

OTTOMAN-ARAB RELATIONS AND THE FORMATION OF THE MODERN STATE OF YAMAN

Abdol Rauh Yaccob

National University of Malaysia, Bangi

1.1 Introduction

The presence of the Ottomans in Yaman transformed the history of Yaman notably, when the country was again linked with other Arab lands, and these were governed unitedly under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. The period was marked by the revolts of the *Yamanīs*, the *Zaydīs* and the *Šāfi'īs*. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of studies on the history of the Ottomans in Yaman have emphasised the theme of the Ottoman-Yamani conflict. This paper attempts to examine the presence of the Ottomans in Yaman, underlining the Ottoman imperial administration of the country and their relation with the *Yamanīs*.

The Ottomans first ruled Yaman since 1538, following their conquest of Egypt from the *Mamlūks* in 1517. Yaman was previously under the *Mamlūks*, who occupied the country in 1515-16 as a response to the presence of the Portuguese in the Red Sea, and it was accordingly surrendered to the Ottomans. The Ottomans, therefore, succeeded without much difficulty in gaining control of the greater part of Yaman, and likewise the Red Sea, assuming responsibility for protecting the area from further Portuguese incursions (Baldry 1963: 156, Serjeant 1963: 47-8). The country was then administratively divided into 7 districts: *Šan'ā'*, *Muḥā*, *Zabīd*, *Saḥla*, *Kawkabān*, *Ṭawīla*, *Ma'rib* and *Aden* (Abāza 1987: 26). During this period the Upper Yaman Highlands, the area north of *San'ā'* including *Ša'da*, *Šahara* and *Ḥaḡḡa*, remained in the hands of the *Zaydī Imāms* (Māḏī 1950: 15). This circumstance enabled the *Zaydīs* to form a potential threat to the Ottoman authorities and the *Zaydīs* proved to be capable of expelling the Ottomans from the country in the 1630s, during the time of *Imām Qāsim* and his son, *Imām Muḥammad* (Baldry 1963: 158). After that date, the greater Yaman, from *Asīr* in the north to *Ḥaḍramawt* in the south, remained under the *Zaydī Imāms*. But less than a century later the *Zaydī Imāmate* rapidly collapsed into disarray. *Tihāma* and the Lower Yaman were declared independent under local authorities; the southwest under the *Laheḡ Sultanate* since 1728 (Anīs 1963: 225-61), *Asīr* and *Tihāma* under *Šarīf Aḥmad*, *Imām's* governor of *Abū Arīš*, since 1730 (Baldry 1985: 46).

At the end of the 18th century, the *wahhābiyya* movement appeared in *Naḡd* and the *Wahhābīs* succeeded in gaining control over the greater part of Arabia, including Yaman, after they took *Muḥā* in 1804, and they remained there until the arrival of *Muḥammad 'Alī* of Egypt in 1819. In 1837, the whole *Tihāma* came under the control of *Muḥammad 'Alī*, including *Ḥudayda*, *Zabīd*, *Muḥā* and *Šayḥ Sa'īd* (*ibid.*). The British, fearing partly that *Muḥammad 'Alī*, who was a great admirer of the

French, might extend his influence to seize ḥAden on his own or in conjunction with the French, and therefore pose a serious threat to India, took ḥAden in January 1839 (Kour 1976: 28)¹. The British, now apprehensive about the safety of their newly acquired possession of ḥAden, secured the co-operation of several European powers, Russia, Austria and Italy, who jointly pressured Muḥammad ḥAlī to evacuate his forces from Arabia, and in April 1840 Yaman was evacuated (Baldry 1963: 161).

The withdrawal of Egyptian forces from Yaman paved the way for the Ottomans to return to the country. In 1849, the Ottomans decided to occupy Yaman as part of their claimed sovereignty on the grounds of previous occupation. In April 1849, they took Ḥudayda and other parts of the Tihāma from Šarīf Ḥusayn of Abū ḥArīš, who succeeded Muḥammad ḥAlī at his withdrawal from the Tihāma (Anīs 1963: 225-6; Admiralty 1917:40; Baldry 1963: 162). The Ottomans proceeded to the hinterland and entered Ṣanḥā on 24 July 1849, at the invitation of Imām al-Mutawakkil Muḥammad b. Yahyā (Anīs 1963: 225-6; al-ḥAmrī 1984: 333-4). In the situation of being a nominal Imām, one would suggest that the Imām's action was presumably to look for a support to strengthen his position as Imām. The Imām was invited to conclude an agreement, whereby he would consent to the stationing of a small Ottoman garrison in Ṣanḥā, but the highlands would continue under his government. The Imām was to be considered a vassal of the Porta and the revenues from the highlands were to be divided between the Imām and the Ottomans (NID 1964: 272-273). The Imām, in return, was to have been provided with a monthly salary of 4,000 riyāls. Soon a revolt took place in the capital. The Imām was denounced as treacherous by the rebels, notably for his consent to the presence of Ottoman forces in Ṣanḥā, and a new Imām was appointed, ḥAlī b. Muḥammad ḥAbdallāh, on 26 July 1848. And on 18 August of that year, the Ottomans were expelled from the capital, and forced to retire to the Tihāma (Anīs 1963: 225-6; al-ḥAmrī 1984: 334-41). But the atmosphere in the highlands was far from quiet. Imām ḥAlī was soon rejected, and the country was again divided among rivalling Imāms until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which eventually encouraged the Ottomans, who retained their foothold in the Tihāma, to secure their position in the greater Yaman. Following an invitation from the notables of Ṣanḥā, discontented by the alleged incompetence of the Imāms, the Ottomans were able to establish themselves in the central highlands after 1872 (Admiralty 1917: 40).

1.2 The Ottoman administration of Yaman 1872-1908

After the re-occupation of Yaman in 1872, the Ottoman Provincial Reform Law of 1864 was extended to Arabia, including Yaman, but apparently was not put fully

¹ In the 1840s the French themselves revived their interest in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean where they had had great influence in the 18th century. (Waterfield 1968: 137)

into force until a later date. Even by the end of 1876, when the new provincial system was in operation all over the rest of the empire, the Arabian Peninsula was at least in part still exempted (Davison 1963: 158). At some date after 1872, Yaman was treated as a *wilāyet* (province) and divided into four *sanğaq*s (districts): Şan^{ca}, Hudayda, ^{ca}Asīr and Ta^{ca}izz. These four *sanğaq*s officially constituted the *wilāyet* of Yaman until 28 April 1913 (19 Rabī^{ca} at-tānī, 1331) when another provincial law was issued which excluded ^{ca}Asīr from the province of Yaman (Grohman 1993)². It is most likely that ^{ca}Asīr from 1913 was administered as an independent *sanğaq* under the direct control of the Porta, like those of Ğabal Lubnān, al-Quds (Jerusalem), Diyār az-Zur and Baḡāzī (Abāza 1987: 104). The continuing trouble in the *sanğaq* of ^{ca}Asīr seems to have been the main cause of the change.

The four *sanğaq*s of the *wilāyet* of Yaman were administered under *mutaşarriifs* (governors of districts) who were responsible to the *wālī* or Governor resident at Şan^{ca}. Each of the *sanğaq*s was subdivided into *qadās* headed by *qā'immaqāms* and these *qadās* were further subdivided into *nāhiyas* under the responsibility of *mudīrs* (Admiralty 1917: 48).

Although the Imāms relapsed into subsidised obscurity, the Ottomans did not effectively hold or administer the area north of the highlands. Areas such as Hamīr, Şa^{ca}da, Şahara and Nağrān remained independent from the Ottoman administration. The Ottoman effort to hold the oases of the eastern plateau, such as Mārib, did not result in any permanent occupation (Admiralty 1917:40). Their attempts to extend their rule southwards into the ^{ca}Aden Hinterland towards Laheğ, were, however, challenged by the British at ^{ca}Aden. When the Ottomans sent troops to help the rival brother of the ^{ca}Abdali Sulţān, the British immediately reacted by sending troops to protect the Laheğ Sulţān. British protection was soon extended to include other tribes near ^{ca}Aden.

As a *wilāyet*, Yaman was militarily under the control of the 7th Army Corps. The 7th Army was not, however, recruited from Yamanīs. The Yamanīs were apparently exempt from military conscription, at a time when the Ottoman Government continued the practice of conscripting its Muslim subjects into the Army Corps for a period of twenty years. The first six years was active service, called *nizām*, the following eight years were first (active) reserve as *redifs*, and the remaining six years as *Mustahfaza* or second reserve army. As regards non-Muslim subjects, they were exempted but had to pay a special tax, known as "*al-badl al-askarī*". However, in some *wilāyets*, Muslim subjects were also exempted, such as the *wilāyets* of Istanbul and Crete, the Red Sea Islands, Tripoli, Hiğāz, and the Yaman itself (Abāza 1987: 106). In 1899,

² al-Ḥuşrī was wrong to believe that no further amendments were made to change the existing divisions when he referred to the Imperial report of 1332 (AD 1904) to confirm these four *sanğaq*s as constituting the *wilāyet* of Yaman (al-Ḥuşrī 1960: 241). Baldry, however, referring to the British records claimed that the exclusion of ^{ca}Asīr took place in 1909 (Baldry 1963: 180).

it was rumoured that military conscription would also be extended to Yaman in an attempt to introduce a new administrative programme, but this was denied by the Minister of War³. The Yamanīs were instead recruited for the Gendarmerie (*Zaptieh* or *Hamideh*) service as army volunteers. This practice started following the appointment of the new *wālī*, Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Paša, in 1878. They were normally recruited from the tribesmen, especially from the highlands, because of their endurance. A number of the people of the Tihāma too were recruited, as well as Sudanese, Somalis and Ethiopians. Their functions were to convey administrative orders to the people concerned, to assist the tax collectors, to act as intelligence agents, to keep order in the bazaars, to carry messages and to escort travellers and convoys entitled to the protection of the government (Bury 1915: 167).

The Gendarmerie had a strength of four battalions, with headquarters at Ṣan‘ā’. Of the two battalions for the capital, one was on permanent duty and the other was kept in reserve; the other two were sent to various places in the *wilāyet*. Those in Ṣan‘ā’ were all recruited from the tribesmen of the highlands (*ibid.*). In addition, there was also a battalion of mounted gendarmerie, known as *Sowari*, with a strength of four companies, of which one was at Hudayda, two were on detached duty, and the remaining was at Ṣan‘ā’. The duty of the *Sowari* was to escort officials of rank and the Ottoman mail. They were drawn from the Sudanese, Ethiopians and Somalis (*ibid.*).

The tax system of the Ottoman rule was not appreciated by the Yamanīs, and eventually led them to rebel against the Ottomans. The administration of the collecting of taxes was worsened by the corrupt practice of the officials. In the Qurayšī country, west of Zabīd, officials were in the habit of levying exorbitant octroi dues on dates entering Zabīd after the usual tithes had already been paid at the date plantations. The tribesmen refused to pay further taxes, and troops were accordingly sent to compel payment⁴. Later, during the Imām’s uprising, the Yamanīs were forced to pay *zakāt* and *‘uṣr* (tithes), and at the same time they were subjected to other taxes such as octroi dues levied by the Ottomans.

The Ottoman attempts to promote efficiency of the administration in the province of Yaman by introducing the new Provincial Law into the *wilāyet*, presumably after 1876, proved unsuccessful. A decade after their return to the province, the Ottomans confronted persisting revolts of the Yamanīs initially in ‘Asīr and the Tihāma, followed by a revolt in 1891 in the Yaman highlands led by Imām Muḥammad. The principal justification for this uprising was the alleged misconduct of the officials in the *wilāyet*, coupled with their seeming violation of Islamic practice that angered the

³ R/20/A/1188, O’Conor to Foreign Office, 5/2/1900.

⁴ FO 195/2174, Report on the Yemen vilayet, administrative and economic, for the period extending from 1st April to 31st August 1904’ by Richardson, British vice consulate Hudaydah, 31/8/1904.

rebels. The name of Sulṭān ʿAbdalḥamīd had, however, been spoken of by the rebels, including the Imām, with affection⁵.

The Sulṭān, who according to the Imām was misinformed of the real situation in the Yaman, could not accept any justification for revolt. Marshal Aḥmad Fayḍī Paša was accordingly sent to the Yaman to subdue the revolt. Although the Ottomans succeeded in bringing the revolt of 1891 under control, they failed to secure the *wilāyet* from further disturbances. The malpractice of the Ottoman officials was apparently the cause behind it, and this situation became worse as one revolt followed another.

At the subsequent Imamic revolts, notably that of 1905, the Ottomans were not yet prepared to prefer any other measures than military to promote tranquillity in the country. The reappointment of Marshal Fayḍī Paša in May 1905 to replace Marshal Riḍā Paša⁶, who had been in office only since March of that year, as the Commander of the 7th Army Corps in the Yaman with orders to retake Ṣanʿāʾ and restore order in the Yaman, indicated that the Ottoman Government would not accept the loss of Ṣanʿāʾ, which had surrendered to Imām Yaḥyā in April 1904. The continuation of the war not only led to the collapse of a truce initiated by the Imām, but also indirectly allowed the persistence of corrupt practices by the officials led by Fayḍī Paša himself. On 31 July 1905 Fayḍī Paša was appointed as acting *wālī* to replace Tawfīq Bey⁷, which gave him authority over the civil as well as the military administration⁸.

Fayḍī Paša came to Yaman first in 1873 as a Captain and attained the rank of Major in 1887. He had commanded the force that was dispatched to the Yaman in 1892 to relieve Ṣanʿāʾ and retake other towns captured by Imām Muḥammad. He then held the post of *wālī* and Commander-in-Chief of the Yamanī force for a period of seven years until he was relieved in 1898⁹. During his tenancy as *wālī* and

⁵ R/20/A/1256, Richardson's report, 6/6/1908.

⁶ General Riḍā Paša, previously posted at Tripoli, was appointed Commander of the Ottoman forces in Yaman in March 1905 to replace Tawfīq Paša who had only held the post since 1904. Tawfīq Paša was previously a divisional General of the 4th Army corps at Diyār-Bakir before he was posted in the Yaman. ʿAbdallāh Paša had been the Commander-in-Chief in the Yaman before Tawfīq Paša since 1898. (FO 195/2178, 4/5/1905; R/20/A/1188, 20/7/1898.)

⁷ Tawfīq Bey (the *wālī* not to be confused with Tawfīq Paša the Commander-in-Chief) was appointed as new *wālī* to replace ʿAbdallāh Paša who had been in the post since the dismissal of Ḥilmī Paša in October 1902. He was formerly a palace secretary at Yıldız for several years and had also occupied the posts of *mutaşarrif* at Jerusalem and *wālī* of Konieh respectively for a short period. Just before being sent to Yaman, he became a member of the "*Şura-i Dowlat* (State Council) at Constantinople". (FO 195/2174, 31/8/1904.)

⁸ FO 195/2198, Richardson's report, 1/8/1905.

⁹ FO 195/2198, Richardson's report, 4/5/1905. In June 1898, Fayḍī Paša left Yaman for Baghdad as Commander of the 6th Army corps. (R/20/A/1188, 20/7/1898.)

Commander of the Yaman forces from 1892 to 1898, Fayḍī Paşa had taken the opportunity to accumulate wealth at the expense of the public revenues, and it was said that when he left Yaman he possessed nearly a million pounds sterling. This practice continued after his return to Yaman in 1905. Richardson said that it was an open secret in Şan^cā' that he had not abandoned his corrupt practices, and he had helped himself liberally to the large remittances from Constantinople, with the same lavish hand that he dispensed presents to the different Arab *şayhs* and tribesmen surrendering to him during his successful action in retaking Şan^cā' in August 1905¹⁰.

It is clear that during his second tenancy as *wālī* and military commander from 1905 to 1908, Fayḍī continued to misappropriate a substantial share of the *wilāyet*'s revenues and to persist in corrupt practices. In this, he was backed by the *mutaşarrıf* of Hūdayda, °Abdalwahhāb Effendi. All posts of *qā'immaqāms* and *mudīrs* were sold to the highest bidder by the *wālī* and the *mutaşarrıf* of Hūdayda respectively, and these provincial officials were expected to remit separately part of the taxes collected by them to their chiefs at Şan^cā' and Hūdayda¹¹.

In Yaman as well as other *wilāyets*, frequent changes of officials were part of the practice of administration under the Provincial Reform Law of 1864, in an attempt to improve efficiency in the administration of the province. Unfortunately, in Yaman, some of the more capable and honest officials were apparently recommended by the present *wālī*, Fayḍī Paşa, to be replaced with corrupt men. For example, °Izzat Bey, *qā'immaqām* of °Udayn and a capable officer, was replaced by °Izzī Fathu Effendi, a man of questionable character and antecedents. Ilyās Bey, *qā'immaqām* of Bāğil, an honest and diligent officer, was dismissed for remitting the whole of the taxes collected in his *qadā'* into the treasury. Some corrupt officials, on the other hand, remained in office, such as the *mutaşarrıf* of Hūdayda, °Abdalwahhāb Effendi, who had proved to be one of the most incompetent and corrupt officials ever appointed to the *sanğaq* of Hūdayda. He remained there for two years without initiating a single reform pertaining to the welfare of the people (*ibid.*). The British Vice-Consul at Hūdayda, G. A. Richardson, witnessed the prevailing conditions of the Ottoman administration in Yaman. He stated in June 1908 that

“the present regime has driven away the few capable and honest officials the vilayet contained; internal affairs are in such a muddle and the conduct of the officials so glaringly unscrupulous, that one is given the impression that the Porte sends out, with few exceptions, exiles and criminals to carry out the administrative works of this hapless province, erringly known as Arabia Felix”. (*ibid.*)

¹⁰ FO 195/2224, Richardson's report, 5/9/1906.

¹¹ R/20/A/1256 & FO 195/2286, Richardson's report, 6/6/1908.

It is not true that efforts to improve the administration in Yaman were not made until the Young Turks were in power. A number of Imperial Commissions had already been sent to Yaman to make recommendations concerning this issue. An example of this is the special commission of Reform that was sent in April 1905 by the Sultān¹². As a result of the investigation carried out in the *sanğaq* of Hudayda, Ibrāhīm Bey, *mutaşarrif* of Hudayda¹³, was dismissed on the recommendation of Šakīr Paša, the President of the Commission. Ibrāhīm Bey was quite unfit for the post: not only was he illiterate, but he did not possess the necessary administrative ability and tact. Furthermore, he was a protégé of the former *wālī*, ‘Abdallāh Paša¹⁴. Maḥmūd Nadīm Bey, the adjoint of the *wālī*, a post which was created at the end of 1904, was also replaced by a civil member of the Reform Commission, a protégé of Fayḍī Paša. This change coincided with the appointment of Fayḍī Paša as *wālī* in the place of Tawfīq Bey¹⁵. Marshal Šakīr Paša who was a most enlightened, just and honourable officer, and perhaps the most able officer that had yet been sent out to Yaman, however, left for Constantinople on October 6, 1905. It had been hoped that he would have remained and been appointed *wālī* and Commander-in-Chief of the *wilāyet*¹⁶.

In April 1907, another Imperial Commission was sent to Yaman with orders to inquire further into the grievances of the people of the *wilāyet* and also to arrange a truce with the Imām¹⁷. Consequently, in May 1907, forty Arabs, selected by the Commission as representatives of the principal tribes in Yaman, sailed to Istanbul to place their grievances personally before the Sultān and discuss the causes of the troubles and suggestions for remedies. The Imperial Commission also brought about some reforms in the *wilāyet*. On the recommendation of the Commission, the Imperial Irade ordered the release of about one hundred political prisoners and rebels who had been sentenced since 1905 for participation in the revolt. This, however, led to great dissatisfaction among the military officials, who reacted by arresting three of

¹² FO 195/2198, Richardson's report, 17/4/1905.

¹³ Ibrāhīm Bey, a Circassian, was one of ‘Abdallāh Paša's protégés. He had been a brigand chief in the Caucasus mountains before he was sent to Yaman. (FO 195/2174, 31/8/1904.)

¹⁴ FO 195/2198, Richardson's report, 31/1/1905 & 12/6/1905.

¹⁵ Maḥmūd Nadīm was well known and greatly respected at Hudayda where he was the President of the Commercial Tribunal there for some time and later at Ġidda in the same office. In 1894 he was nominated *qā'immaqām* of Zabīd and then promoted to *mutaşarriflik* of Tripoli. (FO 195/2198, 31/1/1905.)

¹⁶ FO 195/2178, Richardson's report, 16/10/1905.

¹⁷ R/20/A/1256 & FO 195/2254, Richardson's report, 27/4/1907.

the principal leaders immediately after their release¹⁸. In the administration, the same Commission introduced reform by prohibiting the further employment of six corrupt *qā'immaqāms* who had spent many years in the *wilāyet* accumulating wealth by squeezing taxpayers. Among these were Muḥammad Ra'ūf of Ṭawīla, his brother Aḥmad Adīb, the late *qā'immaqām* of Radāc, and Šāliḥ Bey, *qā'immaqām* at Zabīd¹⁹. In August 1907, a Finance Commission was sent by the Sulṭān under the presidency of General Sābit Paša to supervise the finances of the *wilāyet* of Yaman. The Commission proved impotent, owing to the obstruction of Fayḍī Paša, the *wālī* and Commander-in-Chief, and the indifference of the Istanbul authorities. Yawar Effendi, who replaced Sābit Pasha, was powerless to act, owing to the attitude assumed by the *wālī*, who reduced the power of the Finance Commission to that of an anomalous and meaningless body in the *wilāyet*²⁰.

The move for change in the administration of Yaman continued even after the Young Turk revolution of 1908. Negotiations with the Imām and al-Idrīsī continued to dominate the episode of the new Ottoman administration in Yaman, a development which will be further dealt with in the following discussion.

1.3 Imamic-Ottoman Relations

Opposition to Ottoman rule in Yaman began earlier in other areas than in the Imām's stronghold of the highlands. At Abḥā in 1882, the Ottomans were cut off from the coast, followed by an attack on them at Luḥayya (Baldry 1963: 168). These oppositions, however, were typical of tribal resentment, which left no major injurious effect on the Ottomans. Only in 1891, with the first of a series of the Imām's uprisings, did a real threat to the survival of the Ottomans in Yaman begin.

The ostensible reason for Imām Muḥammad's rising against the Ottomans in Yaman was apparently religious. The religious issue adopted by the *Zaydī Imāms*, notably by Imām Muḥammad and his successor, may have been primarily inspired by *Zaydī* doctrine, which went back to Zayd b. 'Alī b. Ḥusayn, who rebelled openly against the 'Umayyads after the events of Karbalā', calling for the observance of the Book of God and the *Sunna* of His Prophet, the preservation of the *Sunna*, and the abolition of *bid'a*. Fundamentally, therefore, the *Zaydīs* and, in particular, their Imāms, were strongly inspired to rise up against any unjust ruler. This element, however, is not uncommon but was shared by other groups among the *Sunnīs* in Yaman notably Sayyid al-Idrīsī, who also fought the Ottomans for religious reasons, apart from personal and political interests. The *Zaydī Imāms* may also have felt that they

¹⁸ R/20/A/1256, Richardson's report, 30/5/1907.

¹⁹ Muḥammad Ra'ūf had already been imprisoned by Ḥusayn Ḥilmī Paša for some 10 years and was released in 1905 by Fayḍī Paša and was appointed *qā'immaqām* at Ṭawīla. (R/20/A/1256, 30/5/1907.)

²⁰ R/20/A/1256, Richardson's report, 6/6/1908; FO 195/2236, June 1908.

could not tolerate any more the loss of their position as temporal and spiritual leaders of the *Zaydīs*, as a result of the actions of the Ottomans. Since the occupation of Ṣanʿā' in 1872, the temporal role of the Imāms of the *Zaydīs* was questioned, notably, when the power to appoint officials and judges was taken away from them, and the Imāms were further restricted from ruling over the tribesmen. They were also prevented from collecting *zakāt*, eliminating, therefore, their religious claim, and naturally diminishing their influence as spiritual leaders. Instead, the Imāms and their family were paid a monthly salary of 3,000 riyāls (al-ʿAqīlī 1958: 53). The limiting of the authority of the Imāms to a position similar to that of local religious leaders, as opposed to their intended ideal position as *Zaydī Imāms*, induced them to rise up against the Ottomans in the name of religious duty as Imāms.

In addition to the religious issue, the Imāms made a conventional claim to the territory of their ancestors in Yaman. This claim not only led them to oppose the Ottomans in Yaman, but also al-Idrīsī in ʿAsīr and the British protégés of the ʿAden Protectorate, which the Imāms regarded as part of their greater Yaman. Beside the issues of the *Zaydīs'* doctrine and their territorial claims, the malpractice of the Ottoman officials in Yaman gave the final impetus to the uprising of the Imāms of Yaman. However, on a number of occasions, the Imāms were under pressure from their followers, notably the *Zaydī* tribesmen, the principal *ṣayḥs* and the Imām's advisers, either to lead an uprising against the Ottomans or to decide matters concerning the future of the *Zaydīs* in Yaman. Therefore the Imām must act in accordance with the wishes of the community who selected him as Imām. Whereby the slightest inclination on his part to depart from the mandate specified by the community would be a signal for his fall and disgrace, and leading to the election of another Imam.

When Sayyid Yaḥyā was elected as Imām in June 1904, he continued in his father's footsteps in opposing the administration of the country by the Ottoman officials. Richardson, British vice-consul at Hudayda, reported that Sayyid Yaḥyā's accession to the Imāmate was notified to the *wālī*, as well as his intention to continue hostilities²¹. During his stay at Ṣanʿā', Richardson found that it was an open secret that the new Imām would give the Ottomans considerable trouble after the departure of ʿAbdallāh Paša, the former *wālī* and Commander-in-Chief. Preparations were also made to organise a general revolt throughout the mountainous districts of Yaman, the home of the *Zaydīs*. The main strength of the Imām was drawn from the *Zaydī* tribesmen. This time the tribesmen were more willing to support the Imām. They suffered badly through droughts and famine in 1904²², which directly affected their

²¹ FO 195/2174, Richardson's report, 31/10/1904.

²² In July 1904, Richardson described the appalling condition of the country during his visit to Ṣanʿā' when he stated that "the severe hand of famine has left a very lasting impression on the agricultural population and the villages and towns present sad spectacles with their swarms of hungry and starving men,

livelihood. They were also discontented over taxation during these hard days, and this induced them to support the Imām as their new leader.

With the support of the tribesmen, Imām Yaḥyā moved towards Ṣanʿāʾ and succeeded in subduing the Ottomans in April 1905. Accordingly, the Ottoman authorities were demanded to sign the capitulation, which resulted in the surrender of the capital to the Imām. All troops and Ottoman officials, including the *wālī* and the Commander-in-Chief, were permitted to leave for Ḥudayda, under a guarantee from the Imām for their safety²³.

The Imām made a further move by proposing to administer all mountainous districts of Yaman where the *Zaydī* element was predominant, to pay, in return, an annual tribute to the Sultān, and to maintain at his own expense a garrison of 5,000 Ottoman troops at Ṣanʿāʾ. It was also suggested that the Sultān should receive a deputation from Yaman for the purpose of presenting grievances against the misrule of the Ottoman officials²⁴.

Although it was unlikely that the Ottomans would accept either the capitulation of Ṣanʿāʾ or the Imām's proposals, negotiations for peace with the Imām proceeded. On 8 June 1905 Maḥmūd Nadīm was accordingly sent to Ṣanʿāʾ to conduct negotiations with the Imām for the purpose of reaching an amicable understanding²⁵. Maḥmūd Nadīm did not, however, see the Imām personally. He was met outside Ṣanʿāʾ by a representative of the Imām and was escorted to Rawḍa, a town about five miles north of Ṣanʿāʾ, where the Imām resided at that time. Written communications passed between them for nearly a week. The Imām was personally in favour of a peaceful settlement, but he could not carry his advisers and the principal *ṣayḥs* with him. In his last proposal, the Imām offered to return Ṣanʿāʾ to the Sultān and to desist from further rebellion, on condition that the towns of Damār, Yarīm, Ḥaḡḡa, Ṭawīla, Kawkabān and ʿAmrān would be given to him²⁶.

The Ottomans were not yet prepared to abandon these areas to the Imām, and orders were issued for a general movement against the insurgents. On 16 July 1905, Aḥmad Fayḍī Paša, who was in charge for the relief of Ṣanʿāʾ, made a first advance in the direction of Ṣanʿāʾ with six battalions of Albanian troops, and on 29 August

women and children. The average mortality from starvation at Manāḥa, in the district of Ḥarāz is about 15 daily, but is much greater in the neighbouring villages. I am informed that 2,000 deaths from the above cause occurred between Ibb and Taʿizz during the past few months". (FO 195/2174 28/7/1904).

²³ FO 195/2174, Richardson's report, 20/12/1904.

²⁴ FO 195/2198, Richardson to G.P. Devey, Jiddah, 16/5/1905.

²⁵ FO 195/2198, Richardson to Devey, 12/6/1905.

²⁶ FO 195/2198, Richardson to Devey, 15/7/1905.

1905, only four months after the surrender of Ṣan'ā', the Ottomans succeeded in retaking the capital²⁷.

After his successful campaign in recapturing Ṣan'ā' in September 1905, Aḥmad Fayḍī Paša led an army of 10,000 in the middle of November that year towards Šahāra, in an attempt to crush the Imām there, where the majority of the artillery, rifles and ammunition captured from Ṣan'ā' had been kept. However, due to the inaccessibility of Šahāra because of its mountainous features, and the constant counter-attacks of the Imām, Fayḍī Paša decided to abandon the campaign²⁸. The renewal of the military operations against the Imām undoubtedly affected the attitude of the Imām towards the Ottomans. The Imām's resentment towards them was conveyed to the 'Abdali Sulṭān. In September 1906, the Imām wrote to justify his action, claiming that the Ottoman officials were responsible for renewing a state of war in Yaman.

At the failure of military action, an option for diplomatic policy began to take place. A number of negotiations were undertaken with the aim of coming to terms with the Imām. In July 1906, the Grand Šarīf of Mecca deputed a commission to Yaman to persuade Imām Yaḥyā to come to an agreement and to save Muslim blood in the name of Islamic unity²⁹. The mission was apparently undertaken at the request of the Grand Šarīf, but no doubt it was executed at the express command of the Sulṭān. In August, the delegation arrived at Hudayda with the above message. The Imām was reported to have replied stating his wish not to continue hostilities against the Ottomans, and his eagerness to put an end to all the bloodshed. But, the Imām said, he was not free to make the decision of his own free will in such matters, as he had to be guided by the wishes of the community who had selected him as Imām. The Imām also declined the offer of a position in Yaman under the Ottoman Government with a residence at Ṣan'ā' similar to that held at Mecca by the Grand Šarīf³⁰. The Imām, furthermore, accused the administration of deliberately misinforming the Sulṭān of Islām of the real situation in Yaman (Baldry 1963: 177). The Imām insisted that the basis of any understanding with the Ottomans should commence with the withdrawal of the troops to Manāḥa, in accordance with the treaty signed at the capitulation of Ṣan'ā'³¹. The Imām was apparently prepared to negotiate. In his counter-request, the Imām made it clear that he wanted to administer,

²⁷ FO 195/2198, Richardson to Devey, 30/8/1905.

²⁸ R/20/A/1256, Richardson's report on Yemen, 22/7/1906. In opposition to this account Baldry (1963: 177) quoted from al-Kibsi, *Imām and Yaman Independence* (A.U.B. thesis) that Šahāra was retaken.

²⁹ FO 195/2224, 8/9/1906; Baldry 1963: 177.

³⁰ R/20/A/1256, Hussein to Sir O'Conor, 8/9/1906.

³¹ R/20/A/1256, Richardson to Dr. Hussein, 6/11/1906.

under the suzerainty of the Sultān, the mountainous part of Yaman that formerly belonged to his ancestors, paying tribute to the Government. A small Ottoman garrison would also be allowed to stay at Ṣan^{ʿā}³².

At the failure of the above mission, a delegation selected from officials in Yaman was accordingly sent to the Imām. The Imām agreed, presumably after failing to secure a friendship treaty with the British by which he had hoped to obtain a supply of arms either to protect his position or initiate a new revolt (Baldry 1963: 177). He sent his representatives and a few of his principal followers to Rayḡa about thirty miles north of Ṣan^{ʿā} to meet the delegation, which consisted of Maḥmūd Paša, Maḥmūd Nadīm Bey, the adjoint of the *wālī*, and Aḥmad Bey, one of the secretaries of the Yamani *wilāyet*. The main objectives of the delegation were to persuade the Imām to cease hostilities, to arrange for the release of the Arab hostages held by him and to return to the Government the military stores taken from Ṣan^{ʿā}. The result of the negotiations was kept secret, but it was not fruitful³³. Accordingly, a deputation from Istanbul reached Yaman in April 1907 with the aim of patching up matters with the Imām and his followers (*ibid.*). Although the Commission was given very wide powers to deal with the Imām, it did not reach an agreement as the Imām repeatedly demanded his autonomy in the *Zaydī* districts and the evacuation of Ṣan^{ʿā}, in accordance with the capitulation of Ṣan^{ʿā} in April 1905³⁴, and, presumably, the Commission was not yet given authorization to discuss the matter. The Commission left for Constantinople on 29 May 1907.

The Ottomans were subsequently trying to bypass the Imām, presumably to win over the Imām's followers or to divert their allegiance from him. At the instance of the Commission, an Imperial notification was promulgated on 28 April 1907 inviting the inhabitants to select their chiefs and *šayḡs* in order to place their grievances personally before the Sultān, also to point out the causes and offer suggestions. Accordingly, about forty Arabs were selected from the principal tribes, and they sailed for Istanbul³⁵. This Yamani delegation cannot be considered as representative of the Imām, although its *Zaydī* element must have obtained the consent of the Imām, before they proceeded to the capital. Ṣan^{ʿā} and other *qadās* including ʿAmrān, Ḍamār, Ġibla, Taʿizz, Ḥarāz, Abū ʿArīš, Zabīd and Ḥudayda sent delegates, but there was no representative from the Imām as he neither replied nor sent his own delegates³⁶. The mission, as anticipated by the Imām, was fruitless. But the return of the delega-

³² R/20/A/1256, Richardson to Dr. Hussein, 6/11/1906; FO 195/2224, 5/9/1906.

³³ R/20/A/1256, Richardson to Dr. Hussein, 6/11/1906.

³⁴ R/20/A/1256 & FO 195/2254, Richardson to O'Conor, 27/4/1907.

³⁵ R/20/A/1256, Richardson to O'Conor, 30/5/1907.

³⁶ R/20/A/1256, Richardson to O'Conor, 30/5/1907.

tion had a calming effect in Yaman and the *Zaydī* force which had been threatening Ṣanʿā' and Manāḥa withdrew (Baldry *op.cit.*: 179-80).

In September 1907, at the request of the Sulṭān, another move was made by the Ṣarīf of Mecca to attempt to subdue the Imām. A delegation consisting of four muf-tis, representing the four *madhabs*: Hanbalī, Ḥanafī, Mālikī and Ṣāfiʿī, who resided at Mecca and four other '*ulamā*' from Mecca and one from Madīna were sent to Ya-man. Their duty was to tour the *wilāyet*, to advise the people to remain loyal to the Caliph, and to renounce their allegiance to the Imām, who was described an impos-tor and a rebel, whose acts were contrary to the laws of the Prophet³⁷. The delega-tion also addressed a letter to the Imām, warning him against his rebellious and defi-ant behaviour towards the Government during the past years. They informed him that if he tendered his submission, the Sulṭān was prepared to grant him a monthly allowance and accord him a status similar to that of the Ṣarīf of Mecca. They further requested him to release all the Arab hostages and Turkish prisoners at Ṣahāra. They also earnestly advised him to desist from his illegal attitude in demanding tithes from the tribesmen in the mountainous districts, as they already had to pay such taxes to the Ottoman authorities (*ibid.*). The Imām, in reply, stated that he was not a rebel, but, on the contrary, he was loyal to the Sulṭān. The local Ottoman officials, he added, owing to their abuse of authority and the oppression of the poor agricultural classes, were responsible for his action in waging war, and for the bloodshed that had resulted (*ibid.*). A second letter was then sent to the Imām by the deputation to remind him of the severe chastisement awaiting him unless he submitted in good time and to rebuke him for having described himself as Commander of the Faithful. When they left the capital, no answer was received from the Imām and the mission was likewise unsuccessful (*ibid.*). The Imām had for some time been inactive against the Ottomans, despite his rejection of both peace missions sent from Istanbul to ar-range a settlement with him. This inaction was probably due to his engagement against his rival, Sayyid Ḥasan al-Qāsimī ad-Daḥyānī³⁸.

The restoration of the Constitution in 1908 was thought to bring new hope for the Yamanis. In November 1908, two notable Yamani *ṣayḥs*, Ṣayḥ Muḥammad Mu-

³⁷ R/20/A/1256 & FO 195/2254, Richardson to O'Conor, 18/9/1907.

³⁸ About three months prior to the death of Imām Muḥammad, he was affected with a stroke of pa-ralysis in one of his upper extremities. According to the precepts of the *Zaydī* doctrine, the person select-ed to fill the post of Imām should be sound in every limb. Subsequently, a notable of Ṣa'da, Sayyid Ḥasan al-Qāsimī ad-Daḥyānī claimed the Imāmate, but had not a sufficiently strong body of followers at the time to back up his pretension. However, following the death of Imām Muḥammad in 1904, ad-Daḥyānī had openly asserted his claim, and had been able to hold his own in the Ṣa'da district against Sayyid Yaḥ-yā. ad-Daḥyānī had been supported to a certain extent by the Ottomans at the instance of Fayḍī Paša, with a view to reducing the power of Sayyid Yaḥyā. During the greater part of 1908, the new Imām, Say-yid Yaḥyā was in conflict with ad-Daḥyānī (FO 195/2320, Richardson to Lowther, 1/3/1909.)

zaykir and Šarīf ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥassān al-Mutawakkil, were sent to Yaman. Their duty was to persuade the Imām to send his deputies to Istanbul to present his claims before the Government, with a view to bringing about a permanent peace in the *wilāyet*. Accordingly, three notables of great influence, Sayyid ʿAbdallāh Ibrāhīm, Qādī ʿIzzī aš-Šerkī and Sayyid Muḥammad aš-Šāmī, were selected by the Imām to go to Istanbul³⁹. But there was no satisfactory understanding materialised.

In December 1908, however, a new move took place, when the Council of Ministers in Constantinople discussed the possibility of implementing further reforms in Yaman. These included the replacement of corrupt officials; the reorganisation of the police; prevention of malpractice in the collection of taxes and an increase in the number of schools. In March 1909, the Council of Ministers made another proposal, *i.e.* to delegate the civil and religious administration in the district of Ṣaʿda to Sayyid Yaḥyā in their attempt to arrange the settlement with him.

These proposals remained idle for some time. Fayḍī Paša was, however, replaced by Ḥasan Taḥsīn Paša, who was very friendly to the Imām⁴⁰. But the improved relationship between the Imām and the officials was short-lived, as a new *wālī*, Muḥammad ʿAlī Paša, was appointed. Malpractice again became rampant under the new *wālī*, and this in itself inevitably provoked a fresh revolt. In 1911, Imām Yaḥyā led another revolt which was provoked by the bad conduct of the new *wālī*, Muḥammad ʿAlī Paša, which caused discontent amongst the people. This coincided with the revolts of al-Idrīsī in ʿAsīr⁴¹ and of the Zarāniq tribesmen⁴². The first manifestation of the new revolt under Imām Yaḥyā was the appearance of armed bands in the vicinity of the capital on or about 12 January 1911. Simultaneously with the operation, the rebels grabbed the town of Ṣanʿāʾ from all sides in great strength, and cut off all the communication with Manāḥa and Taʿizz to the south, and also with the garrisoned towns in the north⁴³. However, at the end of April 1911, the revolt in the Yaman highlands under the *Zaydī* Imām collapsed, almost as suddenly as it had commenced. This was partly due to the lack of support and co-operation from the

³⁹ FO 195/2320, Richardson to Lowther, 1/3/1909.

⁴⁰ R/20/A/1268, Imam to Aden, April 1909.

⁴¹ ʿAsīr had been in rebellion for centuries under the leadership of Ašraf Abū ʿArīš long before the appearance of Sayyid Muḥammad Idrīs in the 1900's. During the revolt of 1904 in ʿAsīr, a large number of officials, including the *mutasarrif* and Military Commander of ʿAsīr, were killed. (FO 195/2174, 'Quarterly Report on the Yemen vilayet, administrative and economic', by Richardson, 1904.)

⁴² The Zarāniq country is in the vicinity of Ḥudayda and the tribesmen had for a considerable period previously refused to pay all the taxes to the Ottoman authorities. They also pillaged the caravans en route to Bayt al-Faqīh for considerable time. (FO 195/2174, 'Quarterly Report on Yaman' by Richardson, 1904.)

⁴³ FO 195/2376, 18/1/1911, 16/2/1911, & 12/4/1911.

tribesmen who inhabited the agricultural districts lying between Huḡayla and Ṣanʿā'. They were tired of the prolonged internal strife and were busy attending to their fields, which had received plentiful rains during the previous year. Imām Yaḥyā had therefore been obliged to have recourse to the warlike mountain tribesmen of the north and north-west of Ṣanʿā', such as Hašīd and Bakil, Dū Muḥammad and Dū Ḥusayn, with whom he had overrun the country. Various tribesmen, on the other hand, had been reluctantly compelled to take sides with the Imām, owing to their having previously rendered hostages to him as a guarantee of giving him support in his cause against the Ottomans⁴⁴. Since the collapse of the revolt, sympathy towards Imām Yaḥyā deteriorated among a considerable number of influential sections of his followers. Furthermore, there were signs of alienation from him, and even of open revolt against his authority. These factors played an important part during his negotiations with the Ottomans and undoubtedly forced pressure on him to make the best of any bargain offered by the Ottomans. In September 1911, secret negotiations between ʿIzzat Paša, the Commander-in-Chief, and the Imām materialised, when the treaty of Daʿan was concluded. The treaty marked a turning point in the history of Imamic-Ottoman relations in the Yaman since the reoccupation of Ṣanʿā' by the Ottomans in 1872. It eliminated all the principal sources of friction and discord between the Ottomans and the Imām. Moreover, the treaty recognised the Imām as the temporal and spiritual leader of the *Zaydis*. Consequently, the Imām remained loyal not only to one particular official but to the Ottomans in general, as he abided by the treaty. Furthermore, the treaty became the basis of their relations throughout the First World War, and this enabled the Imām to acquire control of an independent state of Yaman, which was under the Ottomans when the war ended.

REFERENCES

- Abāza, Fārūq ʿUṭmān. 1987. *al-Ḥukm al-ʿuṭmānī fī l-yaman 1872-1918*. Cairo.
 Admiralty. 1917. *A Handbook of Yemen*. Cairo.
 al-ʿAmrī, Ḥusayn ʿAbdallāh. 1984. *Miʿat ʿām min tāriḥ al-yaman al-ḥadīth*. Damascus.
 Anīs, Muḥammad. 1963. *ad-Dawla al-ʿuṭmāniyya wa-š-šarq al-ʿarabī, 1514-1914*. Cairo.
 al-ʿAqīlī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad ʿĪsā. 1958. *Min tāriḥ as-sulaymānī wa-l-ʿarabī fī t-tāriḥ* I. Riyad.

⁴⁴ FO 195/2320, Richardson to Lowther, 12/6/1909.

- Baldry, J. 1963. "al-Yaman and the Turkish Occupation 1849-1914". *Arabica* 23.156-196.
- . 1985. "The History of Tihamah". *Studies of the Tihama: The Report of the Tihamah Expedition of 1982 and Related Papers*. Edited by F. Stone. London.
- Bury, G. Wyman. 1915. *Arabia Infelix*. London.
- Davison, Roderick H. 1963. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*. New Jersey. FO = *The Public Record Office (Kew-London), Foreign Office Records*.
- Grohman, Adolf. 1993. "al-Yaman". *Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913-1936* VIII. 1155-1158. Leiden.
- al-Ḥuṣrī, Sāti°. 1960. *al-Bilād al-ʿarabiyya wa-d-dawla al-ʿuṭmāniyya*. Beirut.
- Kour, Zaki. 1976. "Why the British Took Aden". *Middle East International*. London. February.
- Mādī, Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh. 1950. *Dawlat al-yaman az-zaydiyya, naš'atuhā, tataw-wuruhā, ʿalāqatuhā*. Cairo.
- NID = Naval Intelligence Division. 1964. *Western Arabia and the Red Sea*. London.
- Serjeant, R. B. 1963. *The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast*. Oxford.
- Waterfield, Gordon. 1968. *Sultans of Aden*. London.