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: Ṣan‘ā’, Muḩā, Zabīd, Sahla, Kawkabān, Ṣawīla, Ma‘rib and ‘Aden (Abāza 1987: 26). During this period the Upper Yaman Highlands, the area north of Ṣan‘ā’ including Ṣa‘da, Shāhara and Ḥaţţa, remained in the hands of the Zaydī Imāms (Mādī 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 Muhammad (Baldry 1963: 158). After that date, the greater Yaman, from ‘Asīr in the north to Ḥadramawt 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 Laheğ Sultanate since 1728 (Anīs 1963: 225-61), ‘Asīr and Tihāma under Šarīf Aḥmad, Imām’s governor of Abū ‘Ari‘, since 1730 (Baldry 1985: 46).

At the end of the 18th century, the waḥḥābiyya movement appeared in Nağd and the Waḥḥābis succeeded in gaining control over the greater part of Arabia, including Yaman, after they took Muḩā in 1804, and they remained there until the arrival of Muhammad ʿAlī of Egypt in 1819. In 1837, the whole Tihāma came under the control of Muhammad ʿAlī, including Hudaydah, Zabīd, Muḩā and Šayh Sa‘īd (ibid.). The British, fearing partly that Muḥammad ʿAlī, who was a great admirer of the
French, might extend his influence to seize ‘Aden on his own or in conjunction with the French, and therefore pose a serious threat to India, took ‘Aden in January 1839 (Kour 1976: 28). The British, now apprehensive about the safety of their newly acquired possession of ‘Aden, secured the co-operation of several European powers, Russia, Austria and Italy, who jointly pressured Muḥammad ‘Alī 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 Hudayda and other parts of the Tihāma from Šarīf Ḥusayn of Abū ‘Arīṣ, who succeeded Muhammad ‘Alī at his withdrawal from the Tihāma (Anis 1963: 225-6; Admiralty 1917:40; Baldry 1963: 162). The Ottomans proceeded to the hinterland and entered Ṣanʿā’ on 24 July 1849, at the invitation of Imām al-Mutawakkil Muḥammad b. Yahyā (Anis 1963: 225-6; al-’Amrī 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 Ṣanʿā’, 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 Ṣanʿā’, and a new Imām was appointed, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh, 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 (Anis 1963: 225-6; al-’Amrī 1984: 334-41). But the atmosphere in the highlands was far from quiet. Imām ʿAlī 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 Ṣanʿā’, 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

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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 (districts): Şan’ā', Hûdayda, ‘Asîr and Ta‘izz. These four sanğaq officially constituted the wilâyet of Yaman until 28 April 1913 (19 Rabî‘ 1331) when another provincial law was issued which excluded ‘Asîr from the province of Yaman (Grohman 1993). It is most likely that ‘Asîr from 1913 was administered as an independent sanqâq under the direct control of the Porta, like those of Ḡabal Lubnân, al-Quds (Jerusalem), Diyâr az-Zur and Baŋżązî (Abâza 1987: 104). The continuing trouble in the sanqâq of ‘Asîr seems to have been the main cause of the change.

The four sanqâq of the wilâyet of Yaman were administered under mutasarrîfs (governors of districts) who were responsible to the wâli or Governor resident at Şan’ā'. Each of the sanqâq was subdivided into qâdâs headed by qâ‘îmmâqaqâms and these qâdâs were further subdivided into nâhiyas under the responsibility of mudîrs (Admiralty 1917: 48).

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

As a wilâyet, Yaman was militarily under the control of the 7th Army Corps. The 7th Army was not, however, recruited from Yamanîs. The Yamanîs 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 nizâm, the following eight years were first (active) reserve as redîfs, and the remaining six years as Mustahfâza or second reserve army. As regards non-Muslim subjects, they were exempted but had to pay a special tax, known as “al-badîl al-‘askarî”. However, in some wilâyet, Muslim subjects were also exempted, such as the wilâyets of Istanbul and Crete, the Red Sea Islands, Tripoli, Hiğâz, and the Yaman itself (Abâza 1987: 106). In 1899,

2 al-Ḥuşrî 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 sanqâq as constituting the wilâyet of Yaman (al-Ḥuşrî 1960: 241). Baldry, however, referring to the British records claimed that the exclusion of ‘Asîr 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 War. The Yamanīs were instead recruited for the Gendarmerie (Zaptieh or Hamideh) service as army volunteers. This practice started following the appointment of the new wāli, Ismā‘īl Haqqī Paşa, 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 Sān‘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 wilāyets. Those in Sān‘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 Sān‘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 Qurayṣī 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 payment. 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 Muhammad. 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

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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 Sultan 'Abdalhamid had, however, been spoken of by the rebels, including the Imam, with affection.

The Sultan, who according to the Imam was misinformed of the real situation in the Yaman, could not accept any justification for revolt. Marshal Ahmad Faydi Pasha 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 wilayet 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 Faydi Pasha in May 1905 to replace Marshal Ridah Pasha, 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 San'a and restore order in the Yaman, indicated that the Ottoman Government would not accept the loss of San'a, which had surrendered to Imam Yahya in April 1904. The continuation of the war not only led to the collapse of a truce initiated by the Imam, but also indirectly allowed the persistence of corrupt practices by the officials led by Faydi Pasha himself. On 31 July 1905 Faydi Pasha was appointed as acting wilay to replace Tawfiq Bey, which gave him authority over the civil as well as the military administration.

Faydi Pasha 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 San'a and retake other towns captured by Imam Muhammad. He then held the post of wilay and Commander-in-Chief of the Yamani force for a period of seven years until he was relieved in 1898. During his tenancy as wilay and

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5 R/20/A/1256, Richardson's report, 6/6/1908.
6 General Ridah Pasha, previously posted at Tripoli, was appointed Commander of the Ottoman forces in Yaman in March 1905 to replace Tawfiq Pasha who had only held the post since 1904. Tawfiq Pasha was previously a divisional General of the 4th Army corps at Diyar-Bakir before he was posted in the Yaman. 'Abdallah Pasha had been the Commander-in-Chief in the Yaman before Tawfiq Pasha since 1898. (FO 195/2178, 4/5/1905; R/20/A/1188, 20/7/1898.)
7 Tawfiq Bey (the wilay not to be confused with Tawfiq Pasha the Commander-in-Chief) was appointed as new wilay to replace 'Abdallah Pasha who had been in the post since the dismissal of Hlimi Pasha in October 1902. He was formerly a palace secretary at Yildiz for several years and had also occupied the posts of mutasarrif at Jerusalem and wilay of Konieh respectively for a short period. Just before being sent to Yaman, he became a member of the "Sura-i Dovlat (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, Faydi Pasha 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, Faydū 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‘ā’ 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 šayḥs and tribesmen surrendering to him during his successful action in retaking Şan‘ā’ in August 1905¹⁰.

It is clear that during his second tenancy as wālī and military commander from 1905 to 1908, Faydū continued to misappropriate a substantial share of the wilāyet’s revenues and to persist in corrupt practices. In this, he was backed by the mutasarrīf of Ḥudayda, ‘Abdalwahhāb Effendi. All posts of qā‘immaqāms and mudīirs were sold to the highest bidder by the wālī and the mutasarrīf of Hudayda respectively, and these provincial officials were expected to remit separately part of the taxes collected by them to their chiefs at Şan‘ā’ and Hudayda¹¹.

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, Faydū 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 Bāgil, an honest and diligent officer, was dismissed for remitting the whole of the taxes collected in his qada’ into the treasury. Some corrupt officials, on the other hand, remained in office, such as the mutasarrīf of Hudayda, ‘Abdalwahhāb Effendi, who had proved to be one of the most incompetent and corrupt officials ever appointed to the sanğaq of Ḥudayda. He remained there for two years without initiating a single reform pertaining to the welfare of the people (ibid.). The British Vice-Consul at Hudayda, 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 Sultan\textsuperscript{12}. As a result of the investigation carried out in the san\c{c}aq of Hudayda, Ibr\=ah\=im Bey, mutasarrif of Hudayda\textsuperscript{13}, was dismissed on the recommendation of Şak\=ir Pa\=şa, the President of the Commission. Ibr\=ah\=im 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 wâli, "Abdallah Paşa"\textsuperscript{14}. Mah\=m\=ud Nad\=im Bey, the adjoint of the wâli, a post which was created at the end of 1904, was also replaced by a civil member of the Reform Commission, a protégé of Faydi Paşa. This change coincided with the appointment of Faydi Paşa as wâli in the place of Tawfiq Bey\textsuperscript{15}. Marshal Şak\=ir Pa\=şa 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 wâli and Commander-in-Chief of the wilâyet\textsuperscript{16}.

In April 1907, another Imperial Commission was sent to Yaman with orders to inquire further into the grievances of the people of the wilâyet and also to arrange a truce with the Imâm\textsuperscript{17}. 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 Sultan and discuss the causes of the troubles and suggestions for remedies. The Imperial Commission also brought about some reforms in the wilâyet. 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

\textsuperscript{12} FO 195/2198, Richardson's report, 17/4/1905.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibr\=ah\=im Bey, a Circassian, was one of "Abdallah Pa\=şa's protégés. He had been a brigand chief in the Caucasus mountains before he was sent to Yaman. (FO 195/2174, 31/8/1904.)

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

\textsuperscript{15} Mah\=m\=ud Nad\=im was well known and greatly respected at Hudayda where he was the President of the Commercial Tribunal there for some time and later at Ğidda in the same office. In 1894 he was nominated qâ'timmaqâm of Zabîd and then promoted to mutasarriflik of Tripoli. (FO 195/2198, 31/1/1905.)

\textsuperscript{16} FO 195/2178, Richardson's report, 16/10/1905.

\textsuperscript{17} R/20/A/1256 & FO 195/2254, Richardson's report, 27/4/1907.
the principal leaders immediately after their release. In the administration, the same Commission introduced reform by prohibiting the further employment of six corrupt qāʾimmaqāms who had spent many years in the wilāyet accumulating wealth by squeezing taxpayers. Among these were Muhammad Raʿūf of Ṭawīla, his brother Ahmad Adīb, the late qāʾimmaqām of Radāʿ, and Šālīh Bey, qāʾimmaqām at Zabīd. In August 1907, a Finance Commission was sent by the Sultān 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 Faydī 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.

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 Abhā in 1882, the Ottomans were cut off from the coast, followed by an attack on them at Luhayya (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 Muhammad’s rising against the Ottomans in Yaman was apparently religious. The religious issue adopted by the Zaydi Imāms, notably by Imām Muhammad and his successor, may have been primarily inspired by Zaydi doctrine, which went back to Zayd b. ‘Ali b. Husayn, 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 Sunnis in Yaman notably Sayyid al-Idrīsī, who also fought the Ottomans for religious reasons, apart from personal and political interests. The Zaydi Imāms may also have felt that they

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18 R/20/A/1256, Richardson’s report, 30/5/1907.
19 Muhammad Raʿūf had already been imprisoned by Husayn Hīlī Paša for some 10 years and was released in 1905 by Faydī Paša and was appointed qāʾimmaqām 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 Zaydis, as a result of the actions of the Ottomans. Since the occupation of San’a in 1872, the temporal role of the Imams of the Zaydis was questioned, notably, when the power to appoint officials and judges was taken away from them, and the Imams were further restricted from ruling over the tribesmen. They were also prevented from collecting zakat, eliminating, therefore, their religious claim, and naturally diminishing their influence as spiritual leaders. Instead, the Imams and their family were paid a monthly salary of 3,000 riyals (al-Aqili 1958: 53). The limiting of the authority of the Imams to a position similar to that of local religious leaders, as opposed to their intended ideal position as Zaydi Imams, induced them to rise up against the Ottomans in the name of religious duty as Imams.

In addition to the religious issue, the Imams 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-Idrisi in Asir and the British proteges of the ‘Aden Protectorate, which the Imams regarded as part of their greater Yaman. Beside the issues of the Zaydis’ doctrine and their territorial claims, the malpractice of the Ottoman officials in Yaman gave the final impetus to the uprising of the Imams of Yaman. However, on a number of occasions, the Imams were under pressure from their followers, notably the Zaydi tribesmen, the principal sayyids and the Imam’s advisers, either to lead an uprising against the Ottomans or to decide matters concerning the future of the Zaydis in Yaman. Therefore the Imam must act in accordance with the wishes of the community who selected him as Imam. 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 Yahya was elected as Imam 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 Hudaydah, reported that Sayyid Yahya’s accession to the Imamate was notified to the wali, as well as his intention to continue hostilities21. During his stay at San’a, Richardson found that it was an open secret that the new Imam would give the Ottomans considerable trouble after the departure of Abdallah Pasha, the former wali and Commander-in-Chief. Preparations were also made to organise a general revolt throughout the mountainous districts of Yaman, the home of the Zaydis. The main strength of the Imam was drawn from the Zaydi tribesmen. This time the tribesmen were more willing to support the Imam. They suffered badly through droughts and famine in 190422, which directly affected their

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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 San’a 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.
livelhood. 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 Yahyā moved towards Ṣan‘ā’ 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 safety.23

The Imām made a further move by proposing to administer all mountainous districts of Yaman where the Zaydi 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 Ṣan‘ā’. 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 officials.24

Although it was unlikely that the Ottomans would accept either the capitulation of Ṣan‘ā’ or the Imām’s proposals, negotiations for peace with the Imām proceeded. On 8 June 1905 Mahmūd Nadīm was accordingly sent to Ṣan‘ā’ to conduct negotiations with the Imām for the purpose of reaching an amicable understanding.25 Mahmūd Nadīm did not, however, see the Imām personally. He was met outside Ṣan‘ā’ by a representative of the Imām and was escorted to Rawḍa, a town about five miles north of Ṣan‘ā’, 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 šaykh with him. In his last proposal, the Imām offered to return Ṣan‘ā’ to the Sultān and to desist from further rebellion, on condition that the towns of Damār, Ḍarin, Ḥaǧǧa, Ṭawīla, Kawkabān and ‘Azmān would be given to him.26

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, Āḥmad Fayḍī Paṣa, who was in charge for the relief of Ṣan‘ā’, made a first advance in the direction of Ṣan‘ā’ with six battalions of Albanian troops, and on 29 August

women and children. The average mortality from starvation at Manāḥa, in the district of Harāz, 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 Ta‘izz 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 San‘ā’, the Ottomans succeeded in retaking the capital.  

After his successful campaign in recapturing San‘ā’ in September 1905, Ahmad Faydi Paşa led an army of 10,000 in the middle of November that year towards Şahāra, in an attempt to crush the Imām there, where the majority of the artillery, rifles and ammunition captured from San‘ā’ had been kept. However, due to the inaccessibility of Şahāra because of its mountainous features, and the constant counter-attacks of the Imām, Faydi Paşa decided to abandon the campaign. 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 Astablāl Sultan. 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 Yahyā to come to an agreement and to save Muslim blood in the name of Islamic unity. The mission was apparently undertaken at the request of the Grand Šarīf, but no doubt it was executed at the express command of the Sultan. In August, the delegation arrived at Hidayda 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 San‘ā’ similar to that held at Mecca by the Grand Šarīf. The Imām, furthermore, accused the administration of deliberately misinformed the Sultan of Islam 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 Manāha, in accordance with the treaty signed at the capitulation of San‘ā’. 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 Şahāra was re-taken.

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 Sultan, 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 San'a.  

At the failure of the above mission, a delegation selected from officials in Yaman was accordingly sent to the Imam. The Imam 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 Rayqa about thirty miles north of San'a to meet the delegation, which consisted of Mahmud Pasha, Mahmud Nadim Bey, the adjoint of the wali, and Ahmad Bey, one of the secretaries of the Yaman wilayet. The main objectives of the delegation were to persuade the Imam 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 San'a. The result of the negotiations was kept secret, but it was not fruitful. Accordingly, a deputation from Istanbul reached Yaman in April 1907 with the aim of patching up matters with the Imam and his followers (ibid.). Although the Commission was given very wide powers to deal with the Imam, it did not reach an agreement as the Imam repeatedly demanded his autonomy in the Zaydi districts and the evacuation of San'a, in accordance with the capitulation of San'a in April 1905, 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 Imam, presumably to win over the Imam'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 sayhs in order to place their grievances personally before the Sultan, also to point out the causes and offer suggestions. Accordingly, about forty Arabs were selected from the principal tribes, and they sailed for Istanbul. This Yaman delegation cannot be considered as representative of the Imam, although its Zaydi element must have obtained the consent of the Imam, before they proceeded to the capital. San'a and other qasas including 'Amran, Damar, Gibla, Ta'izz, Haraz, Abu 'Ariš, Zabid and Hudayda sent delegates, but there was no representative from the Imam as he neither replied nor sent his own delegates. The mission, as anticipated by the Imam, was fruitless. But the return of the delega-

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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 Zaydi force which had been threatening Ṣan‘ā’ 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 mutsīs, representing the four madhābs: Hanbalī, Ḥānafī, Mālikī and Šāfī‘ī, who resided at Mecca and four other ‘ulamā’ from Mecca and one from Madīna were sent to Yaman. Their duty was to tour the wilāyat, to advise the people to remain loyal to the Caliph, and to renounce their allegiance to the Imām, who was described an impostor and a rebel, whose acts were contrary to the laws of the Prophet. The delegation also addressed a letter to the Imām, warning him against his rebellious and defiannt 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 Ṣāhāra. 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 arrange a settlement with him. This inaction was probably due to his engagement against his rival, Sayyid Hasan al-Ṣāṣīmi ad-Dāhyānī.

The restoration of the Constitution in 1908 was thought to bring new hope for the Yamanis. In November 1908, two notable Yamani šayhs, Šayh Muhammad 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 paralysis in one of his upper extremities. According to the precepts of the Zaydi doctrine, the person selected to fill the post of Imām should be sound in every limb. Subsequently, a notable of Sa’da, Sayyid Hasan al-Ṣāṣīmi ad-Dāhyānī 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 Muhammad in 1904, ad-Dāhyānī had openly asserted his claim, and had been able to hold his own in the Sa’da district against Sayyid Yahyā, ad-Dāhyānī had been supported to a certain extent by the Ottomans at the instance of Faydi Paşa, with a view to reducing the power of Sayyid Yahyā. During the greater part of 1908, the new Imām, Sayyid Yahyā was in conflict with ad-Dāhyānī (FO 195/2320, Richardson to Lowther, 1/3/1909).
zykirk and Šarīf ‘Abdallāh b. Hassān 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 vilâyet. Accordingly, three notables of great influence, Sayyid ‘Abdallāh Ibrāhīm, Qādī ‘Izzī aš-Šerkī and Sayyid Muḥammad aš-Šāmī, were selected by the Imām to go to Istanbul. 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 Sa’āda to Sayyid Yahyā in their attempt to arrange the settlement with him.

These proposals remained idle for some time. Faydī Paša was, however, replaced by Hasan Taḥṣīn Paša, who was very friendly to the Imām. But the improved relationship between the Imām and the officials was short-lived, as a new wālī, Muḥammad ‘Alī Paša, was appointed. Malpractice again became rampant under the new wālī, and this in itself inevitably provoked a fresh revolt. In 1911, Imām Yahyā led another revolt which was provoked by the bad conduct of the new wālī, Muḥammad ‘Alī Paša, which caused discontent amongst the people. This coincided with the revolts of al-Idrīṣī in ‘Asīr and of the Zarānīq tribemen. The first manifestation of the new revolt under Imām Yahyā 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 Sa‘ā from all sides in great strength, and cut off all the communication with Manāḥa and Ta‘izz to the south, and also with the garrisoned towns in the north. 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

40 R/20/A/1268, Imam to Aden, April 1909.
41 ‘Asīr had been in rebellion for centuries under the leadership of Aṣraf Abū ‘Aris long before the appearance of Sayyid Muhammad Idrīs in the 1900’s. During the revolt of 1904 in ‘Asīr, a large number of officials, including the mutasarrīf and Military Commander of ‘Asīr, were killed. (FO 195/2174, ‘Quarterly Report on the Yemen vilayet, administrative and economic’, by Richardson, 1904.)
42 The Zarānīq country is in the vicinity of Hudayda and the tribesmen had for a considerable period previously refused to pay all the taxes to the Ottoman authorities. They also pillaged the caravans on 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 Huğayla and Şan‘ā’. They were tired of the prolonged internal strife and were busy attending to their fields, which had received plentiful rains during the previous year. Imam Yaḥyā had therefore been obliged to have recourse to the warlike mountain tribesmen of the north and north-west of Şan‘ā’, such as Haši’d and Bakil, Du Muḥammad and Du Ḥusayn, with whom he had overrun the country. Various tribesmen, on the other hand, had been reluctantly compelled to take sides with the Imam, 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 Imam 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 Izzat Paša, the Commander-in-Chief, and the Imam materialised, when the treaty of Da‘an was concluded. The treaty marked a turning point in the history of Imamic-Ottoman relations in the Yaman since the reoccupation of Şan‘ā’ by the Ottomans in 1872. It eliminated all the principal sources of friction and discord between the Ottomans and the Imam. Moreover, the treaty recognised the Imam as the temporal and spiritual leader of the Zaydīs. Consequently, the Imam 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 Imam to acquire control of an independent state of Yaman, which was under the Ottomans when the war ended.

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