

ANGLO - OTTOMAN CONFRONTATION IN YEMEN: 1840-49

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In previous studies we traced the beginnings of Ottoman renewed concern over Yemen to the Mocha incident of 1817. British assault on Mocha that year excited the suspicions of the sultan's government. The assault on what they interpreted the back door to the holiest shrines of Islam was seen as part of British design on Yemen as a whole, particularly after their political agent extracted a treaty from the Imam of Sanaa that was seen as an attempt to legitimize their presence at Mocha without reference to Ottoman sovereign rights over the region.

During the next decade the British sought to firm up their hold on this corner of Arabia by stabilizing both the Tihama and immediate hinterland. Unable to do so with their limited forces, they urged Muhammad Ali, viceroy of Egypt, to undertake a campaign of pacification in the 1830's which, while not altogether successful, did gain a period of respite for the inhabitants and quieted tribal feuds and Wahhabi-Asiri assaults on the port towns of the Tihama. No sooner did the viceroy complete his costly campaign than Palmerston put pressure on him to withdraw from both Yemen and Syria, which was done in 1840 in exchange for his being granted hereditary rule over Egypt.

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The purpose of this paper is to show how the absence of political stability and persisting insecurity induced the Ottoman government to take firm measures leading towards the reestablishment of direct rule over Yemen in order to prevent the British from expanding their influence and control out of the Aden enclave. We have relied on a dossier in the Ottoman archives entitled «Yemen Meselesi» (problem of Yemen) for the Ottoman position and a detailed confidential report based on correspondences and memoranda by means of which the British sought to justify their denial of Ottoman sovereign claims over the portions of Yemen they coveted for the purpose of establishing a permanent foothold there, first at Mocha; and when that failed, next at Aden.

Aftermath of the Egyptian Withdrawal

Before withdrawing from the Tihama, Muhammad Ali turned over the administration of the district to Husayn ibn Ali Haydar, a şerif from Abu Aris, and a loyal supporter since he first entered the viceroy's service in 1836 as a secretary to the Egyptian administrator for Mocha. Ibrahim Paşa, the viceroy's nephew and over all commander of the expedition appointed Husayn over Hodeida, his brother Abu Talib, commander of the contingents left behind, and recognized Husayn as official şerif of Abu Aris, thus granting him and members of his family almost full administrative control of the low lands of Yemen. In exchange, Husayn promised to pay an annual tribute of 90,000 German crowns to Muhammad Ali, who after deducting expenses was to relay the balance to the sultan's treasury in Istanbul.

Husayn's control was challenged from the start by his two principal enemies: Muhammad ibn Awn, şerif and administrator of Mecca, and the Imam of Sanaa. They both coveted administrative control over this pivotal region, but Muhammad Ali trusted neither and preferred Husayn because he deemed him more capable of standing up to the British

than either the Imam, whom he suspected of secretly favoring British presence of Awn, who was too far away to be effective. Husayn had another challenger in the notorious chieftain, Sayh Ali Hamida of Bajil who also coveted control of the Tihama.

Ottoman accounts speak of Husayn as a loyal administrator who strove to suppress the turbelent tribes, particularly the Asiris, and enforce justice. They allege that it was his pursuit of justice and fulfilment of duty that led to resistance on the part of those dubbed by Ottomans as *haşarat* (worms) in league with «foreign elements», reference being made to the British through agents at Aden and Mocha.

The British, on the other hand, alleged that this chief «from the day of his appointment pursued a course of invariable hostility to British interests.»¹ Husayn on his part did little to conceal his resentment of British intrusion and the manner in which they took hold of Aden. He was determined to take matters difficult for the vice consul at Mocha and restrict his movements to the confines of the town itself. His other resolve was to prevent British contacts with tribes neighboring Aden. It seems that he was successful for a while. In the words of Capt. Haines, political agent at Aden, «overland communication may be considered at an end for the time being.»²

The şerif's conduct reflected to a large extent Ottoman resentment towards the India Government which had been maneuvering from the beginning to establish posts on the south Arabian coast by challenging Ottoman sovereign rights in the south. It also reflected his frustrations over the seeming inability of the sultan's government to suppress the feuds of the tribes and their maraudings which created in-

1 India Board to London, 10 December 1841, cited in F.O. 881/2147.

2 Report to the Secret Department, No. 66 of 1840. F.O. 78/3158.

stability and invited foreign powers to fish in troubled waters. Husayn was determined in his tactless way to dislodge the British by whatever means possible. He hauled down the British flag from the port town of Mocha on grounds they had not been granted formal consular rights by the Sublime Porte insulting Capt. Gordon of the «Zenobia», an East India Company vessel, who was then serving as vice consul and demanded Aden be handed over to him by the Bombay government. Then in October of 1840 a chief of the Danwa rebelled and occupied Taiz proclaiming that he was charged with a sacred mission to throw the British out of Aden but was dispatched shortly thereafter by the Imam's forces who saw in the British at Aden and Mocha possible allies in his efforts to retrieve control of Yemen.

Indeed, shortly after Ibrahim Pasa handed Hodeida over to Husayn the Imam sent his nephew to Aden to protest this transfer and invited the agent to sign a treaty of friendship with him. But neither at this nor at two subsequent entreatments by the Imam's representative did Haines respond favorably to the overture. The Government of Bombay wanted a neutral zone between and the Imam's possessions. It certainly did not wish to be drawn into the Imam's feuds with rivals much more powerful at this time than himself, particularly when the legality of their possession of Aden was in question.

Haines never trusted Husayn from the day he first entered Egyptian service as scribe-secretary to Muhammad Amin Ağa, the viceroy's mutasallim of Mocha in 1836. Nor did he underestimate the şerif's ability to make mischief for the British. When the viceroy agreed to evacuate Yemen, he surrendered control of Mocha to Husayn on the pretext that the şerif was the highest bidder and besides, he derived from a line of sayyids of the Asrafis. One Hajj Yusuf, a wealthy merchant of Hodeida, personally pledged to secure the annual tribute Husayn agreed to pay the central government. His other two rivals, the Imam of Sanaa and Ali Hamida of the Tihama were too poor to bid.

In recounting the events that precipitated the crisis of 1842-43, Haines alleged in a report to Bombay³ that Husayn felt strong enough to assert his independence, demanding the submission of the Imam of Sanaa and the placement of Aden under his control. Flushed reportedly with a new sense of power, he cut down the British flag at Mocha, issued an edict preventing Christians (mostly European traders) from riding in or near Mocha, and confined their entry and exit to one gate only. This he professedly did as an agent of the sultan's government, hence it was necessary to refer the matter to Istanbul for satisfaction.

The report of the vali of Hijaz (overseer of Yemen) from Jidda treated British demands at Mocha as unreasonable and in contravention of Ottoman sovereign rights. He regarded them an insult to «the padisah (sultan) and Islam.» He attributed the incident to the illegal raising of the British flag at Mocha, implying extraterritorial privileges not formally granted by the sultan. He regretted the scuffle at the vice consul's residence and the subsequent indignities suffered by his person. The vali questioned, however, the advisability of the India Board maintaining a formal post at Mocha.⁴

London forwarded the India Board's protests to Canning who demanded satisfaction from the Porte including the dismissal of Husayn even though Aberdeen had not instructed him to do so.⁵ The foreign minister referred London's protests to the Mecilis-i Vâlâ-yi Ahkam-i Adliye (law court),

3 See his No. 34 to the Secretary of the Bombay Government of 25 May 1848. F.O. 78/3185.

4 See his dispatch of mid S 1258/late September 1842 addressed to both the ministers and the sultan. Lef 13 in *Mesail-i Mühimme* (henceforth *Mesail*), 1797.

5 For Ottoman translations of London's and Canning's protests see Lef 1 in *Mesail*, 1795, also the foreign minister's tezkeré to the Sadr of 12 M 1258/23 February 1842 accompanying Canning's demand: Lef 2 in *Ibid.*

which did not respond before first investigating the situation at first hand.

The Mission of Asraf Beg

The Sublime Porte obtained the sultan's approval to send Asraf Beg⁶ back to Yemen to investigate and implement a set of secret instructions. Asraf was familiar with the land and the problems from his previous mission in the 1830's.

Among his instructions, Asraf was to stop in Egypt and consult with the viceroy whose experiences in Yemen could provide proper advice. Accordingly Asraf visited Muhammad Ali in March of 1842. In Muhammad Ali's subsequent letter to the sultan we have an index of the topics he discussed with Asraf. While confessing to be out of touch recently with Yemen, he counselled against the dismissal of Husayn or of converting Yemen into an independent vilayet at this time, an alternative included in Asraf's instructions. To depose Husayn because he was a bit zealous in the discharge of his duties would require a military cum naval operation beyond the capacity of the government to mount. Even if possible, and successful, stability will not return to the area. The viceroy suggested that Asraf consult further with the vali at Jidda, the serif of Mcca, and Ferik Ahmad Pasa, military commander of the Hijaz.⁷

Asraf was relieved to have the viceroy's views because they coincided with those of the ministers of the Porte. As a matter of fact, Asraf carried secret instructions empowering

6 Asraf was the son of Selim Thabit, a hacedan or department chief in the imperial chancery (Divan-i Ali).

7 See his report to the Nizaret (Ministry) of 18 S 1258/14 March 1842. Lef 1 in *Mesail*, 1796.

8 For details see the viceroy's letter of 3 RI 1258/14 April 1842, in *Ibid.*

him to bestow official recognition upon Husayn and extend his functions for another three years if he would agree to the conditions proposed by the Porte.

Upon reaching Jidda, Asraf discussed these terms with the vali and obtained his approval, and endorsement. He reached Zabid (Yemen) late September and avoided immediate contact with Consul Crointden. On the 29th he met with Husayn and discussed the government's terms which fell under three headings: 1) honoring commitments to the sultan's government; 2) respecting that government's arrangements with the chief of Asir, and 3) accepting agreements reached with the British concerning Yemen, and observing the rules of civility in dealing with their agent at Mocha. He was to remit the tribute through the vali of Hijaz and forward to the imperial kitchens the quantity of coffee beans previously levied on his district.

As concerns neighboring Asir, Asraf was empowered to confirm its chief in his post as official mutasallim by terms of a secret firman from the Sadr if A'id b. Mur'i (the chief) accepts the jurisdictional authority of Husayn over Asir. Another firman would confer the governship of Yemen on Husayn for three years and render the Imam of Sanaa a mutasallim of Husayn if the latter should accept the administrative authority of the vali of Hijaz over Yemen.⁹

Husayn agreed to all these conditions and so stated it in an official communiqué to the government of the sultan and Uthman, vali of Hijaz¹⁰. The orders Asraf carried made it

9 For approval and the appropriate Emr ve Firman of 23 M 1259 see **Mesail**, 1797.

10 For Husayn's letter of 3 JI 1258/12 June 1842 see **Lef 5** in **Mesail**, 1797; see also a draft of the order and relevant letters from Asraf together with the Sublime Porte's firman to the vali containing instructions on this and on other matters. **Lef 11** in **Mesail**, 1797.

clear that Yemen and Asir would be administrative appenages of Hijaz. Responsible authorities in Istanbul and Hijaz felt this could be done only by conferring official recognition and strengthening thereby Husayn's role in spite of reservations concerning Asir's chief.¹¹

The Asiris had posed a constant threat to the security of Mocha's inhabitants, disrupting trade and compelling many to abandon this important port town rather than put up with their marauding habits. It was in the interest of assuring Mocha some security that the Porte insisted on Husayn maintaining the annual tribute of 20,000 crowns to A'id b. Mur'i.¹²

While the Ottoman government was anxious to maintain friendly ties with Great Britain, such ties were not to have priority over important internal considerations, namely Ottoman sovereignty over the whole of Yemen. The resident vice consul at Mocha first came to Mocha with a letter of acknowledgement from Muhammad Ali, no longer the recognized agent of the sultan in Yemen, not from the Sublime Porte. The sultan's government nevertheless was prepared now to extend formal recognition provided the British accept Husayn as the mutasallim of Mocha.¹³ The Porte's hesitancy in permitting the expansion of British trade activity stemmed from strong opposition from Arabian and Muslim traders, particularly those based at Jidda. These merchants resented the fact that foreign merchants were circumventing duty payment by shipping goods via Mosawa on the Eritrean coast from India, and even from Yemen itself. Muslim traders were also avoiding the payment of customs duty and the

11 For details see the imperial mazbata, Lef 1 in *Mesail*, 1797, and on Asraf's encounter with the chief of Asir, his letter to the Porte of 27 N 1258/3 November 1842, in *Mesail*, 179.

12 See Uthman's letter to the sultan of 15 S 1258/21 October 1842. *Mesail*, 1797. We have also 15 and 18,000 figures.

13 See Lef 1, mazbata draft, *Mesail*, 1797.

treasury of Hijaz was suffering a loss put at three thousand kises of akçe annually.¹⁴ Meanwhile the şerif of Mecca was pressing Istanbul for more funds to meet the expenses of policing the area.¹⁵

The Sublime Porte would have preferred the British establish their consular post at Hodeida so as to put more distance between them and Husayn. The ministers were not prepared to accept Canning's demand that Husayn be deposed. They recommended instead that the foreign minister pen him a polite letter to smoothen his ruffled feathers.¹⁶ No flag would be authorized raised at Mocha until the British accede to Ottoman terms.

British terms as presented by Canning revealed the lack of regard for Ottoman sovereignty. They reflected what Capt. Robert Crompton demanded, briefly that Husayn should levy only 2 1/4% customs duty on goods carried by British vessels, be they of Hindu, British or even corsair origin, when native south Arabians paid the legal 3%. The şerif was to promise not to maltreat such traders even if their acts appeared to transcend provisions of applicable Islamic law. He was not to obstruct efforts of British subjects and protégés to obtain supplies from the ports of the Tihama under his jurisdiction. He was to conclude no treaties with the French or any other foreign power without first clearing it with the British resident at Mocha. Full protection was to be accorded all British subjects and protégés in his domain. Disputes arising between Mochans and British citizens were to be settled by representatives of both the şerif and the resident «according to the principles of justice» (apparently not according to Islamic law). Husayn was to allow British sub-

14 See Utman's report to the sultan of 15 S 1258/28 March 1842. Lef 13 in *Mesail*, 1797.

15 See his petition of 8 JI 1258/17 June 1842. Lef 10 in *Ibid.*

16 This was the Meclis-i Vâlâ's recommendation. See *tezkeré* of 11 M 1259/11 February 1843. *Mesail*, 1797.

jects to move about freely in his domain and not be mistreated either by customs officials or agents of Muhammed Ali of Egypt. Finally, Husayn was to treat Britain's friends as his friends and her enemies as his enemies.¹⁷

That the Sublime Porte would accede to such terms and expect someone of Husayn's caliber to abide by them was not logical or reasonable. It is doubtful that the British themselves expected the sultan's government to accept them. Aden was already their choice as principal base in south Arabia; and if they could extract favorable terms for Mocha, so much the better. Otherwise they were prepared to withdraw from Mocha. Meanwhile they might preoccupy Husayn with Mocha and divert his attention away from Aden until such time as they might end his administration altogether.

As concerns Asraf's mission, he got what he came for: submission of Husayn to government terms, and A'id's as well. All that was needed now was some sort of romanization by the sultan's government.

Meanwhile the India government was not certain it would accept Husayn's administration for another three years. Haines reported to the Secret Committee on Asraf's mission, termed by him «an inquiry into the conduct of the Sheriff of Mocha.» He showed concern over Husayn's confirmation in the post of administrator fearing that it would lead next to an inquiry into Aden and the Indian trade with the Red Sea. Haines also noted that Asraf avoided contact with William Smith, consul at Mocha, lest by meeting with him he lent legality to his position, handing the firman instead to Capt. Haines. He did not wait for the flag to be

17 For text of Crintden's seven-point demand see Ottoman translation dated 3 RI 1258/14 April 1842 and the Ottoman version: *Lef* 7 in *Mesail*, 1797.

hoisted at Aden, departing rather from Hodeida to Istanbul.¹⁸

The document handed Haines included a request for particulars of exactions on British trade complained about and specific questions the Ottoman government posed for the India government concerning Ottoman sovereign rights which they were questioning, namely: 1) when did the Imam of Sanaa legally hold the port towns of the Tihama during which time the British flag reportedly was allowed to be raised, 2) for how long did Muhammad Ali control this area by virtue of conquest, and 3) the official date of Ottoman recognition of Husayn as administrator over the port towns?

In forwarding the document to India, Haines recommended the Board concern itself with the last point only and insist on the application of the 1838 Treaty of Commerce with the sultan's government in determining the amount of customs duty to be paid by British shipping. As concerns the Ottoman firman, he objected to the absence of an apology for insults suffered by the British flag and resident at Mocha, albeit the firman did authorize the raising of the flag and ordered that respect be shown British merchants in the future. No restitution was mentioned for plundered possessions. He was skeptical concerning the şerif's ability to pay the annual tribute in addition to meeting local administrative and military expenses because Ottomans «are weak in Arabia.»¹⁹ He doubted moreover that either Husayn or «the aged ruler of Lahadj» would allow peaceful trade for long, even though for the moment between two and five hundred camel loads were entering Adn daily. He was certain that both rulers would soon excite the tribes to annoy the British.

18 From Lord Ripon of the India to Aberdeen, 15 November 1843 enclosing extract of a letter from Political Agent S.B. Haines of the East India Company to the Secret Committee of 22 September 1843. F.O. 78/3185.

19 See his report of 25 October 1842 enclosing a document «in Arabic» with a Turkish statement from Asraf forwarded to the Secret Committee. F.O. 78/3185.

Haines suspicions were confirmed by a letter from Sultan Bier Hamad (sic) who resided only a few miles from Aden, in which it was alleged that Husayn wrote the sultan of Lahaj who then proceeded together the tribes for a secret meeting. Fearing a possible attack, Haines recommended to the company that it station the brig «Tigris» in Aden waters until the results of the «secret conference» are known.²⁰

Meanwhile London was interested in resolving the legal status of Yemen in order to determine the amount of customs duty that can be levied on British shipping. The usual charge was 12% on goods from Yemen, Abyssinia and adjoining areas brought into Jidda, a clearly defined Ottoman port thereby subject to terms of the 1838 treaty.²¹ Should it be determined that Yemen did indeed fall under Ottoman sovereignty, then the India Board would be confronted with the same rate of payment which they hoped to circumvent by denying Ottoman sovereignty over the low lands and the ports of the Tihama now formally administered by Husayn for the sultan's government.²²

The Advocate General tendered his judgement in May of 1844; and as one might have expected, it favored British policy objectives in the Red Sea. He ruled that Abyssinia was not part of the Ottoman empire for commercial purposes. As concerns Yemen, he conceded that between 1569 and 1630 it was de jure under Ottoman sovereignty, but that after 1663 (when Sultan Muhammad IV's forces were defeated) it passed under the control of Sayyids and since then, under the

20 Dispatch of November 1 to the secret Committee. Incl. in Ripon's dispatch of November 15. F.O. 78/3185.

21 See Rifaat's Memorandum to Canning of 26 July 1843 in Canning's No. 162 of August 1 to Aberdeen. F.O. 78/3185.

22 Aberdeen to the Queen's Advocate General transmitting correspondence from Canning and the India Board, 12 December 1843. F.O. 78/3185.

control of the Imam of Sanaa thus depriving Yemen of a «Turkish character.»

As concerns Mocha, the Advocate ruled that Husayn's rule was legitimate in that he was duly appointed by an agent of the Sublime Porte (Muhammad Ali) and confirmed in his post in 1842 in return for the payment of tribute, which he apparently had rendered on a regular basis. The sultan's government was ruled to possess at least de facto authority here and thus responsible for the actions of its officers. So it was legitimate to demand some satisfaction and compensation for Husayn's mistreatment of British subjects. Aden, on the other hand, was conveniently treated as lying outside the pale of Ottoman de jura control. Thus Husayn's acquisition of a part of the coast bordering on it was regarded as illegal because his sovereign, the sultan, was deemed by the British Advocate General as having no sovereign rights over it. He concluded that with the exception of Mocha, no part of Yemen came under the provision of the 1838 treaty (sometimes referred to as a commercial convention).²³

What was remarkable about the Advocate's ruling is that in almost every instance it paralleled the suggestions put forth by the East India Board in replying to Lord Ripon's letter of inquiry,²⁴ wherein Aden was considered to have been ceded legally by the «Sultan or Fakih of Aden», even if there was some question about his right to do so. Ottoman sovereignty was held to have been not uninterruptedly exercised over Yemen. The presence of Egyptian troops in this part of Arabia between 1833 and 1840 was treated as «occupational» not at all buttressing Ottoman sovereignty claims, let

23 Document signed by Hodson at Doctor's Commons, 15 May 1844 and addressed to Lord Aberdeen in reply to his solicitation of December 12 of 1843. F.O. 78/3185.

24 See copy of the reply from East India House of 21 September 1843. F.O. 78/3185.

alone rights. Only the Hijaz was considered as undisputed Ottoman territory in Arabia.

What is interesting about this whole exercise in sovereignty determination is that it would not have taken place were it not for claims made by the East India Board, and specifically the Bombay government, against Husayn, «the emir of Mocha.»

The report of the Advocate General was forwarded to Canning with copies to India. The ambassador was instructed by Aberdeen to use it as a guide in communicating with the sultan's government.²⁵

However much the British hoped for Husayn's removal, they reluctantly conceded that he had been too firmly seated for Asraf to unseat him even though the sultan's government had authorized the exercise of this option. Moreover, he enjoyed the support of Muhammad Ali of Egypt and the sultan could scarce afford to alienate him further given the strong influence the viceroy still wielded among conservative ministers.

The Problem Continues

Radical changes were still in the offing. The sultan's government had not obtained its objectives as both Nejd and Yemen appeared to resist stabilization. In September of 1846 a joint report presented by the vali of Hijaz and the emir of Mecca alleged that Husayn had defaulted on his payment of tribute and preoccupied himself with conquering not just the Tihama but the hinterland up to Taiz as well. His objec-

²⁵ See dispatch No. 76 from the Foreign Office, 20 May 1844, together with a draft copy of Ripon's to Aberdeen from the India Board of 7 October 1843 in response to Canning's request for clarification of 26 August 1843. F.O. 78/3185.

tive allegedly was to depose the Imam of Sanaa and replace him with Muhammad Mansuri, using up funds he should have remitted to the Jidda treasury, as well as the 15,000 crowns owing to the chief of Asir. Ahmad Beg, miralay of the Ottoman contingent in Yemen was too weak to stop him. Vali Uthman had made a number of trips to Yemen to investigate. Husayn Efendi, the divan's scribe, had also examined the situation at close range. All were concerned with the consequences of Husayn being locked in battle with powerful enemies: Mur'i al-Hatir and Ali Hamida who attacked an army depot and relieved it of its arms and ammunition in order to make war on Husayn. While the Asir and Yam chiefs joined efforts to stop Hamida, they realized soon enough this could be done only with force. Meanwhile Husayn's three-year appointment was up for renewal, and there was strong reluctance to recommend it in view of the fact he had defaulted on tribute, the coffee bean due imperial kitchens, and his policies threatened renewed conflict with the British.

Yet inspite of all this, Ottoman officials in Jidda and Mecca were prepared to recommend he be kept on for another term if he would leave Ali Hamida alone, deliver the annual tribute to Jidda, pay the same to Asir and remain obedient to the sultan. If not, then they suggested the Sublime Porte ready a land and sea force and prepare to move against him en force.²⁶

The emir of Mecca was investigating boundary disputes in Asir when a marauding chief, Hafiça, invaded the Medina area inflicting heavy casualties on the defendants including notables, the mudir of Medina, the şayh of the Haram, the naib of the Haram, the servant of the mudir, the chief

26 See a joint mâruz (petition) submitted by the new vali, Ra'if, and Muhammad b. Awn, the emir of Mecca, of 23 N 1262/16 September 1846. Lef 3 in *Mesail*, 1800.

correspondence secretary, and numerous other high-ranking citizens. The city itself was in distress and appealing for aid.²⁷ This took place only a few weeks after the vali had received a secret inquiry from the sultan's government concerning the strength of the two trouble makers of Arabia: Husayn of Yemen and Faysal ibn Turki of Nejd.²⁸

In a separate communique from the vali, Faysal is accused of precipitating disorder by his killing the son of the chief of the «Hamsirizades» (sic.). The vali urgently needed 2500 and 1500 horse together with expenses totaling 2000 purses of akçe.

The vali was convinced that no stability would return to Asir if not granted a measure of administrative autonomy and regular troops for policing it. He did not rule out a punitive strike against the tribal elements causing turmoil there. He favored trapping and capturing Ali Hammuda and holding him hostage to check his marauding followers. He mistrusted the British, whom he accused of conspiring with the Imam of Sanaa to eliminate Husayn and thereby threaten the Hijaz. Thus he favored keeping Husayn on for another three years if he honors his pledge to the sultan's government.

The conditions requiring pacification were too many in the vali's judgement to be redressed without the use of force. Under no circumstances would he tolerate an alliance between the British and the Imam which would cost the sultan the Tihama, citing by way of example how the British gained

27 See letter from the vali, Serif M. Ra'if, to the sultan of 19 N 1262/12 September 1846. Lef 5 in *Mesail*, 1800.

28 Letter of 21 N 1262/21 January 1846 and the vali's response of 23 N 1262/16 September 1846. Lef 4 in *Mesail*, 1800. Faysal was captured by the Egyptians in 1838 and taken to Egypt but allowed by Khedive Abbas to return. In 1849 he forced the last Egyptian governor to leave the country. He headed the Wahhabi forces.

final control of India. The consequences would be too disastrous to countenance when measured in the loss of trade and revenue, upon which both Asir and Hijaz were dependent to a considerable degree. He suggested that the vali of Egypt be instructed to ready vessels for the transportation of troops from Jidda to Yemen, namely two battalions of nizam troops and an additional two of başıbozüks (irregulars) from Egypt (perhaps several regiments more) and 5000 purses of akçe to meet expenses.²⁹

The vali's recommendations were in keeping with those of the Meclis-i Vâlâ based on reports submitted by Abd al-Muttalib Efendi, whose assessment of the situation they trusted. Abd al-Muttalib, a Hijazi notable, recognized the need to check both Faysal and Husayn. But to dislodge the latter would require substantial force, particularly if a successor is to be appointed. The income of the Hijaz could be assured only if Yemen is stabilized, as did occur when Muhammad Ali briefly pacified both regions. He did not rule out the prospect of entrusting administration of Yemen to an independent vali Da'ud Pasa, custodian of the Prophet's Haram (Medina) would make a good governor since he is both capable and trustworthy with administrative experience acquired first in Baghdad and then in Hijaz. Moreover, Da'ud has maintained good relations with the bedouins and has firsthand knowledge of Yemen. He would make a good vali, wrote Abd al-Muttalib to the sultan's government.

Asraf's Second Mission

Abd al-Muttalib's recommendations reinforced Asraf's own concerning Yemen being erected into an independent

29 For additional details see his mâruz of 13 N 1262/6 September 1846. Lef 2 in *Mesail*, 1800.

30 For imperial endorsements of recommendations made see tezkeré of 14 RI 1262/11 March 1846 and iradé of 20 RI/17 March. *Mesail*, 1801.

vilayet as the only practical solution. When asked to return to Yemen, Asraf was armed with a secret order empowering him to appoint Da'ud as vali should Husayn prove uncooperative.

It was common knowledge that the administrators of Hijaz mistrusted Husayn and tended not to see his side of events in Yemen. The Sublime Porte was aware of the rift, and in the interest of impartiality had authorized Husayn Efendi of the Mecca divan to journey to Yemen and talk personally with Serif Husayn. Essentially he was authorized to remind the emir of Mocha that stability and economic security were absolutely essential if revenues are to be secured and the tribute rendered as agreed upon. Husayn the scribe made it clear to his namesake that a good portion of expenses incurred in the maintenance of the two harams (Mecca and Medina) depended on revenues from Yemen.

The emir was in full agreement and proclaimed it from mosque and mimbar that he was a loyal and true servant of the sultan. But his problem was how to avoid wasting funds on unnecessary campaigns when, as he put it, «there are too many tribes and evil doers in Yemn.» Much of the funds earmarked for tribute was used up in policing actions against marauders. He told the emissary from Mecca that he was indebted to the tune of 150,000 crowns - why he could not pay tribute lately, either to Asir or to Jidda. If anyone doubted his veracity, «then let him send ten investigators to assess the income and expenditure of Yemen and help himself to the surplus.»³¹

After studying the results of Husayn's mission to Yemen both Vali Rai'f and Emir Awn of Mecca decided to recommend the reappointment of Husayn for another three years.

31 See report of Husayn Efendi, katib-i divan, to the emir of Mecca of 29 S 1262/3 September 1846. Lef 5 in *Mesail*, 1804.

Yemen had achieved some stability with Husayn chastising Hamida. To depose him at this juncture might lead him to conspire with the British at Aden against Ottoman interests in Yemen.³² The Meclis-i Vâlâ reached a similar conclusion. As concerns Faysal of Nejd, while conceding that he «derived from a long line of malicious Wahhabis» it would be prudent to keep him on until the end of the pilgrimage season then deal with him firmly if he recants his offer of loyalty. Then he might be replaced either by Halid of the Sarq (eastern province) as administrator of Nejd or by Abdallah of Sammar.³³

Husayn of Mocha was seen as the best of unpleasant alternatives; but again if need be, too could be dealt with forcefully after the pilgrimage. Troops would then be dispatched, even from Iraq, on British vessels if necessary, to chastise him. Under no circumstances would the meclis countenance a situation in Yemen that would give the Imam of Sanaa a pretext to collaborate with the British and extend their meddling in the internal affairs of Yemen.³⁴

As reasoned by the ministers at Istanbul, Ali Hamida was the primary mischief maker who, should he weaken Husayn in battle, might entice the Yam and Asir tribes to attempt to destroy him while Hamida eliminated the present Imam of Sanaa in favor of the relative whom Husayn had deposed. The besieged Imam might invite the British to come to his rescue by virtue of a treaty relationship concluded in December of 1820 but of dubious validity. This would threaten the whole Hijaz and the Tihama with possible foreign occu-

32 See text of joint from Ra'if and Awn to the Sublime Porte of 11 N 1262/3 September 1846. Lef 5 in *Mesail*, 1804.

33 A subordinate of Faysal, of the Rasids, who was rewarded with the hereditary governorship of Sammar for his support of Faysal against the Egyptians.

34 Tezkeré and Iradé for full text, 27 L.1262/14 October 1846. *Mesail*, 1800.

pation. It was a matter of urgency therefore that the situation stabilize. To that end Asraf was commissioned to return to Yemen with instructions for military mobilization to ensure the success of his mission.³⁵

The Ottomans had learned to contend with the tribes of Yemen, blaming their persistent feuds, wars and marauding habits for the social, economic and political instability of the region. They singled out the Dhu Muhammad, Husayn, Hasid, Bajil and Yam tribes for much of the turmoil and spoke of them as a bunch of «ruzala» (mischief makers). The tribes of the Tihama wanted no traffic with these highlanders, who were often instigated and manipulated by the Imam of Sanaa. The only way the merchant colonies of the port towns could keep them at bay was by building strong fortifications and constantly reinforcing them.³⁶

Emir Husayn's task was difficult as he had much to contend with in order to maintain stability and control. He knew he could win over the Porte's emissary if he convinced him that the Imam of Sanaa was behind much of the instigations against him and the low lands, with or without alleged British connivance aiming reportedly at ousting the Ottomans from Yemen.³⁷

Fearing that Husayn was too weak militarily to withstand a combined attack by supporters of the Imam, and possibly the British at Aden, the Sublime Porte authorized the dispatch of troops to Yemen. The loss of Yemen's port towns and the revenue of their customs houses would have

35 See their mazbata of 17 L 1262/10 October 1846. Lef 1 in *Mesail*, 1800.

26 See the account of As'ad Jabir, «Yemen», 353-54.

37 The vali of Jidda for one was convinced of this possibility. See his two letters to M. Awn of 9 S 1262/4 August 1846. Lefs. 3 & 4 *Mesail*, 1804.

led to a major financial crisis for the administrators of Hijaz.

Asraf was instructed to consult with the musir of Arabistan forces, who also doubled sometimes as the vali of Sidon, even though the muşir had alerted Istanbul in advance that his troops in Syria were too depleted to spare any for Yemen. He was also asked to consult with Muhammad Ali of Egypt for mustering the required military force.³⁸

The imperial order carried by Asraf clearly specified that if Husayn fails in meeting his obligations he is to be deposed and replaced by a governor of the sultan's choosing. The emr-i ali stipulated that Husayn would then be allowed to return to his dwelling in Abu Aris where, if he causes no problems, he will receive a fixed income (amount unspecified).³⁹

That order was neither delivered nor executed at this time. For on his way to Yemen, and as instructed by the Sublime Porte, Asraf stopped in Egypt to consult with the viceroy who, more than any other Ottoman vali understood well the vicissitudes of Yemeni politics and difficulties in controlling this turbulent land. Muhammad Ali already had knowledge through his counterpart at Jidda and the emir of Mecca of Husayn's entanglements with the Imam (whom he replaced with another) and his ally Ali Hamida. He received notices to ready vessels for troop transportation. But after weighing risk and possible consequences, Muhammad Ali counselled against the expedition to chastise Husayn, let alone depose him.

38 See the tezkeré of the Sadr of 15 S 1263/3 February 1847. **Mesail**, 1804.

39 The emr-i ali was dated December, 1846. Husayn was officially appointed in February of 1843. For the emr see **Lef 1** in **Iradé** of 16 Z 1262/6 December 1846. **Mesail**, 1802.

Money was the key factor in the viceroy's consideration. It was in short supply both in Istanbul and Jidda. He estimated the cost of the expedition at 30,000 kese a year, just to police Yemen with Ottoman troops. He was prepared to meet a part of the cost but he expected Egypt's treasury to be reimbursed for it. Another consideration was the tribal situation: too many tribes to keep in check. Tangling with chiefs like Husayn and Ali Hamida could exhaust troops and bankrupt treasuries. Jidda had only two battalions at its disposal. To ship them to Yemen would leave Hijaz defenceless. To send additional regular troops to Yemen would be wasting them, as «they will perish aimlessly» and the coffee crop of Yemen would be destroyed. In that eventuality, American coffee would flood the market forcing prices down and Yemen would be squeezed out of the competition resulting in great income losses. So besides losing good fighting men, the Ottoman government would lose also badly needed revenues. The rule in the past, argued Muhammad Ali, was to encourage not destroy agricultural production in the Ti-hama. But then if the ministers of the Porte still insist on it, troops could be transported from Sidon on ships coming from Marseille to Egypt, thence overland to Hijaz. To transport the battalions of Jidda would require the purchase of six or seven large transport vessels from India.⁴⁰

Another Expedition?

Ibrahim Ağa, captain of the artillery unit at Jidda, was summoned to Istanbul for consultation in November of 1846. He told the government that to make ready another expedition would require additional expenses for upkeep, pay, clothing (summer and winter), Qur'ans for the troops, and a monthly allowance for both irregular troops and cavalry units

⁴⁰ See Muhammad Ali's letter to the sultan of 15 M 1263/5 January 1847. Lef 1 in Iradé of 8 S 1263/26 January 1847. **Mesail**, 1803.

above the present level.⁴¹ Muhammad Kamil, müşir at Sidon, acknowledged the Sublime Porte's request but notified the ministers that he would defer sending the battalions requested until they had studied Muhammad Ali's views and comments on the situation in Yemen.⁴² Muhammad Ali's response had arrived ten days earlier. He acknowledged Asraf's official mission but recommended against the dispatch of troops at this time.⁴³

Based on the views submitted, the Sadrazam (grand vizier) cancelled previous instructions given Asraf and authorized the dispatch of one battalion of troops, from Istanbul, instead of two from Sidon, together with 229 artillerymen and their equipment.⁴⁴ All correspondences on the subject were then referred to the Meclis-i Vâlâ for further deliberation. The Meclis-i Has (cabinet session) was also asked to study the matter.⁴⁵

Asraf arrived in Jidda on May 9, eighteen days after departing Suez by ship. He delivered 4000 purses to the treasury, funds allocated for troop expenses, and made it known that he would be guided by instructions given him in March by the grand vizier.⁴⁶ He met with the vali on May 15 and delivered to him both «oral and written messages» concerning the affairs of Yemen and Asir. The wording of these messages was not fully disclosed, leaving one to speculate whether he carried additional secret instructions. The emir of Mecca was on a campaign to suppress uprisings in

41 For a transcript of his oral report see **Lef 2** in **Mesail**, 1803.

42 See his *mâruz* of 23 M 1263/13 January 1847. **Lef 4** in **Mesail**, 1803.

43 See his petition to the Sadrazam of 13 M 1263/13 January 1847. **Lef 5** in **Mesail**, 1803.

44 See draft of proposed letter of reply to the viceroy. **Lef 1** in **Iradé** of 2 RI 1263/18 February 1847. **Mesail**, 1805.

45 See *tezkeré* of 6 S 1263/24 January 1847. **Mesail**, 1803.

46 See his letter to the Porte of 29 JI 1263/15 May 1847. **Lef 2** in **Mesail**, 1807.

Ra's and Quasim for the purpose of carrying out orders to bring the eastern provinces under control,⁴⁷ so Asraf was not able to meet with him.

The Sublime Porte's instructions appeared to stress the need for unanimity of opinion on the part of all concerned (viceroy of Egypt, vali of Hijaz, emir of Mecca and Asraf himself) as to the solution best suited under the circumstances for Yemen's problem. The key issue to be considered was whether to depose or keep Husayn on for another three years, in return for his strict adherence to commitments made.⁴⁸ The vali and emir had expressed readiness in their reply to Istanbul to abide by decisions arrived at, in strict obedience to imperial orders.⁴⁹ The emir deferred further statements on the question of whether to keep Husayn or replace him with another until he returned from the eastern provinces, and the outcome of his mission of pacification was known.⁵⁰

Asraf departed Jidda for Yemen on July 13 accompanied by Hamdi Efendi who had replaced the deceased Husayn as scribe of the divan. Although the emir of Mocha had not abided by assurances delivered through the previous scribe, Asraf still assured through the previous scribe, Asraf still met with Husayn and handed over to him the latest word from the imperial divan in Istanbul.⁵¹

News of the initial decision to dispatch fresh troops to Hijaz under the command of Mahmud Pasa reached British Consul Murray through the viceroy himself who stated that the purpose of the proposed expedition was to check the

47 Asraf to the Porte of the same date. Lef 2 in *Mesail*, 1807.

48 Asraf to the Porte of the same date Lef 2 in *Mesail*, 1807.

49 See *mâruz* of the vali to the Sadr of 23 J 1263/10 June 1847. Lef 1 in *Mesail*, 1807.

50 See his letter to the Sublime Porte of 27 JI 1263/3 May 1847. Lef 4 in *Mesail*, 1807.

51 See his letter to the Sadr of 18 B 1263/12 July 1847. Lef 2 in *Mesail*, 1809.

troublesome mountain tribes of Yemen surrounding Aden, ostensibly to protect British lives and commerce in keeping with the provisions of the 1838 Treaty of Commerce between Great Britain and the Ottoman state. Muhammad Ali did not appear optimistic about the proposed expedition's prospects of success given the difficult Yemeni terrain and the fact that Ottoman officials in Hijaz were already engaged in an on-going campaign to pacify the defiant Wahhabi tribes of Nejd. Consul General Murray on the other hand chose to believe that Muhammad Ali and the Sublime Porte were secretly in league to reoccupy Yemen. The viceroy responded by accusing the British of plotting with the Porte to send so few men to accomplish a nearly impossible task and thereby pave the way for their own intervention. Judging from his past experiences in Yemen, one can readily understand why the viceroy should vow never to get involved in that country again unless the Sublime Porte was prepared to forgo Egypt's annual tribute of 60,000 purses (300,000 Sterling) so he could mobilize a force of 10,000 men (the numbers needed by his estimate) to pacify the tribes of Arabia.⁵²

On learning that the Sadr had recommended against the expedition, Muhammad Ali let Murray know that is way because of his recommendations that it was done. Only a regiment was to be sent to Hijaz, and for the purpose of replenishing ranks not for fighting tribes.

Murray had queried Palmerston re the viceroy's allegations of Anglo-Ottoman connivance and was told by him that it was not his (Palmerston's) idea but he would rather the viceroy believe it was in order to impress Muhammad Ali

52 He reckoned it had cost him 30 per man to subdue them over a decade earlier; on that basis it would take the entire amount of tribute to accomplish the task again. See Charles A. Murray to Palmerston from Cairo, 1 January 1847. F.O. 78/3185.

53 See Murray's No. 17 of 19 January and 13 of 8 March 1847, from Cairo to Palmerston. F.O. 78/3185.

with his own influence before the Porte, although Palmerston agreed with the viceroy that to try and combat Yemeni and Hijazi rebels with limited forces would be a «bad bargain for the Porte.»⁵⁴

De Facto Vilayet for Yemen

The Sublime Porte was convinced by now that there could be no military solution to Yemen's problem opting rather for a policy of appeasement and flattery to keep trouble makers in line. The two meclises had studied the data turned over to them by the grand vizier and reached the conclusion it was more politic to appease rather than fight Husayn. Indeed, they were prepared to grant him hereditary rule over Yemen (as they had granted Muhammad Ali in 1840 over Egypt) if it would give him the incentive to pacify the land, take firm control over it and administer it on behalf of the sultan. As an expression of their encouragement they authorized two gold-bejewelled medals (nişan-i ali or nişan-i emaret) for Husayn and his son, another for the emir of Mecca by way of appeasement as the Porte realized only too well that the emir did not miss an opportunity to discredit Husayn and work towards his ouster. Faysal of Nejd was likewise appeased with the rank of istabl (imperial equerry) in return for a payment of the tribute in the amount of 10,000 crowns annually. Abd al Muttalib was likewise kept on as emir.

Should this policy of appeasing Husayn fail, then Asraf was empowered to implement the firman that authorized his deposition and replacement. But that was not necessary since on January 20, 1848, the Meclis-i Has recommended a rank of mir-i miran for Husayn's oldest son with a salary of 100,000 piasters which put him at the same rank of a pasa who go-

54 See his dispatch of 30 January 1847 to Murray. F.O. 78/3185.

verns a province and made him equal to the vali of Hijaz. His youngest son was to receive the rank of mîr-i ümera and a high-ranking nişan. All this at the recommendation of Asraf who felt that Husayn was indeed sincere in his loyalty to the sultan and that the problems confronting him were not all of his own making.

Since he was short on revenue, it was recommended that he offer a bedel (equivalent) in coffe and sugar. To appease merchants it was further decreed that to taxes be levied on goods shipped to Hijaz from Yemen if it can be shown that customs duty had been collected on it at some Yemeni port; for to charge such a duty would be tantamount to recognizing Yemen as lying outside Ottoman sovereignty. And to retax goods shipped from one Ottoman possession to another would constitute an injustice.⁵⁵

The sultan was relieved to receive the same recommendation from all three principal bodies: Vâlâ, Has and Sadaret and in recognition of Asraf's work he authorized a high-ranking nişan for him encrusted with diamonds together with a green mantle edged with pearls, a scarlet mantle for the vali of Hijaz and a one for the emir of Mecca to be dispatched with emîr-i hac (leader of the pilgrimage). Letters of appreciation were decreed sent to the valis of Egypt and Hijaz, the emir of Mecca, and the emir of Mocha, which also stipulated the sultan's decrees re Yemen.⁵⁶ They also spelled out the conditions under which Husayn would be reappointed and his authority strengthened by granting him the powers of a de facto vali. Among his responsibilities were maintaining good relations with Yemeni tribes and the British at Aden, in a manner conforming to the empire's high

⁵⁵ See the Sadr's tezkeré of 17 S 1264/24 January 1848. *Mesail*, 1810.

⁵⁶ See the imperial iradé of 25 S 1264/1 February 1848. *Mesail*, 1810; asee also the Sadr's tezkeré of 11 RI 1264/16 February 1848. *Mesail*, 1812.

standards. He was to safeguard the line of communication with Yemen and keep records in a sort of takvim-i vekayi (official almanac) for submission to and review by the Sublime Porte. He was not to withhold vital information from officials sent to Yemen to review its affairs.⁵⁷

Lest jealousy overtake other ranking officials in Hijaz, the Sublime Porte authorized nişan to high ranking aids of the şerif and emir of Mecca, Tevfik Paşa (commander of troops) and treasurer Ahmad Ağa. And for the first time official government documents refer to Husayn as «vali of Yemen.»⁵⁸

But events unfolding in Yemen soon dashed government hopes. News of such happenings had not yet reached Istanbul when the sultan and his ministers uttered a sigh of relief.

Imam of Sanaa Rebels

Documentary evidence available does not reveal the time lapse in the commencement of the next series of events and their being reported to Istanbul. One suspects strongly that Muhammad b. Awn, the emir and serif of Mecca, was implicated strongly in them. Circumstantial evidence point to his instigating indirectly the Imam of Sanaa to rise against Husayn. And so Muhammad b. Yahya decided to launch a military campaign to unseat Husayn. The attack commenced late in 1847 but the earliest reference to it by the Sublime Porte was in May of the following year.

Ottoman data show no action for the last six months of 1847 and leaves one to wonder whether b. Awn was not deliberately suppressing news of events given the little concealed fact that his own political ambitions extended from Mecca to

57 See the imperial iradé of 16 R 1264/20 May 1848. *Mesail*, 1814.

Yemen. The fact also that the Imam chose to report to Awn on the course of his campaign leaves little doubt that he was given to understand he had the sympathy of the emir of Mecca.

As noted earlier, Imam Muhammad was appointed through the aegis of Husayn himself. But apparently he chose to side with Ali Hamida to regain possession of the low lands for the imamamate, alleging that they always constituted part of the Imam's holdings in the past. Husayn reminded him that the Sublime Porte had invested him with the administration of Yemen with a rank equivalent to a vali. The Imam responded by declaring Husayn a rebel, and when Husayn resolved on taking possession of Taiz the Imam sent his own men to capture this strategic town. By the time Husayn arrived there with about three hundred men he found himself in a trap set for him by the Imam and Ali Hamida at Wâdi Burja, some seven hours away from Hodeida. Reinforcements led by his brother Yahya from Abu Aris did not arrive in time, and Yahya was killed as the survivors attempted to withdraw to Qati while Husayn himself was wounded. Of the original 150 survivors of the battle who attempted the withdrawal, only 25 reached the fort. Pursuing tribesmen of the Dhu Duhammads and Dhu Hysayns, who had sided with the rebels, besieged Husayn at Quti and compelled him to surrender some twenty five days later. By the terms of the surrender Husayn agreed to surrender all Tihama towns with the exception of Hodeida and Luhayya, the latter being left in the hands of Husayn's brother to administer. Asraf in the meanwhile, unaware of what was going on, had been awaiting transportation at Jidda for Suez on what had been decreed a successful mission.

News of the fighting reached Suez by means of one of Muhammad Ali's ships returning from Masawa after delivering to it the new muhafiz, Halil. A Turkish letter dated March 15 was rushed to the viceroy from Suez. Asraf was considerably disturbed over the explosiveness of the situation

in Yemen, particularly when it was rumored that the Imam had asked the British for support. Officials of the Hijaz led by the Ottoman commander at Mecca (Tevfik Pasa) were determined not to let the Imam exercise authority over the Tihama. It was now revealed that the Sublime Porte and viceroy of Egypt had purposely divided the administration of Yemen between the Imam of Sanaa and the emir of Mocha so as not to allow one powerful element to dominate the whole region. Husayn was to serve as buffer between the Imam at Sanaa and the British at Aden in order to make sure the two would not be able to strike up an effective alliance that would threaten Ottoman sovereignty over Yemen and interdict the vital line of trade and communication with the Hijaz. The decision reached at Jidda with Asraf taking part was to chastise the Imam. As expected, Muhammad Ali endorsed the decision, all being of one mind that the Imam was culpable.⁵⁹

Yusuf Ağa, the customs official at Hodeida since 1818 fled to Jidda and reported that the uprising was the result of a joint conspiracy between the British and the Imam to wrest control of Yemen from the Ottomans.⁶⁰ Asraf himself expressed the same concern in relaying news of the event to Istanbul.⁶¹

On January 29, 1848 the Imam wrote the serif of Mecca about his campaign against Husayn, alleging the latter was spreading evil in the land and causing much hardship so he was compelled to take action against him. Besides, historically the Tihama belonged to Sanaa and the considered

58 See contents of tezkeré of 23 R 1264/1 April 1848 and the imperial iradé approving them two days later. *Mesail*, 1813.

59 Mâruz of 2 JI 1264/6 April 1848 to the Porte. *Lef 7* in *Mesail*, 1816.

60 See *Lef 1* in *Mesail*, 1815. Macro, on the other hand (*Yemen*, p. 75) states that Capt. Haines had rejected all overtures for support from the Imam.

61 See his mâruz of 6 JI 1264/10 April 1848. *Lef 14* in *Mesail*, 1816.

it his duty to recover it in order «to enforce the good and prevent the spread of evil.»⁶² In another letter to the şerif of the same date he promised to honor his request and «be kind to our brother Yahya b. M. Hamid al-Din who is fortunate to be one of yours (i. e. your supporters) and deserving of good grace.»⁶³ He alleged that by seizing Mocha, Zabid and Bayt al-Faqih he was only aiming at achieving peace and security for the land.⁶⁴

The assaults on the port towns occasioned considerable hardship for residents and merchants who in a number of petitions to the Sublime Porte complained of their trade being brutally disrupted and of the hardships visited upon their families forcing a good number of traders to flee the land, for as north as Jidda itself.⁶⁵

The British were among the first to have details of the events, which they forwarded onto Alexandria and Istanbul. What Ottoman accounts did not reveal was that Husayn could obtain his release only by handing over 20,000 crowns to the Dhu Husayn, who had held him captive. The tribes appeared to vacillate between Imam and Husayn, depending on the fortunes of battle. While all expected Ottoman troops to materialize in due course, the tribes of Asir wasted no time in gathering and descending from their mountain strongholds to plunder the towns of the Tihama and resell their loot to the highest bidder among former owners. Husayn quite clearly could exercise no authority outside of what money might buy. These recent events showed him to possess no base for the exercise of power and authority. The money he

62 See his letter of 22 S 1264/29 January 1848. Lef 20 in *Mesail*, 1816.

63 Lef 21 in *Mesail*, 1816.

64 Letter of 20 January 1848 (erroneously listed 13 S of 1263 instead of 1264) to M. b. Awn. Lef 23 in *Mesail*, 1816.

65 Petitions were addressed to both the vali and the «şayh of the honorable haram», one dated 1 M (9 December) and the other 25 M (11 January) of 1264/1847-48. Lefs 22 & 24 in *Mesail*, 1861.

needed was ordinarily obtained from customs revenue and compulsory levies upon merchants, most of whom now had fled, as well as appeasement of the Asiris by tribute payment, which now had been raised to 30,000 crowns per annum.⁶⁶

Unable himself to report, it was left up to his brother Haydar Ali to write Awn and present Husayn's version of the facts, naturally laying the blame on the Imam who reportedly goaded Husayn into war in September of 1847 by claiming the whole Yemen for himself as «the land of his ancestors» and demanding that Husayn get out of it. He implored the serif to send military assistance to chastise the Imam and secure the release of his brother, who in the meanwhile had been put up for sale.⁶⁷

Needless to say, the consensus of official Ottoman opinion both in Arabia and Egypt, as well as Istanbul favored the position of Husayn. Indeed, a chronicler of the events of this period refers to Husayn as a good administrator, a «muhiqq» (just person) who was only doing his duty when treacherously betrayed by the Imam whom Husayn had once favored. He attributed Husayn's military failure to the emir's inability to capture the key town of Bajil.⁶⁸

The Problem in Retrospect

The best single assessment of the confused situation is to be found in a petition drafted by Asraf and the top-ranking officials of Hijaz dated 27 RI 1264/2 Marc. In reviewing Ottoman strategy for Yemen since Muhammad Ali suppressed

66 See No. 34. Capt. Haines to the secretary of the Bombay government of 25 May 1848. Incl. in dispatch from India Board to Ad-dington of 27 June 1848. F.O. 7813185.

67 See his letter of 15 RI 1264/21 March 1848. Lef 25 in *Mesail*, 1816.

68 Ali, «Miraat ül-Yemen», p. 74.

the Bilmez rebellion fifteen years earlier, it stated that dividing up Yemen between the Imam and the emir of Mocha was for the purpose of ensuring the stability of the hat (line of communication) from Hijaz. But it was up to Husayn to define clearly the area over which he held jurisdiction so as to avoid encroaching on the Imam's. This he was unable to do; consequently good government was to elude the land. The Sublime Porte in turn had proceeded to appoint Husayn without consulting, as had been the custom in the past, with the Imam of Sanaa because the vali of Hijaz wanted to end such a custom. When Sanaa coveted Taiz for strategical reasons, Husayn was obliged to prevent it. So the Imam, who was referred to as the «mutawakkil» (deputy in charge) of Sanaa, gathered a force of 7500 men and with Ali Hamida set out early in January of 1848 to strip Husayn of the lands he administered. When Husayn attempted to surprise the Imam's troops at Bajil, he himself was surprised. The mountain tribes in Husayn's camp withdrew rather than fight for him. Husayn withdrew to Qati with a handful of his men, only four-hour distance from Hodeida where he held out for the next twenty eight days waiting for the help that never arrived. Mediators arranged his surrender of the entire area between Bayt alFaqih and Mocha to the Imam and his allies. But this area was legally assigned to Husayn to administer by provisions of an imperial decree and cannot be reassigned to anyone except by orders of the sultan. Hence the emir of Mocha must still be considered the legal administrator of the Tihama. The petition praised Husayn for not asking for help and expressed regret that neither the Yam tribes nor the Asiris offered to rescue him. It was his nephew Hasan, administrator of Hodeida, who sold letters of credit on the customs of the port town to raise 10,000 crowns to pay for a fighting force that might rescue his uncle.

To Husayn's Rescue

Mahmud, the ferik of the nizamiye contingent in Hijaz, insisted that the Imam must not be allowed to get away with his unprovoked attack on Husayn. He recommended the dispatch of a military expedition to chastise him. The force would consist of two battalions (at the very least) numbering each a thousand regulars, plus another two thousand irregulars, five artillery pieces, a thousand cavalry, a thousand basibozuks and their equipment. The money would come from the treasury at Jidda.

The division commander felt time was of the essence if Husayn is to be rescued and a possible rapprochement between the Imam and himself spelling doom for Ottoman sovereignty in Yemen is to be prevented. On the other hand, the Imam might well succeed in exercising single-handed control over the entire land, holding Husayn hostage and for ransom to the highest bidder who might attempt to resell him. All these nightmarish alternatives were among the information Yusuf Ağa supplied officers of the Porte in Hijaz.⁶⁹

Immediate action was recommended by the vali, the emir of Mecca, and his lieutenant Tefvik, with the endorsement of Asraf, the emissary of the sultan. The emir alleged that he attempted a rescue mission via Asir but that fifteen days out of Medina a storm blew away much of the supplies and ammunition thus forcing him to retreat. Funds were not ample; troops had not received pay for four months, and morale was low. To make matters worse, they were receiving pay in riyals, figured at 23 piasters each when in the open market the riyal fetched up to 33 piasters. Thus they were losing up to a third in value of total pay. A petition submitted to Istanbul urged the government to send more money

69 See mâruz of Ferik Mahmud to his superior of 11 RI 1264/16 February 1848. Lef 4 in *Mesail*, 1816.

with the Qapucibaşı Ibrahim Ağa, the Jidda customs official who was then in Istanbul.

The Sadr was seriously disturbed over the prospects of Yemen being lost to the Ottomans through one or the other of the combatants calling upon foreign help, to wit British. He also noted that there was an urgent need to bring Ottoman military contingents up to full strength in Hijaz and to provide additional troops if an expedition is to be mounted. The Jidda treasury already under stress can not meet the necessary expenses, let alone provide pay for troops. After consulting with the Meclis-i Has and the Serasker, the Sadr concluded in his tezkeré to the sultan that the responsibility for the situation in Yemen must now be shouldered in Istanbul. The documents received from Hijaz accompanied the Sadr's request for permission to take up the matter with the Meclis-i Vâlâ.⁷⁰

The Sadr requested 4500 kese akçe and once troops brought up to full strength, an annual expenditure of 18,000 kise for their salary and upkeep.⁷¹ The sum was about 1500 kise less than what Hijaz had requested, but then it was assumed that troops would have to be transported by sea to avoid being ambushed by Asiris on their way to the Tihama and the cost of sea transport would be higher.⁷²

70 See his tezkeré of 29 JI 1264/3 May 1848. *Mesail*, 1815.

71 See *Lef* 1 in *Mesail*, 1815.

72 See *mâruz* of Asraf, «memur-i Yemen», Mahmud, «Firik-i nizamiye-i aqtar-i Hicaziye», M. Serif Ra'if, «vali eyalet-i Jidde», and M. b. Awn, «emir-i Mekkeyi mükerrerme» of 27 RI 1264/2 March 1848. *Lef* 16 in *Mesail*, 1816. See also *Lef* 18, a petition by the same parties of the same date asking for the upgrading of troop levels, additional funds, and relaying the concern of the inhabitants of Yemen over their possibly passing under non-Muslim rule.

Review of Ottoman Policy in Arabia

The Sadr took advantage of the situation in Yemen to effect a review of Ottoman policy towards that part of the empire. The Meclis-i Has endorsed an expedition to Yemen, but recommended that the emir of Mecca lead it after being reinforced with necessary troops and equipment. The Meclis considered also the situation in Hadramaut, whose merchants according to British complaints received in Istanbul obeyed no rules of the sea, sailing into Red sea ports at will. According to a report received from Ishaq, the naqib al-asraf of Mecca who had been sent to investigate, the merchants of Hadramaut acted like a «jumhuriya» (sic.) since they were only loosely governed, with the Banu Sadan among them leading Hadrami traffic in trade with Red Sea ports. As concerns al-Hasa and Qatif, «ports of Nejd» in the «bay of Basra» (sic), they should be placed under the administration of the müdür of Nejd, i.e. Sayh Faysal, provided he behaved himself humanely. «Kuwait bay» was also to be regulated in some fashion, perhaps assigned to Faysal to govern, certainly a better alternative than it falling into British hand.⁷³

Before making a final recommendation, the Meclis-i Vâlâ wanted to deliberate further the views of officials in Hijaz that Husayn's ouster was proof of his lack of experience and finesse for the position he was officially assigned. But his loyal services earned him good treatment and the Imam's misbehavior, chastisement. His conduct endangered Ottoman possessions and risked the loss of the Tihama to the British. The Meclis recommended a new map be drawn of Yemen with Asraf and Tefvik both supervising the undertaking. Tefvik was to head the expedition while the emir of Mecca served as supervisor. Albanian başbozüks, used to mountain fighting, were to serve as the core of the expedition; and

73 For additional details see mazbata draft of the Meclis. **Lef 13** in **Mesail**, 1816.

to avoid unpredictable winds in the lower Red sea, troops should be transported by steamer. If not enough steamers are available, perhaps the British consul at Alexandria can provide a few to supplement those at Jidda. Five thousand akçe would be made available as an advance on financing the expedition, and since Husayn had paid 15,000 crowns to the Asiris, an examination of that region's finances was necessary in order to make proper adjustments.

These recommendations stemmed from a statement of particulars submitted by officials of the Hijaz at their meeting in Jidda prior to Asraf's departure. M. b. Awn was chosen to supervise the expedition at that time because of his successful record in suppressing rebellion in Nejd. It was also decided at that meeting that someone should be placed in charge of handling the finances, police functions, and tribal affairs of Asir. A new appointee to serve as «emir of Yemen» was likewise discussed. Hijaz had less than 8000 troops, and for mountain fighting Albanians would be best suited (about a thousand), who could also assist in repairing the forts of the Yemen line. Muhammad Ali would be asked to provide troop transport since Jidda's transport consisted of two set-hiyes (under one hundred feet, 2-3 mast boats).

Since the Imam of Sanaa had shed Muslim blood by attacking Husayn, a secret emirname should be issued to authorize a replacement for him as müdür of Sanaa, with the choice being left to the commander of the expedition. On the other hand if the Imam and Husayn can demonstrate strong following and willingness to abide by their commitments in peace, then the commander might decide to confirm both in their respective posts. Meanwhile, engineers should be sent to establish a fort on one of the islands off Bab al-Mandib to ensure the transit of troops by sea. To head off problems at Hadramaut, Ishaq Efendi would serve as emissary there. The affairs of Kuwait and neighboring areas can be settled after Yemen's are in order. More medals were authorized for the emir of Mecca and his entourage by way of encour-

agement. The Sadr approved these recommendations of the Meclis and the sultan issued the necessary decrees.⁷⁴ The only modification was a caveat stipulating that the 5000 purses authorized would come from the ministry of public works in the form of a loan.

Decrees issued in Istanbul were to be carried back by Tevfik Pasa who was in the capital at the time. Tevfik himself received a bonus of 50,000 piasters given the difficult task awaiting him. Ahmad Ağa, the treasurer of Jidda who had escorted the kiswa was awarded a personal gift of 20,000 piasters.⁷⁵ The sultan also authorized consultation with Muhammad Ali re troop passage, clothing and equipment for them and reimbursement of the Egyptian treasury for their cost.⁷⁶ Since it was risky to entrust the 5000 purses in gold allocated for campaign expenses to the whims of transportation, the sultan deemed it safer to have a banker in Istanbul issue a letter of credit for the amount to a correspondent in Alexandria, whence the defterdar of Jidda can take charge of it.⁷⁷ War tents were authorized shipped to the emir and vali, and the third class medal turned in by Tevfik for a higher one was assigned to Halim Efendi, the scribe of the emir of Mecca.⁷⁸

While ministers of the Porte were taking measures to expedite the campaign, word reached the emir of Mecca that Husayn had been freed. His nephew Hasan showed up with a force estimated at between five and eight thousand, mostly Yam tribesmen, and when the Imam hesitated with six hundred of his followers (stopping at Damar, two leagues away from Sanaa) to negotiate a peace settlement, Hasan stormed the fort at Zabid where the Dhu Husayns held his uncle and

74 See tezkeré of 2 B and iradé of 6 B 1264/4 and 8 June of 1848. *Mesail*, 1816.

75 See iradé of 14 B 1264/16 June 1848. *Mesail*, 1817.

76 Iradé of 21 B 1264/23 June 1848. *Mesail*, 1818.

77 Iradé of 21 B 1264/23 June 1848. *Mesail*, 1819.

freed him. The Imam immediately retreated to Sanaa.⁷⁹ Hasan, his uncle and Ali b. Mur'i of Asir converged on Mocha with two thousand men and recaptured it. Rumors reaching them suggested the Imam was in the port town and they had hoped to capture him too.

Having regained the Tihama and more, Husayn asked the vali to reinstate him as governor. But the vali let him know that he would have to await further instructions before acting on Husayn's request.⁸⁰ He also wished to investigate directly the facts, so he proceeded by sea with forty men in order to verify Husayn's claim.⁸¹

The Sublime Porte learned of Husayn's deliverance while Tevfik was making ready to leave for Egypt to escort the başbozüks and the funds to Jidda. The delay of departure was occasioned by an outbreak of pestilence in Alexandria. Now he wanted to know whether it was still necessary to send an expedition to Yemen in view of Husayn's regaining control.⁸²

The Sadr hesitated to make a decision until he had received confirmation.⁸³ Meanwhile he sought the advice of the Meclis-i Has, Meclis-i Vâlâ, and the Meclis-i Ali Umumiye who reviewed the reports sent by Abdullah, son of the emir of Mecca, who was left in charge when his father was on a

78 Iradé of 2 S 1264/4 July 1848. **Mesail**, 1820.

79 Ragib («Yemen», p.358) makes this assertion while a draft letter to the vali alleges that the Imam was caught defenceless at Mocha and captured by a contingent of Asiris. **Lef 4 in Mesail**, 1821.

80 See his mâruz of 7 S 1264/9 July 1848 (presumably to the Sadr). **Lef 2 in Mesail**, 1821.

81 See an undated Turkish letter addressed to the vali. **Lef 4 in Mesail**, 1821.

82 See his mâruz to the Sadr of 27 B 1264/29 June 1848. **Lef 1 in Mesail**, 1821.

83 Tezkeré of 18 N 1264/8 August 1848. **Mesail**, 1821.

campaign, to Namiq Paşa, müşir of Arabistan, also by Da'ud Paşa, the şayh of the Haram al-Nabawi (Medina). The decision reached was that Husayn and the Imam cannot get along, hence it was advisable to appoint an independent vali to govern Yemen, perhaps Da'ud himself. Money already delivered to Jidda should have a collateral (bedel). Arrangements should be made to ensure the delivery of the subsidy to Asir, cut off by Husayn some three years earlier.⁸⁴ The sultan concurred with their findings and recommendations.

All agreed that Yemen was too valuable a possession to lose, stressing every port and mountain town by name.⁸⁵ Granted the Imam of Sanaa once governed the whole region, but his defiance of Muhammad Ali led to the coastal towns being assigned to Serif Husayn of Abu Aris to administer, which he now undertook to recover by force making for instability and costing the treasury great losses. Yemen could yield an income of between seven and eight thousand kise akçe if governed properly and the English would have no pretexts to expand their sphere along the coast of Yemen. The qat crop of Yemen, it was suggested, could be used to pay members of the expedition.⁸⁶

The decision not to reappoint Husayn was welcome news to the British. His hostility towards Europeans was widely known and they feared his ability to incite the tribes against them for south Arabia to north east Africa. His being appointed ruler over Yemen under the prevailing circumstances would only reinforce the notion that he was truly favored by the sultan because of his opposition to the English and his tough stance against infidels. They would naturally have

84 The figure given is 18,000 crowns; for other details see tezkeré of 12 ZA 1264/29 September 1848. *Mesail*, 182.

85 Hodeida, Mocha, Luhayya, Jadhan (ports), Zabid, Bayt al-Faqih, Darhaymi, Bajil, Taiz, Zahra, Muhtara, Hablaba, and Sanaa (highland towns).

86 See mazbata (n. d.) Lef 1 in *Mesail*, 1822.

favored the appointment of «the lord of Sanaa» because of his heralded title as «sayyid al-hilâfa» (lord of the successorship) but they were not insisting on it. They too preferred the sultan appoint a separate governor for Yemen.⁸⁷

The decision to carry on with plans for the expedition was made at the urgings of Hijaz officials. They felt a need to remind the British at Aden of Ottoman sovereignty over Yemen, particularly since Dau'd Pasa of Medina had stated in a communication to Istanbul that the Imam had reached a secret agreement to sell Bandar Awn to them in return for their support. He argued that it was a known fact that they wanted Husayn out. Besides, Dau'd himself was not pleased with the French and British flying their flags at Jidda, hours away from the sacred haram of Islam.⁸⁸ Moreover, there is no guarantee the British might not intervene if the Imam of Sanaa is defeated. It was imperative, therefore, to send Ottoman troops in order to assert Ottoman presence and authority, and restore confidence to the inhabitants who have endured great suffering.⁸⁹

Tevfik concurred with the decision; for as he saw it, the Imam and Husayn both enjoyed equal military strength with neither being prepared to let up until the other is eliminated. Suffering of the inhabitants would aggravate the situation. The expedition in his opinion must go on as planned, and until a suitable administrator for the whole of Yemen is appointed.⁹⁰ Tevfik got his wish, also 500 young başıbozüks to

87 Capt. Haines to the Secretary of the Board of the Government of Bombay. No. 34 of 25 May 1848. Incl. in India Board's communication to Addington of 27 June 1848. F.O. 78/3185.

88 See joint mâruz of Awn, Ra'if and Ferik Mahmud of 7 S 1264/9 July 1848. Lef 1 in *Mesail*, 1824. Also reply to inquiry from the Porte of same date. Lef 3.

89 See mâruz of muhafiz Zayn al-Abidin of 7 S 1264/9 July 1848. Lef 4 in *Mesail*, 1822.

90 See his mâruz of 11 N 1264/11 August 1848. Lef 5 in *Mesail*, 1822.

accompany him and serve as replacement of older ones at Jidda.⁹¹

The military expedition reached Yemen in 1849. Tevfik Qibrisli headed a force of three thousand disembarking at Hodeida. Meanwhile, Husayn was still exercising authority over the Tihama pending the announcement of new arrangements. It was being rumored that he was getting ready to expand his authority over the rest of Yemen and strengthen his hold by importing weapons and teachers from Europe. All this in spite of the Imam's opposition, lack of unity among the tribes, ambitions of dishonest relatives, and mistrust of the British at Aden.⁹²

Husayn came to Hodeida to greet Tevfik accompanied by his nephew Hasan, qaimmaqam (deputy) of Hodeida. He aimed to convince Tevfik that he, Husayn, should be granted formal rule over Yemen through a renewed commitment. But Tevfik simply read him the emirname (royal decree) that praised the family for loyal service to the sultan and ordered them back to their hometown of Abu Aris, granting them the income of the area stretching from Zahra to Abu Aris to defer their expenses. The rest of the Tihama, he told them, would be governed by an official directly appointed by the sultan. For the moment Tevfik would take charge of Tihama's government.⁹³

Meanwhile the Imam had written Capt. Haines at Aden for support but got no commitment in return. So rather than wait on orders from Tevfik, he decided to come to Hodeida just when directives were being issued for him by Awn and

91 Mâruz of 19 L 1264/19 September 1848. Lef 2 in *Mesail*, 1824 and the tezkeré of 25 ZA 1264/24 November 1848 and the imperial iradé of three days later. *Mesail*, 1824.

92 Jabir, «Yemen», p. 360.

93 Ali, «Miraat ül-Yemen», p. 76; Jabir, «Yemen», pp. 360-61.

Tevfik. The Imam listened to the directives and invited Tevfik to accompany him back to Sanaa and proclaim the imperial decrees defining the status of Yemen's administration. Tevfik at that time had only 2200 men at Hodeida. And while it was deemed risky for him to journey to Sanaa, since it could be misconstrued by the inhabitants as a show of force to intimidate them, still he insisted they accompany him. The Imam in turn was accompanied by a thousand warriors. His strategy was to surprise the commander's troops during their first night in Sanaa. While the surprise attack inflicted casualties on Ottoman troops and gravely wounded Tevfik, the Imam's men were quickly bested and scattered. Tevfik then formally deposed the Imam and replaced him by Ali b. Mahdi,⁹⁴ as the official mutawakkil of Sanaa. Tevfik left Sanaa twenty five days later, after recovering some strength and returned to Hodeida exhausted with his troops.

Tevfik never fully recovered from his injuries. Awn returned to Mecca after replacing prevailing administrative ordinances with new ones which, for all practical purposes, erected Yemen into a vilayet, thus enabling the imperial government to appoint an outsider to govern it without regard to the immediate wishes of the inhabitants.⁹⁵

But to say that the new arrangements settled the problem of Yemen is to belie events of subsequent years. Ottomans might have effected stability in the Tihama, particularly after the opening of the Suez canal in 1869 enabling them to move reinforcements all the way by sea, but in the highlands, feuds, disturbances, and turmoil persisted, as evinced in the fact that nine imams struggled to govern the interior during the six years following the death of Tevfik.

94 He was first appointed Imam in 1246/1830-31 and deposed shortly thereafter; then again in 1262/1845, and now for the third time by Tevfik.

95 Ali, «Miraat ul-Yemen», p. 77.

It was not until the dispatch of Muhtar Pasa in 1869 that Ottoman troops were able to assert effective control over the interior by establishing a permanent military garrison in nearly every key town and hamlet.

Their mistrust of the British did not diminish. Harassment through the tribes around Lahaj of the colony at Aden went on, but to no avail in the end.

In conclusion, we must question the wisdom of a policy based on fear and suspicion, namely Ottoman for British at Aden that set in motion struggles that proved costly and counterproductive, but did indeed enable the Ottomans in the end to assert firmer control over Yemen by reintroducing direct rule. The British secured their foothold by the elimination of the menace posed by Husayn. The Ottomans succeeded in preventing them from expanding this foothold. The natives for the moment lost control over their own administrative affairs, and Yemen remained for all practical considerations a politically dissheveled entity given to feuds and rivalries with the major tribal configurations continuing their internecine struggles.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The material for this presentation derives largely from the Başbakanlık Arşivi (Prime Minister's Archives) of Turkey and manuscripts housed in the library of Istanbul University.

Since Yemen, like Lebanon, constituted a special problem for the Ottoman state because of foreign involvement, a special dossier termed «Mesail Mühimme, Yemen Meselesi» was prepared. We have read this dossier thoroughly and the material cited often in this paper derives from it, supplemented also by the iradeler of the Meclis-Vâlâ, Dahiliye, and Ayniyat embracing notably emirnames and other official imperial decrees.

The principal manuscripts we relied on are those of As'ad Jabir, entitled «Yemen» (TY 5250), a thorough study by an army officer commissioned by Abdul Hamid in 1909 as a result of the country's unsettled affairs, and

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