ikhwan was a source of great support for Ibn Saud. Another significant development in the Islamic movements was between 1921 and 1925, when the Ottoman Empire ended. This event encouraged Ibn Saud to exercise more influence, and the family took control of Najd and Hijaz. These two areas have the famous cities of Mecca and Medina, which are considered sacred by the whole Muslim community. Beginning in 1928, Ibn Saud started promoting a modernization approach in Islam (BBC, 2019). It was a time when there were huge conflicts and differences between the Ikhwan leaders and Ibn Saud. Ikhwan leaders argued that all the conquests had the active participation of Ikhwans, and the establishment of Ikhwan was based on Wahabbi Sunni Islam. The modernization policies created acceptance and assimilation of other interpretations of Islam as well, and it was not acceptable for Ikhwans. The successful elimination of Ikhwan leaders through an agreement in the Lupin conference made Ibn Saud the single power in Saudi Arabia. In September 1932, King Abdulaziz assumed power in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The power struggles in the initial period of Saudi Arabia are also attributed to economic instability. Saudi Arabia is now an oil-rich country and has a highly stable economy. However, oil was discovered in the Kingdom in 1938, and Aramco was the first company that initiated oil production in 1938. Therefore, economic deprivation also inclined different tribal leaders to get maximum hold of power. It is because without assuming the powers, they could not have higher control over the factors and means of production. The decade of the 30s is also remembered for The Great Depression, which made the economic situation more challenging for Saudi Arabia (Crafts & Fearon, 2013).

Fitna Ibn Mashhour

Ikhwan and Ibn Saud had worked in collaboration for a long time. However, when Ibn Saud attempted to modernize the Saudi territory, differences developed between them. Ikhwan pointed out that all the efforts to conquer the territory were based on a basic and minimum agenda that the conquered territory would protect their faith and lives. They wanted to continue with the Wahabist approach to Islam and were intolerant of other interpretations of Islam. Ibn Saud wanted to build cordial relations with other Muslim countries because they had also conquered Mecca and Medina and wanted to provide leadership to the Muslim world. Their attempts were both in the form of within-state rebellion and cross-border raids. Ikhwans wanted to have a small nation-state where they could practice their faith with freedom and autonomy. As an alternative, they wanted to be associated with other states, such as Iraq, Kuwait, or Jordan, so that they could be saved from the new and modern ideologies of Ibn Saud.

These two options of Ikhwans were contradictory (Hagar,

1981). For a small nation-state, they had demanded its place in the Nejd land. The British authorities couldn't accept this demand because it would be against the obligations of the British to Ibn Saud. The occupation of Ibn Saud on Nejd had been acknowledged by the British authorities. The second option, where the Ikhwan demanded to be recognized as Kuwaitis and not Saudis, was also impossible for Britain. Kuwait was a small state, and there was a real threat that if Ikhwans were allowed to penetrate Kuwait, they could have revolted against the Kuwaiti authorities. Ibn Saud was also not in favor of providing refuge to Ikhwan in Kuwait. British authorities were also suspicious about the new loyalties of Ikhwans. By 1930, both Ibn Saud and British authorities had realized that the revolt of Ikhwan was rooted in religious discontent, and they wanted to promote religious ideologies under their political agenda. A British official Dickson, while analyzing these demands of Ikhwans, urged them to reconcile their differences with Ibn Saud (Hagar, 1981).

When the appeal of Ikhwan to the British officials was unsuccessful, Ikhwans again tried to contact Dickson on July 24, 1929, through Farhan Ibn Mashhour. Faisal Al Dawish was also very active at that time, and during this negotiation period, he pushed women, older adults, and children from Ikhwans into Kuwait. Since they revolted against Ibn Saud, they were facing a food shortage in Najd, and they believed that staying in Kuwait would reduce their misery. The meeting of Farhan Ibn Mashhour and Faisal Al Dawish with Dickson was held on July 30, 1929, in Kuwait (Hagar, 1981). However, Dickson was not satisfied with the demands of the two Ikhwan leaders, and both were asked to leave Kuwait after the meeting. In this meeting, Farhan Ibn Mashhour represented the whole Ikhwans, and their demands for a political agreement were presented to Dickson. In this meeting, Ibn Mashhour falsely claimed the victory of the Ikhwans and said,

"We are victorious today, and as such, we consider it a suitable time to reiterate our promises of friendship with the English and to reassure H. M. G. that we, Ikhwan, will not again attack the Iraq or Kuwait tribes" (Hagar, 1981).

When the demands of Ikhwan leaders were not accepted by Dickson, Ibn Mashhour threatened that British authorities must provide Ikhwans asylum in Iraq or Kuwait. If these demands are not fulfilled, the Ikhwan leaders will turn to France to seek help. When all efforts of the Ikhwan leaders could not bring any meaningful results, the Ikhwan leaders threatened that they would instigate the whole of Najd against Ibn Saud. Ikhwans was involved in many raids against Nejd tribes that mostly occurred in September 1929. Ibn Saud criticized the approach of the British official Dickson because he had softly dealt with the two Ikhwan leaders in Kuwait (Hagar, 1981). According to Ibn Saud, the two leaders should not be allowed to depart by British authorities and should be behind bars. Ibn Saud considered it a change in the policy of the British authorities. Ibn Saud also pointed

out an agreement that if Ikhwan leaders entered Kuwait territory, they would be attacked at once (Hagar, 1981). From the perspective of British authorities, soft dealing was essential to portray a neutral stance to the world community. British authorities did not want to take sides between Ikhwan and Ibn Saud for fear of strong reactions from Muslims in other parts of the world. However, the authorities also wanted to have good relations with Ibn Saud because they had emerged as leaders and promoted a progressive side of the religion (Alon, 2010). The British authorities ensured that Ikhwan leaders would never be successful in overthrowing the rule of Ibn Saud. Nevertheless, Ibn Saud considered the revolt of Ikhwan as a continued threat to his rule, and Lupin conference demands can be seen in this historical perspective.

Wahhabism

In the approaches of Ikhwan leaders, including Farhan Ibn Mashhour and Faisal Al Dawish, during 1929-1930, it was evident that the Ikhwan movement wanted to continue with the ideology of Wahhabism in their conquered territories. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze how Wahhabism is placed in the Islamic school of thought and how it differs from other communities of interpretation. Sunni and Shia are two major sects in Islam, and Wahhabism is attributed to a subset of Sunni doctrine (Ayoob & Kosebalaban, 2009). This school of thought emerged after the preaching of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who was an Islamic scholar in the eighteenth century (Macris, 2016). It is considered an orthodox interpretation of Islam, in which monotheism is considered the best approach to worship. Due to their firm beliefs in the oneness of God, the followers of this school of thought are also known as Muwahid (Macris, 2016). Although the key theologian promoting Wahhabism, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab died in 1792, there were still a large number of followers of Wahhabism in the Arab world.

The large presence of the followers in Saudi Arabia can be explained by the fact that the reform movement was started by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Najd, Saudi Arabia. He gave the concept of bid'ah, which referred to those practices in Islam that had been added after the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and had no relevance to the basic teachings and principles of Islam (Rosen, 2006). For example, the veneration of saints and pilgrimages to the shrines were termed idolatrous impurities that were added to Islamic practices. Therefore, the followers should focus on the oneness of God and avoid idolatrous acts. There was an agreement between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad bin Saud. As per the agreement, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab accepted the political authority of Ibn Saud. Saud family allowed free propagation of the Wahhabi movement and more share in land acquisition and power (Rosen, 2006).

After this agreement, an alliance continued with the followers of both parties for an extended time. The House of Saud followed the religious ideologies of the Wahhabi

sect. However, when Saudi Arabia gained independence in 1932, Ibn Saud was ruling the country. At that time, the country's rulers wanted to portray a modern image of the country. Even today, the interpretations of Islam are mostly based on the teachings of Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab. This has been the issue at the government level in the Kingdom. The events of 1929-1930 emerged on the political front. However, the analysis in the current study indicates that the political conflicts were rooted in differences in religious ideologies. There has been such a widespread promotion of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia that any deviations from the teachings and principles of this sect create frustration and anger among the local population.

Fitna Ibn Mashhour also emerged because Ikhwan was established based on the Wahhabism approach and the leaders were not ready to change their narratives. They believed that they had been successful in conquering different areas based on Wahhabism interpretations. Now, when they have acquired a significant portion of the land, they should be allowed to continue their practices based on Wahhabism. The issue with the Wahhabism approach is that it is not a majority representation of Islam (Al-Ibrahim, 2015). Wahhabism has a strict emphasis on the pure teachings of Islam and Shariah. The interpretation believes in the literal interpretations of the Quran and Hadith, and there is no room for multiple interpretations, diversity, and pluralism. Wahhabism is also correlated with Salafism, and the Ikhwan movement in Egypt followed the Salafi approach (Al-Ibrahim, 2015). This rigid interpretation of Islam causes issues in reconciling with other communities. For example, the freedom available to women is limited, and different forms of art and aesthetics are not appreciated in this interpretation. Therefore, it was the right approach on the part of Ibn Saud to promote the modern interpretations of Islam. Ikhwan leaders, including Farhan Ibn Mashhour and Faisal Al Dawish, opposed these initiatives because they lost their power and influence in the territory. They had gathered a large number of followers that had been attracted to Wahhabism practices. The deviation from these practices was considered a loss of power, and the differences were on a constant rise during 1929-30.

Lupin conference can be considered a deciding and landmark moment in this era of tensions between Ikhwan and Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud and King Faisal of Iraq realized that it was not prudent to encourage the extremist ideologies of Ikhwan leaders. They are instigating and provoking religious sentiments for their benefit. If they were allowed to advance their agenda, they would not limit their transgressions to the Saudi territory. They will also infiltrate Iraq, Jordan, and Kuwait. The British authorities had also realized that their soft dealings with the Ikhwan leaders might affect their ties with the Arab leaders (Hagar, 1981).

The Role of British Authorities

The British authorities had assumed a neutral role in the tensions between Ikhwan leaders and Ibn Saud (Hagar,

1981). Ibn Saud was not pleased with this strategy because it was motivating the Ikhwan leaders, and they were increasing their demands on the authorities. Ikhwan leaders even claimed that promoting Wahhabism was part of their agreement with Ibn Saud, and they could not adopt another approach contrary to the agreement (Hagar, 1981). Ibn Saud was well aware of all these developments, but still, they chose to address this issue diplomatically. It was a good strategy for Ibn Saud because they were already facing opposition from Ikhwan leaders and focused their strategies on addressing the immediate internal threat. The threat of Ikhwan leaders was to such an extent that the overall rule of Ibn Saud could be overthrown. Therefore, Ibn Saud instead decided to seek aid from British authorities and King Faisal of Iraq, and Lupin conference had the representation of both parties. The negotiations and deliberations turned out to be in favor of Ibn Saud, and they were successful in the extradition of Ikhwan leaders from Iraq.

Ibn Saud was also successful in explaining the benefits of the new approach to Islamic principles. The rulers still followed the principles of the Quran and Sunnah but argued that they did not want to jeopardize the unity of Islam. They respect other interpretations as well. They explained that Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was not the creator of any new sect in Islam (Kechichian, 1986). It was his interpretations and preaching, and because of a wider influence, it was termed a Wahhabi movement. They highlighted that they wanted to be part of the mainstream of Islam and wanted to play an active role in modern civilization. When the issues of Ikhwan leaders were not addressed adequately by the British authorities, they asked Ibn Saud to discontinue their relationships with the British authorities. However, Ibn Saud did not accept this demand and continued collaborating with the British authorities.

Ibn Saud presented specific demands to the British authorities in the context of Fitna Ibn Mashhour. All their demands were consolidated into specific demands (Hagar, 1981). The first demand was to provide necessary military support to combat the rebellious motives of Ikhwan leaders. The next demand was the expulsion of Ikhwan from Kuwait. When Ikhwan leaders held a meeting with the British official Dickson, they demanded the propagation and implementation of Wahhabism in the Saudi territory and particularly in Najd. The next option presented to them was to move to Kuwait, where they could practice their ideologies freely. However, the demand of Ibn Saud was the immediate expulsion of Ikhwan leaders because they believed that if Ikhwans were allowed to settle in Kuwait, they would increase their influence by living there.

Furthermore, it would harm the sovereignty of all neighboring states, including Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the third demand of Ibn Saud was the creation of a blockade between Najd and Kuwait. Without such a blockade, there could have been movements to Kuwait without the consent of Ibn Saud. These demands

were also communicated and discussed with Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait.

One of the reasons the movement of Ikhwan followers in Kuwait occurred was because Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait did not cooperate with Ibn Saud. He sympathized with the Ikhwan rebels because he had developed differences with Ibn Saud. He anticipated that if Ikhwans were successful in toppling Ibn Saud from the throne, Kuwait might have good ties with the new rulers (Zahlan, 2015). However, in the public sphere, the ruler of Kuwait did not openly support Ikhwan because he did not want to upset British authorities. The proposed blockade between Kuwait and Najd was also not liked by the ruler of Kuwait because it would also translate into an economic blockade considering the higher trade between Najd and Kuwait. The British officials accepted Ibn Saud's demand to increase controls on the Kuwaiti borders. However, a soft stance was taken on the other demands. It was a setback for Ibn Saud because it allowed the free operations of Ikhwan leaders. Therefore, in the Lupin conference, when the leaders of Ikhwan had fled to Iraq, the demand of Ibn Saud was the immediate handover of Ikhwan leaders to Ibn Saud, including Farhan Ibn Mashhour and Faisal Al Dawish.

CONCLUSION

This study was based on the review and consolidation of secondary data regarding the rebellion of the Ikhwan leaders against Ibn Saud that was discussed at the Lupin conference in 1930. The Lupin conference was held in 1930 to reach a peace treaty between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In the conference, Saudi Arabia expressed reservations regarding Ikhwan leader Farhan bin Mashhour who was involved in various rebellion acts against Ibn Saud. The study highlighted the issues and concerns that compelled the Saudi authorities to demand the extradition of Farhan bin Mashhour from Iraq.

During 1929-1930, as Ikhwan had attained a significant portion of the land, they assumed to be allowed to continue practicing the religion based on Wahhabism. But the ideology contradicted Ibn Saud's idea of modernization within the region, which had a tremendous setback on the Ikhwans and resulted in their flight to Iraq. Later on, the leaders of the Ikhwan rebels relocated to Al-Jihara in Kuwait after fleeing Iraq. Faysal Al-Dawish and other Ikhwan commanders were flown from Kuwait to King Abdul-Aziz's camp at Khabari Wadha on January 28, when they were handed up to the King. Dickson was also in attendance. The leaders were imprisoned in Riyadh. Faysal Al-Dawish died in his Riyadh cell in October 1931 after suffering from pain for a month due to significant growth in the lower region of his throat. Farhan bin Mashhour was not handed over to Ibn Saud, but he settled in Syria from 1930 until he died in 1935, where he died after fighting with his cousin.

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Conflicts of Interest Statement

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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