

Empire, Islam, and
Politics of Difference

The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage

Politics, Society and Economy

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Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference

Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849–1919

By
Thomas Kuehn



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*To my mother, Hannelore Kuehn, and to the memory of my father,
Gerd Kuehn (1930–2009)
with love and gratitude*

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“Clothing the ‘Uncivilized’: Military Recruitment in Ottoman Yemen and the Quest for ‘Native’ Uniforms, 1872–1914.” In *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*, edited by Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, 143–56. Copyright © 2004 by EREN Yayıncılık Ltd., Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND DATE CONVERSION

For the transliteration of Ottoman-Turkish and Arabic names and terms I have followed the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. However, doubled “-yā” appears as “-īy” and not as “-iyy;” thus “mülkiye” (and not mülkiyye). Months of the *hijrī* and Ottoman *mālīye* calendars are rendered according to the *Redhouse Yeni Türkçe İngilizce Sözlük/New Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: Redhouse Press, 1991), thus “Ramazan” (and not Ramaḍān) and “Nisan” (and not Nisān). Place names familiar to European and North American readers appear in their Anglicized version; thus “Istanbul” (and not İstanbul), “Damascus” (and not al-Shām), and “Aden” (and not ‘Adan). With the exception of Aden, all Yemeni place names are fully transliterated; thus “Şan‘ā” (and not Sanaa), “Yarīm” (and not Yarim), and “Dhamār” (and not Dhamar). However, “Ḥudayda” is rendered without the definite article.

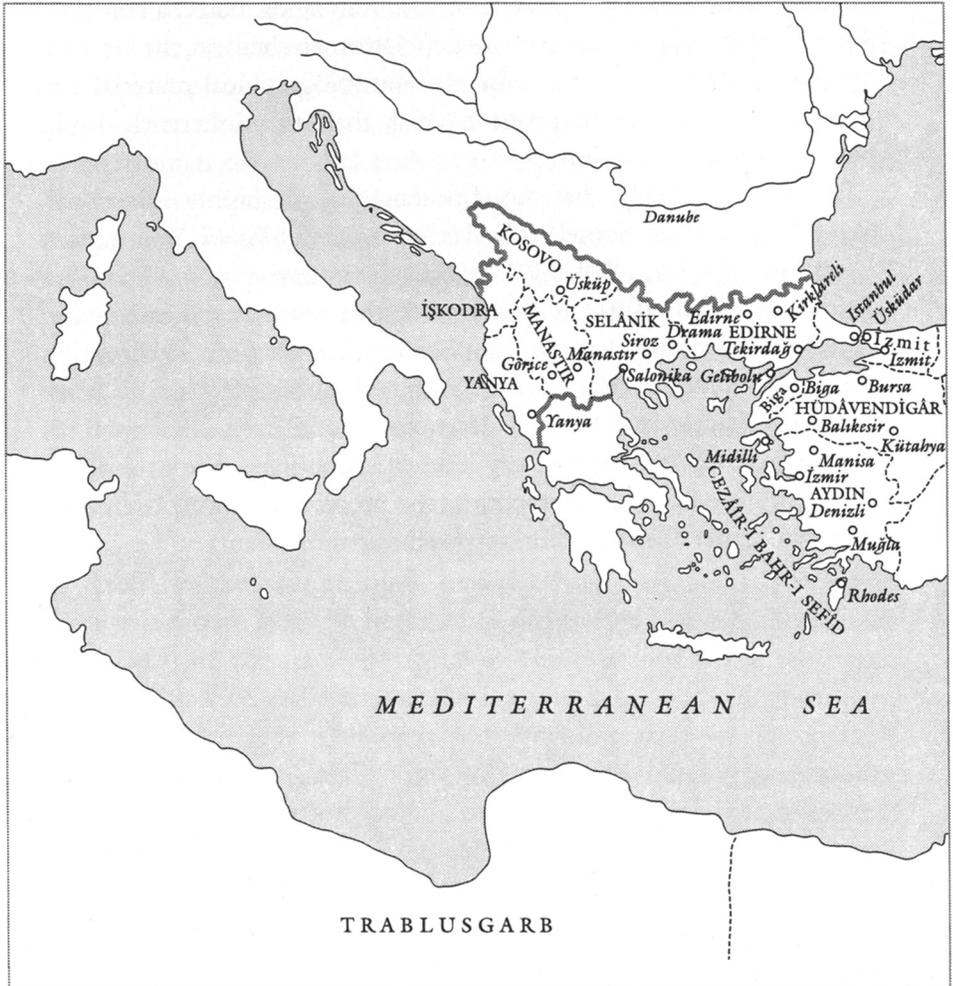
For the conversion of Ottoman *mālīye* dates, which correspond to the Julian calendar, I have followed Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, *Wüstenfeld-Mahler’sche Vergleichungs-Tabellen zur muslimischen und iranischen Zeitrechnung mit Tafeln zur Umrechnung orient-christlicher Ären. Unter Mitarbeit von Joachim Mayr neu bearbeitet von Bertold Spuler* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961), 28: till 12 March 1900: *mālīye* date = Gregorian date—12 days; after 12 March 1900: *mālīye* date = Gregorian date—13 days.

ABBREVIATIONS

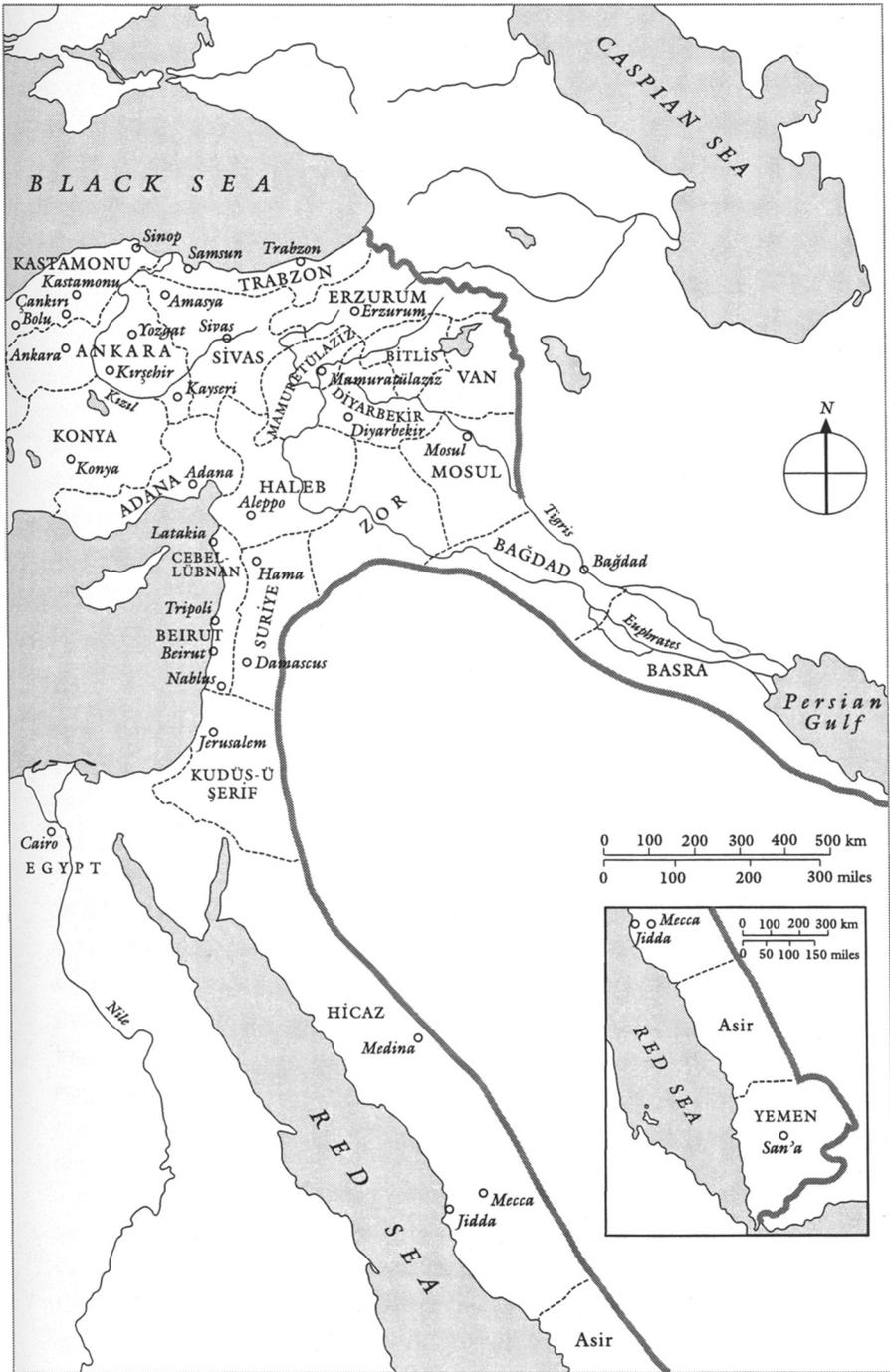
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AION	<i>Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli</i>
A.DVN.NMH.	Bâb-i Âli Evrak Odası Sadâret Evrakı Divân-i Hümâyûn Kalemi—Nâme-i Hümâyûn
A.MKT.MHM.	Sadaret Mektûbi Kalemi Mühimme Kalemi (Odası) Belgeleri
BOA.	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul
DBİA	<i>Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi</i>
DH.MUİ.	Dahiliye Nezareti Belgeleri, Muhaberât-i Umumiye İdaresi Belgeleri
EI	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i>
EI ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition</i>
FO	Foreign Office
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
IOR	Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, Records Division
MES	<i>Middle Eastern Studies</i>
MV.	Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbataları
ROY	Records of Yemen
SAMUSD	Sicill-i Ahvâl Müdüriyeti Ulema Sicil Dosyaları
ŞBMA.	Şeyhülislâmlık (Bâb-ı Meşîhat) Arşivi, İstanbul
ŞD.	Şûra-yi Devlet Belgeleri
TCTA	<i>Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi</i>
TDV. İSAM.	Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, İstanbul
TNA (PRO)	The National Archives (Public Record Office), Kew
WI	<i>Die Welt des Islams</i>
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
Y.A.HUS.	Sadaret Hususî Maruzat Evrakı
Y.A.RES.	Sadaret Resmî Maruzat Evrakı
Y.EE.	Yıldız Esas Evrakı
Y.MTV.	Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı
Y.PRK.ASK.	Yıldız Perâkende Evrakı, Askerî Maruzat
Y.PRK.AZJ.	Yıldız Perâkende Evrakı, Arzuhal ve Jurnaller
Y.PRK.BŞK.	Yıldız Perâkende Evrakı, Mâbeyn Başkâtâbeti

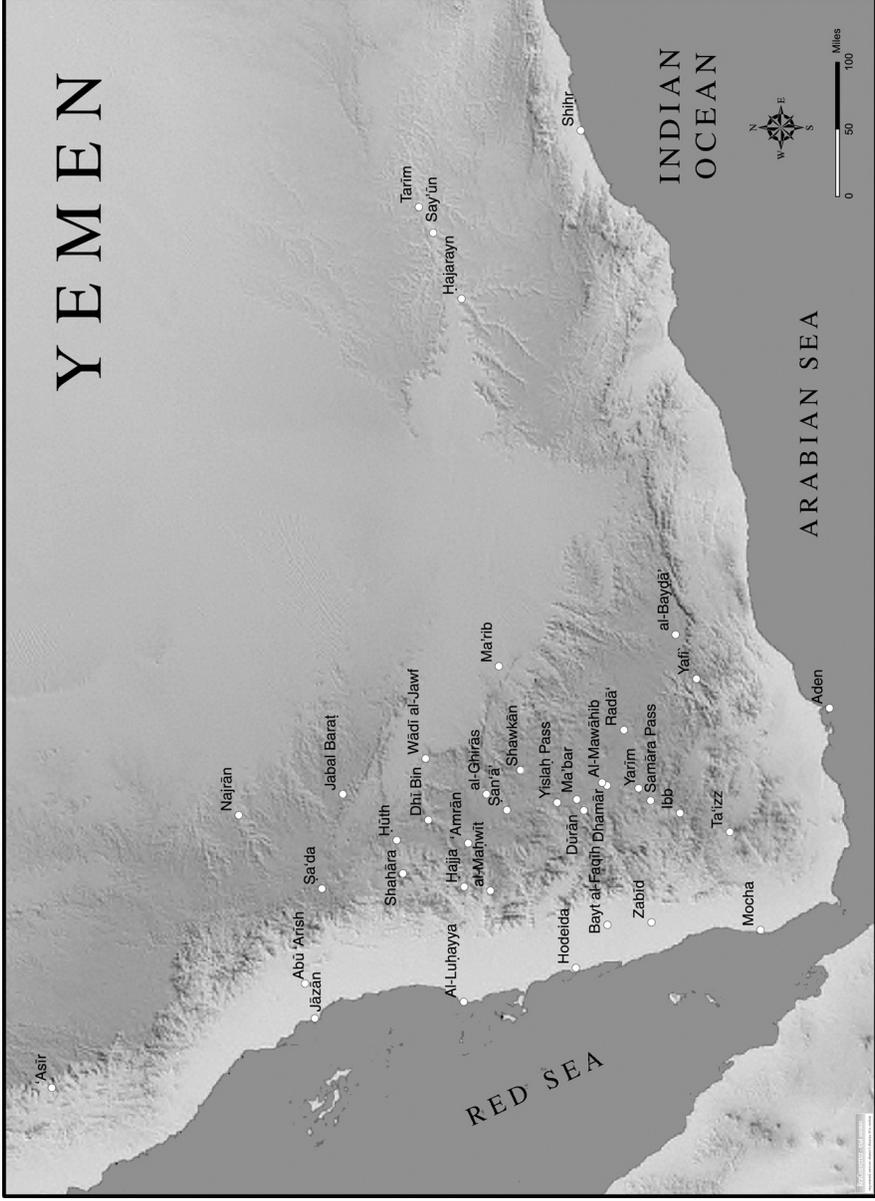
- Y.PRK.ML. Yıldız Perâkende Evrakı, Maliye Nezareti Maruzatı
Y.PRK.MYD. Yıldız Perâkende Evrakı, Yâveran ve Maiyyet-i Seniyye
Erkân-i Harbiye Dairesi
Y.PRK.TKM. Yıldız Perâkende Evrakı, Tahrirat-i Ecnebiye ve Mâbeyn
Mütercimliđi
Y.PRK.UM. Yıldız Perâkende Evrakı, Umum Vilayetler Tahriratı

MAPS



Ottoman provinces c. 1900. Reproduced from Benjamin C. Fortna. *Imperial Classroom. Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Copyright © 2000 by Oxford University Press. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.





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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Around 1911, Maḥmūd Nedīm Bey, from 1913 the last Ottoman governor-general of Yemen, met in Cairo with Horatio Herbert Kitchener, then Britain's pro-consul in Egypt.¹ When the conversation turned to the difficulties of the Ottoman central government with ending opposition to its rule over this southernmost province of the Ottoman Empire, Kitchener offered this advice: "In the Red Sea region, there are French, Italian, and English colonies. If you were to study these colonies... and see what has been done and what is being done there, your job would be rendered much easier." Then he drove his point home

¹ In his memoirs, Maḥmūd Nedīm does not specify when exactly this conversation took place. It must have occurred between 1911 when Kitchener took up his post as British consul-general and agent in Egypt and the summer of 1914 when he became secretary of state for war. Maḥmūd Nedīm (1865–1940) was born in Damascus in AMal 1281 (beginning 13 March 1865), the son of a provincial administrator. He was educated at a *rüşdiyye* school (advanced primary school) in Tripoli (Trāblusšām) and entered provincial officialdom at age twelve, as an apprentice clerk. From 1880 to 1894, Maḥmūd Nedīm held positions in the provincial judiciary, in the Hijaz and in Yemen, including as president of the commercial court of Ḥudayda (August 1886–December 1887 and April 1888–January 1889) and of Jidda (January 1889–March 1892 and December 1892–September 1894). Starting with two short terms as deputy district governor (*kāymakām vekili*) of Jidda (July–October 1892 and May–October 1893) he continued to work as a provincial administrator for the rest of his professional life. From 1894 to 1904 he served as district governor (*kāymakām*) in Anatolia, Benghazi, and Yemen (*kāymakām* of Zabīd, May 1895–March 1897). Maḥmūd Nedīm returned to Yemen as deputy governor-general in the fall of 1904 and remained in this position till May 1907. His connection with the empire's southernmost province continued during the Second Constitutional Period (1908–18). From February 1910 to December 1911 he represented Ḥudayda in the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies (Meclis-i Meb'ūsān). Maḥmūd Nedīm again served as deputy governor-general of Yemen from December 1911 to February 1913, when he was appointed governor-general (*vālī*) of that province, and, as it turned out, the last Ottoman official to hold this position. In early 1919, Ottoman military forces withdrew from Yemen in compliance with the armistice of Mudros (31 October 1918). And yet, until 1923 Maḥmūd Nedīm stayed on as an adviser to the Zaydī *imām* al-Mutawakkil 'alā'llāh Yahyā b. Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Dīn (d. 1948) and formally, at least, continued to hold his position as governor-general until the start of his retirement in August of that year. He spent his retirement years in Adana and, from 1926, in Istanbul where he died on 11 March 1940; see Ali Birinci, "Mahmut Nedim Bey Osmanlı devleti'nin son Yemen valisi," in *Mahmud Nedim Bey, Arabistan'da bir ömür. Son Yemen valisinin hatıraları veya Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Arabistan'da nasıl yıkıldı?* ed., Ali Birinci (Istanbul: İsis, 2001), vii–ix.

even more directly: “Do remember this: Yemen in particular you have to administer as a colony. That’s your only choice.” When Maḥmūd Nedīm later mentioned this conversation to Enver Paşa, one of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihād ve Terakḳī Cem’iyeti), the most powerful political party in the Ottoman Empire at the time, Enver responded: “If we were to administer Yemen as a colony, wouldn’t we cause the [local] people to rebel against us?”²

Yet in 1938, Taḥsīn Paşa, from 1894 to 1908 first secretary (*ser-kātib-i şehriyāri*) of Sultan ‘Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), claimed,

There was a special policy that Sultan Hamid pursued toward distant regions [of the empire], such as Iraq and Yemen, and that one could term a colonial policy. Sultan Hamid, who fully understood that the people of these areas could not be administered like those living in other parts of the empire and according to the same laws and modes [of governance], had accepted an administrative system that was in accordance with the capabilities of the local population.³

This book is a history of the concepts and practices of Ottoman imperial rule over large parts of present-day Yemen from 1872 to the end of World War I. Maḥmūd Nedīm’s conversations with Kitchener and Enver and the observations of Taḥsīn Paşa highlight three points that I focus on in this study. One focus concerns the disagreement among these bureaucrats as to whether there was, in fact, an Ottoman colonialism in Yemen, when it began, and what it entailed; in this, we see a reflection of the ambiguous nature of Ottoman imperial rule in south-west Arabia. As I demonstrate, Ottoman imperial rule over this part of the Arabian Peninsula was a peculiar hybrid that I term *colonial Ottomanism*: a combination of elements of colonial domination being its most prominent feature, with efforts at building a more homogeneous and centralized empire under the banner of Ottomanism (a form of imperial patriotism) also key. Further, this hybrid form of imperial rule emerged in a context marked by the Ottoman Empire’s connection to, and conflict with, rival imperial powers, Britain being the foremost among them. European territorial expansion into Ottoman lands and European attempts to gain economic and political influence

² See Mahmud Nedim, *Arabistan’da bir ömür*, 107–8.

³ See Ali Ergenekon, ed., *Sultan Abdülhamid. Taḥsīn Paşa’nın Yıldız hatıraları* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1990), 205. For Taḥsīn Paşa’s term of office, see Sinan Kunalp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali (1839–1922). Prosopografik rehber* (Istanbul: İsis, 2003), 13.

through alliances with local communities and leaders both in Arabia and in other parts of the empire shaped the ideas, the planning, and the actions taken by Ottoman officials in Yemen, as did European strategies of colonial rule both in colonial dependencies along the Red Sea and farther afield. However, Ottoman imperial planners did not only look toward European empires for strategies to rule “backward” peoples. While British forms of indirect rule informed Ottoman policy making toward various local leaders before World War I, not surprisingly, so did long-standing Ottoman practices of devolving measures of autonomy to religious communities.

At the same time, the structure of Ottoman rule in Yemen was not entirely the choice of the imperial rulers. Struggles within Yemen—often going back well before the period under study—shaped the possibilities available to Ottoman policy makers and caused initiatives to change the overall direction of imperial rule to fail or to be redirected. Local elites tried to maintain power, both by using the structures into which they were incorporated from 1872 to make claims on the Ottoman state and by utilizing their continued access to resources outside state control. In short, they made claims as part of the empire, within it, *and* acted with local resources, carving out semi-independent spaces at its edges.

Second, I use the case of Yemen to explore how the Ottoman Empire was run as an imperial system in a world of competing imperial powers. At the center of this study I examine the strategies through which Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers sought to maintain control over this part of the Arabian Peninsula; a region that was coerced back into the empire only between 1849 and 1873, after more than two centuries of independence under various local dynasties. More specifically, I focus on the ways in which policy makers in Yemen and Istanbul, including Sultan ‘Abdülhamîd II and his advisers, as well as cabinet ministers and governors-general, sought to govern the newly-created province according to what they often termed the “customs and dispositions” (*‘ādāt ve emzice*) of the local population. A crucial aspect of this was the issue of how to deploy the rule of the center through a variety of local intermediaries, be they local lords, tribal chiefs, descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad (*sāda*, sing. *sayyid/shurafā*, sing. *sharīf*), or the Zaydī *imāms*. And, just as importantly, to what extent should the distinctive customs and laws of the local people more generally, including forms of arbitration, sectarian ties, or their attachment to the sacred law of Islam, the *sharī‘a*, be incorporated

into the province's official governance? It is my contention that Ḥanafī Sunnī and Zaydī Shī'ī notions of legitimacy, authority, and morality significantly informed Ottoman policy-making in Yemen and government attempts to make sense of local society.

My emphasis is, therefore, on empire as a political form that posed certain structural problems: The Ottomans, like the British, the French, the Habsburgs, and the Russians, had to balance politics of incorporation ("the empire's claim that its subjects belonged within the empire") and differentiation ("the empire's claim that different subjects should be governed differently") in order to rule a large, spread-out, and diverse empire.⁴ Since it made explicit and reproduced local particularity and distinctiveness (for example by creating "native-style" uniforms for locally recruited soldiers or by incorporating elements of local *sharī'a* courts into the provincial judiciary), politics of differentiation was also politics of difference. Imperial rule thus meant constantly addressing the dilemma of how to accommodate local particularity in ways that would give the local people a stake in Ottoman rule without undermining it. How this balance was struck greatly depended on the specificities of the mutual interaction and competition among the Ottomans, their imperial rivals, and different local actors in the shifting contexts of local, imperial Ottoman, and world politics. For example, as I discuss in chapter 6, the apparent success of British indirect rule in the Sudan, the hinterland of Aden, and India, prompted the Ottoman central government in the early 1900s to consider more seriously a greater devolution of power to local leaders as a way to reaffirm its control over southwest Arabia, where it faced increasingly stiff opposition led by the Zaydī *imām* al-Mutawakkil 'alā'llāh Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (d. 1948) (hereafter: Yaḥyā). However, concerns about British expansion in this area, as well as the experience of European support for secessionist politics in other parts of the empire, significantly limited the degree of power the central government was willing to concede to the *imām*.

Third and finally, I am interested in the struggles—at the local, regional, and imperial levels—over the categories of knowledge that informed and structured the ways in which the rule of the imperial center was deployed. After all, notions of what, exactly, constituted the "customs and dispositions" of the local people were subject to conflict,

⁴ See Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 11 and chap. 6, these quotes: 154.

contestation, and change that involved Ottoman bureaucrats (like Governor-General Aḥmed Feyzî Paşa⁵ and the Şan‘a’ appeals court judge Muḥammad Hilâl Efendi),⁶ local elites (like the parliamentarian

⁵ Aḥmed Feyzî Paşa (AH 1255 [beg. 17 March 1839]/AMal 1255 [beg. 13 March 1839]–1915) was born on the Crimea, the son of a local *müderri*. He was educated at a local elementary school (*maḥalli ibtidā’i mektebinde*) and later, in Istanbul, at a military middle school (*mekteb-i i’ dādiye-i ‘askeriye*) and at the military academy (*mekteb-i ḥarbiye*) from which he graduated on 15 Şaban 1280/25 January 1864. Three months later, he joined the Fifth Regiment of the Imperial Guard (*hāşşa ordu-yi hümayüni*) as a second lieutenant (*mülāzim-i sāni*). Aḥmed Feyzî took part in the re-conquest of ‘Asir and highland Yemen in 1871–73, during which he was promoted to the ranks of major (*binbaşı*) (10 Mayıs 1287/22 May 1871) and lieutenant-colonel (*kāymakām*) (30 Ağustos 1288/1 September 1872). His long career as an administrator in Yemen began with appointments as *kāymakām* of the *każā*’s (districts) of Jabal Rayma (from 15 Haziran 1288/27 June 1872 to 15 Haziran 1289/27 June 1873) and of Ḥujjūr (from 1 Teşrin-i sani 1289/13 November 1872 to 14 Teşrin-i evvel 1292/26 October 1876). From October 1876 to February 1885, he served first as deputy governor (*mutaşarrıf vekili*), then as governor (*mutaşarrıf*) of ‘Asir. During this period Aḥmed Feyzî rose to the ranks of brigadier-general (*mirlivā*) (14 Teşrin-i evvel 1292/26 October 1876) and division general (*ferik*) (7 Mayıs 1297/19 May 1881) following the first of his three terms as governor-general of Yemen (12 February 1885 to 1 December 1887), where he also commanded the Seventh Imperial Army. From 30 Mart 1303/11 April 1887 to 16 Ağustos 1307/28 August 1891 he served as commander-in-chief of the Ottoman military forces in the Hijaz. On 16 Ağustos 1307/28 August 1891 he was again appointed commander-in-chief of the Ottoman military forces in Yemen to take charge of military operations against the large-scale insurgency led by the Zaydī *imām* al-Manşūr bi’llāh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ḥamid al-Dīn (d. 1904) (hereafter: al-Manşūr). On 18 Rebiülahir 1309/20 November 1891 Aḥmed Feyzî became governor-general of Yemen for the second time and served in this capacity until 10 Nisan 1314/22 April 1898. Later that year, he was transferred to Baghdad, where he took over the command of the Sixth Imperial Army as a field marshal (*müşir*); see BOA./ Sicill-i Ahvāl Komisyonu Defterleri, 167–49 for Aḥmed Feyzî Paşa’s personnel file; however, Kuneralp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, 57, states that Feyzî Paşa’s second term as governor-general of Yemen ended in May 1898; he also lists him as “Ahmed Fevzi Paşa.” From October 1902 to October 1904, Aḥmed Feyzî Paşa held the position of commander-in-chief of the Sixth Imperial Army in conjunction with that of governor-general of the Province of Baghdad. In August 1905, he was again appointed governor-general of Yemen and commander-in-chief of the Seventh Imperial Army, and held these positions until October 1908; see Kuneralp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, 57.

⁶ Muḥammad Hilâl Efendi (b. AH 1256/1840–41) was born Aleppo. After a *madrasa* education in his home town and in Egypt he entered the Ottoman judiciary. Before he served his first term in Yemen as presiding judge at the criminal division of the province’s court of appeals (19 August 1879–16 August 1881), Muḥammad Hilâl had been a deputy judge and later a judge at *shari’a* courts in the *sancaḳ* of Deir ez-Zor, in the Province of Aleppo, and in the sub-province (*sancaḳ*) of Ḥamā’. After 1881, he served in the provinces of Adana, Ankara, Tripolitania, and Konya as presiding judge at the criminal division of the local courts of appeals (till December 1893). From November 1887 to September 1888 he held this position for the second time in Yemen. From 1897 to 1907 Muḥammad Hilâl worked at the ministry of police. Neither his further career nor the date of his death are known; see Nejat Göyünç “Trablusgarb’a ait bir lâyiha,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/the Journal of Ottoman Studies* 1 (1980), 235–36.

Sayyid Aḥmad al-Kibṣī), and European travelers and scholars, such as the Austro-Hungarian epigrapher Eduard Glaser.⁷

From 1834 to 1837 and in 1849, Ottoman sultans first tried to re-occupy portions of Yemen by proxy with the help of regional vassals, such as Meḥmed ‘Alī Paşa, the governor-general of Egypt, and Muḥammad b. ‘Awn, the *amīr* and *sharīf* of Mecca, respectively. This book, however, takes as its starting point the years 1871–73, when military forces dispatched from Istanbul moved beyond Ottoman strongholds in the coastal plain (Tihāma) and re-conquered large parts of Yemen’s northern and southern highlands. I argue that the years 1871–73 were fraught with more significance than the years 1834–37 and 1849. They featured the arrival of a new order, which involved the disempowerment of the most prominent lords in the highland region, the incorporation of the re-conquered territories into the new and more centralized Ottoman provincial system, and a new ideological outlook, that of the conquerors who represented their actions as a mission to civilize and uplift a “backward” local population. The end point of the book is the withdrawal of the Ottomans from Yemen in 1919 following their defeat in World War I.

The book takes as its main argument the point that, for most of the period under study, politics of difference predominated in the Province of Yemen (Yemen *vilāyeti*). These policies differed from the *more* uniform administrative policies that had been introduced in most parts of Ottoman Anatolia, geographical Syria, and Ottoman Iraq under the auspices of government-sponsored reform efforts known as

⁷ Sayyid Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Kibṣī (d. 1927) was born in AH 1290 (beg. 1 March 1873) in the *hijra* (see below) of al-Kibṣ in the region of Khawlān al-‘Āliya east of Ṣan‘ā’ into a family of local *sāda*. He grew up in al-Kibṣ and in Ṣan‘ā’. Sayyid Aḥmad accompanied his father Yaḥyā into exile first to Istanbul and later to the island of Rhodes following the uprising of Imām al-Manṣūr in 1891–92. Later on, both escaped from Rhodes and found asylum in British-occupied Egypt. From 1909 to December 1918, Sayyid Aḥmad represented Ṣan‘ā’ in the Ottoman parliament. In speeches, newspaper articles, and as member of a parliamentary commission on Yemen he fought for a solution to the conflict between the central government and Imām Yaḥyā. In 1912 he was decorated for his efforts by the sultan. After World War I, he entered the service of Imām Yaḥyā and served as governor (*āmil*) of Khawlān al-‘Āliya, of Bilād al-Rūs, and of Banī Bahlūl. Sayyid Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Kibṣī died in Ṣan‘ā’ on 7 June 1927/7 Zilhicce 1345; see Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Zabāra, *A’immat al-Yaman bi’l-qarn al-rābi’ ‘ashar li’l-hijra*, vol. 2: *Sirat al-fātiḥ al-shahīd* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘at al-Salafiya, AH 1376/1956–57), part 2, 193–94; Sabine Prātor, *Der arabische Faktor in der jungtürkischen Politik* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1993), 253 [Prātor lists him wrongly as “Sayyid Ahmad Yahya Efendi al-Kabsi”].

the *Tanzīmāt*, and that members of the Ottoman bureaucratic elite defined as hallmarks of civilization in the context of an Ottoman imperial patriotism. This politics of difference thus institutionalized what Ottoman bureaucrats perceived as the difference-cum-cultural inferiority of Yemen's population and, by extension, demarcated this particular province as a subordinate part of the Ottoman imperial system. And yet, at times they coexisted with efforts at incorporation rarely seen in European colonial empires. Most important, during both constitutional periods (1876–78 and 1908–18), Yemeni deputies represented districts of the empire's southernmost province in the Ottoman parliament. 'Abdülhamīd II brought members of the local elite, such as colonels (*mīralāyılar*) 'Alī Muthannā al-Ḥusaynī al-Rijāmī and Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khabbānī, into the circle of his personal advisers at the Yıldız Palace, where they helped shape the formulation of government policies toward Yemen in their capacity as inspectors and authors of memoranda.⁸ At times, the central government and its local representatives simply chose to ignore the idea that the “backward” could not be governed like the “civilized” and sought to overturn key elements of the politics of difference.

While historians have made the point that Ottoman imperial rule in the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries was a hybrid that combined long-standing forms of running a diverse empire with elements of colonial domination and/or efforts at (nation-) state building, this hybridity has not formed the focus of an in-depth study. By the same token, scholars have looked at the encounters

⁸ Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khabbānī (d. 1927) was born into a family of Ṣan'ānī *sāda* around AH 1285 (beg. 24 April 1868). He grew up in Ṣan'ā' and first studied there at the Great Mosque. In AH 1304 (beg. 29 September 1886) he was sent for further education to Istanbul as part of a group of students from among Ṣan'ānī *sāda* and *a'yān*. Sayyid Aḥmad studied for three years at the military academy and was then appointed one of 'Abdülhamīd II's numerous aides-de-camp (A.D.C.s or, in Ottoman-Turkish, *yāverān*). He eventually reached the rank of colonel (*mīralāy*). According to Prätör, he is probably identical to “Sayyid Aḥmad Bey Djanānī” who was elected MP for Ṣan'ā' in 1909 and retained his seat in the Ottoman parliament till the end of December 1918; see Prätör, *Der arabische Faktor in der jungtürkischen Politik*, 252. After World War I, Sayyid Aḥmad returned to Yemen and entered the service of Imām Yaḥyā, first as quartermaster general (*rā'isu 'l-dā'irati 'l-lawāzimi 'l-askariyati*) and later as inspector of the imamic schools in Ṣan'ā' (*mufattishu li'l-makātibi 'l-imāmiyati*). He died in Ṣan'ā' on 11 Ramazan 1345/15 March 1327; see Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Zabāra, *A'immat al-Yaman bi'l-qarn al-rābi' 'ashar li'l-hijra* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'at al-Salafiya, AH 1376/1956–57), vol. 1, 61; idem, *A'immat al-Yaman*, vol. 2, part 2, 192.

of government bureaucrats and local actors during this period as aspects of state building, but have not asked the question of what was actually imperial about the ways in which the Ottoman Empire was run.⁹ The predominance of politics of difference also characterized Ottoman imperial rule over a number of other provinces during this period, notably Shkodër (İşkodra) in present-day northern Albania, as well as Tripolitania (Ṭrāblusgarb) and the Hijaz, which today are part of Libya and Saudi Arabia, respectively. Why, then, the focus on Yemen? Ottoman attempts to regain and maintain control over this area from the mid-nineteenth century were the last major example of territorial expansion in the empire's history. They were undertaken more than two hundred years after most of southwest Arabia had been lost to a local dynasty of Zaydī Shī'ī *imāms* and were part of broader efforts to bring about an imperial revival in the face of severe territorial losses that the Ottoman Empire suffered at the hands of its European rivals and various separatist movements. At the same time, Ottoman expansion in Yemen took place as part of an imperial scramble for strategic positions and resources in the Red Sea region and the Horn of Africa; this scramble pitted Britain, France, semi-independent Egypt, Italy, and the Ottomans against each other in part of a broader global expansion of imperial ambitions. By the late 1880s, the newly-created Province of Yemen had turned into the frontier of the Ottoman Empire, where the Ottomans came perhaps most directly into contact with various forms of European colonial rule.

Moreover, for Ottoman bureaucrats and military commanders, mastering Yemen was linked directly to the stability of Ottoman dynastic rule and thus of the empire as a whole. It was in Yemen that the sultans' claim to the caliphate, a central element of Ottoman dynastic legitimacy during the nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries, faced its most powerful domestic challenge through the increasingly momentous opposition mounted by the Zaydī Shī'ī *imāms* and their supporters. Shī'ī clerics in Najaf and Karbala, Yezidi farmers and craftsmen in today's northern Iraq, and Wahhābī communities in the Najd may have refused to recognize the Ḥanafī Sunnī sultan in

⁹ See, for instance, Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 265; see also, "Introduction—Towards a New Urban Paradigm," in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (Beirut and Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2002), 8.

Istanbul as caliph, yet, none of them succeeded in drawing the central government into military conflicts of the magnitude experienced in southwest Arabia from the early 1890s onward. Moreover, none of them inflicted defeats on the Ottoman military that measured up to the surrender of the provincial capital Şan‘ā’ to the fighters of Imām Yaḥyā in the spring of 1905.

Similarly, Ottoman imperial planners considered control over Yemen vital to protect the Hijaz with the holy sites of Islam at Mecca and Medina. Ever since the Ottoman conquest of this region in the early sixteenth century, controlling these sites and protecting the annual pilgrimage (*hajj*), played an important role in the Ottoman dynasty’s politics of legitimacy.¹⁰ This control became an increasingly central concern from the reign of Sultan ‘Abdül‘azîz (r. 1861–76), when Ottoman rulers came to emphasize, more than ever before, their role as caliphs and the Islamic character of the regime, all as part of an effort to create political unity and cohesion at the domestic level against both internal and external pressures.¹¹ Especially from the reign of ‘Abdülhamîd II, fears that Britain sought to take control of Arabia and establish an Arab caliphate based in the Hijaz were widespread among members of the Ottoman government.¹² Increasing concern about the possibility of British territorial expansion appears to have been the main reason the Ottoman government in 1870–71 decided to re-conquer large parts of southwest Arabia and the coastal region of the Persian Gulf between the Shatt al-Arab and Qatar.¹³ This concern in itself was not new. From the early decades of the nineteenth century, when the British East India Company occupied Aden (1839) and entered into treaty relationships with a number of local leaders on the coast of the Persian Gulf (from 1820), the Ottoman government had suspected Britain of designs to incorporate larger parts of the Arabian Peninsula into its Indian empire. In response, in

¹⁰ See Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 1994), 7–10, 92–126, 184–87.

¹¹ See R. J. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule, 1839–1967* (London: C. Hurst, 1975), 133–35.

¹² Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 1998), 58–59, 60–63; see also William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Society, and the State in Arabia: The Hijaz under Ottoman Control, 1840–1908* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984), 200–2.

¹³ Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 134–35.

1849, Ottoman military forces occupied parts of Yemen's coastal plain (Tihāma) and made a first (unsuccessful) attempt to take control of the highland region around Ṣan'ā'.¹⁴ However, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and hence easier access to the Red Sea region, made the specter of British expansion appear much more threatening to Ottoman government circles.¹⁵ Under these circumstances, direct control not only over the Tihāma, but also over the highland region of Yemen, was considered vital, mainly because Ottoman policy makers hoped that it would more effectively deter the British from extending their sphere of influence from the hinterland of Aden toward the Hijaz. However, Ottoman fears about far-reaching British designs in Arabia were essentially unfounded. For most of the nineteenth century, British politics in this region did not go beyond efforts to protect imperial communications with India, hence the acquisition of Aden as a coal-ing station and the fostering of treaty relationships with local rulers in the Persian Gulf region.¹⁶ It was largely in response to Ottoman expansion in southwest Arabia and the Persian Gulf that the British also adopted a more expansionist policy and began to formalize their presence in the hinterland of Aden through the establishment of protectorates over the local rulers.¹⁷

Imperial Ambiguities: Defining Colonial Ottomanism

As noted, the policy makers of the Ottoman, British, French, and Russian empires all faced the same dilemma of *imperial rule*, namely, how to balance politics of incorporation and difference. Yet, in the overseas dependencies of Britain, France and other European powers, as well as in certain parts of Russia's continental empire, imperial rule took a specific form—colonialism. Partha Chatterjee and other historians argue that at the heart of colonialism was a rule of colonial difference that creates a binary split into colonizers and colonized and insists

¹⁴ Caesar E. Farah, *The Sultan's Yemen: Nineteenth-Century Challenges to Ottoman Rule* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 1–13, 30, 54–55.

¹⁵ See Frederick F. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 16–20.

¹⁶ This is argued by Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, 171–2.

¹⁷ Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 136–55.

on the essential inferiority and inequality of the latter.¹⁸ However, Frederick Cooper demonstrates that “the meanings of difference were always contested and rarely stable.” Throughout this study I therefore use the term “politics of colonial difference” rather than “rule of colonial difference.”¹⁹ The politics of colonial difference was expressed in “dual structures for the governance of Europeans and ‘natives’” that often included separate legal codes and courts of law, the exclusion of the “natives” from the democratic politics of the metropole, as well as efforts to segregate space and regulate sexual relations between the two groups.²⁰ We can therefore distinguish between *imperial* governance on one side and *colonial* governance on the other. Whereas in the context of the former, difference did not always imply discrimination and a binary split into “we/they,” colonizer and colonized, it did in the context of the latter.²¹

What did Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen share with those adopted by British, Dutch, French, or Russian colonial rulers during the same period? For one, they were based on the assumption that the “backward” could not be governed like the “civilized.” Moreover, to an important degree, they institutionalized the difference and perceived inferiority of the local population by leaving them outside the purview of political practices and administrative regulations that were theoretically universalist or empire-wide in nature: be it censuses, cadastral surveys and conscription in the case of Yemen, the system of social classification in the case of Russian Turkestan, or the right to participate in the democratic politics of the metropole in the case of British India, the Dutch East Indies, or French Indo-China. Finally, like these European colonial rulers, Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers in Yemen legitimized their rule as a mission to civilize and uplift a “backward” population, but were neither able nor willing to erase difference by profoundly remaking local society. Just as with European

¹⁸ See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 16–26.

¹⁹ See Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 23.

²⁰ George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 37 (this quote), 38; Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 12; Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 28.

²¹ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 12.

colonial rule in the above-mentioned cases, Ottoman rule in Yemen was therefore based on the perpetuation of difference.²²

While contested and dynamic, politics of difference in Ottoman Yemen nevertheless differed in several respects from those policies meant to separate the colonizers from the colonized in these European colonial dependencies. For instance, difference in the case of Ottoman Yemen did not separate rights-bearing citizens in the metropole from disenfranchised subjects in the colony. Outlying Ottoman provinces, such as Yemen, were represented in parliament during both constitutional periods (1876–78 and 1908–18), even though their inhabitants may have been considered “uncivilized” (while parliamentary representation in the Ottoman context did not carry the same political weight as it did in Britain or France, it was by no means a mere formality). Conversely, from 1878 to 1908, the autocratic regime of ‘Abdülhamid II withheld liberal citizenship rights from all the people of the Ottoman Empire.

At the same time, Yemen’s subordinate position in the Ottoman imperial system remained ambiguous. It was never officially declared a colony, but retained the status and administrative structure of a regular province (*vilāyet*) as defined in the law of provincial administration of 1871. What was more, it was simply not possible to distinguish colonizers from colonized along clearly defined lines of ethnicity, language, or religion. Local literati often referred to the representatives of the Ottoman central government as “Turks” (*atrāk*), while European observers tended to view Ottoman domination as one of “Turks” over “Arabs.” This perspective, however, failed to capture the complex ethnic composition of the administrative and military cadres in charge of governing the Province of Yemen. The Ottoman administrator or military officer “on the spot” could be an Albanian Tosk, a Christian-Orthodox convert from Crete, an Anatolian Turk, an Arab from geographical Syria or Tripolitania, or a Circassian. To complicate matters further, until the very end of our period there was no attempt to distinguish soldiers and administrators from outside the province from the local population, at least in terms of the legal codes that applied to them or the legal forums they had to use. Before 1911, the Ottoman criminal code applied to all civilians resident in the province; all were

²² See Adeeb Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 65 (2006), 232–33.

expected to use the same courts of justice. In other words, there were neither “native courts” nor “native laws.” Similarly, for soldiers and administrators from outside the province, marrying local women did not carry with it the stigma of miscegenation that was such an important feature of the politics of difference in many European colonial contexts.

Politics of difference did not always place the people in the Province of Yemen at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the inhabitants of the empire’s core provinces. For example, local males were excluded from compulsory military service partly because the central government feared that the introduction of conscription would lead to serious opposition. Still, given the length and harsh conditions of service in the Ottoman military, not being subject to conscription was not necessarily an element of discrimination. At the same time, there is evidence that the government was primarily interested in co-opting local leaders at the provincial level, but not in bringing them into the ministerial bureaucracy in Istanbul. Moreover, as a result of the judicial reforms of the 1880s, appealing a court decision in Yemen became significantly more cumbersome than in those provinces where the new *nizāmiye* court system existed (see chapter 4).

It is precisely because it featured colonial elements alongside attempts to incorporate Yemen into a more centralized and homogeneous imperial structure under the auspices of the *Tanzīmāt* that I have chosen to refer to Ottoman imperial rule over Yemen during the period under study as *colonial Ottomanism* and not as Ottoman colonialism. The term colonial Ottomanism refers to a hybrid form of imperial rule that was colonial in some respects but not in others. Choosing this particular term allows me to more effectively make a central point, namely, that Ottoman policy makers were very careful to employ only those elements of colonial rule that they considered conducive to securing Ottoman domination over Yemen, and not implement others that they feared would undermine Ottoman rule. I argue that the reluctance to distinguish clearly between metropole and colony and between colonizers and colonized reflected a profound concern that too much differentiation might subvert Ottoman rule and—especially after 1876 and 1908—undermine government claims to the equality of all Ottoman subjects that were meant to help ensure the empire’s survival. Shedding light on the hybrid form of Ottoman imperial rule in Yemen adds to our understanding of the complexities of Ottoman imperial governance more generally and helps us better

situate the Ottoman Empire of this period within the larger context of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century empires.

Background on Ottoman Imperial Rule in Arabia

By the time Ottoman military forces re-conquered the highland part of southwest Arabia in 1871–73, the Ottomans had been ruling a multi-religious, multi-ethnic empire for more than four hundred years. Not unlike the rulers of Muscovy and later the Russian Tsars, the Ottoman sultans incorporated and ruled these territories and communities in different ways, depending in large measure on pre-Ottoman governmental practices and on geographical accessibility. Privileges, rights, duties, and rewards were assigned differentially both to local elites and to collectivities defined by religion, occupation, or territory, be they Kurdish lords, Orthodox Christians, janissaries, or the residents of particular neighborhoods in specific towns.²³ Imperial governance was thus based on difference, not uniformity.

This began to change from the 1840s when, for the first time in Ottoman history, the Ottoman central government and its representatives sought to implement a uniform system of administration, taxation, military recruitment, and education throughout the empire, in an attempt to ward off both the encroachments of European imperial powers and separatist challenges at the domestic level. These efforts intensified during the reign of Sultan ‘Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). Under the auspices of Ottomanism, a form of imperial patriotism, the objective was to forge a more homogeneous population of loyal and “useful” Ottoman subjects, in order to make the empire more resilient against these external and internal pressures. While these attempts initially focused on those parts of Ottoman Europe, Anatolia, and Ottoman Syria that the central government found easier to access and control, from the 1860s they also came to include some of the empire’s

²³ See, for instance, Dina Rizk Khoury, “The Ottoman Centre versus Provincial Power-holders: An Analysis of the Historiography,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 139; Fikret Adanır, “Semi-autonomous Provincial Forces in the Balkans and Anatolia,” in *Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3, 160–63. For the imperial Russian context, see Jane Burbank, “An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7 (2006), 397–431.

external and internal peripheries, such as Ottoman Transjordan, or present-day northern Albania.²⁴

The re-conquest of large parts of southwest Arabia by Ottoman military forces in 1871–73 and the subsequent creation of the new Province of Yemen are part of this larger context. Following the occupation of Yemen’s coastal plain (the Tihāma) in 1849, the imperial government thus re-asserted its control over significant portions of an area that had been part of the empire for about a hundred years, until the 1630s, when Zaydī Shī‘ī *imāms* of the Qāsimī line brought this earlier Ottoman presence to an end. As I discuss in chapters 2 and 3, Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers in Yemen resembled colonial conquerors of this period, in that they sought to legitimate their rule by representing the population of the newly-established province as “savages” in need of being uplifted through the practices and institutions of the modern state. There is, however, evidence that they initially placed less emphasis than their British, French, or Russian counterparts in India, West Africa, or Turkestan on institutionalizing what they perceived as the difference and cultural inferiority of the indigenous population. Rather, encouraged by a series of quick and decisive victories over the most important local lords, Ottoman policy makers in Istanbul and Yemen appear to have been convinced that the political process of integrating the local population into the Ottoman state would be completed within a relatively short period of time and without much resistance. To facilitate integration, they created all those administrative structures in the new province that, theoretically at least, could be found in every province of the empire. Most prominent among them were a clearly defined hierarchy of administrative sub-divisions (province (*vilāyet*), sub-province (*sancağ*), district (*każā*), and sub-district (*nāhiye*)) as stipulated in the law of provincial administration of 1871, an administrative council (*meclis-i idāre*) at each level of provincial government, as well as a municipality in the new provincial capital, Şan‘ā’. Moreover two Yemeni deputies

²⁴ See Maurus Reinkowski, *Die Dinge der Ordnung: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung über die osmanische Reformpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005); and Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For a study that focuses specifically on the ways in which various local communities in Ottoman Albania and Yemen interacted with the Ottoman state, its agents, and the European powers, see Isa Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Social and Political History of Albania and Yemen, 1878–1918* (Istanbul: İsis, 2003).

were allowed to represent the newly-created province in the first Ottoman parliament of 1876–78.²⁵

As I demonstrate in chapter 4, already by the mid-1870s, senior Ottoman administrators in Yemen, such as Governor-General Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa realized that Ottoman rule was not sufficiently established to govern the local people in the same way as the populations in those parts of Ottoman Europe, Anatolia, or Ottoman Syria, where government control was much stronger.²⁶ Through their encounters with local jurists, merchants, farmers, and the Zaydī *imāms*, senior Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers elaborated a form of governance that was essentially based on the institutionalization and reproduction of perceived difference. More specifically, in an attempt to find acceptance for Ottoman rule, they chose not to implement key elements of *Tanzīmāt* governance that were supposed to be applied throughout the empire, such as cadastral surveys, censuses, conscription, and the *nizāmīye* courts. Thus, they treated the Province of Yemen quite differently from most provinces of Ottoman Europe, Anatolia, Ottoman Syria, and Ottoman Iraq, where these measures were *at least partially* applied. This latter point deserves particular emphasis. What Yemen shared with other peripheral provinces, such as the Hijaz and Shkodër, was the degree to which this politics of

²⁵ See Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), 265. Devereux refers to the two deputies as “Sheikh ‘Ali E[fendi]” and “Sayyid Muhammad E[fendi]” without providing any further information about them.

²⁶ Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa (d. 1891) was an administrator and military officer of Cretan origin who served many times as governor-general of different European and Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In Ottoman Europe he served twice as governor-general of İşkodra (September 1871–January 1872 and May 1884–January 1887) and Yanya (December 1873–November 1874 and April 1879–September 1883). He held this position once in the Province of Bosnia (October 1872–December 1873). Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa’s postings as governor-general in the empire’s Arab provinces include Tripolitania (November 1874–February 1875), Yemen, where he also commanded the Seventh Imperial Army (April 1875–April 1879), Baghdad (January 1887–November 1889), and Syria (December 1889–November 1891). His only high-level posts in the imperial capital were those of marshal of the imperial arsenal of ordnance and artillery (*tophâne müşiri*) (July 1872) and of commandant of police (*zabtiye müşiri*) (August–October 1872); see Kunalalp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, 108. However, there is evidence that Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa was still in Tripolitania from April 1875 to August 1876; see Bernard Lory, ed., *Le Yémen en 1877–78 tel que l’ont vu deux médecins Bulgares Hristo Stambolski & Josif Ljubenov*. Traduction, introduction et notes de Bernard Lory (Istanbul: Isis, 2008), 59n1. Still, governmental correspondence used in the present study suggests that the *paşa* had taken up his post by October 1875.

difference was both collective *and* spatial: it affected the population of an entire province and not just certain communities. At the same time, officials adapted taxation, military recruitment, and judicial institutions to what they perceived as the “customs and dispositions” of the local population. Both sets of measures institutionalized the difference and cultural inferiority—in the eyes of Ottoman bureaucrats—of the indigenous people vis-à-vis the conquerors. Thus, what set Yemen apart from most Ottoman provinces, was not differentiation *per se*, but rather *the degree of differentiation* at a time when, elsewhere, Ottoman rule had moved toward a more uniform administrative policy under the banner of an imperial patriotism.

While adaptability toward the political and economic conditions of newly-conquered territories had always formed an important characteristic of Ottoman provincial government, these adaptations cannot be understood simply in terms of continuations of earlier forms of imperial governance. Rather they were shaped and deployed in contrast to the principles and practices of *Tanzīmāt* governance that the central government sought to implement throughout the Ottoman lands and indeed succeeded in implementing in large parts of Ottoman Europe, Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq. Moreover, they were justified in new ways. For centuries, members of the Ottoman ruling elite had viewed borderland peoples as “savages.” Now, the notion of the “savage” shifted from a person who embraced heterodox beliefs or lived outside the realm of urban culture and sophistication to someone who occupied a lower rung in a hierarchy of civilizations.

It is important to note that there were limits to the government’s willingness to adapt its practices and institutions to local conditions. For instance, when the Ottoman government abolished the *nizāmīye* tribunals in Yemen during the 1880s and devolved their responsibilities to the *sharī’a* courts, it incorporated a “local” element of conflict resolution by making these courts the principal forums of justice. Yet, in insisting that the tribunals apply not the local, but the codified, Ottoman version of the *sharī’a* and the Ottoman penal code, it created a judiciary that neither replicated the ways in which justice had been administered before the advent of Ottoman rule, nor conformed entirely to the judicial system in other parts of the empire. That is, by dismantling the *nizāmīye* courts, governors-general İsmā’il Hakkı and ‘Osman Nürî paşas and their superiors in Istanbul confirmed their perception of the indigenous population as “savages” who could not

be ruled like more civilized Ottoman subjects in other parts of the empire.²⁷ While the upgrading of the *sharī'a* courts formalized and solidified this aspect of local “savagery” through specific administrative structures and practices, and thus institutionalized difference, the specific format of these courts suggests that institutionalizing difference did not mean “freezing” local ways as they were. Rather, it meant ordering and domesticating “the local” and, thereby, creating something new.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this quest to institutionalize difference for the purpose of maintaining Ottoman rule was the issue of how to integrate the Zaydī *imāms* into the structures of provincial government, while at the same time clearly and unambiguously limiting their authority to the “local.” In chapter 6, I argue that the near collapse of Ottoman rule in Yemen during the 1904–7 uprising led to initiatives on the part of the central government to restructure provincial governance in this part of the empire in ways that would conform, to a far greater extent, to local “customs and dispositions” than had hitherto been the case. In a context shaped by power struggles that involved Imām Yaḥyā and his local rivals, as well as Britain, Italy, and various groups within the Ottoman government, these efforts eventually led to the Da‘ān agreement signed in October 1911 by representatives of the sultan and the *imām*. The relationship between the Ottoman government and the Zaydī *imāms* posed, in a particularly acute form, the problem of how to balance incorporation and differentiation, and thus to address one of the key tensions of empire. On the one hand, the imperial government suspected the *imāms* of claiming the title of caliph

²⁷ ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa (1840–98) graduated from the military academy in Istanbul in 1862 and began his career as a lieutenant in the general staff. During the reign of ‘Abdülhamid II he became a division general in 1880 and a field marshal in 1883, see İbrahim Alâettin Gövsa, *Türk meşhurları ansiklopedisi* (N.p.: Yedigün Neşriyat, n.d.), 297. At the height of his career, between 1882 and 1896, he served as governor-general of the Hijaz (August 1882–July 1886 and June–December 1892), Aleppo (December 1886–October 1887 and December 1892–June 1894), Yemen (December 1887–June 1889), and Syria (November 1881–June 1882 and June 1894–July 1896), see Kuneralp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, 115. During his first term as *vâlî* of the Hijaz he attempted, unsuccessfully, to increase the power of the central government at the expense of the *amîr* and *sharîf* of Mecca. It seems that ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa was involved in the assassination of the exiled Midḥat Paşa in Ṭā’if in 1884, see Ochsenwald, *Hijaz under Ottoman Control*, 186–91, 188. İsmâ’il Ḥaḳḳî Paşa (d. 1891) was an Ottoman administrator and military officer who served twice as governor-general of Yemen and as commander-in-chief of the Seventh Imperial Army (December 1879–December 1882 and May 1890–June 1891); see Kuneralp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, 84.

and thus harboring political ambitions that not only went beyond the context of southwest Arabia, but directly threatened a central element of the Ottoman sultan's legitimacy. It was, therefore, imperative to find a political arrangement that would unambiguously confine the *imāms* within the boundaries of the "local." On the other hand, it was equally critical to ensure that this political arrangement gave the *imām* a sufficient stake in the governance of the Province of Yemen to keep him an ally and dependent ruler, while not allowing him a degree of power that would make Ottoman sovereignty over this part of the empire purely nominal. The Da'ān agreement sought to address these issues by creating a sectarian order unprecedented in the history of Yemen. Within the territory of the Province of Yemen, it demarcated a zone where *Imām Yaḥyā* exercised judicial authority over the entire *indigenous* population according to the *Zaydī* version of the *sharī'a* but remained ultimately answerable to the imperial government in Istanbul.

The challenge of demarcating the "right" measure of difference that would be conducive to stabilizing Ottoman rule was also reflected in yet another aspect of the dilemma of governing Yemen in the aftermath of the 1904–7 uprising. While a number of senior officials appear to have identified the idea to devolve a measure of power to the *imām* with the forms of indirect rule that the British practiced in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, the hinterland of Aden, or the princely states of India, they did not take the step to officially declare Yemen a colony. I argue that an important reason for this was the concern that institutionalizing difference in this explicit fashion might undermine the legitimacy of Ottoman rule, especially in the Arab provinces where it had rested to an important degree on the claim to protect the local people against the imperialist expansion and colonialism of the European powers. Perhaps more importantly, after the end of the autocratic regime of 'Abdülhamīd II in July 1908, the new constitutional regime sought to ensure the survival of the empire by touting the equality of all Ottomans; this was epitomized in the election of a parliament with representatives from all provinces.

Just as important, this study demonstrates that these boundaries of difference and integration were crucially related to the process of knowledge production about local society. I explore the struggles and controversies among different groups of Ottoman bureaucrats, local leaders, and European scholars about what the "customs and dispositions" of local society actually were and into which governmental institutions and practices they should be translated. I show that

high-ranking Ottoman officials, local jurists (*‘ulamā’*), and the Zaydī *imāms* often argued the centrality of particular categories of knowledge in order to further their own political agendas. Indeed, throughout the period under study, Ottoman notions of local backwardness differed widely and were used to justify very different policy recommendations. In the mid-1890s, for instance, the governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, successfully advised against taking away tax collection privileges from those tribal leaders and small lords collectively known as *shaykhs* by arguing that the local people were still “uncivilized” and hence too attached to these elite figures. Only four years later, his successor, Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa, embarked upon the disempowerment of these leaders after having convinced the central government that Ottoman “civilizing” efforts had been sufficiently successful to allow for such a measure.²⁸ Moreover, in contrast to what occurred in parts of the British and Russian empires, these efforts at knowledge production were not carried out within the framework of scholarly societies and universities by scores of geographers, archaeologists, botanists, or ethnographers. To the very end of Ottoman rule, the main conduits of producing knowledge about local society remained administrative memoranda authored by commissions of inspection or individual bureaucrats. These almost never led to the production of gazetteer-style printed manuals for administrative use or large ethnographic studies. To a great extent, these activities remained concerned with matters of authority and revenue collection and had only a very limited scholarly dimension.

²⁸ Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa (1855–1923) was the son of a merchant in Mitylene (Midilli). He was educated at a local *madrassa* and at a *riüşdiye* school. In 1874, he entered provincial officialdom where he spent most of his career. His senior positions include the governor-generalships of Adana (April–November 1897) and Yemen (May 1898–October 1902), as well as the inspector-generalship for Macedonia (1902–8). During the Second Constitutional Period (1908–18) he served as minister of the interior (November 1908–April 1909), grand vizier (February–April 1909 and May 1909–January 1910), minister of justice (July–October 1912), and, finally, ambassador to Vienna (October 1912–May 1919), where he remained until his death on 3 April 1923; see Hans-Jürgen Kornrumpf, “Hüseyn Hilmi Pascha. Anmerkungen zu seiner Biographie,” in *Festschrift für Andreas Tietze*, ed. Arne A. Ambros and Anton C. Schaendlinger (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986), 197; however, according to Feroz Ahmad, Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa died on 3 April 1922; see Feroz Ahmad, “Husayn Hilmî Pasha,” *EP*, vol. 3, 624. See also Ahmad, “Husayn Hilmî Pasha,” 624; Kunalalp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, 80; İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal, *Son sadrazamlar* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1982), vol. 3, 1654–1703.

While scholars of the late Ottoman Empire have shown that local actors manipulated categories of rule by “inventing” local customs for the consumption of imperial bureaucrats, I demonstrate that from the late 1870s we see administrators competing both with each other and with local power figures over who “accurately” interpreted local culture.²⁹

Geography

In this study, “Yemen” refers to a vast territory in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula bordering on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Not entirely coterminuous with the territory of today’s Republic of Yemen, it extends from ‘Asīr in the north to the Gulf of Aden in the south and from the shores of the Red Sea in the west to the fringes of the Rub‘ al-Khālī desert in the east. Large portions of this area were part of the Ottoman Empire from 1538 to 1636, and again from 1849–73 to 1919. Geographically, Yemen can be divided into the barren, sandy plains of the Tihāma that are 40–70 kilometers wide and extend along the coast of the Red Sea, and the highlands that run from the Hijaz down to the hinterland of Aden with mountain ranges on its western, southern, and eastern edges, and high plateaus at its center.

The Tihāma was Yemen’s door to the wider world. For centuries, its inhabitants maintained connections to Africa, the Mediterranean, Iran, and South Asia, be it as traders, scholars, Sufis, pirates, or mercenaries. Conquerors like the Ottomans and local rulers like the Qāsīmī *imāms* sought control over port cities such as Luḥayya, Ḥudayda, and Mukhā (Mocha) for strategic reasons and because of the revenues generated by regional and long distance trade. The townspeople and the tribal communities in the rural areas, like the Zarānīq and the Banī Marwān, were overwhelmingly Shāfi‘ī. The few inland towns included Zabīd, the most important center of Shāfi‘ī learning in southwest Arabia. While Sufi orders were well established in the south, Wāhhābī forms of Islam found followers in the northern Tihāma from the early 1800s.³⁰

²⁹ See, for instance, Jens Hanssen, “Practices of Integration—Center-Periphery Relations in the Ottoman Empire,” in *The Empire in the City*, ed. Hanssen, Philipp, and Weber, 61–63, 65; Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 148.

³⁰ See, for instance, Nancy Um, *The Merchant Houses of Mocha: Trade and Architecture in an Indian Ocean Port* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

The highlands, in turn, are divided into several distinct regions. To the far northwest lies ‘Asīr, which includes a stretch of coastal plain and foothills, but is mainly mountainous and often had closer ties to the Hijaz and the Tihāma than to the rest of Yemen. Tribal farmers formed most of its population, which was predominantly Shāfi‘ī. As in the Tihāma, Sufi orders were prominent, especially the Aḥmadiya.³¹

To the east, ‘Asīr borders on Upper Yemen, a highland plateau that stretches from the oasis of Najrān south to the Sumāra pass. This region includes, in the words of Bernard Haykel,

all the major Zaydi centers of learning, such as Ṣa‘da, Sanaa and Dhamār. In Upper Yemen live the farming tribesmen in whose territories Zaydi imams and scholars have based themselves and who have provided the imams with the military power with which to establish their claim to rule. An elective affinity existed between the tribesmen and the imams and this was displayed robustly when the imams waged campaigns against outside invaders, such as the Ottomans, or when they led wars of conquest into outlying regions such as Lower Yemen. The relationship, however, is fraught with tensions and as often as not, tribes turned against an imam, supported a contender, or simply refused to acknowledge any imam.³²

Concentrated around Najrān were the Ismā‘īlīs of the Yām tribe. Historically, the Yām formed alliances with both the Ottomans and the Zaydi *imāms*. Mercenaries from Yām served the Ottomans and many of the local rulers throughout Yemen.³³

South of the Sumāra pass lies Lower Yemen, by far the richest part of Yemen because of the extensive agriculture that is possible on the slopes of its mountains. Lower Yemen is almost entirely Shāfi‘ī. Since pre-Ottoman times, rulers of Yemen sought control over this region because its agricultural riches translated into higher state revenues

³¹ See Johannes Reissner, “Die Idrīsīden in ‘Asīr. Ein historischer Überblick,” *WI* 21 (1981), 167. The Aḥmadiya was founded by Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d. 1837) who was originally from Fez (Morocco); see *ibid.*, 165–66; see also Kinahan Cornwallis, *Asir before World War I: A Handbook* (S Maria La Bruna, Cambridge: Falcon, Oleander, 1976 [1916]), 12. It seems that “‘Asīr” as a geographical term for this region was introduced by Europeans and by the Ottomans and was used only from the 1810s. Originally, “‘Asīr” referred to a tribal confederation around Abḥā, the mountain region was known as al-Sarāt or as Sarāt ‘Asīr while the northern part of the coastal plain and the foothills were referred to as al-Mikhḻāf al-Sulaymānī and their southern portion as al-Mikhḻāf al-Yamānī; see Reissner, “Die Idrīsīden in ‘Asīr,” 167 and 167n6.

³² Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

³³ See, for instance, Farah, *Sultan’s Yemen*, 72–73, 76, 82.

than anywhere else in the country. The prosperity of the land also allowed urban centers such as Ta'izz and Ibb to thrive.³⁴

On its western edges, Upper Yemen merges into another region, the Western Mountains. Here, as in Lower Yemen, extensive agriculture on carefully maintained terraced fields formed the basis of people's livelihoods. It is mainly in the Western Mountains, especially in the areas of Jabal Ḥarāz and Jabal Rayma, that coffee, Yemen's principal cash crop for export since the late sixteenth century, was grown. While people in this region were tribal, local tribes were less important militarily than those of Upper Yemen. Even though a largely Shāfi'i region, the Western Mountains included a significant area of Ismā'īlī settlement around Manākha in Jabal Ḥarāz.³⁵

Politics, Religion, and Sectarian Boundaries in Yemen

Except for small Jewish communities, the population of Yemen was overwhelmingly Muslim, with the majority belonging to the Zaydī Shī'i and Shāfi'i Sunnī sects (*madhāhib*). As seen, there was a certain geopolitical dimension to these sects, insofar as Zaydīs were often associated with the northern highlands (Upper Yemen) and Shāfi'īs with their southern portion (Lower Yemen). Moreover, Shāfi'īs tended to associate Zaydīs with a northern quest for supremacy over the south, while Zaydīs often regarded Shāfi'īs as "subjects." In practice, boundaries between these sects were fluid. For instance, the descendants of many of those Zaydī "governors, administrators, judges, teachers,

³⁴ Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 3–4.

³⁵ There is an ongoing debate among anthropologists, historians, and political scientists about the meaning, significance, and analytical usefulness of the category of "tribe" in Yemen. Isa Blumi, for example, urges scholars to move away from what he considers a fixation on "tribe" as a category to make sense of local society and its dynamics; see Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 43–56. By contrast, Lisa Wedeen and Shelagh Weir focus on exploring the ways in which the category has been used by different actors in different regional and historical contexts; see Shelagh Weir, *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 1–5; Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 170–76. Wedeen's observation that "...tribes do not necessarily denote particular unities of production and exchange, although they can, and the category's meanings and significance vary markedly within Yemen..." (Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions*, 173) also applies, I suggest, to the context of Ottoman Yemen. While throughout this study "tribe" and "tribal" will not appear in quotes, readers should be aware that these are contested categories.

military personnel, and tribesmen” who had moved to Lower Yemen during the 250 years between the two Ottoman occupations eventually became Shāfi‘īs, while those who retained ties to the north remained Zaydīs.³⁶

There were few doctrinal differences between the two sects, the most significant being the Zaydī notion that the imamate, that is, the political and religious leadership of the community of Muslims (*umma*), belonged to a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, who excelled both as a religious scholar and as a warrior. Of particular importance was the emphasis on the charismatic character of the *imām*, which in theory precluded any dynasty formation. A claimant to the imamate was supposed to make his “summons” (*dā‘wa*) and “rise” (*khurūj*) to assert his claim on the battlefield.³⁷ Yet after bringing to an end the first period of Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia in the 1630s, *imāms* of the Qāsimī line established a dynastic state with distinctly “Sunnī” features and came to rule large parts of present-day Yemen. Just as important, by the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Zaydīs developed an indigenous Sunnī-oriented tradition, epitomized by Muḥammad al-Shawkānī, that effectively eliminated the differences between Zaydīs and Shāfi‘īs.³⁸ By the time Ottoman troops embarked on the conquest of highland Yemen, the Qāsimī state had disintegrated and given way to the rule of local lords, among them several pretenders to the Zaydī imamate who competed for influence and resources.

Over the next four decades, several *imāms* continued to oppose the Ottoman presence from their strongholds in the unoccupied highlands north of Ṣan‘ā’. To establish their claims as legitimate rulers, these leaders harked back to the idiom of the “charismatic” *imāms* who had succeeded in ending Ottoman rule in the early seventeenth century: they framed their opposition to the Ottomans as a defense of the *sharī‘a*, which, they argued, the representatives of the imperial government failed to uphold. Indeed, *sharī‘a*-related issues, such as the application of *sharī‘a* punishments (*ḥudūd*) for adultery, false accusation of adultery, drinking wine, theft, and highway robbery (as opposed to those prescribed by the Ottoman criminal code) or authority over the

³⁶ Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 37, 41–42.

³⁷ On the Zaydī doctrine of the imamate see, for instance, Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 6–7, 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, chaps. 2–4.

appointment and removal of judges were part of the terms that Imām Yahyā set for a negotiated settlement with the Ottoman state during the early 1900s.³⁹ These ideas, however, did not prevent a significant portion of the local Zaydī elites from forming alliances with the Ottomans during the entire period under study.

Social Hierarchies

During the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the social structure of Upper Yemen was characterized by a hierarchy of clearly demarcated status groups or estates. The descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad (*sāda*, sing. *sayyid*) considered themselves to be at the top of the social order. Ideally, they were engaged in politics and in the interpretation of Islamic law. Only *sayyids* could become *imāms*. The next lower estate, the *quḍāt* (lit., ‘judges’; sing. *qāḍī*), were in theory religious and legal scholars like the *sayyids*. While every tribesman (*qabīlī*) could become a *qāḍī* through the mastery of Islamic law, the status of *qāḍī* was often hereditary. In the history of Upper Yemen, *qāḍīs* have been prominent not only as *sharīʿa* court judges and religious-cum-legal scholars, but also as government administrators, sometimes in senior positions.⁴⁰

At the same time, Paul Dresch reminds us that

[a]s with the qadis, so with the sayyids, the conspicuous actors...are the scions of a few great houses, but their relatives less close to the core of the family’s power, and sayyids from other families, did not occupy any fixed place in political structures or in relations of production. Some taught, some farmed, and some, at particular junctures, governed, although intermittently. They cannot safely be spoken of *en bloc* as having been a ruling class.⁴¹

Sayyids and *qāḍīs* often lived in protected enclaves (*hijar*; sing. *hijra*). These were towns or villages in tribal territory. Below these two learned estates were the tribal farmers who formed the majority of the local population. The armed protection that they extended to the members of all estates constituted a central element of Upper Yemen’s social

³⁹ See B. Carra de Vaux, J. Schacht, “Ḥadd,” *EP*, vol. 3, 20.

⁴⁰ Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 136–37; Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 4.

⁴¹ Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 141.

order. *Sayyids*, *qāḍīs*, and tribesmen considered themselves above a number of estates, those whose members were not of tribal origin and who were associated with certain professional occupations, such as barbers, butchers, musicians, tanners, or weavers. They were collectively known as the *banū 'l-khums* (lit. “sons of the fifth,” i.e., potential recipients of public charity). As *dhimmīs* (protected non-Muslim subjects under Muslim rule) and/or “tribal clients” (*jīrān*), the local Jews stood apart from this social hierarchy.⁴²

The Plan of this Study

Chapter 2 situates the Ottoman military campaigns of 1871–73 and the subsequent creation of the new Province of Yemen within the larger context of the political and social transformations that the Ottoman state and society underwent from the 1830s as a result of the *Tanzīmāt*. I also explore the political and economic processes in southwest Arabia that facilitated the Ottoman re-conquests. I focus particularly on the demise of the foremost regional power, the dynastic state of the Qāsimī *imāms*, and on the emergence of competing local lords as the principal political players in various parts of the Yemeni highlands.

At the same time, I show that at this stage, the highlighting of local difference was largely limited to the writings of Ottoman bureaucrats and literati. Encouraged by what had been a series of quick and decisive victories over local rulers, during the early 1870s Ottoman officials assumed that the task of turning the local people into loyal Ottoman subjects would be accomplished in the near future. As a result, the governmental institutions that they created in the new province and their administrative practices emphasized incorporation into the Ottoman imperial system much more strongly than differentiation.

Drawing on Ottoman sources from the years 1849–75, chapter 3 shows that the re-conquest of highland Yemen ushered in not only a more direct form of Ottoman rule, but also marked a new way of looking at the local peoples. Unlike their predecessors in 1849, senior officials like Brigadier-General Aḥmed Rāṣīd or Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa, the first governor-general of the new province, represented the indigenous

⁴² Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 5; Franck Mermier, “Al-Yaman, 4: Ethnology and Social Structure of the Yemeni Highlands,” *EP*, vol. 11, 277.

population as “backward” and, hence, different, in order to emphasize the need for the imposition of “civilizing” Ottoman rule.⁴³ I argue that Islamic concepts and spatiality were central to these notions of local backwardness: imperial bureaucrats viewed local society as uncivilized not only because it practiced what they considered a primitive and degenerate form of Islam, but also because it was politically fragmented and had allowed major urban centers to fall into decline. The ordering of provincial space—for instance through the creation of a hierarchy of administrative divisions and urban construction projects—was thus a crucial element of Ottoman ideas about civilizing the indigenous peoples.

In chapter 4, I explore a decisive shift in the Ottoman approach toward governing Yemen that occurred between the mid-1870s and the late 1880s and that led to the elaboration of “colonial Ottomanism.” During this period, local opposition to the introduction of more direct, centralizing governance, financial constraints as a result of state bankruptcy, and increasing concerns about British and Italian imperial competition in the southern Red Sea region prompted Ottoman bureaucrats to go farther in adapting administrative structures and practices to what they perceived as forms of local authority and conflict resolution than they had in the early 1870s. Arguing that the “uncivilized” could not be governed like Ottoman subjects in areas under tighter government control, they now shifted the emphasis of provincial governance in Yemen from incorporation to differentiation. More than before, these bureaucrats thus came to adopt politics of difference that formalized the supposedly lower station of the indigenous people vis-à-vis their conquerors through specific modes of governance. As we shall see, local actors, such as tribal leaders and the *sāda* contested and manipulated the categories of knowledge on which this politics of difference was premised in an attempt to advance their own political agendas.

Chapter 5 is a detailed study of the ways in which the emergence of the Zaydī *imām* al-Manṣūr bī’l-lāh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn (d. 1904) (hereafter: al-Manṣūr) and his son and successor Yaḥyā as the most prominent leaders of the anti-Ottoman opposition in Yemen

⁴³ For Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa (1839–1919) see Feroz Ahmad, “Mukhtār Pasha, Ghāzī Aḥmed,” *EP*, vol. 7, 525–526.

during the period between 1891 and 1907, challenged and transformed the politics of difference that had been adopted since the mid-1870s. Unlike their predecessors during the 1870s and 1880s, al-Manṣūr and Yaḥyā succeeded in carrying their insurgencies deep into the Province of Yemen in 1891–92, 1898–99, and 1904–7, thereby increasing the pressure on the Ottomans. As the government's competition with the *imāms* over the loyalty of the local people intensified, senior bureaucrats raised serious doubts about the politics of difference as it had been elaborated since the late 1870s and they attempted to refashion it in ways that the local people could accept as righteous Muslim rule. It was in this context that, from 1898, Governor-General Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa reorganized provincial revenue collection by taking it out of the hands of local *shaykhs*, banned the production and sale of alcohol throughout the province, and required officials to adopt the dress code of local '*ulamā*'. At the same time, mounting opposition under the leadership of the *imāms* helped establish sectarian affiliation as the primary category through which officials sought to make sense of the political and social dynamics in the empire's southernmost province. I show that controversies over the politics of difference and the related categories of knowledge were the sites where senior bureaucrats and local elites not only fought over the nature of provincial government but also pushed for a form of governance that would help them secure substantial material benefits.

Chapter 6 examines how, in the aftermath of the 1904–7 uprising, the politics of difference was reconfigured to reach its most elaborate form in the Da‘ān agreement of October 1911 that ended the conflict between the Ottoman central government and Imām Yaḥyā. The Da‘ān agreement established a sectarian order unprecedented in the history of Yemen by dividing the province into a Sunnī-dominated part that remained exclusively under Ottoman rule and an Ottoman-Imamic condominium in which the Zaydī branch of Shī‘ī Islam predominated. The arrangements laid down in the agreement accorded Yaḥyā the status of a Zaydī community leader and dependent ruler under Ottoman sovereignty, thus affirming the subordinate position of Zaydīs within the Sunnī-led Ottoman imperial system. The agreement also provided the *imām* with financial and military support against his local rivals and thus allowed him to consolidate a power base from which he would build an independent Yemeni state following the Ottoman withdrawal from southwest Arabia in the aftermath of World War I.

A Note on the Sources

In this study I draw on Ottoman, British, and local Yemeni sources. I was fortunate to do my research in the archives and libraries in Istanbul at a time when these institutions made available a richer variety of sources on Yemen than ever before. A large part of these are government papers of various kinds, such as telegrams, commission reports, and memoranda. These documents show that there was a high degree of dissent and debate among officials as to how Yemen should be governed. In other words, they show that Ottoman attempts to control this outlying province involved a high degree of “experimentation” and, therefore, caution us against viewing Ottoman rule in terms of a cohesive, monolithic “project.”

At the same time, these documents provide a wealth of information about the various ways in which the local population coped with the Ottoman presence. For instance, commission reports reveal that local ‘*ulamā*’ defied their rulers by mentioning the name of the Zaydī *imām* and not that of the Ottoman sultan-caliph in the *khuṭba* during the Friday prayer and that avoidance protest, migration, or unregulated trade (“smuggling,” from the government perspective) were common ways of coping with Ottoman rule. Beyond these government papers, I found petitions, letters, newspaper articles, and parliamentary minutes that allowed me to bring out local voices more directly. The availability of these local, mostly Arabic sources in Istanbul is all the more important because both archival sources and private papers from the Ottoman period are still extremely difficult to access in Yemen itself. What is available are mostly chronicles from the period under study and prosopographical dictionaries. These chronicles are particularly important sources because they provide information about local perspectives on Ottoman rule that is otherwise difficult to obtain. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that they do reflect the perspective of a particular group, the mostly urban-based legal scholars (‘*ulamā*’). Moreover, our understanding of Ottoman governmental policies and practices and of the encounters between the representatives of the Ottoman central government and local actors is limited by the fact that most of the correspondence between different governmental agencies in Yemen has not come to light. Similarly, documents relating to Ottoman *sharī’a* and *nizāmīye* courts remain for the most part inaccessible to researchers.

CHAPTER TWO

THE 'RETURN OF THE TURKS': THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1871-73 AND THE CONTEXT OF TANZĪMĀT IMPERIALISM

Politics and Society in Southwest Arabia in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

By the late 1860s Ottoman control over southwest Arabia was largely limited to a few strongholds on the coastal plain (Tihāma) of 'Asīr and Yemen. These included the port towns of Mukhā, Ḥudayda (the provincial capital at that time), and Luḥayya, as well as a number of towns further inland, most notably Zabīd in the southern Tihāma. All of the regions east of the Tihāma, however, were ruled by a number of local lords of whom only the *amīr* of 'Asīr, Muḥammad b. 'Ā'id, acknowledged Ottoman sovereignty. Though officially he had been appointed governor (*mutaṣarrıf*) of 'Asīr by the government in Istanbul, he enjoyed such a degree of autonomy that this arrangement was in fact a mere formality. Two large-scale campaigns in 1865 and 1870 showed that he aspired to be more than just an important ally of the sultan in southwest Arabia.¹ The *amīr* of 'Asīr wanted to establish himself as the paramount ruler of the region by pushing the Ottomans out of Yemen altogether. While Muḥammad b. 'Ā'id's family had risen to political prominence in 'Asīr as allies of the Saudi rulers of Najd during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the rise of the various lords who controlled Upper and Lower Yemen was a direct result of the disintegration of the Qāsimī state from the late 1820s.²

As scholars of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century southwest Arabia have demonstrated, the demise of the Qāsimī dynasty of Zaydī *imāms* was closely linked to an important shift in the world economy that occurred toward the end of the eighteenth century when European colonies in the Americas in effect took Yemen's place as the main producers of coffee for the European markets. As a result, the most

¹ See, for instance, John Baldry, "Al-Yaman and the Turkish Occupation, 1849-1914," *Arabica* 23 (1976), 166-67.

² *Ibid.*, 162-63.

important source of revenue of the Qāsimī state, the customs dues levied in port cities like Mukhā and Ḥudayda on coffee exports, decreased substantially and finally dried up completely when the *imāms* lost control over the Tihāma from 1832 onward.³ This significantly diminished the ability of the Qāsimīs to buy off opponents and to finance a large bureaucracy and mercenary army. The power of the *imāms* eroded very quickly; this is clear from the fact that in the early 1840s, Imām al-Hādī Muḥammad b. al-Mutawakkil Aḥmad (d. 1843) was able to uphold Qāsimī rule against rebels in Lower Yemen, but just ten years later, neither of the two major pretenders to the imamate was able to control Ṣan‘ā’.⁴

Local chroniclers referred to this period of disintegration of the Qāsimī state, which was marked by fierce factional conflict between various claimants to the imamate and their supporters and by the rise to political prominence of various local leaders, as the “days of corruption” (*ayyām al-fasād*).⁵ It is, however, important to remember that this portrayal of the decades from the late 1820s as a period of chaos and decline reflects the perspective of a particular social group, namely the mostly urban elite of *sayyids* and legal scholars. As judges and administrators, these elites had belonged to the main beneficiaries of the state that had been built under the auspices of Qāsimī rule from the mid-seventeenth century onward. Thus, they likely experienced the most dramatic decline in political influence and economic standing.

If read against the grain, local accounts provide ample evidence that the *ayyām al-fasād* were a period of rapid and profound socio-political transformation that brought new centers of power and new elite groups to the fore. Mainly due to the paucity and sketchy nature of the sources on this period, our understanding of the nature of these transformations remains extremely limited. It seems, however, that by the late 1860s at least three major power centers had emerged. Members of the Sharaf al-Dīn family had succeeded in carving out their own sphere of influence in the area northwest of Ṣan‘ā’ and in establishing themselves as *amīrs* of Kawkabān. Similarly, there is evidence that under the leadership of their *dā‘ī*, members of the local Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ī community formed an independent polity in one of their major areas

³ See Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 187.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵ Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.

of settlement in Yemen, the rich coffee growing region of Jabal Ḥarāz in the central highlands between Ṣan'ā' and the coastal plain. From Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh-i Yemen ve Ṣan'ā'* [History of Yemen and Ṣan'ā'], it appears that the *dā'ī*, as ruler of Jabal Ḥarāz, drew crucial support from mercenaries of the Ismā'īlī Yām tribe in Wādī Najrān in the far northeast of Upper Yemen.⁶ Rāšid also mentions that from around the early 1850s, a local ruler by the name of Sayyid 'Alī was in control of the second major coffee producing area in Yemen, the region of Jabal Rayma southwest of Jabal Ḥarāz and adjacent to the Tihāma.⁷

Apart from these major rulers, however, a large number of smaller lords also benefited from the breakup of the Qāsimī state. For instance, in reports from Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa to the grand vizier, written just after Ottoman military forces took Ṣan'ā' in April 1872, there is a suggestion that many of these lesser rulers were the descendants of mercenary leaders from the tribal communities of Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn whom the Qāsimī *imāms* had assigned revenue grants (*kuṭ'a*) that allowed them to collect a specified amount of taxes in certain designated areas throughout the highland region around the former capital. While in theory awarded on a temporary basis, these revenue grants appear to have turned into de facto landed property with the disintegration of the Qāsimī state.⁸ Further correspondence from the period immediately following the Ottoman conquest contains evidence that not only the power of these smaller lords, but also that of major rulers like the *amīrs* of Kawkabān had their roots in the *kuṭ'a* system of the Qāsimī *imāms*. It seems that this applied also to parts of Lower Yemen, where mercenary leaders of the Dhū Muḥammad or Dhū Ḥusayn and their descendants appear to have taken control of the environs of Ta'izz and Ibb.

During the Qāsimī period the *imāms* had, on a regular basis, employed substantial numbers of mercenaries from the tribal communities of Ḥāshid and Bakīl in Upper Yemen; these mercenaries were men who were unable to make a living from agriculture alone. Since the collapse of the Qāsimī state left these communities without this important source of income, it is possible that the seizure of land in

⁶ Aḥmed Rāšid, *Tārīh-i Yemen ve Ṣan'ā'*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Başıret Matba'ası, AH 1291/1874–75), vol. 2, 87–90.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 169.

⁸ BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 45341, doc. 2, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa, to the ministry of war, 21 Nisan 1288/3 May 1872.

the immediate vicinity of Ṣan‘ā’ during the two decades prior to the Ottoman conquest occurred as part of an attempt on the part of Bakīlī tribesmen from Banū Ḥārith and Arḥab to make up for this loss of income.⁹

Notably, the rise of these local lords in Upper and Lower Yemen was not the only consequence of the demise of the Qāsimī state. As noted earlier, by the early 1850s the power base of the Zaydī *imāms* had eroded to such a degree that they were no longer able to provide a modicum of security sufficient to prevent local leaders from the surrounding areas from seizing the lands in the greater Ṣan‘ā’ valley from which many of the residents of the city appear to have drawn their livelihoods. In fact, the two main claimants to the imamate at the time, al-Hādī Ghālib b. Muḥammad and al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin had, by all accounts, become little more than rival lords who turned the former capital into an arena for their political ambitions and rivalries. Not surprisingly, this armed conflict between imamic factions greatly disrupted the city’s economy: vital foodstuffs from the immediate hinterland and imported goods from farther a field only reached Ṣan‘ā’ markets irregularly. This, in turn, drove up prices and led to repeated devaluations of the local currency.¹⁰ It was in this context that, from the mid-1850s onward, changing coalitions of Ṣan‘ānī merchants and headmen of the city’s neighborhoods took the unprecedented step of electing one of their peers—first Aḥmad al-Haymī and, soon after his death in 1862, Muḥsin Mu‘īd—*shaykh* of Ṣan‘ā’ in an attempt to secure the city’s autonomy against the *imāms* and their allies in the hinterland. While al-Haymī, Mu‘īd, and their supporters at various points in time over the next two decades had to enter into alliances with their opponents among the ‘*ulamā*’, merchants, and artisans of Ṣan‘ā’, as well as with the *imāms*, they nevertheless succeeded in retaining control over the city’s affairs, at least until the beginning of the Ottoman occupation in 1872.¹¹

However, there is evidence that by 1871 these Ṣan‘ānī leaders had come to the conclusion that on their own they would be unable to prevail against their opponents, particularly Imām al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin

⁹ See BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 45341, doc. 3, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa, to the ministry of war, 21 Nisan 1288/3 May 1872.

¹⁰ See Franck Mermier, *Le Cheikh de la Nuit. Sanaa: Organisation des Souks et Société Citadine* (Arles: Sindbad/Actes Sud, 1997), 44.

¹¹ For a nuanced analysis of this process see Mermier, *Cheikh de la Nuit*, 45–51.

and those lords from Arḥab who had succeeded in cutting off the city from its supplies from the north. Turning to the Ottomans for support appeared to them, it seems, as the only viable strategy that was likely to ensure their political and economic survival. As a result, Muḥsin Mu'īd and several of his local allies from among the merchants and 'ulamā' negotiated the handover of Ṣan'ā' during 1871 and early 1872 with Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa, the commander of the invading Ottoman expeditionary force.

It seems that one of Muḥsin Mu'īd's political opponents, Imām al-Hādī Ghālib b. Muḥammad, also viewed the Ottoman invasion as an opportunity to outmaneuver his rivals. Whereas al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin decided to withdraw to the northern highlands after his attempts to mobilize the Ṣan'ānīs for a *jihād* against the Ottomans yielded only the meager result of some five hundred supporters, it is clear from the *Ḥawliyyāt Yamāniya* that Imām al-Hādī sought an alliance with the invaders. Quite obviously, he wanted to adopt the same strategy that his father had pursued in 1849, namely, securing the imamate for himself by readily accepting the position of a dependent ruler under Ottoman sovereignty.¹² As it turned out, al-Hādī miscalculated the intentions of the conquerors: by 1872 Ottoman bureaucrats had abandoned ideas of governance for the province that would allow for such a degree of "indirect rule." For the next thirty-five years policy makers in Ṣan'ā' and Istanbul did not consider an Ottoman-Imamic alliance a serious option for governing the empire's southernmost province.

By contrast, an alliance with the city's merchants and 'ulamā' was, for the Ottomans, as we shall see, important because it provided them with a secure operational base from which they could undertake the further subjugation of the northern highlands and where they could establish the capital of the new Yemen *vilāyeti*. The willingness of urban leaders to prefer the Ottomans to the *imāms* as their future protective power also greatly facilitated the claim of imperial bureaucrats that they were liberating an oppressed people from the tyranny of local rulers. If the merchants and 'ulamā' of Ṣan'ā' had hoped that the advent of Ottoman rule would be conducive to creating an environment in which they could thrive economically, they were not

¹² Anonymous, *Ḥawliyyāt Yamāniya*, ed. 'Abdullāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī (Ṣan'ā': Dār al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya, 1991), 293, 298.

disappointed. Many of them, particularly members of the ‘*ulamā*’, found employment in the new provincial administration. As Horst Kopp and Eugen Wirth have argued, the following decades also brought a considerable boost to local businesses:

...si l’on excepte les années de famine et de guerre autour de 1905, on peut dire que la deuxième période de domination ottomane apporta aux habitants de Sanaa sécurité personnelle, confiance dans les structures politiques et économiques et nombreux possibilités de revenus supplémentaires. On pouvait désormais sans honte montrer son aisance et manifester son prestige social. Dans une telle situation, où prévalait la concurrence entre les propriétaires de maisons et entre les artisans qualifiées, s’est forgé le style quasi hybride de l’architecture de Sanaa.¹³

Tanzīmat Imperialism and the Re-conquest of Southwest Arabia

By the time Ottoman military forces under the command of Division General (*ferīk*) Meḥmed Redīf Paşa launched their campaign to conquer the highland regions of ‘Asīr and Yemen in 1871, the Ottoman government had already been pursuing the objective of re-establishing its rule over southwest Arabia for nearly fifty years.

The Ottoman re-conquest of Yemen must be seen within the broader framework of the profound transformations that government agencies and society in the Ottoman Empire underwent from the early 1800s and that in many ways paralleled developments in Japan under the Meiji regime. Like the latter, Ottoman rulers and their allies sought to shore up the empire’s defense against increasing European encroachment by re-organizing their administrative bodies and armed forces in ways that adapted European-style expertise to local needs. Territorial expansion to establish more direct control over the empire’s Arab borderlands in North Africa, geographical Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula was meant to provide more security and resources. Both official correspondence and Aḥmed Rāşid’s *Tārīh-i Yemen ve Şan’ā* suggest that the Ottoman government decided to re-conquer southwest Arabia for strategic and economic reasons. These were, in turn, related to the larger context of the above-mentioned reforms that were

¹³ Horst Kopp and Eugen Wirth, *Sanaa: Développement et Organisation de l’Espace d’une Ville Arabe*, traduit de l’allemand par Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert et François Blukacz (Sanaa: Centre Français d’Etudes Yéménites, 1994), 41–42.

meant to bring about an imperial revival. After the failure of their initial attempt to take control of Şan'ā' and the surrounding highlands in 1849, representatives of the imperial government largely limited their designs to maintaining their presence in the principal port cities and in some strongholds throughout the coastal plain. To further secure this Ottoman foothold in southwest Arabia, the government entered into alliances with local leaders, most notably with the *amīr* of 'Asīr, Muḥammad b. 'Ā'idī who, by this time, was probably the most powerful ruler in the region. In return for acknowledging Ottoman suzerainty, the *amīr* was appointed governor of 'Asīr and left with a substantial degree of autonomy. It seems that for most of the 1850s and 1860s policy makers in Istanbul did not want to commit any more of the empire's financial resources to what was then clearly considered an imperial outpost of secondary importance.

By the late 1860s, however, several factors appear to have contributed to a reassessment of the Ottoman position in this part of the empire by those in government circles. For one, several uprisings led by Muḥammad b. 'Ā'idī showed the precarious nature of the Ottoman presence in southwest Arabia. Quite obviously, granting the *amīr* autonomy had not achieved the intended objective of guaranteeing an Ottoman foothold in the region at the price of a relatively low degree of involvement in the hinterland. Moreover, from 1869 onward, their appearance of vulnerability and seeming inability to contain local opposition must have become particularly serious to senior officials. As Frederick Anscombe has demonstrated, there was a widely-held concern in Ottoman government circles that the opening of the Suez Canal that year would lead to increased inter-imperial competition in the Red Sea region, especially with Britain, which would take advantage of easier access to the Red Sea to seek territorial gains at the expense of the Ottomans.¹⁴ By occupying the Yemeni highlands, the government sought to create a buffer zone in order to prevent the British from extending their sphere of influence from the hinterland of Aden toward the Hijaz. Protecting the annual pilgrimage route and securing control of the holy sites at Mecca and Medina had always been a crucial element of the Ottoman dynasty's politics of legitimacy.¹⁵ It had become even more important from the reign of 'Abdūl'azīz,

¹⁴ See Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, 16–19.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, 7–10, 92–126, 184–87.

when the sultans began to stress their role as caliphs and the Islamic character of the empire as part of their efforts to create a political climate of unity and cohesion against both European encroachments and secessionist movements at home.¹⁶ The Ottoman government, however, was not only concerned about European imperial competition, but also suspected that the Khedive İsmā'īl, as autonomous ruler of Egypt nominally under Ottoman sovereignty, had designs on southwest Arabia.¹⁷ At the same time, the central government was in need of funds to pay for an expanding bureaucracy, infrastructure, and army (under the auspices of the *Tanzīmāt*), and seizing control of the rich agricultural areas in Lower Yemen and the northwestern highlands meant a substantial increase in tax revenues. Finally, adding an estimated three million people to the sultan's subjects must have seemed to military planners an important expansion of the pool of conscripts for the imperial army.

The Ottoman re-conquest of Yemen was, for all intents and purposes, an imperialist expansion. For one, establishing direct rule over Lower Yemen and most of the northern highlands was imperialist in the sense that it was, quite literally, an act of empire building: the Ottoman Empire had come to an end in this part of the Arabian Peninsula in the 1630s when the Qāsimīs had forced government troops to withdraw after a presence of barely a hundred years. At that juncture, power relations between the imperial center and local elites in many of the empire's provinces were in a process of transformation that differed greatly from region to region, but that led, eventually, to a reduced influence of the central government in these locales. Yet, while these local elites still depended on the imperial center to obtain tax collection privileges and social prestige and to recruit the members of their military households, in the case of Yemen the rupture was complete.¹⁸ The Qāsimī rulers were not only independent in fact, but also in the ways in which they conceptualized their polity. The sultan's name was not inscribed on locally minted coins, nor mentioned during Friday

¹⁶ See, for instance, Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 133–35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 134–35.

¹⁸ See Tal Shuval, "Cezayir-i Garp: Bringing Algeria back into Ottoman History," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 22 (Spring 2000), 108. See also Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 111–54; Ariel Salzmann, "An Ancien Regime Revisited: 'Privatization' and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Politics and Society* 21 (1993), 393–423.

prayers, nor was there, as in the case of Egypt, a token governor-general dispatched from Istanbul to stress symbolically the continuity of Ottoman suzerainty. Most importantly, however, the Qāsimīs held the title of “Commander of the Faithful” (*Amīr al-Mu’minīn*), thereby disputing the sultan’s claim to the caliphate.¹⁹ More generally, it was the Zaydī doctrine of the imamate that provided the political-religious underpinnings of Qāsimī resistance to the Ottomans and their claim to rule. This doctrine was first elaborated during the centuries after the *imām* al-Hādī ilā ‘l-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 298/911) founded the Zaydī community in Yemen. Like the Twelver Shī’īs, the Zaydīs believed that the supreme leadership of the community of believers was restricted to descendants of ‘Alī’s sons, Ḥusayn and Ḥasan. But, very much in contrast to the Twelvers, Zaydīs did not recognize a hereditary line of *imāms* and held that any member of the Ahl al-Bayt who issued his “summons” (*da‘wa*) to allegiance and then rose (*khurūj*) against illegitimate rule could be recognized as the rightful *imām*.²⁰ There was, therefore, a strong emphasis on *sayyid* leadership: only *sāda* could become *imāms*. Crucially, the *imām* had to be a warrior-scholar who not only distinguished himself on the battlefield, but also stood out as a *mujtahid*. The Zaydī doctrine of the imamate differed from that of the Twelver Shī’īs also, insofar as it did not consider the *imām* impeccable or infallible; indeed his religious authority could be challenged. As Bernard Haykel put it “[i]f after assuming the post the imam was to come to lack one or more of these qualifications or fall short in the performance of his duties, his imamate was forfeit and he was expected to cede it to a more qualified candidate, who in turn would make his ‘summons’ and ‘rise’.”²¹

¹⁹ See also Robert L. Playfair, *A History of Arabia Felix or Yemen*, reprint of the 1859 Bombay edition (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970), 29–30: “Until the last few years, the throne of Yemen was hereditary in the family of the Imāms of Sanāa; they were of the Zeidee sect, and assumed the title of Ameer-el-Māomineen, or ‘prince of the faithful,’ and were recognised in their own dominions as the spiritual as well as temporal heads of their religion. For several centuries they stamped their own coin, and hoisted their own flag—the double-bladed sword of Ali on a red ground. Now, however, the inhabitants have refused to recognise any longer the government of their legitimate sovereign: for about a year after the last Imām was deposed, robbery and bloodshed reigned unchecked in the city; but at last the merchants agreed one of their own body as governor. His authority is still respected within the walls, but outside the city he is powerless for good or for evil.”

²⁰ See Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 6–7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

After driving the Ottomans out of Yemen in 1635, the Qāsimīs created a dynastic state (*dawla*) that reflected an important change in the nature of imamic authority and rule.²² It is, however, crucial to note that the earlier concepts of the imamate did not disappear. Grounded in “the potential for righteous rule and a just order embedded in manuals of law and the Ahl al-Bayt, an ever present source of imams” they survived the Qāsimī *dawla* and its demise and played an important role in galvanizing resistance to Ottoman rule from the 1870s.²³

The Qāsimī dynastic state and the elites that were forged during its rise from the mid-seventeenth century were not part of the framework of the Ottoman state and society. Moreover, Yemen did not experience what Ehud Toledano has called the “dual process of *localization-Ottomanization*” that occurred in the remaining Arab provinces of the empire from the late seventeenth century as

...Ottoman soldiers, officers, and administrators, gradually developed local interests, joined the local economy, and married local women. They learned Arabic, acquired local tastes, and became locally acculturated. At the same time, members of wealthy families and urban notables achieved Ottoman power-elite status by entering the administration. They accepted the privileged position of Ottoman culture and sought education in the imperial system, either in Istanbul or locally. They learned Ottoman Turkish, and were trained for government posts. The competition among these families for upper-echelon government jobs carrying elite status was often fierce, and (to the delight of the imperial centre) ‘local’ interests were not infrequently sacrificed in the process... These processes had a major political impact on the regions treated here, in that they slowed down the disintegration of Ottoman rule. The success of the inclusivist nature of these processes ensured the loyalty of local elites to the empire and enabled them to feel a strong sense of belonging to the Ottoman community.²⁴

To foreign travelers, such as the Danish geographer Carsten Niebuhr, who visited the region in the mid-eighteenth century, it was clear that whereas Egypt was still part of the Ottoman Empire, the Qāsimī state was not.²⁵

²² Ibid., 17.

²³ Ibid., 15–16.

²⁴ See Ehud R. Toledano, “The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700–1900): A Framework for Research,” in *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from within*, ed. Ilan Pappé and Moshe Ma’oz (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 155–56.

²⁵ See Carsten Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern*. Mit einem Vorwort von Stig Rasmussen und einem biographischen Porträt

Thus, what is important about the work of Toledano or Tal Shuval for the context of this study is the way in which it helps us better situate the case of Yemen within the larger effort on the part of the imperial government to incorporate the Arab periphery into the structures of the empire. Whereas in Ottoman Tripolitania, Iraq, and parts of geographical Syria imperial bureaucrats could build, to some extent, on the existing attachment of local elites to the empire for the purpose of establishing the institutions and practices of the *Tanzīmāt* state, this was not possible in southwest Arabia. In the former cases it is, therefore, more appropriate to view attempts to establish *Tanzīmāt* forms of governance as centralization, in the sense that they were meant to intensify already existing ties between these regions and the imperial center. In the case of Yemen, however, the advent of the *Tanzīmāt* state was much more an imposition of alien rule and hence more comparable to forms of European or Japanese imperial expansion during this period. Thus, the conquest of Yemen should be seen as an example of what Louise Young, with reference to the Meiji regime in Japan, has termed expansion in "self-defense."²⁶ Very much like the first Japanese expeditions to Korea and Taiwan in the 1890s, the conquest of Yemen was intended to make the empire safer against the encroachments of its European rivals and to enhance its position in the southern Red Sea region which, since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, had increasingly become an area of intense imperial competition.

On 22 January 1873, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa, the first governor-general (*vālī*) of the new Province of Yemen sent a report to the grand vizier describing in considerable detail the military campaigns during the previous year that had led to the conquest of Lower Yemen and most of the northern highlands. The *paşa* then outlined the administrative measures that had been taken to create the new province. Having laid out the elements of what he viewed as the successful re-establishment of Ottoman rule over southwest Arabia, the governor-general concluded on a triumphant note:

von Barthold Georg Niebuhr (Zurich: Manesse, 1997), 140–42 (on Egypt); Niebuhr's account also shows that at the time of his journey, in the 1760s, an Ottoman governor resided in Jidda, see *ibid.*, 285. By contrast he referred to the part of southwest Arabia controlled by the Qāsimī *imāms* as the "Kingdom of Yemen" (Königreich Jemen) and therefore as a political entity independent of the Ottoman Empire, *ibid.*, 290.

²⁶ Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 23.

... the rule and titles of the more than three hundred lords of which the province used to consist... have been completely and entirely destroyed and abolished and rich and poor and the elites and the common people are now considered equal by the government; in all affairs and matters of the province everything is geared toward the application of those principles that guide regular administrative measures in the other exalted provinces. For that reason, the Province of Yemen has been made indistinguishable from the latter...²⁷

Ahmed Muhtâr Paşa sought to convey, in these lines, more than a report that a former imperial province had been reclaimed for the sultan. He implied that with the creation of the Province of Yemen, the nature of Ottoman rule in this part of the Arabian Peninsula had changed radically. Ever since the imperial government had tried to regain a foothold in southwest Arabia in the late 1830s, large parts of the region had been ruled indirectly through local leaders such as Muḥammad b. 'Ā'id, who maintained his position as *amîr* of 'Asîr, but under the title of governor (*mutaşarrıf*). Similarly, before Kıbrıslı Tevfik Paşa's abortive expedition to Şan'a in 1849 rendered this plan void, an understanding had been reached with the Zaydî *imâm* al-Mutawakkil Muḥammad whereby the latter would have ruled the highlands on behalf of the Ottomans.²⁸ Under these arrangements local leaders retained a high degree of autonomy, to such an extent that their attachment to the empire was often purely nominal. Now, however, with the disempowerment of the local rulers and the granting of equality before the law to all of the sultan's new subjects, key elements of *Tanzîmât* governance had been introduced. Under this new regime the indigenous population would be governed to a much lesser degree according to local notions of power; rather, first and foremost, governance would take place through institutions, practices, and regulations that were, theoretically at least, universally applied throughout the empire. Thus, Ottoman soldiers and administrators embarked upon the far more ambitious undertaking of remaking local

²⁷ BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 1922, doc. 1.2, memorandum, governor-general of Yemen, Ahmed Muhtâr Paşa, to the grand vizier, 10 Kanun-i sani 1288/22 January 1873, 7–8: "...vilâyetiñ mürekkeb oldığı üçyüzden ziyâde dere beglik 'ünvân ve idareleri...kâmilen esâsından mahv ve ilgâ edilüb ganî ve fakîr ve e'âlî ve edânî nazar-i hükümetde yeksân tutilmağda vel-hâşıl bil-cümle umûr ve huşûşât-i vilâyetde vilâyat-i celile-i sâireniñ mebdâ-i idâre-i harekât-i nizâmiyesine taṭbîk mu'amele kılınmağda olmasından ṭolayı Yemen vilâyeti dahi hemân anlardan farksız bir hâle getirilmiş..."

²⁸ See Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 188.

society according to the concepts and principles of *Tanzîmât* governance. At the same time, the reference to equality before the law and the application of uniform, empire-wide standards of administration suggests that the government indeed intended to treat the local people on the same footing with populations in more “developed” parts of the empire.

There is evidence that this perspective was the result of a series of decisive and mostly quick victories that had characterized the campaigns of 1871–73. For instance, in the instructions for Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa that were drawn up soon after he was appointed commander-in-chief of the Ottoman expeditionary force in southwest Arabia, the government sounded a much more careful note: in the passages concerning the creation of a provincial administration after the successful conclusion of military operations, Aḥmed Muhtâr was instructed not to appoint any administrators who were likely to be hostile to, and to take action against, the dispositions and customs of the local population.²⁹ He was also authorized to allow for modifications of administrative regulations according to local custom if need be. Finally, the central government made it clear that future governmental structures in general, and levels of taxation in particular, were to be of a kind that would not alienate the indigenous population.³⁰ These instructions were most probably issued during the campaign against Muḥammad b. ‘Ā’id in ‘Asîr and definitely before the beginning of the advance from the Tihâma through the Jabal Ḥarâz region toward Şan‘â’. They reflect, therefore, an uncertainty in government circles as to how long the campaign would take and how much resistance it was still likely to encounter. Under these circumstances, the soldiers and administrators seemed well advised to take into account local conditions when it came to creating the new Province of Yemen.

It is also necessary to view the government’s perspective against the background of the severe setbacks that had frustrated all previous attempts to establish more direct rule beyond the coastal strongholds seized in the late 1840s. For example, Kıbrıslı Tevfîk Paşa’s attempt to occupy Şan‘â’ and the surrounding highlands in 1849 had ended in failure: a substantial number of the Ottoman expeditionary force

²⁹ BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 1705, no date, council of ministers to Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa.

³⁰ Ibid.

were killed in street fighting with the residents of Şan‘ā’ and the rest was forced to retreat to the coast.³¹ Even operations of a more limited scope, such as the attempted conquest of the Jabal Rayma region to the east of Ḥudayda in 1857–58, had come to nothing.³² More important perhaps, less than two years before the campaign in ‘Asīr began, an uprising led by Muḥammad b. ‘Ā’id had come close to expelling Ottoman forces from Yemen altogether, by laying siege to Ḥudayda, the only remaining holdout of government forces.³³

The campaigns of 1871–73, then, brought what, to many observers, must have appeared as a dramatic reversal of Ottoman fortunes in this part of the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, virtually all of the major rulers who had benefited from the demise of the Qāsimī state in the 1840s and early 1850s suffered spectacular defeats at the hands of the Ottoman military forces. Among them were not only the *amīr* of ‘Asīr who had been the most prominent opponent of Ottoman rule, but also the rulers of Jabal Rayma and Jabal Ḥarāz, and the *amīr* of Kawkabān, northwest of Şan‘ā’. It is clear from both local chronicles and Ottoman correspondence that the defeat of these rulers led many of the smaller lords to surrender without further resistance. Moreover, Şan‘ā’ and Ta‘izz, the two major urban centers of the region, were occupied without fighting.

Through these victories, the Ottomans established themselves as the paramount, unrivaled power in the region—or so it seemed at the time. It is his confidence in this newly-won position of strength that informs Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa’s report to the grand vizier. This confidence, I would argue, led Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa to the conclusion that the more cautious approach toward governing the new province that the government in Istanbul had suggested was no longer necessary: given the strength of the Ottoman position he does not appear to have anticipated any serious opposition to the attempt to turn the local people into loyal Ottoman subjects through the homogenizing institutions and practices of the modern state. Since perceived difference could, therefore, be expected to disappear in the near future, they saw no need to formalize it by adapting governmental structures and

³¹ On Kıbrıslı Tevfik Paşa’s expedition, see, for instance, Farah, *Sultan’s Yemen*, 59–60.

³² See Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 169–71.

³³ On this uprising and the siege of Ḥudayda, see, for instance, BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 1639, doc. 1.2, governor of Yemen (*Yemen mutaşarrıfi*), ‘Alī Paşa, to the grand vizier, 28 Teşrin-i evvel 1286/9 November 1870.

practices to what officials viewed as local customs. Thus it was believed possible to govern the indigenous population just as the people in the more developed parts of the empire.

A closer look at government correspondence and the official account of the campaign, recorded in Aḥmed Râşid's *Târih*, suggests that Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa's views were, indeed, endorsed officially. For instance, both Râşid and a committee of war ministry officials were explicit in dismissing local ways as "savage" and culturally inferior. They recommended that, in order to govern the new province successfully, officials should *know* these ways, but did not suggest that such cultural hierarchies be translated into specific administrative structures.³⁴ Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa's assertion that the Province of Yemen would be integrated into the empire as a province like all the others was confirmed just three years later, when the government allowed the new province to be represented by two deputies in the first Ottoman parliament. Yet, a careful reading of the above-mentioned sources suggests a more nuanced picture. At the end of his 1873 report to the grand vizier, Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa emphasized that he expected censuses and cadastral surveys, two crucial elements of *Tanzîmât* governance, to be implemented in Yemen soon. In other words, the *paşa* admitted that for a certain period of time, at least, there would be a need for politics of differentiation in the newly created province.

While the decision to grant parliamentary representation to members of the local elites might well have reflected the hope for a swift assimilation of the local people along the lines imagined by the government, it is possible to argue that it was also related to the larger context of inter-imperial competition that characterized the position of the Ottoman Empire in south Arabia in particular, but also in international politics in general. Judging from Râşid's account, the campaigns of 1871–73 were prompted, in no small part, out of concern to prevent a rival European power—most probably Britain—from occupying Yemen.³⁵ While the success of these military operations certainly led officials like Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa to believe that the Ottoman position in the region was more secure than it had been since the seventeenth century, political developments during the years 1873–75 must have

³⁴ See BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 47047, doc. 3.2, council of military ordinances (*meclis-i tanzîmât-i askerîye*) to the grand vizier, 3 Teşrin-i evvel 1289/15 October 1878.

³⁵ Râşid, *Târih*, vol. 2, 256–58.

mitigated this view somewhat. More specifically, massive diplomatic pressure on the part of the British government resulted in the withdrawal of Ottoman military forces in 1874 from the Aden hinterland south of Ta'izz—most notably the Sultanate of Laḥj—that they had occupied in 1873. While the Ottoman government justified the occupation of this area with reference to the fact that it been part of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Britain claimed it as within its sphere of influence and won.

Among Ottoman officials, this diplomatic setback might have raised fears about a loss of prestige among the local population and, hence, a weakening of the Ottoman position that would encourage leaders to seek British protection. In this context, allowing a recently conquered province to be represented in the Ottoman parliament can be interpreted as an attempt to ward off perceived British designs on southwest Arabia by demonstrating beyond the *fait accompli* of military occupation that the Ottoman government was serious about reclaiming Yemen as an integral part of the empire. At the same time, this decision might have been intended as a signal to local elites that they would be offered a greater stake in the Ottoman state than they could ever expect under British rule.

In 1880, senior officials, among them Maḥmūd Nedīm and Sa'īd *paşas*, made a similar argument with reference to the Albanian, Kurdish, and Arab parts of the empire in general in a memorandum for the Palace. They suggested that integrating individuals from these regions into the Ottoman army, civil officialdom, and the religious hierarchy was crucial to maintaining the empire's internal cohesion against the encroachment of foreign—in other words, European—powers.³⁶

To a great extent, then, it was the particular power configurations between the Ottoman government and its agents on the one hand, and local leaders and the European imperial powers on the other, that shaped Ottoman perspectives on the population of southwest Arabia and its place within the socio-political structures of the empire. These perspectives differed markedly from the ways in which bureaucrats and intellectuals of most imperial powers during the second half of the nineteenth century conceptualized the governance of the conquered peoples in their dominions. To be sure, in the Ottoman case, too,

³⁶ See BOA./Y.EE. 75–16, Maḥmūd Nedīm and Sa'īd *paşas* [other seals illegible] to the Palace, 2 Cemaziyülevvel 1297/12 April 1880.

the justification for conquest was based to a significant degree on the perceived cultural inferiority of the local population and, hence, the positing of difference. However, for those Ottoman officials who were involved in the creation of the Yemen *vilāyeti*, the positing of difference was primarily a discursive strategy meant to legitimize imperial expansion, but it was not envisaged as the guiding principle that would inform and structure the mode of governance for the new province. In the moment of victory, politics of differentiation had not disappeared, but what officials emphasized were politics of incorporation. What the sultan's representatives intended to implement, it appears, were the concepts of the *Tanzīmāt* state that were normalizing and homogenizing in character and thus geared to the elimination, not the creation, of difference. Moreover, the evidence discussed earlier suggests that the imperial government was prepared to admit the local people to the emerging community of Ottoman citizens, even though they considered them "backward" and "primitive." In the British context, by contrast, turning the indigenous population of colonial dependencies into fully accepted members of the British nation had arguably never been an objective of imperial policy, while in the context of the French empire, plans of assimilation along these lines had been largely abandoned by this time. By the mid-1870s, therefore, the Ottoman presence in Yemen was certainly *imperialist* insofar as the central government sought to incorporate new territories into the empire and to utilize their human and natural resources. However, there was, I suggest, no intention to establish a colonial regime. As we shall see, perspectives on governing the new province were to change profoundly within less than a decade.

The Beginnings of Ottomanization

At this initial stage of the Ottoman presence, perhaps the most important aspects of this effort to replace the local with the imperial and, thus, to Ottomanize the new province were the disempowerment of the local lords and the introduction of taxation along the lines practiced in other parts of the empire.³⁷ As we have seen, the conquerors

³⁷ See, for instance, Alexander Schölch, *Palästina im Umbruch 1856–1882. Untersuchungen zur wirtschaftlichen und sozio-politischen Entwicklung* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), 184–224.

were not content with breaking the resistance of those local rulers who had chosen to fight the invading Ottoman troops. As in various other parts of the empire over which the government had sought to tighten its grip in the context of the *Tanzîmât*, the objective was to eliminate, or at least neutralize the power bases of all local leaders who posed a potential threat to the Ottoman presence. Often, as in the cases of the rulers of ‘Asîr, Jabal Ḥarâz, and Kawkabân, this meant that these leaders and their families were removed from their seats of government and sent into exile. Among these the *amîr* of Kawkabân received relatively favorable terms: he was exiled to Şan‘â’, where he and his family lived on a government stipend for the next thirty years.³⁸ Moreover, their mountain strongholds, forts, and towers, that is, the most visible symbols of their rule, were either garrisoned by the Ottoman military or torn down.

However, a closer look at Ottoman government correspondence suggests that Muhtâr Paşa’s claim that the rule of all local lords had been brought to an end should be taken with caution. It appears that the new Ottoman rulers were, from the very beginning, willing to co-opt those less prominent leaders who had supported or, at the very least not opposed, the Ottoman conquest. For example, the son of a certain Shaykh Qâsim, then the principal local leader in the Ḥujjariya area south of Ta‘izz, appears to have been given the rank of district governor (*ḵāymaḵām*) and thus been incorporated into the structure of the newly-established provincial government.³⁹ Yet, for prominent political figures there was no place in the new order as dependent rulers under Ottoman sovereignty—even those sympathetic to Ottoman rule. For example, while al-Hādî Ghālîb b. Muḥammad, one of the local pretenders to the Zaydî imamate, appears to have hoped for an arrangement with the Ottomans that would have allowed him to rule as *imâm*, all he received from the Ottoman government was a stipend and a seat on the newly-created administrative council (*meclîs-i idâre*) of the province.

At the same time, a crucial element of the disempowerment of the local lords was what appears to have been a comprehensive restructuring of taxation throughout the province. Little research has so far been

³⁸ See BOA./Y.MTV. 214–38, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Ḥüseyn Ḥilmî Paşa, and reform commission to the Palace, 10 Nisan 1317/23 April 1901.

³⁹ BOA./ŞD. 2259–6, doc. 3, governor-general of Yemen, Mehmed ‘İzzet Paşa, to the ministry of the interior, 24 Ağustos 1298/5 September 1882, 1.

done on the taxation and revenue systems that were used in various parts of Yemen and 'Asir during the decades between the breakup of the Qāsimī state in the late 1830s and the Ottoman conquest in the early 1870s. According to Ottoman government documents, the revenue system from which major local rulers like the *amīr* of Kawkabān, smaller lords, and *sāda* drew their support was known as *kuṭ'a*. While in these documents Ottoman officials did not provide any detailed information on how this system worked, they compared it to the *tīmār* and *muḳāṭa'a* systems that had been current in many parts of the Ottoman Empire before the *Tanzīmāt*.⁴⁰ This suggests that the principle of *kuṭ'a* was the right to collect a certain amount of taxes within a particular area; it seems that many of these revenue grants had turned into de facto landed property since the demise of the Qāsimī state. This revenue system seems to have been a leftover from the Qāsimī period. It is, however, unclear whether rulers like the *amīr* of Kawkabān needed the current Zaydī *imām*—even though he may not have had any real authority over them—to confirm these rights to tax collection. According to al-Wāsi'i, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa demanded to see the “tax registers” upon entering Ṣan'ā' in April 1872, perhaps indicating that this was indeed the case.⁴¹ While Ottoman government papers make no reference to these registers, a document drawn up by the newly-established administrative council of the sub-province of Ṣan'ā' in September 1873 states that before the Ottoman conquest, the *amīr* of Kawkabān, Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn, and two other *sayyids* had received revenues from about one hundred villages.⁴²

Under the new regime the most prominent local rulers and the *sāda* lost their tax collection privileges. However, there is evidence that less important leaders and allies of the Ottoman government, such as Shaykh Ḥamūd of Bājil—in the foothills between Jabal Ḥarāz and the Tihāma—were allowed to continue as tax collectors of the Ottomans. Shaykh Ḥamūd was required to pay a yearly lump-sum tax (*maḳṭū' šūretiyle*) of seventy thousand *ḳurūşes* to the provincial treasury, but

⁴⁰ See, for instance, BOA./ŞD. 2253–22, doc. 2, administrative council of the Province of Yemen to the ministry of the interior, 15 Şubat 1294/27 February 1879.

⁴¹ See 'Abd al-Wāsi' b. Yaḥyā al-Wāsi'i, *Ta'riḳh al-Yaman* (Ṣan'ā': Maktabat al-Yaman al-Kubrā, 1990–91), 260.

⁴² See BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 2027, doc. 2.2, report, *meclis-i idāre* of the Ṣan'ā' *sancağı*, 15 Eylül 1289/27 September 1873, 1.

was otherwise left to raise these taxes and to run the sub-district of Bājil as he saw fit.⁴³ In terms of the fiscal system, too, the sovereignty of the local lords was replaced with a central fiscal administration in the provincial capital that claimed, in the name of the sultan, the right to set and enforce levels of taxation throughout the entire province. As in other provinces of the empire, the local people in large parts of the Yemen *vilāyeti* were required to pay three different types of taxes: the tithe (*a'şār*), which was levied on agricultural products and had been the custom in Yemen previously, the sheep tax (*resm-i aġnām*), and the *vergü*, a personal tax.⁴⁴

Moreover, both the newly re-conquered territories and the areas that had been under Ottoman occupation before 1872 were organized as a province (*vilāyet*), as specified in the law of provincial administration of 1871. Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa and his administrators thus implemented in the Province of Yemen a key element of *Tanzimāt* governance that had first been “introduced on an experimental basis in the Danubian *vilayet* in 1864, and then gradually extended to other provinces.”⁴⁵ As we shall see in chapter 3, the introduction of these regulations in Ottoman Yemen represented a serious effort at re-ordering the conglomerate of rival mini-states into a hierarchical order of administrative sub-divisions headed by a governor-general answerable to the central government in Istanbul. In the words of Gökhan Çetinsaya,

[w]ithin the vilayet a chain of authority was laid down. The vilayet was divided into sancaks [sub-provinces], the sancak into kazas [districts], the kaza into nahiyes [sub-districts] and villages. Under the authority of the vali, the sancak was administered by a mutasarrıf who was appointed by the Sultan, the kaza by a kaymakam who was appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, the nahiye by a müdür, the village by an elected muhtar. At vilayet, sancak, and kaza levels, there were to be administrative councils [*mecâlis-i idāre*], formed, in the case of the vilayet councils, by the governor-general, the chief judge, the chief finance officer, and the chief secretary, together with four representatives of the population (two Muslim and two non-Muslim), and the religious heads of the

⁴³ BOA./ŞD. 2253–22, doc. 2, administrative council of the Province of Yemen to the ministry of the interior, 15 Şubat 1294/27 February 1879.

⁴⁴ BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 1922, doc. 1.2, memorandum, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa, to the grand vizier, 10 Kanun-i sani 1288/22 January 1873, 8. On these taxes see Abdüllatif Şener, *Tanzimat dönemi Osmanlı vergi sistemi* (Istanbul: İşaret, 1990), 91–190.

⁴⁵ See Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890–1908* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 9.

Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The council was to meet under the presidency of the vali. The Vali's administration was divided between civil, financial, police, political, and legal affairs. For each of these he had subordinate officials placed under his orders, though the finance officer was still directly responsible to the Ministry of Finance. The Vali was also responsible for recruiting and appointing his staff.⁴⁶

The new province was divided into the *sancaqs* of 'Asīr, Ḥudayda, Şan'ā', and Ta'izz. By early 1873, several *każā's* had been established in every *sancaq*, but the creation of the *nāhiyes* took much longer and continued well into the 1880s.

By 1873, Ottoman officials and military officers around Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa had made great strides toward integrating the reconquered parts of southwest Arabia into the political and administrative structures of the empire that were more uniform and homogenizing in character than at any point in Ottoman history. There was a strong emphasis on incorporation and—as senior officials saw it—not much need for differentiation. Yet, re-conquest was only partly about taking military, political, and administrative measures. It also involved cultural practices: collecting, ordering, and disseminating knowledge about the history and geography of Yemen in the form of government memoranda, newspaper articles, and published monographs were integral parts of the effort to establish imperial control over southwest Arabia.

⁴⁶ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 8.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPERIAL VISIONS: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, EMPIRE, AND THE CREATION OF DIFFERENCE, 1849–75¹

The re-conquest of highland Yemen and ‘Asir was not just about changing the political realities on the ground through military expertise, superior firepower, diplomacy, or administrative reorganization. As the writings of high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers show, there was also an effort to appropriate the new province intellectually. This chapter is concerned with Ottoman knowledge production in the context of the re-conquest of southwest Arabia in 1871–73. It takes as its focus the most substantial written accounts produced in this connection, Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa’s reports to his superiors in Istanbul and Aḥmed Râşid’s two-volume *Tārîh-i Yemen ve Şan‘â’*, published in 1875.² Not unlike other imperial conquerors during this period, these Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers collected information about the region, its inhabitants, and its past, and made them available to members of the central government and, in the case of Râşid’s *Tārîh*, to a wider audience of educated Ottomans. At one level, these forms of knowledge were meant to facilitate the task of government bureaucrats to firmly establish Ottoman rule in the newly conquered province. Perhaps more importantly, they also legitimized the re-conquest of southwest Arabia. However, unlike his British, French, or Russian counterparts in India, Algeria, and Turkestan,

¹ I borrow the term “imperial visions” from Mark Bassin; see Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

² Aḥmed Râşid (d. AH 1309/1891–92) was a military officer and historian who appears to have spent many years of his career in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. As colonel of the Fourth Reserve (*redif*) Regiment of the Seventh Imperial Army he took part in the re-conquest of ‘Asir and highland Yemen in 1871–73. The most substantial and best-known of his works is the *Tārîh-i Yemen ve Şan‘â’* [History of Yemen and Şan‘â’], 2 vols (Istanbul: Başiret Matba‘ası, AH 1291/1874–75). The retired division general died in Bandırma on the Anatolian side of the Sea of Marmara in AH 1309 (beg. 7 August 1891); see Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1927), 374–75.

Aḥmed Rāšid was able to point to the religious ties of the Ottomans to Yemen and to an earlier period of Ottoman rule over this region.

Since the early years of the *Tanzīmāt*, reports and memoranda (*levayih*, sing. *lāyiha*) like those written by Aḥmed Muhtār at various points during the campaigns of 1871–73 were, in the Ottoman bureaucratic context, the most common way to provide information about a given territory and its population for government use.³ Historians have largely concentrated on these sources to explore Ottoman forms of knowledge production during the second half of the nineteenth century and, more specifically, to understand the ideological perspectives of government officials.⁴ These writings are therefore important for the purpose of our study. Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh*, published within two years of the re-conquest of highland Yemen, represents a far more elaborate and ambitious example of Ottoman knowledge production in the service of empire than do the reports authored by Aḥmed Muhtār on Yemen, Fu'ād Paşa on Mount Lebanon, and Cevdet Paşa on Shkodër.⁵ Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh* combines an authoritative history of southwest Arabia with a geographical and ethnographic survey of this region, and uses both to formulate an Ottoman claim to rule over the newly-established province for an Ottoman reading public. Thus, it differs significantly not only from earlier Ottoman accounts on Yemen that were authored in the second half of the sixteenth century or in the mid-nineteenth century, but also from those written by government officials on other territories on the internal and external frontiers of the Ottoman Empire during the 1860s and 1870s. Indeed, it seems that Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh* was one of the first in a series of

³ See Hanssen, "Practices of Integration," 67.

⁴ See Reinkowski, *Die Dinge der Ordnung*; Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*; Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 151–59.

⁵ Keçecizāde Mehmed Fu'ād Paşa (1815–69) was one of the leading Ottoman statesmen of the *Tanzīmāt* period. He served five times as foreign minister and twice as grand vizier. As special envoy of the Ottoman central government he led the crackdown on sectarian violence in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860–61; see R. H. Davison, "Fu'ād Paşa, Keçedji-zāde Mehmed," *IE*², vol. 2, 934–36; Aḥmed Cevdet Paşa (1822–95) was a historian, legal specialist, and administrator. He served five times as minister of justice. In the early 1860s, he was sent on a number of important administrative missions to different European and Anatolian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The first of these assignments was an inspection tour of the Province of Shkodër in the fall of 1861; see H. Bowen, "Aḥmad Djewdet Paşa," *IE*², vol. 1, 284–86; Reinkowski, *Die Dinge der Ordnung*, 189–94.

similar monographs on the Hijaz, Yemen, Najd, Tripolitania, and the Province of Beirut that Ottoman administrators produced from the late 1880s.⁶

In this chapter, I argue that one important strategy of knowledge production in the context of Aḥmed Rāšid's work on Yemen was the attempt to establish a legitimate, historical claim of the Ottoman state to those territories that were conquered by the end of 1873, as well as to those that were still within Britain's sphere of influence in the hinterland of Aden.⁷ The intent of this history was to portray these conquests as a perfectly natural return to direct rule of territories that, so the argument, had never ceased to be an integral part of the empire. In so doing, Aḥmed Rāšid sought to represent the creation of the new Province of Yemen as fitting seamlessly into efforts of the central government to bring the Ottoman provinces in North Africa, geographical Syria, Anatolia or the Balkans under tighter state control.

At the same time, knowledge production was not just an effort to establish the historical claim of the Ottoman state to the conquered territories. Both Aḥmed Rāšid and, to a lesser extent, Aḥmed Muhtar Paşa, laid out in fine detail the forms and regional levels of local "backwardness" that necessitated the imposition of "civilizing" Ottoman rule. At one level, Aḥmed Rāšid asserted, deviating from the Ḥanafī Sunnī form of Islam espoused by the Ottoman dynasty was what branded the locals as savages. Even more importantly, he argued that the Zaydī doctrine of the imamate had plunged the entire region into centuries of political chaos and backwardness. For Aḥmed Rāšid, Yemen was a canvas onto which he could project a vision of the Ottoman Empire as a modern, Muslim imperial power that not only matched, but actually outdid the achievements of the first period of Ottoman rule in the area, while at the same time forestalling the imminent encroachment of Christian European powers on the center of the Muslim world, the holy sites of Mecca and Medina.

⁶ See, for instance, Eyyüb Şabrī, *Mir'atü 'l-Ḥaremeyn*, 3 vols (Koşantiniye: Baḥriye Maṭba'ası, AH 1306/1888–89); Hüseyin Hüsni, *Necd kıt'asının ahvāl-i umūmiyesi* (Koşantiniye: Maṭba'a-i Ebüzziyâ, AMal 1328/1912–13); Mehmed Nürî and Maḥmūd Nâcî, *Trâblusgarb* (N.p.: Tercümân-i Haḳîkaṭ Maṭba'ası, AMal 1330/1914–15). In 1916, Rafiq Bey al-Tamimî and Muḥammad Baghat Bey, two administrators in the Province of Beirut, published a volume titled *Wilâyat Bayrūt* that is very similar to the above-mentioned works; see Michael Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 1996), 70–71.

⁷ See Rāšid, *Tārîh*.

Further, the writings of senior officials like Aḥmed Rāşid and Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa reveal a complex, multi-layered understanding of what “civilizing” the locals actually meant. As we shall see, “civilizing” included the notion of destroying the power of local, illegitimate rulers through the calculated and orderly violence of a modern army, but it also meant developing the province’s agricultural resources and turning the indigenous population into what these bureaucrats perceived as good Muslims and, hence, loyal subjects of the sultan. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, Ottoman notions of bringing civilization to Yemen were closely connected to the idea of ordering space through building and renovation projects, the construction of roads and telegraph lines, and the carving up of the province into a hierarchy of administrative units. These measures were part of a broader effort to reclaim Yemen as an Ottoman space and thus to emphasize its character as an integral part of the empire.

By exploring these different facets of the notion of a civilizing mission and by showing that, at least in 1849, officials did not view their attempts to re-conquer the highlands as a mission to civilize a culturally inferior population, I argue for the need to develop a more complex and historicized understanding of this concept. Historians of the late Ottoman Empire have shown that the notion of a civilizing mission informed the perspectives of the Ottoman bureaucratic elite toward the empire’s borderland people from the beginning of the *Tanzîmât* period in 1839 until the empire’s demise at the end of World War I. However, as we will see, neither politics of centralization, including the re-conquest of outlying areas and the disempowerment of local leaders, nor the deployment of new tools of empire (as Daniel Headrick terms it) in this connection, such as a European-style army or European medical expertise, were, from the beginning, accompanied by the notion that backward people had to be re-made and uplifted.⁸ Rather, a sense of urgency to re-make local peoples and thus to demonstrate the transformational capabilities of the modern Ottoman state seems to have emerged in specific regional contexts (e.g., Mount Lebanon, the borderland between Shkodër and Montenegro, and southwest Arabia) when—at different points during the 1860s and 1870s—Ottoman

⁸ For a similar argument regarding the Mirdites in the Ottoman Province of Shkodër during the period from the 1850s to the 1870s see Reinkowski, *Die Dinge der Ordnung*, 138–39, 290.

officials viewed the imperial government in competition with real or perceived European expansionist designs.

Knowledge Production and Empire

From the late fifteenth century, knowledge production was a key element of Ottoman imperial expansion and governance. As Gábor Agoston has argued, “the Ottomans possessed a structured information-gathering network.”⁹ In many parts of Ottoman Europe, Anatolia, and the Arab lands during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, conquest was followed by the recording of information about pre-Ottoman customs of revenue-collection in so-called *ḵānūnnāmes* that later became the basis for the fiscal administration of newly-created Ottoman provinces.¹⁰ Moreover, “...regular and surprisingly systematic land/revenue surveys (*tahrirs*) under Sultan Süleyman I afforded the Istanbul government and its provincial administrators a detailed and collated database regarding the size, composition, and economic conditions of the population of Ottoman sub-provinces.”¹¹ Day-to-day domestic surveillance and information-gathering was carried out by janissaries and informers employed by provincial governors and local *ḵāḍıs*.¹² Beyond practical considerations of governance, Ottoman knowledge production on conquered territories served different purposes. For example, in the case of the illustrated manuscript *Beyān-i menāzil-i sefer-i ‘Irāḳeyn* [The description of the stages (of Sultan Süleymān Khān’s) campaign in the two Iraqs] that Maṭrakçı Naşūḥ (d. 1564) commissioned for Süleymān I, these could range from documenting the places he had visited to “celebrating conquest and cultivating patronage.”¹³

⁹ Gábor Agoston, “Information, Ideology, and the Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 79.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 246–47; Khoury, “The Ottoman Centre,” 139.

¹¹ Agoston, “Information,” 80.

¹² *Ibid.*, 79–80.

¹³ Palmira Brummett, “Imagining the Early Modern Ottoman Space, from World History to Piri Reis,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans*, ed. Aksan and Goffman, 50–52.

While there is evidence of Ottoman information-gathering on Yemen prior to the conquests of the 1530s,¹⁴ it is not clear whether the Ottoman provincial government of Yemen ever carried out a land- and revenue survey or compiled a *ḳānūnnāme* during the period of the first occupation from 1538 to 1635.¹⁵ Because of the fierce opposition that the local Zaydī *imāms* mounted against Ottoman rule, to a great extent Ottoman knowledge production on Yemen seems to have served ideological purposes: repeated efforts of the central government to (re)gain control over southwest Arabia from the second half of the sixteenth century were celebrated in a number of chronicles as victories of righteous Sunnī Ottoman rulers over their heretic Zaydī enemies.¹⁶

The authors of these campaign histories displayed little interest in providing detailed descriptions of the manners and customs of the local peoples. In order to drive home their ideological point, they found it sufficient to portray local opponents to Ottoman rule as heretics, bandits, or both. All in all, the keen ethnographic curiosity reflected in the multi-volume *Seyāḥatnāme* [Book of travels] of the seventeenth-century courtier, diplomat, and traveler Evliya Çelebi seems to have been an exception to other works written by members of the Ottoman elite during this period. For Evliya and other Ottoman literati, ethnographic description, especially of the strange customs of peoples in different parts of the empire and beyond, was meant primarily for the entertainment of other members of the Ottoman elite, including the sultans themselves.¹⁷

¹⁴ In 1525, for instance, Selmān Re'īs (d. 1528), the Ottoman admiral in charge of operations in the Red Sea, submitted a memorandum to the governor-general of Egypt in which he provided an overview of Portuguese imperial defense from the Persian Gulf to Sumatra and the economic and political conditions in different areas around the Red Sea. He concluded his brief description of Yemen by recommending its conquest. See Salih Özbaran, *The Ottoman Response to European Expansion: Studies on Ottoman-Portuguese Relations in the Indian Ocean and Ottoman Administration in the Arab Lands during the Sixteenth Century* (Istanbul: İsis, 1994), 99–109.

¹⁵ According to Özbaran, "...no cadastral surveys have survived to the present" for the Province of Yemen, see idem, *Ottoman Response*, 21.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Muşafā Rumūzī, *Nāme-i fütūḥ-i Yemen* [Book of the conquests of Yemen] that was commissioned by the Ottoman commander Koca Sinān Paşa (1520–96) who re-conquered Yemen from the followers of the Zaydī *imām* al-Muṭaḥhar between 1569 and 1571; we may assume that Sinān Paşa also commissioned this work to advertise his own military achievements; see Hulūsi Yavuz, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idāresi ve Rumūzī tārīhi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003), vol. 2, ccxxvii–ccxxxvii.

¹⁷ See Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi*. With an Afterword by Gottfried Hagen (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 185–86; Gottfried Hagen, *Ein*

The idea that geographical knowledge—including information about the topography of a given region as well as the governmental institutions, manners, and customs of its population—was essential for the successful *governance* of the empire was first formulated in the Ottoman context by Kâtib Çelebi in the mid-seventeenth century, but only became widespread among the Ottoman ruling elite from about the 1740s. This was, to an important degree, because of the increasingly fierce competition between the Ottoman Empire and some of its European rivals, most notably the imperial states of the Habsburgs and Romanovs.¹⁸ However, well into the early decades of the nineteenth century, information gathering along these lines concentrated on France, Britain, and Prussia, then the foremost powers in Western Europe, and was mainly carried out by Ottoman diplomatic envoys that traveled on missions to the major European capitals with increasing frequency.¹⁹ By contrast, the central government's knowledge of the empire's provinces in general and its internal and external peripheries in particular appears to have been significantly more limited than during the sixteenth century.²⁰ In large measure, this was a consequence of the late seventeenth-century rise to prominence of provincial notables and their households, who, in many parts of the empire, had acquired enough influence to run entire provinces and, especially, collect taxes with little interference from the sultan and the ruling elites in the imperial capital. This began to change during the 1830s and 1840s when the central government under the leadership of a new generation of European-trained bureaucrats initiated the *Tanzîmât*, a series of military, administrative, legal, and fiscal reforms meant to ward off the encroachments of European imperial powers and to contain separatist movements at the domestic level. In order to ensure the unity and territorial integrity of the empire and to build an army and administrative apparatus capable of furthering this goal,

osmanischer Geograph bei der Arbeit. Entstehung und Gedankenwelt von Kâtib Çelebis Ğihânnümâ (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2003), 270.

¹⁸ See Hagen, *Ein osmanischer Geograph bei der Arbeit*, 118, 264–65.

¹⁹ On these reports, see Faik Reşit Unat, *Osmanlı seferleri ve sefaretnameleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1968); see also Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700–83* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

²⁰ According to Jane Hathaway, cadastral surveys on the basis of which taxes were assessed and collected, that is, censuses “of the households in each village—showing the various villages and the amount of land each village farmed,” were “seldom updated after the sixteenth century.” See Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1800* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), 49.

the statesmen of the *Tanzîmât* took unprecedented steps to establish more direct rule over the provinces and draw more efficiently on local manpower and taxable resources. This, in turn, required enhanced knowledge about the political, social, and economic realities at the provincial level. In 1831, a census had already been carried out in the provinces of Bursa and Gallipoli with the express objective of facilitating the recruitment of soldiers for Maḥmūd II's new, European-style army. Another much more ambitious population count in 1841 was meant to generate the necessary data for the newly introduced conscription. More importantly perhaps, efforts to establish more direct rule at the provincial level required "inspectors who would go into the provinces, talk to the inhabitants, record peculiarities and return with suggestions as to how best to administer the provinces."²¹ In addition, the government encouraged local petitions and invited provincial delegations to Istanbul in order to gather further information about the specific needs of the inhabitants in particular regions. The information generated through these inspection tours, petitions, and delegations then formed the basis on which new institutions and practices of provincial government were devised, tested, and, if need be, fine tuned and adjusted. This dynamic process of knowledge production, trial, and re-adjustment continued until the end of the empire. By the time Ottoman military forces embarked on the conquest of highland Yemen, it had already led to the creation of a set of administrative structures that were specified in the laws of provincial administration of 1864 and 1871, and, indeed became standard features of provincial governments in large parts of the Ottoman lands.

By the early 1870s, Ottoman bureaucrats had not only acquired a large repository of official knowledge about local conditions in many provinces of the empire, but they had also adopted new perspectives on both the inhabitants of frontier areas and on the ultimate objectives of Ottoman rule there. Earlier, Ottoman bureaucrats had viewed the nomads of the Syrian desert or sedentary communities in the remote areas of Shkodër as savages who had to be brought in line if they openly challenged Ottoman rule, but who could otherwise be

²¹ See Hanssen, "Practices of Integration," 58–59; according to Hanssen, "Shortly after the Hatt-i Şerif of 1839, imperial officials were sent to the provinces to form an idea about the state of affairs in the provinces. These 'commissions of improvement' investigated the administration of taxes, the operation of local councils and their relationship with the governors, they drew maps, attempted cadastral surveys, assessed roads and the potential for public works."

ignored. Now, they conceived of these people as inferior beings who occupied the lower rungs of a hierarchy of civilizations: In order to ensure the survival of the Ottoman Empire in the increasingly fierce competition with its European rivals, the government could no longer afford to leave these communities alone. Rather, through the institutions and practices of the modern Ottoman state, it had to uplift them to the level of loyal and productive subjects, that is, to the civilized level of government officials and their European counterparts. For *Tanzīmāt* bureaucrats, these frontier areas of the Ottoman state thus became—in the words of Ussama Makdisi—“proving grounds” for Ottoman modernity: It was here that the central government and its agents had to show their capacity to transform territory and peoples in a way that would allow the Ottoman state to catch up with its European rivals.²² While in the early 1860s high-ranking bureaucrats such as Fu’ād and Cevdet *paşas* had articulated these imperial visions primarily in reports to their superiors, by the end of the decade they became an important topic of discussion in Ottoman newspapers for the consumption of the empire’s small but growing reading public. During and after his work in the Province of Baghdad on the staff of Governor-General Midḥat Paşa in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the journalist and bureaucrat Aḥmed Midḥat Efendi published a series of articles in both the official provincial newspaper *Zevrā’* and in the Istanbul-based daily *Başîret* in which he emphasized the importance of uplifting the empire’s Iraqi provinces to the level of prosperity they had enjoyed in ancient times.²³ Râşid’s *Tārîh* is part of this larger context, though it dwarfs the above-mentioned memoranda and newspaper articles in terms of the breadth and detail with which the author elaborates his imperial vision of Yemen as a proving ground for Ottoman modernity. As we shall see, Râşid also differed from these other authors in that he articulated this vision very much in Islamic terms.

In trying to legitimize the restoration of Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia by employing the idiom of a civilizing mission, Aḥmed Râşid and other authors were, most likely, writing for a growing readership of urban, educated speakers of Ottoman Turkish. The production

²² See Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *AHR* 107 (2002), 768–96; this quote: 770.

²³ Michael Ursinus, “Midhat Efendi und der alte Orient,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches und ihre Interpretation*, ed. Michael Ursinus (Istanbul: İsis, 1994), 157–64.

and consumption of newspapers, journals, and monographs were key dimensions in the formation of an Ottoman bourgeoisie during the *Tanzīmāt* period and after. It was, in no small part, through these new media that this emerging class sought to define itself and its position in Ottoman society. This must have been especially true for a segment that Fatma Müge Göçek terms “bureaucratic bourgeoisie.” The latter consisted primarily of Muslim graduates of the new types of European-style military academies and civil service schools that had been created under the auspices of the *Tanzīmāt*. In the preface to the *Tārīh*, Aḥmed Rāšid shows his attachment to the idea of the imperial patriotism so characteristic of the *Tanzīmāt* period by identifying his compatriots (*ebnā-yi vaṭan*) as his audience. At the same time, he states that his work is also written for a more specific readership, namely his fellow officers in the Ottoman military.²⁴ While ideas centered on political freedom, and constitutional government played a crucial role in these broader attempts to articulate a modern subjectivity, it would seem that not only unrestricted royal power, but also “uncivilized,” “savage” peoples on the empire’s frontiers constituted the “foils” against which members of this emerging class sought to project who they were.²⁵ This was certainly also the case during the reign of ‘Abdülhamid II, when the imperial government, through increasingly strict censorship, severely curtailed the possibility for open political debate.

Aḥmed Rāšid’s History of Yemen and Ṣan‘ā

Aḥmed Rāšid’s *Tārīh* was an ambitious project both in terms of the very short time it took to complete, and in terms of the breadth of its scope. Beyond giving an account of the region’s history from pre-Islamic times to the Ottoman conquest of Upper and Lower Yemen in 1871–73, the author also deals in great detail with Yemen’s natural resources, as well as with the culture of the local people. Aḥmed Rāšid seeks to demonstrate that the newly re-conquered province was rightfully part of the Ottoman Empire, and, also, to outline the ways in which the government could derive maximum benefit from these

²⁴ Rāšid, *Tārīh*, vol. 1, 3–4 and vol. 2, 263–65.

²⁵ See Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 80–86, 125.

territories. While the author does not state explicitly whether the Ottoman government officially commissioned his work, his use of official correspondence and, in various passages of the book, his justifications for the campaigns against (unnamed) critics suggest that he was endorsed by, and actually spoke for, those members of the imperial government who had initiated and backed the re-conquest of highland Yemen and 'Asir.²⁶ The *Tārīh* certainly represents the single most important example of Ottoman knowledge production on Yemen in the years immediately after the conquest. Just as important, it is probably the most powerful imperial statement of purpose for southwest Arabia that exists for this early period of Ottoman rule. Furthermore, Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh* remained, for many decades, the most influential reference work on Ottoman Yemen. Among those who later drew on Aḥmed Rāšid's work are Ḥamīd Vehbī, the editor of the official provincial newspaper *Şan'ā'* in the early 1880s, the compilers of several provincial almanacs on Yemen, and later historians and authors of school textbooks.²⁷ In his memoirs, Field Marshal Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa relates that before taking up his position as chief of staff of an expeditionary force sent to Yemen in 1904, he turned to Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh* for information on the region's history, geography, and culture, and ended up memorizing most of it.²⁸ Even though the first Ottoman occupation provided Aḥmed Rāšid with an important element of justification for Ottoman rule in the area, he sharply criticized Ottoman officials, both before 1635 and after 1849, for their incompetence.²⁹ He thus distanced the Ottoman state that carried out the campaigns of 1871–73 not only from the local population, but also from its predecessors, and he contrasted the modernity of the current Ottoman state not just with the backwardness of the locals but also with the deficiencies of past provincial governments.

Aḥmed Rāšid lays out his arguments in support of an Ottoman claim to Yemen in the historical sections of his history; these cover

²⁶ Werner Schmucker, "Zur Begründung der Zweimaligen Türkischen Besetzung des Jemen nach Aḥmad Rāšids 'Geschichte des Jemen und Şan'ā's,'" *Archivum Ottomanicum* 9 (1984), 257.

²⁷ See Klaus Kreiser, "Quellen zur Landeskunde und Geschichte des Jemen in Türkischer Sprache," in *Resultate aktueller Jemen-Forschung, eine Zwischenbilanz*, ed. Hans Becker (Bamberg: n.p., 1978), vol. 1, 101, 112, 117.

²⁸ See Ahmet İzzet Paşa, *Feryadım* (Istanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1992), vol. 1, 29, footnote.

²⁹ Rāšid, *Tārīh*, vol. 1, 302–5, 306–7.

most of its two volumes.³⁰ Werner Schmucker explores this aspect of Rāṣid's account in considerable detail.³¹ Schmucker demonstrates that, according to Aḥmed Rāṣid, the Ottoman sultans became legitimate rulers of Yemen through their victory over the Mamlūk Empire in 1517; it was this victory that established their sovereign rights over the dominions of the ousted dynasty.³²

More importantly, Aḥmed Rāṣid sought to bolster the concept of an Ottoman legal succession to Mamlūk rule in Arabia with the claim that the Ottoman sultans were also the legitimate heirs to the caliphate and hence the leaders of the *umma* in general. In this way, he attempted to undermine the claims that indigenous Zaydī *imāms* had put forward first against Mamlūk, and later against Ottoman attempts to establish control over this part of the Arabian Peninsula. For Aḥmed Rāṣid, the *imāms* were nothing but usurpers (*mūteḡallibe*) who based their purported entitlement to the leadership of the community of believers on a fabricated line of descent from the Prophet Muḥammad.³³ Even though the *imāms* and other “usurpers” had brought the de facto presence of the Ottomans to an end in 1635, this had not rendered Ottoman sovereign rights void. De jure, so the author's argument went, Yemen had continued to be under Ottoman rule.³⁴ In other words, in initiating the campaigns of 1849 and, more importantly, those of 1871–73, the government had done nothing but reclaim what was rightfully part of the Ottoman domains. Aḥmed Rāṣid, however, went further than arguing that the Ottomans had a right to be in Yemen. Now, as during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, he asserted, Ottoman control of Yemen was vital for the protection of the Hijaz and thus the holy sites at Mecca and Medina against the encroachments of Christian powers, be it the Portuguese (earlier) or the British and Italians in the 1870s. At a time when more and more Muslim lands fell to European colonial expansion, the Ottoman conquest of highland Yemen had thus averted the very real possibility of a European strike at the heartland of Islam—something that had become increasingly likely with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.³⁵

³⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, 5–267, 284–322 and vol. 2, 5–239.

³¹ See Schmucker, “Besetzung.”

³² Ibid., 215.

³³ Ibid., 238–39.

³⁴ Ibid., 248–49, 251.

³⁵ See Rāṣid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 256–58.

The idea that Yemen had, in fact, never ceased to be part of the empire was in itself not new. The Ottoman government, in an attempt to affirm its claim to sovereignty over this part of the Arabian Peninsula, had argued along these lines since 1817 in a series of diplomatic exchanges with the British government in London and, more specifically, with the representatives of the British East India Company in Calcutta.³⁶ What was new, however, was the effort to present this claim to an Ottoman Turkish speaking public in the form of an extensive historical narrative; new also was the idea of appending a detailed geographical and ethnographic account of southwest Arabia to this narrative. This section contains several elements that sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Ottoman literati would have found familiar. With the seventeenth-century traveler and diplomat Evliya Çelebi, Aḥmed Rāṣid shared an interest in describing cities and their monuments.³⁷ Moreover, parts of his account of the manners and customs of the locals were, clearly, written with the intention to entertain his readers with descriptions of exotic peoples—another important characteristic of earlier Ottoman geographic writings.³⁸ At the same time, Aḥmed Rāṣid's account was also meant to be a collection of useful knowledge for Ottoman policy makers and administrators. While it thus features elements of earlier Ottoman geographical writings, conceptually it also resembles the regional geographical surveys that the British East India Company commissioned in various territories under its rule from the early nineteenth century onward. For instance, in both the *Tārīh* and the survey of Mysore that Colin Mackenzie conducted in 1800–07, “history” was only one of several categories of data that “...encompassed all portions of geographic knowledge: immediately cartographic data...; cultural information...; social and economic information...; as well as mineralogical, botanical, and zoological information...”³⁹ Like these surveys, Aḥmed Rāṣid's work was informed by a specific

³⁶ See Farah, *Sultan's Yemen*, 1–57.

³⁷ See Dankoff, *Ottoman Mentality*, 48–49.

³⁸ This is particularly apparent in Aḥmed Rāṣid's description of the daily *qāt* sessions that formed a central part of social life in this part of Arabia: men would gather to chat and exchange news while chewing the freshly cut leaves of the *qāt* shrub that contained a mild drug. He not only condemned the locals' addiction to *qāt*, but also compared it to the widespread consumption of opium among the Chinese—another people that Ottoman literati since the sixteenth century had considered exotic; Rāṣid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 341–45.

³⁹ Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 44.

way of observing, ordering, and classifying facts “within an implicit cartographical framework” that had been forged in the context of the Enlightenment.⁴⁰ Ottoman officers most probably adopted these approaches to the production of knowledge from the works of geographers like Kâtib Çelebi and in the context of the new type of education that they received at the military academies and staff colleges in Istanbul from the early decades of the *Tanzîmât* onward. Moreover, between 1848 and 1852, two senior Ottoman officials had the opportunity to work with Russian and British officers on a survey of the Ottoman-Iranian border regions from the Kurdish-speaking areas of Anatolia in the north to the Shatt al-Arab in the south as part of an international commission that was to settle long-standing boundary issues between the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The results of this survey were compiled by Meḥmed Hurşid Paşa, one of the Ottoman commissioners, and published in 1860 under the title *Seyâhatnâme-i hudûd* [lit., The travelogue of the boundary], which is structurally very similar to the above-mentioned surveys commissioned by the East India Company.⁴¹ To be sure, Aḥmed Râşid focuses to a much greater degree on the region’s history than had British surveyors in early nineteenth-century India, no doubt because the Ottomans were intimately involved in southwest Arabia in an earlier period and because of early Islamic history and their efforts to claim legitimate rule based on these two factors. Like those surveys in the British–Indian context, the *Tārîh* reflected the government’s new determination to achieve control over southwest Arabia as it had never done before. In a way, Aḥmed Râşid’s effort to gather and make available useful knowledge about southwest Arabia for those who would govern the newly conquered province paralleled the military operations through which Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa and his expeditionary force had sought to “open” Yemen to the centralizing control of the *Tanzîmât* state.⁴² Below are the categories of regional data used in the *Tārîh* and Mackenzie’s *Survey*. Clearly, the similarities of analytical categories and organizing principles are not merely noteworthy, but underscore a shared worldview.

⁴⁰ Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 39–76; this quote, *ibid.*, 46.

⁴¹ Mehmed Hurşid [Paşa], *Seyâhatnâme-i hudûd*, ed. Alâettin Eser (Istanbul: Simurg, 1997); see Alâettin Eser’s introductory essay, “Bir hudûdun anatomisi ‘seyâhatnâme-i hudûd,’” in *ibid.*, xxiii–xxxii.

⁴² The term “*Tanzîmât* state” was coined by Eugene Rogan; see *idem*, *Frontiers of the State*, 2.

Table 1. Categories of Data in Aḥmed Rāšid's *History of Yemen and Ṣan'ā'*

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1. History of Yemen before Islam.
 2. Geographical overview of the Arabian Peninsula.
 3. Mountains, mountain ranges, hills and *wādīs* in highland Yemen, 'Asīr, and the Tihāma.
 4. Most remarkable buildings; local building styles; the "general welfare buildings" (*ebniye-yi hayriye*) of previous Mamlūk and Ottoman rulers.
 5. Description of the principal towns.
 6. The various regions and tribes of Yemen.
 7. Seasons, flora, and fauna.
 8. Minerals.
 9. Agricultural production.
 10. Craft production.
 11. Domestic and foreign trade.
 12. Currency.
 13. Skin colors of the local peoples.
 14. Manners and customs of the locals.
 15. Revenues and expenditure of the Province of Yemen.
 16. Overall population estimate.
 17. Military route survey.
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Source: Aḥmed Rāšid, *Tārīh-i Yemen ve Ṣan'ā'* (Istanbul: Başıret Maṭba'ası, AH 1291/1874–75).

Table 2. Categories of Data for Colin Mackenzie's Survey of Mysore, 1800–07

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1. Modern names of the circar, pargana, taluk, or district to which each village belongs (also provincial designations if beyond Mughal subdivision into circars).
 2. Ancient names of districts.
 3. Names of capitals, cusbas, etc.
 4. Distances in cross or other Indian measures along the road to compare with the measured road distances, so as to form a conversion factor from British to Indian measures.
 5. Computed distances to significant places to either side of the route.
 6. Names of rivers (ancient and modern), their confluences, etc.
 7. Names of remarkable hills, tablelands, ghats, passes, etc., plus their forests, minerals, and productions.
 8. Remarkable springs, fountains, lakes, etc., and associated temples.
 9. Most remarkable pagodas, which are especially important for examining revenues and land grants.
 10. Languages spoken by the natives.
 11. Remains of ancient structures and any local lore about them.
 12. Modern history of the country, before and after the Mughal conquest.
 13. History of the rajas, poligars, etc.
 14. Extent of each pargana or taluk.

Table 2 (*cont.*)

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15. District belonging to hindu rajas.
 16. "Productions of the country," including plants and the character of the soil.
 17. Minerals, fossils, ores, etc.
 18. Manufacturing and the arts.
 19. Interior and foreign commerce.
 20. System of government and revenue management.
 21. Peculiar customs of the natives, and especially any differences of established customs.
 22. Books and depositories of native learning.
 23. Native legal codes.
 24. Alphabets and the characters used.
 25. Population of districts by caste, family, villages, etc. (tolerable estimate only).
 26. Land revenue under Hindus, although too complex for easy examination.
 27. Prevailing winds, rains, seasonal changes, etc.
 28. Diseases, remedies, medicines, etc.
 29. Remarks on the aspect of the country in general, including sketches of the general outline of hills and ridges, with names and computed distances.
 30. Animals (wild and tame) peculiar to the area.
 31. Principal towns, forts, etc.
 32. Positions determined by astronomical observation whenever possible.
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Source: Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 44.

Knowledge Production and the Creation of Difference

It was not only by asserting a historical claim of the Ottoman dynasty to southwest Arabia that Aḥmed Rāšid sought to legitimize the re-establishment of Ottoman rule over the highland regions of Yemen and 'Asir. To an important degree, his observations on Yemen's present and its past—very much like those of Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa—were meant to demonstrate that the indigenous population was culturally inferior to their conquerors and hence in need of "civilizing" Ottoman rule. That is, the production of knowledge was a crucial component of the attempt to create difference, which, in turn, formed the basis of the effort to represent the Ottoman bid for political and economic domination as a "civilizing mission."

In this crucial respect, Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh* and Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa's reports differed from comparable writings on Yemen from the late 1840s and early 1850s when Ottoman government forces re-occupied parts of the Tihāma and made an unsuccessful attempt at

re-conquering the highlands. Particularly interesting in this context is an (unpublished) account entitled *Sevķü l-'askeri l-cedîd der-'ahd-i Sulţân Mecîd* [The deployment of the new troops in the reign of Sultan ('Abdül) Mecîd], written by Muşţafâ Hâmî (d. 1878), a medical officer who accompanied the Ottoman expeditionary force under Kıbrıslı Tevfik Paşa on parts of their campaign in 1849.⁴³ In a substantial portion of this manuscript, which consists of 81 folios, Muşţafâ Hâmî provided information on the physical geography, economy, and society of the Tihâma region that are often more detailed than the comparable sections in Râşid's *Târîh*; this was accompanied by a series of illustrations. Not unlike Aĥmed Râşid twenty-five years later, Muşţafâ Hâmî notes that Yemen was occupied to extend the just rule of the Ottoman sultan to this part of Arabia and thus to end the "tyranny" of the local lords.⁴⁴ His sense of Ottoman superiority over the locals is reflected in an episode in which he restores the health of a young man that local healers had been unable to cure.⁴⁵ Similarly, we learn that Ottoman military commanders regularly had their troops perform drill exercises to impress the local population.⁴⁶ On the whole, however, these are token references. The author's main objective is to entertain his audience with the story of a military campaign and an account of the "strange customs" of the local population, not to articulate an imperial vision of Ottoman rule in Arabia. He does not situate the campaigns of 1849 within the larger historical context of Ottoman rule in Yemen during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nor does he formulate a vision for the future of the Ottoman presence in southwest Arabia. Though there is a sense of (technological) superiority toward the local people, he does not use his description of their manners and customs to disparage them as "savages" in need of civilizing Ottoman rule.⁴⁷ The same is also true for the above-mentioned *Seyâhatnâme-i ĥudûd* on the Ottoman-Iranian border region.

These examples should caution us against assuming that the notion of a civilizing mission was, from the very beginning of the *Tanzîmât*,

⁴³ For an overview of this account and a short biography of Muşţafâ Hâmî, see Klaus Kreiser, "An Unpublished Ottoman Manuscript on the Yemen in 1849: Muşţafâ Hâmî's *Sevķü l-'asker l-cedîd der-'ahd-i Sulţân Mecîd*," *Arabian Studies* 7 (1984), 161–86.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 12r.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, fols. 19l–20l.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 23l–24r.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, fols. 41–81.

an integral part of how Ottoman bureaucrats conceived of the relationship between the modernizing Ottoman state and the populations in various parts of the empire.⁴⁸ A tentative explanation, that the “civilizing” perspective of Ottoman officials reflected a process of distancing the former from these populations, may be more accurate. This process was, in turn, the cumulative result of the profound transformations of the institutions and practices of the Ottoman state that took place during the three decades from the late 1830s to the 1860s. The farther these transformations progressed, the more “alien” and “backward” the people in the peripheral parts of the empire appeared to imperial bureaucrats. It is to Aḥmed Rāşid and Muhtâr Paşa’s formulations of these various aspects of “backwardness” and the need to “civilize” that we now turn.

Uplifting the Backward

Central to the ways in which both officials framed local “backwardness” was the notion that the region had experienced a profound decline during the centuries prior to the re-establishment of Ottoman rule. This decline, so their argument went, had led to a persistent “anarchy” that was characterized primarily by the “despotism” of local lords.

Like many Ottoman observers after him, Aḥmed Rāşid primarily blamed the Zaydī *imāms* for what he perceived as Yemen’s decline after the end of the first period of Ottoman rule in the 1630s. While he admitted that the demise of the Ottoman presence in this part of the Arabian Peninsula, and hence the rise of imamic rule, had been precipitated not least by the “misrule” of individual governors, Aḥmed Rāşid insisted that it was first and foremost the *imāms* who had plunged the region and its inhabitants into a state of political fragmentation (*teferruk*) and disorder (*teşettüt*).⁴⁹ More specifically, he attributed this process not merely to the failure and actions of individual rulers, but argued that it resulted directly from certain essential, fundamental characteristics of the Zaydī form of Shī‘ī Islam and its concept of the imamate. Rāşid emphasized the important role of the notion that the imamate belonged to a descendant of Ḥasan or Ḥusayn; and that this descendant would rise in armed rebellion (*khurūj*) and prove himself

⁴⁸ This is, for instance, implied by Deringil in *idem*, *Well-Protected Domains*, 93–94.

⁴⁹ See Schmucker, “Besetzung,” 242; Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 1, 257.

worthy through his martial and scholarly qualities. Again and again local leaders had seized upon this notion to legitimate their bid for power; in the process they had caused enormous violence and bloodshed. This notion had led to a proliferation of rival claimants, the result being an almost constant state of factional warfare and the absence of any form of stable government. He held that these circumstances had kept the local population in a state of ignorance (*cehālet*) and eventually brought about the eclipse of imamic rule in the late 1840s and the rise of those tribes and local leaders who dominated the political scene of highland Yemen and ‘Asīr at the time of the Ottoman conquest.⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that, in contrast to Ottoman Sunnī ‘ulamā’ and chroniclers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Aḥmed Rāšid did not disparage Zaydism as heresy.⁵¹ Rather, he argued that Zaydī conceptions of the imamate were conducive to the creation of political and social conditions that protagonists of the *Tanzīmāt* had come to perceive as “backward” and “primitive.” In so doing he adapted and redeployed older anti-Shī‘ī polemics within an imperial discourse, according to which the “civilized” and “modern” were entitled to rule over the “uncivilized” and “backward.” Carefully distinguishing between the *imāms* and “ordinary” believers, he portrayed the local people, both Zaydī and non-Zaydī, as victims of the *imāms*, devoid of any agency. Furthermore, he insisted that at no time did the *imāms* enjoy the loyalty of the locals. Their rule, he emphasized, had rested primarily on brute force and oppression. Another key reason to their success had been their ability to manipulate a gullible population. This was a notion that was already prominent in sixteenth-century Ottoman accounts.⁵² Yet, in pointing out that this gullibility

⁵⁰ Rāšid, *Tārīh*, vol. 1, 275.

⁵¹ For instance, in his chronicle *al-Barq al-Yamanī fī ‘l-faṭḥ al-‘Uthmānī*, which celebrated the Ottoman re-conquest of Yemen under Sinān Paşa in 1569–71, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī al-Makkī (1511/12–82) represented the followers of the Zaydī *imāms*, who fought the Ottomans, as heretics; see *Lightning over Yemen: A History of the Ottoman Campaign (1569–71), being a Translation from the Arabic of Part III of al-Barq al-Yamanī fī al-Faṭḥ al-‘Uthmānī* by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī ‘l-Makkī as Published by Ḥamad al-Jasīr (Riyadh, 1967), translation with introduction and notes by Clive K. Smith (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002), for instance, 124: “The fighting and battle continued from dawn till after noon. Countless Zaydī were slaughtered while few of religion’s loyal were martyred... When afternoon came the Sunnī people gained victory and the heretics were defeated in death and capture, with destruction and subjection in their train.”

⁵² See Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī al-Makkī, *Lightning over Yemen*, 119.

was due to the local peoples' lack of reason and their inability to think in abstract terms, Aḥmed Rāšid was adopting a self-consciously modern perspective that paralleled those of nineteenth-century colonial rulers about "backward" subject populations. He believed that this was the reason that cunning impostors who came forward and declared "I am the Mahdī!" were able to easily lead the locals astray.⁵³

An equally important element of Rāšid's representation of local society was the idea that it was also shaped by the tyranny of "custom." It was in these terms, for instance, that he explained the frequent occurrence of inter-tribal conflicts that were often related to blood-feuds. Here again we come across the trope of the "savage" who is devoid of reason.⁵⁴

And yet, what marked the locals as culturally inferior was not just anarchy fueled by oppressive rulers and "unthinking" customary violence. In considerable ethnographic detail, Aḥmed Rāšid also describes what he considered the barbaric practices of the indigenous population. Perhaps the most important example in his account is a lengthy description of a "typical" circumcision ceremony in 'Asīr, which he concluded with the remark: "...while this [particular] circumcision custom is extremely ugly and indeed outside the realm of humankind, it is also the result of a lack of education and of a state of nomadism..."⁵⁵ Aḥmed Rāšid complemented this picture of a perverted, un-civilized local Islam that was characterized by the tyranny of "false" *imāms* and "barbaric" practices by noting that the study of Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh* throughout the Province of Yemen was extremely limited, if not completely lacking. This was particularly true of 'Asīr, where, for instance, in the district of Rijāl al-Ma' neither 'ulamā' nor students could be found.⁵⁶ The few 'ulamā' among the Zaydīs of the highland regions, he claimed, were neither committed to preaching nor to instruction. While in the Tihāma the teaching of religious studies (*'ulūm-i dīniye*) did, in fact, take place in towns such as Zaydiya, Zabīd, and Ḥudayda, it was strictly limited to members of the local elite (*khawāṣ*).⁵⁷ For Aḥmed Rāšid, there was no doubt that because of the lack of religious scholars, the population of 'Asīr in particular had remained, in terms of faith, "in

⁵³ See Rāšid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 350.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 253.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 254–55.

the darkness of ignorance.” This, in turn, contributed to the deepening political fragmentation and disorder.⁵⁸

Thus, while it would seem, at first glance, that Aḥmed Rāşid shared with earlier Ottoman observers a disparaging perspective on local forms of Islam, a closer look reveals fundamental differences. Like sixteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers, Aḥmed Rāşid viewed local difference, to an important degree, in Islamic terms. But he differed from these earlier observers in that he conceived of these local forms of Islam as elements of a particular condition that marked a lower station in a hierarchy of civilizations. Ussama Makdisi has demonstrated, with regard to similar writings of other Ottoman officials during this period, that there is, implicit in this perspective, a quintessentially modern conception of time that frames a linear trajectory of development in which difference is at an earlier stage. Following this logic, difference was in fact the condition of a “pre-modern other.”⁵⁹ Central to the way in which Aḥmed Rāşid constructed local difference was also the production of historical and ethnographic knowledge. What structured this process of knowledge production was a particular mode of observation that was very similar to geographical surveying in British India, “...conceptually akin to the way modern states examine and discipline their population.”⁶⁰ According to Matthew Edney, “...the manner in which the British *looked* at South Asian geography was as empowered, as privileged, and as concerned with identifying deviation and abnormality as the disciplinary gaze of the doctor or judge.”⁶¹ Aḥmed Rāşid conceived of local “backwardness” in very similar terms. For instance, he concluded his account of what he perceived as the deviant and uncivilized practices of local Muslims with the remark that, through the Ottoman conquest, Yemen had now come under the care of a skilled physician.⁶²

For Aḥmed Rāşid, an important aspect of civilizing the indigenous population was therefore the effort to improve the morals of the local people and inculcate loyalty to the sultan-caliph in Istanbul by providing instruction in the study of orthodox Sunnī Islam beyond elite circles. In this respect his views closely resembled what later, during

⁵⁸ Ibid., vol. 2, 253–54.

⁵⁹ See Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” 771–72.

⁶⁰ Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 53.

⁶¹ Ibid., 53–54; emphasis original.

⁶² Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 253–54.

the Hamidian period, became an integral part of government policy toward Muslim populations throughout the empire. As Selim Deringil has demonstrated, these efforts to forge loyal citizens were premised upon "... a recharged conceptualization of religion and/or direct attachment to the quasi-sacred person of the... sultan."⁶³

Aḥmed Rāşid's concept, however, of teaching loyalty to the locals differed in important ways from those that we observe among government officials during the following decades. For instance, while his views were clearly informed by the modern concept of mass education, he envisaged local *madrasas*, rather than the new *rüşdiyye* and *i'dādiyye* schools, as sites where the teaching of Qur'ān, prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), Qur'ānic commentary (*tafsīr*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) were to take place. For this task, he suggested, the government should recruit Arabic-speaking '*ulamā*' of the Ḥanafī and Shāfī'i schools (*madhāhib*) from the provinces of Syria, Aleppo, Baghdad, and Diyārbakir. While he considered the introduction of these new types of government schools in Yemen vital, the education that they provided was not the central goal of the educational effort that he called for.⁶⁴ Perhaps more importantly, Aḥmed Rāşid makes it clear that as "target groups" he had in mind only the Sunnī population of 'Asīr and Yemen. In marked contrast to high-ranking officials during the reign of 'Abdülhamīd II, he opposed any attempt to convert members of the local Zaydī Shī'i and Ismā'īlī Shī'i communities. To an important degree, he did so out of political pragmatism: During the first period of Ottoman rule, he argued, attempts on the part of various governors at proselytizing the Zaydī population had ended in failure and only increased local support for the *imāms*.⁶⁵ Even though he was not an advocate of proselytizing, Rāşid nevertheless envisaged Sunnīs in a position of supremacy and saw this as the determining factor in the Islamic unity he associated with Ottoman rule and hence with civilization. By dismissing the Zaydī *imāms* as impostors and "usurpers" and, thus, by denying them any legitimacy as leaders of the Zaydī community, he implied that after their liberation from oppression, the Zaydī population would gladly recognize the Ḥanafī sultan-caliph in Istanbul as the true leader of the community of believers.

⁶³ Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 108. For a short case study on related government attempts in Ottoman Transjordan, see Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 151–58.

⁶⁴ Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 255–56.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 276–77.

Inculcating loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty through the “correction” of people’s beliefs and their moral uplifting was only one aspect of how Aḥmed Rāşid conceptualized the Ottoman civilizing mission in Yemen. Like many later Ottoman observers, he also equated being “uncivilized” with economic underdevelopment. The local population, he claimed, had been incapable of taking full advantage of the agricultural potential of the most fertile parts of the region, such as Jabal Rayma, Lower Yemen, and parts of the Tihāma. At one level, this was due to a lack of expertise. He therefore recommended the dispatch of experts to teach the locals more efficient agricultural methods that would boost the production of cash crops like coffee and cotton.⁶⁶ He also attributed the depressed economic conditions in Yemen to the political fragmentation and lack of security caused and perpetuated by myriads of local lords. According to Aḥmed Rāşid, the coffee trade, for instance, had greatly suffered as a result of widespread “banditry.”⁶⁷ The idea implicit in this statement is clear: the elimination of these rulers and the establishment of security under the auspices of Ottoman administration were crucial to economic development and would allow people and goods to travel safely from one end of the province to the other. Equally important in this context was the improvement of communications, which Aḥmed Rāşid wanted to accomplish primarily through government-sponsored road construction.⁶⁸ Already in his January 1873 report to the grand vizier, Aḥmed Muhtār had made the connection between security and the revival of trade as a result of Ottoman rule.⁶⁹ As in the context of Islamic unity, in economic matters, too, civilizing meant overcoming fragmentation. Very much like French administrators in West Africa thirty years later, Aḥmed Rāşid viewed civilization in terms of prosperity and connectedness.⁷⁰ But these elements of an Ottoman mission to civilize Yemen depended upon the successful completion of a more immediate goal: the disempowerment of the local lords.

⁶⁶ Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 316–17, 352–53.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 315.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 315, 353.

⁶⁹ BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 1922, doc. 1.2, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa to the grand vizier, 10 Kanun-i sani 1288/22 January 1873.

⁷⁰ See Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 53.

Disempowering the Local Lords

As we have seen, both Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa and Aḥmed Râşid argued that one of the most prominent features of local society at the time of the Ottoman campaigns was the oppression of the population at the hands of rival lords. Not surprisingly, both officials represented the conquests of 1871–73 and the disempowerment of these local rulers first and foremost as a campaign to liberate the indigenous people. Since they perceived the “tyranny” of the lords as one of the key dimensions of local “backwardness,” the removal of these power figures by Ottoman military forces therefore constituted the first crucial step toward bringing order out of chaos and hence toward “civilizing” the local population. In other words, the conquest itself could be considered a “civilizing” act.

These notions are elaborated in particular detail in connection with the occupation of Şan‘ā’ and its immediate environs by the Ottoman expeditionary force in April 1872. For instance, in a report dated 21 Nisan 1288/3 May 1872, Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa notified the ministry of war in Istanbul about an operation of Ottoman military units against a number of fortified towers just north of the city that were held by a group of Arḥab tribesmen under a certain ‘Abdullāh Dafa‘ī.⁷¹ According to the governor-general, these towers had been constructed many years earlier to prevent Şan‘ānīs from accessing some of their community-owned land north of the city’s Bāb al-Shu‘ūb, land that members of Banū Ḥārith and later Arḥab had seized by force. But Dafa‘ī and his henchmen had succeeded in effectively blockading the northern exit of Şan‘ā’ and thus in harming the city’s economy by depriving its residents of the revenues and products of their land, and, equally important, they used the towers as a base from which they would “terrorize the area at their leisure.”⁷² Apparently, these activities had intensified two years before the Ottoman conquest when Dafa‘ī had killed two *sayyids* from Şan‘ā’. All these years, Aḥmed Muhtâr emphasized, the residents of Şan‘ā’, members of the elite and commoners alike, had been unable to free themselves from these “tyrants and oppressors.” Helplessly, they had to watch “from the walls of Şan‘ā’ and from a

⁷¹ BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 45341, doc. 3, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa, to the ministry of war, 21 Nisan 1288/3 May 1872, 1.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1: “...istediği gibi ortalığı kaşub kavurarak...”

distance” how the tribesmen reaped the profits of the land that was rightfully theirs.⁷³

Two days after the Ottoman military forces had occupied Şan‘ā’ itself without fighting, Aḥmed Muhtār ordered ‘Abdullāh Dafa‘ī to surrender. When the Arḥab leader refused, the new governor-general dispatched one infantry battalion and several pieces of artillery to break the tribesmen’s resistance. After extensive shelling by the Ottoman gunners inflicted heavy damage on the towers, Ottoman infantry attacked and finally overran the defenders’ positions, killing most of them in close combat.⁷⁴ In the same report, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa noted an incident that occurred when the victorious troops brought back into the city the wounded survivors whom they had taken prisoner. According to Aḥmed Muhtār, the hatred that local residents felt against Dafa‘ī’s men was so great that his soldiers were unable to protect two of them from being seized and hacked to death by a group of Şan‘ānīs.⁷⁵

Compared to other military encounters between the Ottoman troops and local fighters throughout the campaign, particularly the six-month siege of Kawkabān, the action against ‘Abdullāh Dafa‘ī might seem relatively unimportant. It is clear, however, from the way in which this episode is presented in Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa’s reports and in Aḥmed Rāşid’s *Tārīh* that both officials considered it emblematic of the picture they sought to convey of Yemen on the eve of the Ottoman conquest and of the role that they thought the Ottoman state should play in this newly-conquered part of Arabia. First, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa introduced his report by noting that the blockade of Şan‘ā’ by ‘Abdullāh Dafa‘ī was characteristic of the political situation in Yemen as a whole. More specifically, he argued that fortified towers like those held by Dafa‘ī and his supporters existed throughout the region, because so far Yemen “...had failed to see a government capable of establishing public order and security...”⁷⁶ These towers provided the locals with security against their neighbors and served as bases for raids against the latter. For the governor-general, they were thus symbols of the anarchy that had taken hold of the area. By stressing that the residents

⁷³ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2–4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1: “...Şimdiye kadar buraların zaḫ-ü-rabḫ-i ‘umūmiye kâdir bir hükümet görememesinden...”

of Şan‘ā’, the former capital of the Qāsimī state, were kept in check and thus humiliated by a group of fifty to sixty armed men, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa clearly meant to demonstrate how far Yemen had declined. Similarly, representing the Şan‘ānis as hapless victims who could only pray for deliverance can be read as an illustration of the idea that oppression at the hands of local leaders like Dafa‘ī could only be overcome through the intervention of the modern Ottoman state.⁷⁷

The contrast between the civilized conquerors and the backward locals is also evoked in the way violence is represented in both officials’ renderings of the operation against the towers at Bāb al-Shu‘ūb. While Rāşid and Aḥmed Muhtār criminalized the actions of Dafa‘ī and his supporters in the strongest possible terms, they did not portray residents of Şan‘ā’ in favorable terms either. The killing of the two prisoners of war by an enraged mob was an example of violence triggered by emotions and, thus, unthinking and uncivilized. By contrast, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa represented the military operation against Dafa‘ī and his men as punishment (*terbiye*), that is, as a disciplinary act executed in an orderly, rational way: three appeals to Dafa‘ī to surrender were followed by the shelling of the towers, the infantry attack, and, finally, the taking of prisoners. The wounded among them were then taken to a military hospital, their treatment being, to Rāşid, “a matter of course.”⁷⁸ In Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa’s report, very much like in Fu‘ād Paşa’s dispatches on the suppression of sectarian conflict in Mount Lebanon ten years earlier, Ottoman military forces thus appeared, as Makdisi puts it, as “the vanguard of Ottoman modernity, rationality, and nationalism,” as the vanguard of the civilizing mission.⁷⁹ This notion was expressed more explicitly in Aḥmed Rāşid’s *Tārīh*. Having stated that the population of Yemen had long remained in a state of misery (*mezellet*) and savagery (*vaḥşet*) as a result of the “tyranny” of local lords,⁸⁰ he described the reaction of the residents of Şan‘ā’ to the arrival of the Ottoman military forces in April 1872 as follows: “...and since they had not seen the like in their lifetime, they stood looking in amazement and astonishment when they suddenly saw the order and tidiness and the magnificence, splendor, and display of the imperial

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 124: “...mecrūhlarının tedāvisi emr-i ṭabī‘ī olduğundan...”

⁷⁹ Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” 782.

⁸⁰ Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 120.

forces...⁸¹ To appreciate the degree to which Aḥmed Muhtâr and, to an even greater extent, Aḥmed Râşid used the occupation of Şan‘â’ and the subsequent operation against Dafa‘î to celebrate the advent of the civilizing Ottoman rule in Yemen, it is useful to take a comparative look at the account that a local eyewitness, the anonymous author of the *Ḥawliyyât Yamâniya*, gave of the above-mentioned events. Like the two Ottoman observers, this anonymous author noted the extreme relief and gratitude of the Şan‘ânîs upon ‘Abdullâh Dafa‘î’s defeat.⁸² But nowhere in his account do we find the locals spellbound at the sight of a modern army; nor does he elevate the Arḥab leader and his men to the importance of virtually having held the Şan‘ânîs in captivity. For the author of the *Ḥawliyyât*, the arrival of the Ottoman expeditionary force was certainly not an event that marked the end of an “age of darkness” and the advent of civilization. In his account, the Ottoman occupation is represented in a much more ambivalent way that leaves room for bitterness about the rise of “new men” like Muḥsin Mu‘îd and about the failure of the Imâm al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin to raise more than a few hundred fighters among the residents of Şan‘â’ for a *jihād* against the invaders.

As noted earlier, Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa viewed the forts and towers of the local lords very much as a manifestation of the “disorder” that characterized Yemen at the advent of Ottoman rule. By the same token, the governor-general considered the occupation or destruction of these structures a key element within the larger effort of turning the newly conquered territories into a well-ordered Ottoman province. These remarks suggest that, at one level, Aḥmed Muhtâr conceived of both backwardness and civilization in spatial terms. That is, not only was backwardness inscribed in space through these structures, but establishing a “civilizing” Ottoman rule also meant re-ordering local space. Efforts to this effect started in Şan‘â’ itself immediately following the occupation by the Ottoman military.

⁸¹ Ibid., vol. 2, 120–21: “...ve müddet-i ‘ömürlerinde böyle bir şey görmediklerinden birden bire ‘asâkir-i şâhâneniñ niżâm ve intizâmını ve debdebe ve ihtişâmını ve satvet ve şânını gördikleri gibi kemâl-i ta‘accüb ve ḥayretle nigerân olub qaldılar.”

⁸² Anonymous, *Ḥawliyyât Yamâniya*, 300.

Ordering Space in Ottoman Yemen

One of the earliest accounts that provide an Ottoman perspective on the issue of ordering urban space in Ṣan'ā' after the Ottoman conquest can be found in Aḥmed Rāšid's *Tārīh*. According to Rāšid, Ottoman construction activities started soon after the town was occupied by the expeditionary corps under Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa in April 1872. First, construction carried out by several infantry units was directed toward providing the essential garrison facilities for the Ottoman troops. The fortifications of the citadel and those around the old city were restored and extended.⁸³ At the same time, barracks, an arsenal, a military hospital, and kitchen and laundry facilities were built inside the citadel compound, which was reconverted into an entirely military space: as Rāšid notes, the Ottoman authorities purchased the private houses that had been constructed there prior to the Ottoman takeover from their owners and turned them over to the military.⁸⁴

Ottoman construction did not, however, focus on the area of the old city, nor was it geared entirely to the needs of the military. The construction site for the future military hospital was prepared in the Mutawakkil quarter where one of the palaces of the Qāsīmī *imāms* was located. This included a garden with fountains, water basins, and trees that were brought from Ṭā'if in the Hijaz.⁸⁵ More important, the southeastern part of the old city, adjacent to the citadel, received particular attention from the new rulers. There, the authorities renovated the Bekiriye Mosque and the public bath (*ḥammām*) that had been donated by Ḥasan Paşa, a governor-general of Yemen during the first period of Ottoman rule (1538–1635). In addition, the public square (*mejdān*) in front of the mosque and bath was cleared of debris, enlarged and partly planted with trees. At its southwestern end, several houses with eateries (*lokanta*), cafés, and shops were built.⁸⁶

⁸³ Rāšid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 243, 245.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 243.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 245. On his first visit to Ṣan'ā' in 1878, the Italian traveler Renzo Manzoni had the opportunity to visit the completed hospital and showed himself extremely impressed with its "European style," order, and tidiness; see Renzo Manzoni, *El Yemen. Tre Anni Nell' Arabia Felice. Escursione Fatte dal Settembre 1877 al Marzo 1880* (Rome: Tipografia Eredi Botta, 1884), 125–26.

⁸⁶ Rāšid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 243–45. On the Bekiriye Mosque, built by Ḥasan Paşa after 1597, see Ronald Lewcock, R. B. Serjeant, and G. Rex Smith, "The Smaller Mosques of Ṣan'ā'," in *Ṣan'ā': An Arabian Islamic City*, ed. Robert Bertram Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock (London: Islamic Festival Trust, 1983), 375–81.

It was this complex, formed by the Bekiriye Mosque, the bath, and the public square, that later became the nucleus of the government quarter of Ottoman Şan'ā'. Finally, Rāşid states that preparations were made for the construction of a *rüşdiyye* school.⁸⁷

In this part of Rāşid's *Tārīh* we come across various aspects of the way in which the Ottomans inscribed their rule in urban space. First, several departments of the civil and military administration of the Province of Yemen moved into one of the palaces of the Qāsimī *imāms*.⁸⁸ This can be read as a particularly powerful way to mark the end of the period when Yemen—as a result of the resistance mounted by the Qāsimī dynasty—had effectively slipped from the control of the Ottoman state and the advent of the new regime. But apparently, the central agencies of the new provincial government did not just take over what, until the 1850s, had been the center of the imamic regime; in addition, they created a distinctive Ottoman space. When, in 1892, the British journalist Walter Harris was received by governor-general Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, he noted that his office in the old palace was decorated and furnished in an adaptation of French baroque style.⁸⁹ It seems that in decorating their office space the governors-general of the new province had imitated the interiors of the imperial palaces of the *Tanzīmāt* period, such as the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul.

At the same time, the restoration of the architectural complex donated by Ḥasan Paşa at the end of the sixteenth century appears as an attempt to stress the continuity between the previous period of Ottoman rule and the new order that men like Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa were seeking to establish in this part of the Arabian Peninsula. In this context, it is interesting to see that Rāşid provides a detailed list of all the “general welfare buildings” (*ebniye-i hayrīye*)—including fountains, public baths, and mosques—that had been donated by various Ottoman governors during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By contrast, he does not mention in this category any of the

⁸⁷ Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 246.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 245. Rāşid is probably referring to one of the *imāms*' palaces that was located inside a fort near the Ḥudayda gate; see Bidwell, “Western Accounts of Şan'ā' 1510–1962,” in *Şan'ā'*, ed. Serjeant and Lewcock, 113.

⁸⁹ See Walter B. Harris, *A Journey through the Yemen and Some General Remarks upon that Country* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893), 303; see also *ibid.*, the drawing between pages 292 and 293.

monuments that were built under the Qāsimī *imāms*.⁹⁰ Thus, a connection is established between the “beneficial” construction activities of the earlier Ottoman rulers of Yemen and those initiated by their successors under the auspices of the *Tanzīmāt*. More importantly, Ṣan‘ā’ is, to a considerable degree, represented as an Ottoman space. There is evidence that the privileging of the Bekirīye Mosque complex continued during the following decades. An article published in the official provincial newspaper *Ṣan‘ā’* in January 1881 points out that masons and other artisans had been specially brought in from Istanbul to carry out urgent restoration work at the mosque during the year 1880, and that Sultan ‘Abdülhamīd II had donated a new candelabra. This was commemorated in an inscription near the entrance of the mosque, which the author did not fail to cite in full.⁹¹ In 1892, Harris noted that the Bekirīye Mosque was well maintained, whereas the other Ṣan‘ānī mosques were in a deplorable state.⁹² Since the Bekirīye Mosque was a Sunnī place of worship that had been donated by a high Ottoman official, the Ottoman government clearly considered it an important symbol of the sovereignty of the sultan-caliph. Maintaining it was, therefore, a way to visually confirm this sovereignty. In particular, because of the claim to the caliphate that successive Zaydī *imāms* put forward during the second period of Ottoman rule, Zaydī mosques were regarded, quite obviously, as “rival symbols” and therefore denied similar attention from Ottoman officials.⁹³

As noted, Rāṣid mentioned that the new provincial government made preparations to provide Ṣan‘ā’ at a later stage with a *rüşdiyye* school, a hospital, and a telegraph station, i.e., many of the key facilities that became markers of Ottoman provincial cities of the *Tanzīmāt* period.⁹⁴ A report drawn up for the Palace by Nāmīk Efendi, a government inspector, in November 1892 illustrates that not only the restoration of existing structures like the Bekirīye Mosque, but also the construction of these new kinds of buildings played a crucial role in representing the authority of the Ottoman state in Yemen. Nāmīk complained

⁹⁰ For instance, the mosque and *qubba* of al-Mutawakkil, the Qubbat al-Mahdi ‘Abbās, or the al-Abhar mosque; see Lewcock, Serjeant, and Smith, “Smaller Mosques,” 382–85.

⁹¹ See *Ṣan‘ā’* 21 (28 Kanun-i evvel 1296 [9 January 1881]), 1.

⁹² Harris, *Journey through the Yemen*, 315.

⁹³ Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 28–31.

⁹⁴ See Paul Dumont and François Georgeon, eds., *Villes Ottomanes à la Fin de l’Empire* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992).

specifically about the almost complete lack of administrative buildings and barracks in the Province of Yemen: only in Şan'ā', he noted, could a government office building (*konak*) be found that befitted the honor of the state. In all the other administrative centers of the province, government officials were scattered over several of the local houses. The same held true of some of the Ottoman troops, and most soldiers were living in tents. What was more, even ten years after construction on the new barracks in Şan'ā' had begun, these were still only half-completed. Nāmık attributed widespread local support of the Zaydī *imāms* against the provincial government precisely to this absence of what Timothy Mitchell has termed "an appearance of order."⁹⁵ Similarly, Aḥmed Rāşid emphasized that the Ottomans were constructing, renovating, or rebuilding in an "orderly way" (*muntaẓam şüretde*) where they had found only ruins and decay.⁹⁶ Rāşid also did not fail to mention the procedural orderliness with which these projects were carried out. Apparently, all plots for the construction schemes of the Ottoman authorities were purchased by the state, and a special commission was appointed to supervise the various construction projects.⁹⁷ Thus, a clear contrast is drawn between local decline and stagnation on one side, and Ottoman order and efficiency on the other. The new rulers portrayed themselves as bringing, quite literally, order out of the chaos represented by the crumbling buildings of Şan'ā'. Rāşid's description, therefore, brings to mind similar attempts of the central government to order and "modernize" cities that were characteristic of the *Tanzīmāt* and Hamidian periods.⁹⁸ For instance, the commission for road improvement undertook to regularize the urban fabric in parts of Istanbul between 1865 and 1869; a project that may well have been at the back of Rāşid's mind when he described city planning in Şan'ā'.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ BOA./ŞD. 2261–17, doc. 10, Nāmık Efendi to the Palace, 17 Teşrin-i sani 1308/29 November 1892; Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 78–80.

⁹⁶ Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 242, 243, 244, 245. While Rāşid was favorably impressed with the solidity and the architectural style of the Şan'ānī houses, he stressed that many of them lay in ruins, stating that since the most prosperous period of the city their number had decreased from roughly 7,000–8,000 to an estimated 5,000; see *ibid.*, 332, 333.

⁹⁷ Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 243, 245, 246.

⁹⁸ Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 31.

⁹⁹ See Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1986), 55–63.

From the early 1880s, government officials considered state rituals yet another way to showcase the civilizing aspect of Ottoman rule in an urban context. For example, in contemporary government papers and in articles published in *Şan'ā'*, officials frequently expressed the view that education in state schools and service in the locally recruited *Ḥamīdiye* units that had been established during the governorship of İsmā'il Ḥakki Paşa (1880–82) were critical to bring the local population within the fold of “Ottoman civilization” (*medeniyet-i 'osmāniye*).¹⁰⁰ By civilizing the population of the Province of Yemen, these bureaucrats were referring to the effort to forge a population of loyal and useful Ottoman subjects through the discipline and standardization of the modern state.

Holding school examinations, drill exercises, and parades in public was, therefore, a way of using urban space to put on display the success of the civilizing mission and, hence, to demonstrate the increasing integration of the province into the structures of the empire. Both sets of ceremonies received detailed coverage in *Şan'ā'*.¹⁰¹ On 8 Temmuz 1297/20 July 1881, for instance, the official provincial newspaper reported on drill exercises and a parade that had been held in the provincial capital in celebration of the sultan's birthday: the ceremony began with a drill performed by the recently created *Ḥamīdiye* artillery unit in the presence of the rest of the *Ḥamīdiye* corps, the governor-general, some officials, and “thousands of people”:

After the above-mentioned guns had been fired, everyone present expressed his good wishes by shouting repeatedly: “Long live the Sultan!” Thereafter they performed a meticulous and orderly parade with, as order requires, the *Ḥamīdiye* band taking the lead, the trumpeters behind them, then the *Ḥamīdiye* battalions and the gunners at the far end, while the musicians of the band played alternately at special places, and during this parade the afore-mentioned gunners marched by with extraordinary speed. The overall view of these heroes displayed the form of a most orderly and perfect unit and the agitation of the banners in

¹⁰⁰ BOA./Y.A.HUS. 167–74, doc. 5, İsmā'il Ḥakki Paşa to the Palace, 31 Mart 1296/12 April 1880; on the role of education see Michael Ursinus, “*Şan'ā'*. Eine amtliche osmanische Provinzzeitung im Jemen,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches und ihre Interpretation*, ed. Michael Ursinus (Istanbul: İsis, 1994), 178–79.

¹⁰¹ For drill exercises of the *Ḥamīdiye* troops see, for instance, *Şan'ā'* 2 [?] (7 Mayıs 1296 [19 May 1880]), 2; *Şan'ā'* 21 (28 Kanun-i evvel 1296 [9 January 1881]), 2; *Şan'ā'* 41 (8 Temmuz 1297 [20 July 1881]), 1; for public school examinations see, for instance, *Şan'ā'* 43 (22 Temmuz 1297 [3 August 1881]), 1–2; *Şan'ā'* 44 (29 Temmuz 1297 [10 August 1881]), 2; *Şan'ā'* 48 (9 [?] Eylül 1297 [21 September 1881]), 2.

various colors in their midst with the exalted line “Asâkir-i Hâmîdiye” written on them presented another pleasant picture to the eyes of the onlooker.¹⁰²

An article published in *Şan'â'* two weeks later, on 22 Temmuz 1297/3 August 1881, gives us a sense of how the Ottoman authorities in the provincial capital turned the final examinations at the local *rüşdiyye* school into a public event. According to *Şan'â'*, the examination ceremonies for the students began with the examinations proper. These were held inside the Bekirîye Mosque in the presence of the governor-general, his staff, various officials, *'ulamâ'*, and *sâda*. During the awards ceremony outside the mosque, the students received their diplomas from the governor-general while an army band performed in the background. The event concluded with a parade of the Hâmîdiye corps and *nizâmîye* (regular) troops.¹⁰³

It should be noted that the connection between the ordering of space and the notion of a civilizing mission was made not only with reference to the urban context. Perhaps the most important mode used to transform Yemen into an Ottoman space was the division of the conquered territories into a set of hierarchically-organized administrative units. It was in this way that the “disorderly” space of Yemen under the domination of local leaders was to be turned into an orderly space that was characteristic of what *Tanzîmât* bureaucrats viewed as “civilization.” These notions are reflected, for instance, in Râşid’s account of how the new rulers created the district of Jabal Rayma in 1873. In great detail he describes how the provincial government divided the region that was to form the district into sub-districts that represented new territorial entities, cutting across those historical parts that had made up Jabal Rayma. It was then determined which villages would belong to which sub-district. At the same time, the authorities in *Şan'â'* appointed the administrative personnel for all these units, from the district governor and his staff down to the village dignitaries and headmen whose names were listed in specific records. Moreover, levels of taxation were fixed, with the help of their headmen, for every single village. While map-making, censuses, and cadastral surveys were not mentioned as tools for the ordering of space, Râşid’s description nevertheless illustrates the effort on the part of the provincial

¹⁰² *Şan'â'* 41 (8 Temmuz 1297 [20 July 1881]), 1.

¹⁰³ *Şan'â'* 43 (22 Temmuz 1297 [3 August 1881]), 1–2.

government to group the people of Jabal Rayma into a new hierarchy of administrative and fiscal units. Important in this connection is Rāšid's insistence that the creation of these units was based on "proper arrangements and instructions" (*tertībāt ve ta'limāt*), a blueprint as it were, that emanated from the central, supreme authority of the new province, the governor-general's office.¹⁰⁴

There is evidence that the ordering of space remained an integral part of how Ottoman officials conceptualized their civilizing mission in Yemen. For instance, in 1880 and 1888, the members of the province's administrative council notified the ministry of the interior in Istanbul that they considered it necessary to set up new sub-districts in the region north of Ṣan'ā', not least because the local population had still not been freed from the primitive state in which they were living.¹⁰⁵ The council's report reflects the idea that the production of space would serve the idea of civilizing the local population, since it allowed the authorities to bring to bear on them more effectively the disciplining techniques of the modern state. This idea is formulated even more explicitly in connection with several plans concerning the administrative restructuring of the Province of Yemen that were drawn up by Ottoman administrators during the last decade of 'Abdülhamīd II's reign (1876–1909). It was against the background of several uprisings led by Imām al-Manṣūr and his son and successor Yaḥyā between 1891 and 1907 that provincial administrators like İsmā'īl Raḥmī, a former district governor of Qa'ṭaba, and senior officials like the governor-general of Yemen, Ḥüseyn Ḥilmī Paşa, or division generals Şâkir and Ferīd paşas called for smaller administrative units so as to ensure a more efficient control of the local population by the authorities.¹⁰⁶ For instance, in a memorandum dated 24 Şubat 1322/9 March 1907 Şâkir and Ferīd paşas spoke in favor of partitioning the Province of Yemen into two provinces and an independent sub-province of 'Asīr, with

¹⁰⁴ Rāšid, *Tārīh*, vol. 2, 168.

¹⁰⁵ BOA./ŞD. 2254–17, doc. 4, Province of Yemen, administrative council to the ministry of the interior, 10 Haziran 1296/22 June 1880; see also BOA./ŞD. 2259–2, Province of Yemen, administrative council to the ministry of the interior, 10 Teşrin-i sani 1304/22 November 1888.

¹⁰⁶ Cf., for instance, BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, which contains an entire file on the issue of partitioning the Province of Yemen into four provinces. In 1904, İsmā'īl Raḥmī called for a restructuring of the province's administrative divisions so as to allow administrators and police to keep a continual watch on the movements and activities of the Yemeni population since, by nature (*ṭab'an*), they had the tendency to indulge in villainy and brigandage (*şeḳāvet*); see BOA./Y.EE. 11–15, 3, 4.

the belief that increasing the number of sub-provinces and district centers would enable the authorities “to pay constant attention to the conditions of the population.” Since, under these conditions “... police could do their duty with ease, security and public order, the sources of wealth and prosperity, would become properly established.”¹⁰⁷

It is necessary to emphasize that some of the above-mentioned spatial practices predated the emergence of the modern state in the context of the Ottoman Empire from the reign of Maḥmūd II (1808–39) onward. For instance, the use of architecture and public ceremonies (parades among them) to represent the authority of the Ottoman dynasty were indeed already well-established practices during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁰⁸ A similar argument could be made with regard to the Qāsimī *imāms* who ruled parts of Yemen between the 1630s and the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ In this regard, the renovation of the Bekiriye Mosque on the order of ‘Abdülḥamīd II confirmed the sultan’s sovereignty in a way that would have appeared familiar to a seventeenth-century observer. However, both Aḥmed Rāṣid’s emphasis on creating an “orderly image” through construction and renovation, and Nāmīk Efendi’s remarks about the political implications of the lack of “proper” government buildings point to a new concept that Timothy Mitchell has studied with reference to nineteenth-century Egypt, namely the notion of “order” as “something pre-existent, non-particular and non-material.”¹¹⁰ Only with this abstract notion of order in mind could the dwellings of Ottoman officials or the un-renovated Bekiriye Mosque appear to the two officials as disorder.¹¹¹ It was in keeping with this concept that Nāmīk Efendi regarded it as inappropriate that officials went about their business in “civilian” dwellings. Similarly, the public school examinations presupposed the concept of learning “separated out as ‘schooling.’” This was as characteristic of Ottoman modernity as military parades that celebrated the creation of disciplined bodies of soldiers that would function like an “artificial machine.”¹¹² The redeployment of earlier or local spatial categories

¹⁰⁷ BOA./Y.EE. 8–20, doc. 1, Şâkir Paşa and Ferīd Paşa to the Palace, 24 Şubat 1322/9 March 1907.

¹⁰⁸ See, for instance, Suraiya Faroqhi, *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1995), 158, 161–65.

¹⁰⁹ See Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 55.

¹¹⁰ Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 79.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 36–37, 85.

within the context of the modern Ottoman state is also apparent in the practice of turning tribal territory into administrative units, as happened, for instance, in the cases of the district of Rijāl al-Ma' in 'Asīr or of the *nāḥiye* of Banū Ḥārith north of Ṣan'ā'. However, as the case of protected enclaves (*hijra*) for *sāda* in tribal territory shows, local concepts of space continued to exist alongside those introduced by Ottoman soldiers and administrators.

The central government's new determination to establish more direct rule over highland Yemen in 1871–73 was accompanied by a profound shift in officials' perspectives on the nature of the Ottoman conquest and the relationship between the state and the local peoples. Previously, in 1849, Muṣṭafā Ḥāmī had represented the military campaigns of Kıbrıslı Tevfik Paşa as an effort to establish the sultan's justice over the Tihāma and highland Yemen. By contrast, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa and Aḥmed Rāşid viewed the conquests of 1871–73 and the creation of the new Province of Yemen as a mission to civilize a backward population: the disempowerment of the local lords was to be followed by the carving up of provincial space into administrative sub-divisions as specified in the law of provincial administration of 1871, by renovation and construction projects in its urban centers, and eventually by transforming the local people into loyal Muslim subjects through Sunnī *madrasas* and new-style middle schools.

Moreover, unlike Ottoman officials in the late 1840s, Aḥmed Rāşid sought to legitimate the re-conquest of highland Yemen historically: for him the campaigns of 1871–73 completed earlier efforts of returning this former Ottoman province to the fold of the sultan's domains after the interregnum of local usurpers. For Rāşid, just as in the sixteenth century, Ottoman control over Yemen was vital in order to protect the holy sites of Islam at Mecca and Medina against Christian European powers. Yet, at the same time, he made it clear that the events of 1871–73 marked more than just the restoration of Ottoman rule, but the establishment of a modern, enlightened regime of power.

Both the notion of a civilizing mission and Rāşid's argument of the Ottomans' historical entitlement to Yemen remained central to Ottoman perspectives on the empire's southernmost province. Indeed, until the end of empire, bureaucrats and military officers considered Yemen a proving ground for Ottoman modernity. However, already by the mid-1870s, encounters with local communities and their leaders had begun to erode the confidence of Ottoman policy makers in the swift incorporation of the new province into the political and

administrative structures of the empire that Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa and Aḥmed Rāşid had expressed in their writings. Officials realized that in order to uphold Ottoman rule in Yemen, governmental institutions and practices had to be adapted to local conditions to a degree unforeseen by the men who hoisted the Ottoman flag on the citadel of Şan‘ā’ in April 1872. It is to this politics of difference that we now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘ACCORDING TO THEIR CUSTOMS AND DISPOSITIONS’: ELABORATING POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE IN OTTOMAN YEMEN, 1874–91

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the positing of cultural difference played a crucial role in the broader effort of Ottoman bureaucrats to legitimize the conquests of 1871–73 and the subsequent creation of the Province of Yemen. Initially, at least, it seems that policy makers in Şan‘ā’ and Istanbul did not place a strong emphasis on the institutionalization of perceived cultural hierarchies through the creation of specific administrative structures.

Yet before long, officials realized that Yemen could not be governed like those parts of Rumelia, Anatolia, Ottoman Syria, and Ottoman Iraq, where government influence was much stronger. In this chapter, I argue that through prolonged power struggles with local communities and against the background of European imperial expansion in the Red Sea region and other parts of the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman officials from the late 1870s onward came to elaborate a form of governance for the newly conquered province that was based to a much greater degree on the institutionalization and reproduction of difference than had been the case during the years immediately following the conquests of the early 1870s. As we shall see, soldiers and administrators now went well beyond emphasizing cultural inferiority and hence the difference of the local population in their writings. Rather, they institutionalized it by adapting modes of taxation, the judicial system, and military recruitment to what they perceived as the “customs and dispositions” (*‘ādāt ve emzice*) of the local people. This was not specific to Yemen. As Huricihan İslamoğlu and Eugene Rogan have demonstrated, this flexibility occurred in many parts of the empire during this period, as the central government sought to tighten its grip on local society. However, what set Yemen apart from many other provinces was the degree of these adaptations. In certain parts of Ottoman Syria, for instance, the government was indeed able to carry out censuses and land registration and to implement conscription and the *niẓāmīye* court system. By contrast, none of these institutions and practices could be introduced anywhere in the Province of Yemen,

including in Ḥudayda and its environs, where Ottoman rule had been reestablished as early as 1849—at the same time the central government moved to exercise more direct rule over parts of Ottoman Syria and present-day Iraq.

Historians of the late Ottoman Empire have identified the *discursive* creation of difference—that is, the representation of local peoples as “backward” and “primitive” and thus in need of being “uplifted” through the institutions and practices of the modern state—in connection with the assumption of a civilizing mission as a key aspect of Ottoman governance during the Hamidian and Second Constitutional periods (1876–1918).¹ However, the case of Ottoman Yemen sheds light on an issue that has been largely overlooked in this literature, namely, the fact that the elaboration of the *politics of difference* was a crucial factor that enabled the imperial government to uphold its rule over some of the empire’s internal and external peripheries. This form of governance was premised upon the assumption that a conquered population could be governed effectively if “accurate” knowledge about political practices, social hierarchies, and culture informed the strategies of the powers that be. In this chapter, I contend that this form of governance constituted a regime that displayed strong parallels to those we observe in the colonies of other empires during this period. At the same time, however, I show that this regime emerged from the background of an older Ottoman imperial legacy and within the specific context of Ottoman domestic politics, which was marked by the complex transformations of government agencies and society from the early nineteenth century.

Like British, Dutch, French, or Russian colonial governance during the period under study, Ottoman politics of difference was based on the assumption that the “backward” could not be ruled like the “civilized.” In the case of the overseas empires of Britain, the Netherlands, and France this meant, to an important degree, that the indigenous peoples were denied liberal citizenship rights, most notably democratic self-government and/or participation in the democratic politics of the metropole. These empires were, therefore, characterized by a

¹ See, for instance, Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003), 318–24; Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism”; Christoph Herzog, “Nineteenth-Century Baghdad through Ottoman Eyes,” in *The Empire in the City*, ed. Hanssen, Philipp, and Weber, 311–28.

contrast between the increasingly democratic metropole and the colonial periphery that was ruled autocratically by senior colonial bureaucrats and their staff.

In the case of Ottoman Yemen, however, politics of difference was not about exclusion from liberal citizenship rights, not least because, for most of the period under study, the autocratic regime of Sultan 'Abdülhamid II denied these rights to *all* the subjects of the empire. Rather, a crucial element of governing according to the "customs and dispositions" of the local people was the decision not to implement censuses, cadastral surveys, conscription, or a standardized judicial system. These were state practices and institutions that theoretically were to be applied throughout the Ottoman Empire with a view to creating a more homogeneous population of loyal subjects. These practices were indeed introduced in large parts of the Ottoman lands. The Ottoman Empire during the period under study was, therefore, characterized by the contrast between a more homogeneous and centralized (but still differentiated) core and a periphery where bureaucrats had to manage the local population without the above-mentioned institutions and practices. While British, Dutch, or French bureaucrats considered colonized peoples not ready, or even unfit, for the introduction of parliamentary democracy, their Ottoman counterparts declared the Yemenis not ready for the introduction of censuses, conscription, or the *nizāmīye* courts.

Yet, unlike many western colonial rulers, Ottoman officials in southwest Arabia often viewed culture, not race, as the principal marker of difference: local "backwardness" and "savagery" were not perceived as innate and immutable, but rather as a condition that could be overcome through the imposition of those norms of governance, education, and religious practice that the *Tanzīmāt* state defined as civilization.²

² See, for instance, Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 18–22; Conklin, *Mission to Civilize*, 78; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 52–59. However, in her work on the issue of métissage in the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina, Ann Laura Stoler argues for a more complex picture, demonstrating that in the context of contesting and demarcating boundaries of difference "...class distinctions, gender prescriptions, cultural knowledge, and racial membership were simultaneously invoked and strategically filled with different meanings for different projects." See Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 202.

While this perspective was also part of certain forms of British and French colonialism during this period, it was much more prominent in the context of Ottoman rule in Yemen. That is, concepts of difference and citizenship that undergirded the elaboration of empire in French West Africa, British India, or the Dutch East Indies cannot explain what these categories meant in the Province of Yemen. The case of Ottoman Yemen requires us to think about colonial difference differently.

Just as importantly, I show that the adaptation of governmental institutions and practices to the “customs and dispositions” of the local peoples was a long and conflicted process: during the fifteen years between the beginning of Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa’s governorship and the uprising of 1891–92, Ottoman bureaucrats experimented with a variety of different measures. These reflected their profound disagreements over what the locals’ customs actually were and how far one could go in terms of adapting provincial governance to them without undermining Ottoman rule over the newly-created province. Thus, we are dealing with the contestations and struggles over how different a particular province could actually be and how to address one of the key tensions of empire, namely the problem of finding the right balance between incorporation and differentiation.

The Idea of a “Customary” Order

Less than four years after Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa’s 1873 memorandum to the grand vizier, high-ranking administrators in Yemen, like Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa, then governor-general, realized that the first governor-general of Yemen had been overly optimistic both in declaring complete victory over the local lords and in assuming that the indigenous population could be assimilated into the political structures of the Ottoman Empire within a relatively short period of time. From the first years of Ottoman rule, agents of the imperial government began to encounter serious opposition to their efforts at establishing key elements of the *Tanzīmāt* form of direct rule over the newly-conquered province, including the imposition of the largely secular Ottoman judicial system and, even more important, the establishment of a level of taxation clearly above those that the local people had known under previous regimes.

It was partly as a result of local discontent with these measures that two Zaydī *imāms*, al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin and, after his death

in 1879, al-Hādī Sharaf al-Dīn b. Muḥammad (d. 1890) succeeded in establishing themselves as prominent leaders of anti-Ottoman opposition among the population in the parts of the northern highlands that had not come under Ottoman occupation in 1872–73. Ottoman bureaucrats viewed this political “comeback” of the *imāms* as a serious challenge to Ottoman rule because it created competition for the loyalty of the Zaydī population of the Province of Yemen. At the same time, it was not only the Zaydī *imāms* who seemed to pose a challenge to Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia. The defeat and death of Muḥammad b. ‘Ā’id had not put an end to his family’s ambitions to rule over ‘Asīr, and in 1881, his son Aḥmad was recognized by several of the local tribes as *amīr*, which prompted the dispatch of Ottoman troops.³ While Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Ā’id was eventually co-opted by the central government, the ‘Asīrī tribes of the Banī Marwān and the Rijāl al-Ma’ rose in revolt against Ottoman rule at various points during the 1880s and 1890s.⁴ Moreover, throughout the period under study, the Zarānīq successfully defied Ottoman attempts to bring the Tihāma south of Ḥudayda under government control. In the fall of 1890, a commission of war ministry officials drew attention to the fact that Zabīd was the only district in the entire *sancaḳ* of Ḥudayda where taxes could be collected without the assistance of the military.⁵ With the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the annexation of ‘Assab and Massawa by the Italians in 1886, the inter-imperial competition in the Red Sea region further intensified. In this context, imperial planners in Ṣan‘ā’ and Istanbul became increasingly concerned about their European rivals’ possible designs on Ottoman Yemen. More specifically, government correspondence addressed concerns that the European powers would try to win over local leaders inside the Province of Yemen and thus subvert Ottoman rule. Overall, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa’s confidence in the strength of the Ottoman position had given way to an acute sense of the precarious nature of Ottoman rule in Yemen. More importantly, the increasingly difficult financial situation of the imperial government limited its ability to project its power in the new

³ See BOA./Y.MTV. 8–52, doc. 3, report, governor (*mutaşarrıf*) of the *sancaḳ* of ‘Asīr, to Division General Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1297/8 November 1881.

⁴ See Baldry, “Al-Yaman and the Turkish Occupation,” 168–69.

⁵ See BOA./Y.MTV. 46–119, memorandum, commission for general military inspection (*teftiş-i ‘umūmī-i ‘askerī komisyonu*), 19 Teşrin-i sani 1306/1 December 1890, 5.

province. These problems were greatly aggravated by the immense drain on the empire's human and financial resources—a drain that was caused by the Ottoman state's bankruptcy in 1875 and by their defeat at the hands of Russia in 1877–78.

It was in response to these developments that senior officials in Yemen and Istanbul over the following fifteen years moved away from earlier perspectives on governing the province. While Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa began by thinking that most local forms of governance would soon give way to imperial ones, his successors sought to create a political order that would be based, to a far greater extent, on the “customs and dispositions” of the indigenous population. By adapting administrative structures and governmental practices to what they perceived as local conditions, Ottoman soldiers and administrators sought to maintain control over the recently conquered province. The idea was to identify the “keys” to local society, as it were, its underlying principles and mechanisms of power. These were then to be drawn upon with a view to elaborating a form of governance that would make Ottoman domination acceptable to the local people and thus more secure. However, since Ottoman officials viewed the indigenous population as “backward” and “uncivilized,” these adaptations institutionalized and reproduced perceived cultural hierarchies and created the effect of distancing the local peoples from their conquerors.

It is necessary to emphasize that the ability to incorporate and appropriate the power structures and methods of rule of a given locale for the purpose of provincial government had been a prominent feature of Ottoman empire-building well before the emergence of Ottoman modernity in the context of the *Tanzīmāt*. What was new was the notion of the “local” as a bounded entity, as something that could be objectified as a “culture” or “civilization” (*medeniyet*), which, in turn, could be known and controlled through the production of “useful knowledge.”

The following sections explore this process of adaptation with regard to four key dimensions of government in the Province of Yemen: taxation/tax collection, the recruitment of government personnel, military recruitment, and the administration of justice. As we shall see, this process reflected the assumption on the part of Ottoman soldiers and administrators that the dynamics of local society could be explained on the basis of two categories of knowledge: the strong attachment of the indigenous population to the *sharī'a* as a concept of righteous order and a regulatory system for conflict resolution, and the pivotal role of tribal leaders, small lords (both referred to as *shaykhs* in governmental

correspondence), jurists (*fuqahā*), and *sāda* as the fundamental categories of power brokers. Most prominent among those who initiated this shift in policy was Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa, who served as governor-general of Yemen from 1875 to 1879.

By the time Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım took office it was clear that not all local leaders had been forced into submission. In contrast to many of the major lords in the highlands, al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin had persisted in his resistance to the Ottoman invasion despite severe military setbacks and efforts on the part of the new rulers to co-opt him. After an abortive attempt to relieve the siege of Kawkabān in the fall of 1872 he retreated into the unoccupied parts of the highlands north of Ṣan‘ā’. There he found support among members of the tribal communities of Ḥaṣhid and Arḥab, who refused to declare their allegiance to the Ottoman government and opposed attempts by the Ottoman military to expand the territory of the province further north, beyond the area that had been occupied by the end of 1873. This opposition continued throughout the 1870s and took the form of prolonged armed confrontations between these communities and Ottoman military forces.⁶ While al-Mutawakkil did not succeed in establishing himself as the leader of all the groups who fought the Ottomans, he nevertheless emerged as one of the main protagonists of anti-Ottoman opposition in the northern highlands. Only moderately successful in purely military terms, he frustrated all attempts on the part of the Ottoman government to eliminate the Zaydī imamate as a potential focus of opposition and an alternative reference point of legitimacy and authority.

At the same time, the Ottomans encountered open, armed resistance not only when they attempted to extend their rule further north, but also inside the new Province of Yemen itself. During 1875–76, uprisings occurred around Ṣan‘ā’, Dhamār, and Radā’ as well as in the district of Zabīd in the Tihāma and in ‘Asīr.⁷ In his reports to the grand vizier, Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım argued that the rebels were encouraged by recent setbacks of government forces against the supporters of Imām al-Mutawakkil and by the latter’s “propaganda” activities. Perhaps more important, however, he attributed these uprisings to the fiscal policies that had been introduced in connection with the creation

⁶ See Farah, *Sultan’s Yemen*, 85–86, 88, 102–4.

⁷ BOA./İrade-Şura-yi Devlet 1680, doc. 2.2, governor-general of Yemen, Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa, to the grand vizier, 31 Haziran [sic] 1292/12 July 1876, 2.

of the Province of Yemen.⁸ More specifically, the governor-general blamed his predecessors for having devised a system of taxation that completely disregarded the “dispositions and nature” of the locals, by which he meant their relative poverty and their lack of familiarity with Ottoman fiscal practices. These previous administrations, he argued, had set levels of taxation without taking into account that before the advent of Ottoman rule the people in many parts of the region had only paid the canonical tithe on agricultural products, if they had been taxed at all.⁹ Similarly, no attempt had been made to adapt tax rates to the economic situation in the different parts of the province; in other words, to demand only what people could realistically be expected to pay given the crop yields of their fields and the numbers of their livestock. As a result, tax revenues had been negligible. Even worse, by resorting to coercion in an attempt to realize these unrealistic levels of revenue, the provincial government had alienated large parts of the indigenous population to the extent of driving them, eventually, into rebellion.¹⁰

Faced with the problem of having to rationalize the exploitation of local tax resources without upsetting the political stability of the province, the governor-general argued for a mode of taxation that would take into account the “dispositions” of the local population. However, it is clear from his reports that he regarded these dispositions as a sign of backwardness, as an aspect of the cultural inferiority of the locals. Muştafa ‘Aşım did not suggest that taxes should be reduced to a uniform level throughout the province. Rather, he sought to distinguish between various levels of taxation according to the economic potential and the degree of government control in the different areas. That is, he set the allocation of tax rates throughout the province to reflect what he perceived as the different degrees of civilization, or rather savagery (*vaḥşet*), of the indigenous people. Referring to the *sancaḳ* of ‘Asir and “some other parts of the province,” the governor-general argued that, in contrast to parts of the empire that had for a long time been under a well-ordered administration (*müddet-i medīdeden beri idāre-i muntaẓama taḥtında maḥallar gibi*), the existence of “nomadic and savage tribes” in these areas made it extremely difficult to carry out

⁸ BOA./A.MKT.MHM. 486–18, doc. 22, governor-general of Yemen, Muştafa ‘Aşım Paşa, to the grand vizier, 15 Temmuz 1292/27 July 1876.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

those administrative procedures on which the orderly allocation and collection of the *vergü*, tithe, and sheep tax crucially depended, namely censuses, a proper assessment of people’s property and the counting of their livestock.¹¹ What he recommended instead was to determine a “moderate” sum that would be collected in lieu of tithe, sheep tax, and *vergü* “ber-şüret-i maḳṭū‘a,” that is, as a lump sum. Eugene Rogan’s explanation of peasant resistance to the census in Ottoman Transjordan also applies to the context of Ottoman Yemen:

...Fears of conscription were only natural in an army with ill-defined terms of service, duties far from home on any of three continents, and a disheartening record of defeat... Thus, while peasants accepted a reasonable level of taxation, they were adamantly opposed to conscription and to any government measure which led to their names being inscribed in the state’s books.¹²

There is evidence that elements of Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım’s recommendations were, in fact, implemented. From the documents studied, however, it is not entirely clear what exactly this scheme of fiscal “zoning” actually looked like; that is, which parts of the province had to pay which taxes. For instance, a memorandum drawn up by the council of state (*şürā-yi devlet*) in Istanbul suggests that the population of the entire *sancaḳ* of ‘Asir and of various—unspecified—*kaḳā*’s in other parts of the province were exempted from paying the sheep tax and *vergü* because of their poverty and backwardness. Similarly, when in 1876–77 three new sub-districts were created in the northern part of the *sancaḳ* of Şan‘ā’ that bordered on territory not occupied by the Ottomans, the directorate of finances in the provincial capital set a specific amount of taxes for each of the tribes in this area without further differentiating according to tax type. In this case, too, the amount of tax revenues that was thus determined was to be collected as a lump sum.¹³ We will see later on in this chapter that tax collection was also one of the main avenues through which the Ottoman provincial government of Yemen co-opted local elites.

¹¹ BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 50932, doc. 3.2, governor-general of Yemen, Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa, to the grand vizier, 20 Mayıs 1292/1 June 1876.

¹² Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 186.

¹³ BOA./İrade-Şura-yi Devlet 2293, doc. 1, grand vizier to the Palace, 17 Muharrem 1296/10 January 1879; *ibid.*, doc. 3, survey of tax revenues prepared by the administrative council of the Province of Yemen, 4 Eylül 1294/16 September 1878.

It is interesting to see that Muştafâ 'Âşım spoke in favor of adapting not only the level of taxation and the mode of tax collection to the locals' relative degrees of "savagery," but also the form of governance in the respective areas. Again with reference to 'Asîr, he recommended that the posts of district- and sub-district governors (*ķāymaķāmlar* and *müdirler*, respectively) be filled with "the leaders and *shaykhs*" of the local tribes. Similarly, individuals from the same elite group were to be appointed officers of the local gendarmerie.¹⁴ In this way, these local leaders would be closely attached to the government, which, in turn, would allow government influence to expand and become properly established. While Muştafâ 'Âşım emphasized that this approach had proved to be very successful in two other borderlands of the empire, Tripolitania and Iraq, these examples were not his principal point of reference for the form of governance that he suggested for the *sancaķ* of 'Asîr. Rather, the main example he advocated emulating was a central element of British rule in India. Referring to the idea of leaving the administration of districts and sub-districts to local leaders, he wrote,

It has been found evident that a possible example can be the [mode of] administration that England adopts and prefers in India employing this very method and that keeps millions of people obedient with a relatively...small military force despite religious and sectarian differences...¹⁵

The central government appears to have acted upon these recommendations with regard to 'Asîr, where it appointed Shaykh Fâ'iz, a local leader who had been exiled to Yanya, governor of the Banî Shahr district.¹⁶ In the four newly-created *nāhiyes* north of Şan'â, the *müdir*s were also chosen from among the *shaykhs* of Arĥab and the local *sāda*.¹⁷

Moreover, the governor-general suggested a strategy that was meant to bring under Ottoman control—in the long run at least—the most "savage" parts of the region, that is, those areas north of Şan'â that

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.: "İngiltere'niñ Hindistân'da bu uşul üzere ittihâz ve iltizâm eylediđi idâreniñ zıddiyet-i dîniye ve mezhebîye ile berâber milyonlarca nüfus kendilerine nisbetle... ufaķ bir kuvve-i askerîye ile dâ'ire-i inķiyâdda bulındırması dahi bu bâbda misâl olabileceđi... derķâr bulunmuşdır..."

¹⁶ BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 64188, doc. 1.2, commission for the selection of district governors (*ķāymaķāmların intihâb ķomîsyonu*) to the grand vizier, 31 Temmuz 1295/12 August 1879.

¹⁷ BOA./İrade-Şura-yi Devlet 2293, doc. 1, grand vizier to the Palace, 17 Muharrem 1296/10 January 1879.

were not yet part of the Province of Yemen. He proposed to neutralize the influence of al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin by co-opting his rivals through the payment of stipends and by recruiting an irregular gendarmerie from among the local population.

While at this stage at least, the government appears to have limited the practice of appointing tribal leaders and *sāda* in charge of entire districts and sub-districts to peripheral regions of Ottoman Yemen like 'Asīr, a closer look at memoranda and other official correspondence from this period shows that the attempt to achieve control over the local population by co-opting these elite figures became a central element of governance throughout the province. For instance, in a series of reports to the grand vizier, Muṣṭafā 'Āşım emphasized that the population of Yemen and especially the members of the Zaydī sect (*madhhab*) respected the *sāda* to a degree that was unparalleled anywhere else. The influence of these *sāda*, or *sayyids*, over "the hearts of the people" (*sādātīñ...kulüb-i nāsa te'sīri*) was such that it could incite them to sedition (*fesād*) and necessitate emergency measures like the deployment of military force. In order to ensure the loyalty of public opinion (*efkār-i 'umūmiye*) toward the government it was, therefore, imperative to honor these *sayyids* and give stipends to those who had been left without any other source of income after their revenue grants (*kuṭ'a*) had been canceled following the reorganization of the fiscal system in connection with the creation of the Province of Yemen. Muṣṭafā 'Āşım estimated that an annual sum of 100,000 *ḳurūşes* would be needed to pay these stipends and proposed to raise half of it through a special tax that would be levied among the Zaydī population of the province.¹⁸ In 1890, Governor-General 'Osmān Nūrī Paşa declared that "... these *sharīfs* are the soul of the land of Yemen, and the Zaydī *imāms* and powerful tribes like Ḥāshid, Dhū Muḥammad, Dhū Ḥusayn, Khawlān,

¹⁸ BOA./A.MKT.MHM. 486–18, doc. 11, governor-general of Yemen, Muṣṭafā 'Āşım Paşa, to the grand vizier, 15 Nisan 1292/27 April 1876. Since 1844, the *ḳurūş* (also: *gurūş*) was officially the standard silver coin of the Ottoman Empire. However, foreign currencies remained in circulation throughout many parts of the Ottoman lands. Throughout the nineteenth century, the population of the Red Sea region usually preferred the Maria Theresia thaler, which was minted in the Habsburg Empire, to coinage issued by the Ottoman central government; see Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 208, 219–20. An unskilled worker in Istanbul earned about six *ḳurūşes* per day in the 1840s and about ten to twelve *ḳurūşes* in 1914. In the 1840s, he would have paid one *ḳurūş* for a bread of 1.28 kg (one *okka*) and two *ḳurūşes* on the eve of World War I; see Pamuk, *Monetary History*, 208n9.

and Arḥab are under the rule and influence of these *sharīfs*...¹⁹ ‘Osmān Nūrī attributed this paramount influence of the Prophet’s descendants to the fact that they were familiar with the “manners and customs of the tribes” (*ḳabā’iliñ ‘ādāt ve ahlākı*).²⁰ While it seems that Muṣṭafā ‘Aṣım’s comprehensive scheme to pay government stipends to *sayyids* without an income was never implemented, local *sāda* and jurists (*fuqahā*) (in fact, *sāda* are often jurists) served throughout the province as administrators, on the administrative councils, and in the judiciary. The provincial revenue system formed perhaps an even more important avenue for the co-optation of local elites. Since censuses and cadastral surveys had not been carried out anywhere in Ottoman Yemen, the government depended for the assessment of tax rates on information provided by local leaders who also assumed the task of tax collection itself. Ottoman governmental correspondence referred to these leaders as “*shaykhs*” regardless of whether they were tribal chiefs (as in Upper Yemen or the coastal plain) or lords (as in Lower Yemen). It seems that over the following fifteen years the provincial government implemented a system of tax collection based on apportionment (*tevzī*). The *tevzī* system had existed in various forms in different parts of the Ottoman Empire since the seventeenth century.²¹ As with all forms of apportionment, the government determined a specific tax burden for a particular fiscal unit, for example, a village, while leaving the task of apportioning the tax burden and collecting taxes to local leaders—the *knez* in Ottoman Serbia, the *a’yān* in the Morea, and the *shaykhs* in Yemen. Under the *tevzī* system, the individuals responsible for the apportionment and collection of taxes were meant to produce a specific amount of tax revenues in their capacity as appointed agents of the provincial government. Thus, they differed from tax-farmers, who, as fiscal entrepreneurs, paid upfront at a government auction for their position and then tried to realize a profit in

¹⁹ BOA./Y.EE. 8–18, doc. 2, memorandum, 7 Teşrin-i evvel 1306/19 October 1890, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ For early examples of apportionment (*tevzī*), see Halil İnalçık, “Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980), 335–37. For different forms of *tevzī* in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire before the *Tanzīmāt*, see especially Michael Ursinus, “„Hane“ in Kalkandelen, „Rü’us“ in Selanik. Regionalspezifische Verwaltungspraktiken und -Begriffe im Osmanischen Bereich bis zum Beginn der *Tanzimat*,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches und ihre Interpretation*, ed. Michael Ursinus (Istanbul: İsis, 1994), 25–47; for the *tevzī* system in the Province of Mosul during the 1830s, see Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire*, 139, 191–93.

addition to recovering their outlays.²² Fiscal units varied from region to region, with the village (*ḡarye*) being perhaps the most common one.²³ Evidence culled from memoranda and commission reports written between 1882 and 1907 suggests that it was common in the Province of Yemen to use two territorial entities, *'uzla* and *mikhlāf*, as fiscal units for the purpose of apportioning taxes in the context of the *tevzi'* system. According to Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa, who served as governor-general of Yemen from 1898 to 1902, an *'uzla* consisted of several villages and was under the authority of a *shaykh*, whereas a *mikhlāf* consisted of several *'uzal* and was governed by a paramount *shaykh* (*shaykhu 'l-mashāyikh* [lit. shaykh of shaykhs]).²⁴ The number of villages per *'uzla*, and of *'uzal* per *mikhlāf* could vary greatly.²⁵

²² See Michael Ursinus, *Regionale Reformen im Osmanischen Reich am Vorabend der Tanzimat. Reformen der rumelischen Provinzialgouverneure im Gerichtssprengel Manastir (Bitola) zur Zeit der Herrschaft Sultan Mahmuds II (1808–39)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1982), 47–51. Ursinus reproduces in English translation an account of a form of apportionment (*tevzi'*) that was common in early-nineteenth century Ottoman Serbia. The author of this account is Prota Mateja Nenadovic, a local notable.

²³ See Ursinus, „*Hane*“ in Kalkandelen, „*Rü'us*“ in Selanik,” 32, 36, and 39.

²⁴ BOA./Y.EE. 8–19, memorandum, former governor-general of Yemen, Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa, to the Palace, 11 Şafer 1325/26 March 1907, 1–2. During a tour of duty in the Province of Yemen in the fall of 1891, Muştafa Şevket, a government inspector, produced a list that provided a breakdown of the Jabal Ḥarāz district into *'uzal* and villages that suggests a less schematic picture and points to regional variations within the Province of Yemen. First, it is not entirely clear from Muştafa Şevket's list whether this particular district contained any *mikhlāfs*. Moreover, not every *'uzla* was led by a single *shaykh*. Rather, we come across arrangements whereby two *shaykhs*, several elders (*'uqqāl*), or several elders and one *shaykh*, were jointly in charge of an *'uzla*. The list also suggests that one *shaykh* could be in charge of several *'uzal*. See BOA./Y. PRK.UM. 23–34, doc. 2, no date. This list is attached to a one-page report by Muştafa Şevket that is dated 18 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/30 October 1891. Similarly, in November 1882, the governor-general of Yemen, Meḥmed 'İzzet Paşa, pointed out that, unlike other areas of the province, not every *'uzla* and *mikhlāf* in the Ḥujjariya district of the *sancaḡ* of Ta'izz had permanent *shaykhs* and that he had appointed *shaykhs* over five *'uzal* of this district in the context of recent administrative reorganization; see ŞD. 2259–6, doc. 4, governor-general of Yemen, Meḥmed 'İzzet Paşa, to the ministry of the interior, 2 Teşrin-i sani 1298/14 November 1882, 2. It is noteworthy that, whereas Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa viewed *'uzla* and *mikhlāf* as tribal units, Meḥmed Žiyā', a former district governor of Mukhā in the Tihāma, did not consider them elements of tribal structures, but rather administrative sub-divisions at the district level; cf. BOA./Y. EE. 9–12, memorandum, former district governor of Mukhā, Meḥmed Žiyā', to the Palace, 27 Mayıs 1307/8 June 1891, 2. The usages and significance of *'uzla* and *mikhlāf* during the period before the establishment of the Province of Yemen in 1872 are not clear to me.

²⁵ For instance, in June 1891, Meḥmed Žiyā' claimed that there were three to four *mikhlāfs* per district, several (*bir kaç*) *'uzal* per *mikhlāf*, and between six and ten villages per *'uzla*; see BOA./Y.EE. 9–12, memorandum, former district governor

Unfortunately, the reports and memoranda under study do not specify which units of apportionment (*tevzī'hāne*) were used to divide the tax burden of a given village among its inhabitants.²⁶ It seems that in the Province of Yemen the *tevzī'* system was primarily used for the collection of the *vergü* and—to a lesser degree—the sheep tax (*resm-i aġnām*).²⁷ At the same time, *shaykhs* were also integrated into the local revenue system as tax-farmers. Tax-farming was the preferred mode of collecting the tithe (*a'šār*). Here again, the above-mentioned fiscal units seem to have played an important role: we hear about tribe (*kaḅīle*), *mikhhlāf*, and *'uzla* as units for *a'šār* tax-farms.²⁸

To an important degree, therefore, ruling in accordance with the customs and dispositions of the indigenous population meant recognizing that instituting the system of power as it was envisaged by the protagonists of the *Tanzīmāt* state was impractical in Yemen. Local power equations did not allow the government to produce forms of knowledge, such as a census, that would establish a direct link between its agents and the individual subject. Therefore, to ensure Ottoman control over the province, administrators felt compelled to identify

of Mukhā, Meḥmed Žiyā', to the Palace, 27 Mayıs 1307/8 June 1891, 2. By contrast, Muṣṭafā Şevket's list of *'uzal* and villages in the Jabal Ḥarāz district contains *'uzal* of more than thirty villages. See BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 23–34, doc. 2, no date. This list is attached to a one-page report by Muṣṭafā Şevket that is dated 18 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/30 October 1891.

²⁶ Units of apportionment at the village level, too, appear to have varied from region to region. In Salonica, for example, this unit was called *rü'üs*. Before 1835, a *rü'üs* was formed by three adult males who were required to jointly produce a specified amount of taxes. See Ursinus, „Hane“ in Kalkandelen, „Rü'üs“ in Selanik, 39.

²⁷ This is suggested by a detailed report drawn up by a commission of inspection that reviewed fiscal practices in the Province of Yemen in the aftermath of the 1891–92 uprising and suggested fiscal reforms; see BOA./Y.PRK.ML. 15/5–1, commission of inspection to the Palace, 15 Ağustos 1309/27 August 1893, 1. Interestingly enough, the authors of the report make no mention of *'uzal* and *mikhhlāf* and state that the *shaykh* of a given tribe (*kaḅīle*) would apportion a set share of the *vergü* among the villages that constituted the tribe. According to the report, it was common in some (unspecified) parts of the province to apportion and collect the sheep tax through the *tevzī'* system. In this case, too, the reports mentions tribe and village as fiscal units for the apportionment of this particular tax, but not *'uzla* and *mikhhlāf*; see *ibid.*, 3.

²⁸ For tribe as a fiscal unit for *a'šār* tax-farms see BOA./Y.PRK.ML. 15/5–1, commission of inspection to the Palace, 15 Ağustos 1309/27 August 1893, 2. *'Uzla* and *mikhhlāf* are mentioned as fiscal units for *a'šār* (tithe) tax-farms in the report of a military commission of inspection that looked into the causes of the 1891–92 uprising; see BOA./ŞD. 2262–1, doc.2, memorandum, military commission of inspection to the council of state, 3 Şubat 1309/15 February 1894, 15 (for *'uzla* as a fiscal unit for the wheat tithe tax-farm of the *'uzla* of Thulā in the *'Amrān* district), 2 (for *mikhhlāf* as a fiscal unit for tithe tax-farms in the sub-province of Ta'izz).

and use what they thought to be local forms of power. As in the context of European colonial rule in Aden or Africa, the result was governmental practice that marked off particular social groups, such as tribes, as objects of rule, but not the individual.²⁹ Indeed, the notion that tribal leaders and *sayyids/sharīfs* were influential to such a degree that co-opting them meant controlling local society shows that Ottoman administrators—very much like their European counterparts in colonial Africa or South Asia—were convinced that apart from these elite figures, no individual agency existed among the local people. For this reason, these leaders could, as allies of the government, turn the locals into loyal subjects; but if they became its adversaries, they could also “manipulate” them to rise against Ottoman rule. At the same time, it is important not to overestimate the significance of censuses and cadastral surveys: even in provinces where these measures had been carried out—for instance in the *vilāyet* of Trabzon or in the *sancağ* of Jerusalem—the central government still needed the cooperation of local elites for the purpose of day-to-day provincial governance. What, then, was specific to Yemen as far as the co-optation of local elites was concerned? As Elizabeth Thompson has shown in her study on the Province of Syria during the first decade of the *Tanzīmāt*, the central government struck a bargain with local notables whereby the latter would be allowed to retain their tax-farms in return for their assistance in implementing censuses and conscription throughout the province. In Yemen, as in Tripolitania, the Hijaz, and parts of Ottoman Iraq, local elites, too, were allowed to assume the role of tax-farmers and to serve as administrators, judges, gendarmerie officers, and members of administrative councils. In contrast to Syria, however, they did not have to “deliver” as much in return. Rather, the bargain that the central government struck was based on the assumption that, in return for the influence of their newly-acquired positions, they would ensure the loyalty of the local population.³⁰

Adaptations of this kind were not restricted to taxation and the recruitment of administrative personnel. In October 1879, an extensive

²⁹ See, for instance, John M. Willis, “Leaving only Question-Marks: Geographies of Rule in Modern Yemen,” in *Counter-Narratives: History, Contemporary Society, and Politics in Saudi Arabia and Yemen*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed and Robert Vitalis (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 120–21.

³⁰ See Elizabeth Thompson, “Ottoman Political Reform in the Provinces: The Damascus Advisory Council in 1844–45,” *IJMES* 25 (1993): 457–75.

memorandum by Muşţafâ ‘Âşım and other senior officials of the province pointed out that attempts to introduce the Ottoman judicial system from 1872 onward met with serious difficulties. Introducing this system in its entirety, they argued, would be impractical due to local circumstances.

Judicial Reform and Boundaries of Difference

Judicial reform had always played a prominent role in the broader effort of the protagonists of the *Tanzîmât* to create a centralized, rational system of power. The new Ottoman judicial system evolved gradually, over several decades from the 1840s onward, in a process that we cannot describe in detail here. It is, however, important to note some of its key characteristics. Secular elements came to play an increasingly important role in the judiciary; by secular elements, we refer to the recognition of the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims and the adoption in the 1850s and 1860s of new commercial and penal codes essentially modeled on French examples.³¹ The most significant change was the introduction of the so-called “regular” (*nizâmîye*) courts. These were designed as collegial bodies with an elected (later appointed) presiding judge (*re’îs*) and a varying number of members (*a’zâ*), half of whom had to be non-Muslims (in areas with mixed populations). According to the law of provincial administration (1864) and, most importantly, several regulations issued in 1879, a *nizâmîye* court had to be set up in the capital of every district, sub-province, and province. Furthermore, these regulations provided for a court of appeals (*istî’nâf mahkemesi*) in the capital of each province and a court of cassation (*temyîz mahkemesi*) in Istanbul. Thus, for the first time in the judicial history of the Ottoman state, clearly defined stages of adjudication and appeal were introduced.³² The *nizâmîye* courts were supposed to hear all civil and criminal cases, while the responsibilities

³¹ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 1997), 64; Haim Gerber, *Ottoman Rule in Jerusalem* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1985), 153; İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun en uzun yüzyılı* (Istanbul: Hil Yayınları, 1995), 162.

³² The development of the new judicial system is summarized by Carter Vaughn Findley and Halil İnalçık, “Mahkama. 2: The Ottoman Empire,” *EP*, vol. 6, 3–11. See also the chapter “Hukuki Düzeni” in *Tanzimat’tan cumhuriyet’e Türkiye ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1985), vol. 2, 573–76 and vol. 3, 579–616.

of the *sharī'a* courts (*maḥākīm-i şer'īye*) were restricted to dealing with cases that involved family law and personal status.³³ Yet, what emerged was not so much a dual legal system with *sharī'a* courts on one side and *nizāmīye* courts on the other, but rather a judiciary where these courts were very much intertwined: the judge (*nā'ib*) of the *sharī'a* court in a district or sub-province also presided over the civil section of the local *nizāmīye* court. Until 1917, *nā'ibs* remained employees of the ministry of the *şeyhü 'l-islām*. From 1879, both the *sharī'a* courts and the civil sections of the local *nizāmīye* courts followed the *mecelle*, a codified version of Ḥanafī *sharī'a* law, and the *nizāmīye* procedural code.³⁴ With the new courts came new judicial procedures involving public prosecutors (*müdde'i-i 'umūmī*), lawyers (*avukat*), and investigators (*mustanṭık*).³⁵

Local opposition to Ottoman legal institutions and practices did not take the form of open revolt as in the case of tax collection. Rather, it seems that overwhelmingly the local people did not recognize Ottoman legal authority, and turned instead to other, parallel legal forums: according to the October 1879 memorandum, only the population of urban centers such as Şan'ā' and Ḥudayda brought cases before Ottoman courts. The rural population usually did not bother to travel to the next town for a lawsuit, but continued to solve legal problems in the way they had done before the advent of Ottoman rule; that is, they either turned to local jurists (*fuqahā'*) or had recourse to tribal arbitration.³⁶

The October 1879 report thus not only suggested that the Ottoman judicial system was clearly unpopular with the indigenous population; it also reflected the concern that it was largely irrelevant when it came to the critical issue of conflict resolution throughout the province. This was a serious matter because the ability to monopolize conflict resolution was a crucial element of the government's civilizing mission and

³³ Gerber, *Ottoman Rule in Jerusalem*, 145.

³⁴ See Avi Rubin, "Legal Borrowing and Its Impact on Ottoman Legal Culture in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Continuity and Change* 22 (2007), 285; Avi Rubin, "Ottoman Judicial Change in the Age of Modernity: A Reappraisal," *History Compass* 7 (2009), 128. Between 1870 and 1876, a commission chaired by the jurist and historian Aḥmed Cevdet Paşa produced the *mecelle*, a standard law code on the basis of the Ḥanafī school of law. It was on this new code that judges of *sharī'a* and *nizāmīye* courts throughout the empire were required to base their decisions; see Findley and İnalçık, "Mahkama," 6 and Carter Vaughn Findley, "Medjelle," *EP*, vol. 6, 971–72.

³⁵ Findley and İnalçık, "Mahkama," 8.

³⁶ BOA./ŞD. 2254–5, doc. 3, memorandum, governor-general of Yemen, Muştafâ 'Âşım Paşa, and senior officials to the council of state, 27 Eylül 1295/9 October 1879, 7.

of any attempt to claim legitimacy for its rule over southwest Arabia. To exert at least some influence over judicial affairs in the hinterland, some local *nizāmīye* judges cooperated with so-called trusted jurists (*me'mūn fuqahā'*) in the rural areas.³⁷ More important still, if criminal cases involving tribesmen were brought before a local *nizāmīye* court, judges often saw that the only possibility of enforcing their sentences was to seek an arrangement with the *shaykh* of the culprit, to the effect that the latter would pay a fine, since the courts lacked the means to summon the accused party to court.³⁸

The authors of the memorandum acknowledged that, to some extent, the unpopularity of the new courts was due to their *modus operandi*. Many litigants were simply unable to pay the court fees, and, as a result, they often dropped their case and sought the advice of a local jurist instead. Just as crucial was the government's limited control over the rural areas. After all, what was the point of turning to an Ottoman court if the authorities lacked the coercive means to summon the accused party? Moreover, Brinkley Messick's work on Ottoman and indigenous legal forms in Yemen during the nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries suggests that it might have been the procedures and structure of the *nizāmīye* courts, as such, that many of the locals found objectionable. According to Messick,

[p]rior to the Ottoman period...there were neither multiple judges (in a single court) nor formal possibilities for appeal. The first of these innovations—like the Christian Trinity when viewed from the Muslim theological perspective—violated the essential oneness of the judicial presence, fracturing the unitary quality of the judge's face and voice in the *muwajaha* encounter. The second, the possibility of appeal, undercut the sanctity and finality of the judge's word, opening the door to continuing reinterpretation of decisions.³⁹

Others objected primarily to the introduction of Ottoman secular criminal law ("qānūn" in local parlance); replacing *sharī'a* law with the Ottoman criminal code meant that criminal justice no longer included the application of the *ḥudūd* punishments that many '*ulamā'* considered a crucial element of righteous government. For the anonymous author of the *Ḥawlīyāt Yamānīya*, the "replacement of the august book

³⁷ Ibid., 3.

³⁸ Ibid., 4.

³⁹ Messick, *Calligraphic State*, 191.

and the noble sunna...with the *qānūn*” suggested that Ottoman rule was Muslim only in name:

...[it] only imprisons the murderer and similarly the thief but not the adulterer and the drunkard, who are left alone for they have committed no crime. The bankrupt remains free unless the one who is owed the money wishes him to be punished by imprisonment. These rulings are specified explicitly in the *qānūn*. Thus, Islam remains in name, and the Qur’ān in image, only.⁴⁰

Moreover, it might well have been the case that the *niẓāmīye* courts were also resented because they were, perhaps, the principal site where one of the main characteristics of the *Tanzīmāt* became tangible, namely, the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims before the law. In the context of Ottoman Yemen, this largely meant the equality of Muslims and Jews. To many, according the testimony of Jews in court equal weight to that of Muslims must have appeared as an unacceptable breach of a social and political order in which the former, as *dhimmīs*, had been relegated to the position of protected second-class subjects. It is no coincidence that from the 1890s onward, Zaydī *imāms* like al-Manṣūr would denounce the Ottoman authorities for according Christians and Jews in Yemen more influence than was their due.⁴¹ Similarly, when in 1911 the Ottoman central government and al-Manṣūr’s son and successor Yaḥyā ended more than two decades of armed conflict with the Da‘ān agreement, one of the main concessions that the *imām* was able to obtain from the central government was the proviso that Yemeni Jews throughout the province would revert to the status of *dhimmīs*.⁴²

Overall, however, Muṣṭafā ‘Āṣım Paşa and the other authors of the October 1879 memorandum, very much like many senior officials later on, placed the blame for the limited acceptance of the Ottoman judicial system on the indigenous population: the Yemenis (*ahālī-i Yemen*) were simply too “savage” (*vaḥṣī*) and “primitive” (*bedāvetkarāne*) to understand the new judicial institutions and practices. The full implementation of the Ottoman legal system, therefore, had to wait until the new, state run *rüşdiyye* schools raised the locals to the cultural level

⁴⁰ Anonymous, *Hawliyyāt Yamāniya*, 324.

⁴¹ Hans Kruse, “Takfir und Gihād bei den Zaiditen des Jemen,” *WI* 23–24 (1984), 453.

⁴² See M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 298.

of the administrators.⁴³ These officials thus perceived indigenous legal practices, too, as markers of cultural boundaries or, more precisely, of civilizational hierarchies.

Senior bureaucrats in Yemen and in Istanbul were in agreement that, as part of a larger effort to find acceptance for Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia, Ottoman judicial institutions and practices had to be adapted to local forms of conflict resolution. Just how far these adaptations should go was debated within Ottoman officialdom and ultimately determined through competition with local leaders, most notably the Zaydī *imāms*, for the loyalty of the local population. What emerged during the following decade as the guiding principle of Ottoman initiatives in this context was the notion that these adaptations should serve, but never subvert, the effort to replace a multi-centric legal order in which the Ottoman state was one among many legal authorities (including “independent” *sharīʿa* courts run by local ‘*ulamā*’ and forms of arbitration exercised by members of tribal communities) with one that was state-centered, in which the Ottoman state “...at least made, if not sustained a claim to dominance over other legal authorities.”⁴⁴ Drawing on Lauren Benton, one can describe the objective of these initiatives also as efforts to move beyond a more fluid legal pluralism toward a more planned one. The former “...occurs where there is an implicit (mutual) recognition of ‘other’ law but no formal model for the structure of the legal order, or where the model is in formation.”⁴⁵ The latter, by contrast, is characterized by greater state control and “a more hierarchical order in which appellate procedures [direct] disputes ultimately to colonial state courts (and to metropolitan courts beyond them).”⁴⁶ Just as important, this more planned legal pluralism was meant to firmly establish the Ottoman state’s law at the top of a legal hierarchy.

In 1880–81, in what turned out to be a first round of legal reforms in the Province of Yemen, the central government broadened the responsibilities of the *sharīʿa* courts at the expense of the *nizāmiye* tribunals, which also lost one of their most distinctive features, the position of

⁴³ BOA./ŞD. 2254–5, doc. 3, memorandum, governor-general of Yemen, Muştafâ Âşım Paşa, and senior officials to the council of state, 27 Eylül 1295/9 October 1879, 7.

⁴⁴ I borrow the terms “multi-centric legal order” and “state-centered legal order” from Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

public prosecutor.⁴⁷ More specifically, in most districts, the Ottomans agreed not to set up *nizāmīye* courts. Instead, *sharī'a* courts staffed by legal personnel recruited from among the local *'ulamā'* would hear all civil cases in these *qazā's*. Moreover, the new regulations would allow for the creation of so-called “courts of the peace” (*şulh mahkemeleri*). These were to solve conflicts among the tribes that fell within the realm of civil law in accordance with tribal custom (*'örf-i kabā'ile tevfiķan*).⁴⁸ In these measures we can see an attempt to incorporate supposedly “essential” elements of indigenous legal practice—jurists, local attachment to the *sharī'a*, and tribal arbitration—into the Ottoman judicial system in order to make the latter acceptable to the Yemenis. While intended to show respect for local judicial forms, the new regulations clearly subordinated these to the *nizāmīye* courts. Only those tribunals located in the center of each sub-province and in the provincial capital were authorized to deal with cases of criminal justice. Furthermore, the *nizāmīye* court of appeals in Şan'ā' and, ultimately, the court of cassation in Istanbul were to remain the highest stages of appeal for all legal cases from the province. From the 1886 and 1888 editions of the official provincial yearbooks (*sālnāme*), it appears that the proposed changes in the provincial judiciary had actually been implemented.⁴⁹

But the Ottoman judicial system in Yemen was to see yet another stage of adaptation to what the authorities perceived as local conditions. In a telegram probably dating from 1888–89, the governor-general of Yemen, 'Osmān Nūrī Paşa, informed the Imperial Palace that the local population was not only ignoring the *nizāmīye* courts, but deeply despised them. Apparently, the antipathy toward this element of the Ottoman judicial system in Yemen had created such a tense political atmosphere that he urged the government to dismantle the *nizāmīye* tribunals altogether and to transfer all of their responsibilities to the *sharī'a* courts. He considered this crucial if the government was to win the support of the local population. Just like senior Ottoman officials eight years earlier, 'Osmān Nūrī pointed to the importance of creating a judicial system that respected local traditions.⁵⁰ Quite obviously, he

⁴⁷ Şan'ā' 39 (24 Haziran 1297 [6 July 1881]).

⁴⁸ Şan'ā' 40 (1 Temmuz 1297 [13 July 1881]).

⁴⁹ *Yemen Sālnāmesi* 3 (AMal 1302/AH 1304 [1886–87]), 161–201; *Yemen Sālnāmesi* 5 (AMal 1304/AH 1306 [1888–89]), 59–114.

⁵⁰ See BOA./Y.MTV. 37–73, governor-general of Yemen, 'Osmān Nūrī Paşa, to the Palace, undated, but referring to an earlier dispatch from 3 Ağustos 1304/15 August 1888.

regarded the changes introduced in 1880 as insufficient. It seems that ‘Osmān Nūrī wanted the re-organized *sharī‘a* courts to deal with criminal cases just like the “independent” *sharī‘a* courts throughout the province: not only were they to adopt the procedures of the latter, but they would also apply *sharī‘a* punishments, such as death through the principle of retaliation (*kıṣās*) or the payment of blood money (*diyyet*), not those prescribed by the Ottoman penal code.⁵¹

In response to the governor-general’s request, the grand vizier solicited the opinions of Aḥmed Cevdet Paşa, the minister of justice, and of a commission of jurists set up by the ministry of the *şeyhü ‘l-islām*. Finally, in August 1889, the sultan authorized the abolition of the remaining *nizāmīye* courts and established the *sharī‘a* courts as the most important legal forums in the Province of Yemen upon the request of the council of ministers. Yet ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa did not entirely have his way, as those *sharī‘a* punishments that were administered at the discretion of the judge (*ta‘zīr*) still had to be in accordance with the Ottoman penal code.⁵² The original objective, however, remained: to create a controlled legal pluralism under the auspices of Ottoman rule. For instance, the new regulations left intact the so-called Commissions for Bedouin Affairs that ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa had set up earlier during his tenure as governor-general. Like the *şulḥ mahkemeleri* that legal reformers had planned to create in 1881, these commissions were supposed to settle conflicts in tribal areas on the basis of the *sharī‘a* and local customary law in order to bring conflict resolution among the tribes under government supervision.⁵³ While a memorandum dating from the mid-1890s indicates that these commissions had been abolished by then,⁵⁴ the question of how to integrate local mechanisms of

⁵¹ See BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 4548, doc. 7, governor-general of Yemen, ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa, to the ministry of justice, 3 Ağustos 1304/15 August 1888, 1. For *kıṣās* see J. Schacht, “Kıṣās,” *EP*, vol. 5, 177–80.

⁵² BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 4548, doc. 1, report of the council of ministers, 2 Ağustos 1305/14 August 1889; the report contained the ministers’ recommendations for judicial reform in Yemen; these were then forwarded for the sultan’s approval to the Palace. Apparently, the sultan’s decree that sanctioned the recommendations was issued within a day; see BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 4548, doc. 11.1, grand vizier to the Palace, with a note signed by the sultan’s first secretary, Süreyyâ Paşa, dated 3 Ağustos 1305/15 August 1889.

⁵³ BOA./Y.EE. 8–26, memorandum, *mutaşarrıf* of Malatya, Maḥmūd Nedim, no date (the year 1311 on the seal suggests that the memorandum was not drawn up before the year AH 1311 [beg. 15 July 1893] or AMal 1311 [beg. 12 March 1895]), 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

arbitration into the judicial system remained an issue that was debated in memoranda and commission reports.⁵⁵ Moreover, the new judicial arrangements still included the commercial court in Hıdayda. What is most interesting, however, is the fact that the judicial responsibilities of the administrative council in Şan'ā', and probably, those of the administrative councils in the district centers, also remained unaffected by these changes. Apparently, these councils continued to function as courts of administrative justice that dealt particularly with complaints by the locals against officials and tax farmers.⁵⁶ In this capacity, they featured the whole set of practices and personnel that could be found at the *nizāmīye* courts, for instance, the division into civil and criminal sections, public prosecutors, investigators, a presiding judge, and appointed members.

There is evidence that the indigenous population did actually make use of these forums of complaint and conflict resolution. In a report dated 12 Mart 1312/24 March 1896, Şâlih Raḥmî, the head secretary of the administrative council of the Province of Yemen, informed the council of state in Istanbul that the *meclis-i idāre* had opened an investigation against the former *mutaşarrıf* (*sancaḳ* governor) of Hıdayda, Muştafâ Paşa.⁵⁷ The administrative council, in its capacity as a court of administrative justice, had become active after some forty-four men and women of the 'Abbāsīya tribe in the district of Baytu 'l-Faqīh had taken legal action against the *paşa* for what they regarded as illegal appropriation of their property. According to the testimony of both the plaintiffs and several witnesses, a detachment of cavalry sent by Muştafâ Paşa had galloped into one of the villages of the tribe during one night in 1895, shot three tribesmen, and seized 140 cattle and

⁵⁵ See, for instance, BOA./Y.EE. 8–20, doc. 3, memorandum drawn up by Division General Ferid Paşa, no date (the memorandum sums up the work of a commission of inspection he had led to Yemen in 1906 and was appended to a shorter memorandum dated 24 Şubat 1322/8 March 1907 and sealed by Ferid Paşa and Meḥmed Şâkir Paşa, another member of the commission, see BOA./Y.EE. 8–20, doc. 1), 4–5; see also John Baldry, "Imâm Yahyâ and the Yamanî Uprising of 1904–1907," *Abr-Nahrain* 18 (1978–79), 62–63.

⁵⁶ For the *mecâlis*, see, for instance, Carter Vaughn Findley, "The Evolution of the System of Provincial Administration as Viewed from the Center," in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, ed. David Kushner (Jerusalem and Leiden: Brill, 1986), 11; a case study focusing on Haifa is provided by Mahmoud Yazbak, *Haifa in the Late Ottoman Period 1864–1914: A Muslim Town in Transition* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 33–45, 64–73.

⁵⁷ BOA./ŞD. 2264–3, doc. 1, 1.

300 goats with the explanation that the Banū ‘Abbāsīya had fallen into arrears with their tax payments.⁵⁸ While the documents contained in the file BOA./ŞD. 2264–3 do not tell us how the case against the *mutaşarrıf* and his associates was eventually decided, the whole development of nine cases that were heard by the administrative council in February and March of 1887 can be traced through another document from the council of state papers.⁵⁹

The police officer Luţfu ‘l-Hudā Efendi, for instance, was sentenced to three months imprisonment according to paragraph 230 of the Ottoman penal code, after having been found guilty of beating various people in the street while on duty in Şan‘ā.⁶⁰ Sayyid ‘Abdullāh al-Washlī, a member of the administrative council of the Ḥajja district, however, was acquitted of the charges of bribery that three *shaykhs* had brought against him.⁶¹

These examples are remarkable in that they indicate that the local population—to some extent, at least—accepted some of the judicial institutions and channels of complaint that the Ottoman authorities had created. The case against Muşţafā Paşa is particularly interesting because the ‘Abbāsīya tribe was part of the Zarānīq confederation that both British diplomatic sources and Ottoman accounts usually portrayed as being the fiercest opponent of Ottoman rule in the Tihāma region.⁶²

Thus it seems that the Ottoman judicial system in the Province of Yemen was much more diverse than Messick suggests. Not only is there evidence that the *niẓāmīye* courts were—contrary to his assertion—indeed set up in Yemen, but that at least in some parts of the province, these continued to exist as courts of administrative justice alongside the *sharī‘a* courts that he describes.⁶³

While the modified judicial system was supposedly more in accordance with indigenous legal practices, it had, in fact, little in common with the ways in which justice had been administered before the advent of Ottoman rule. The *sharī‘a* courts that assumed the functions of the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁹ BOA./ŞD. 2256–20, doc. 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

⁶² See, for instance, Baldry, “Al-Yaman and the Turkish Occupation,” 171, 174, 175; *Arabian Personalities of the Early Twentieth Century*, with a new introduction by Robin Bidwell (Cambridge and New York: Oleander, 1986 [1917]), 245.

⁶³ See Messick, *Calligraphic State*, 187.

nizāmīye courts of justice displayed distinctly bureaucratic features, in that they were staffed by “state employees . . . deployed in categories and grades of positions, each with specific duties and positions”; these ranked grades reflected “a preexisting bureaucratic plan laid out in rationalized and abstract detail.”⁶⁴ These courts thus constituted a break with, not a reversion to, past practices. Similarly, the very idea of entrusting commissions with the task of resolving conflicts among tribes, purportedly in keeping with tribal custom, actually represents a bureaucratic reconfiguration of mechanisms of arbitration that had previously functioned entirely on a non-institutionalized and ad hoc basis.⁶⁵ Moreover, the different segments of the Ottoman judiciary in Yemen fell within the responsibility of specific institutional bodies within the ministerial bureaucracy in Istanbul, each of them with its own hierarchies and practices. While the council of state was the highest stage of appeal for cases involving administrative justice, the office of the *şeyhü l-islām* assumed this function in cases that were dealt with by the *sharī'a* courts.

Further, the structure of the new *sharī'a* courts, very much like that of the dismantled *nizāmīye* tribunals, reflected the idea of a court as a collegiate body, in that it featured not only a presiding judge (*nā'ib*) but also two subordinate members, the *shuhūd al-ḥukm*. More importantly, court decisions were at least in part based on the Ottoman penal code and on the *mecelle*. Thus, in marked contrast to local *sharī'a* judges outside the framework of Ottoman rule, the courts did not apply the *ḥudūd*, nor did they use local legal manuals. Their work was, therefore, fundamentally tied to the modern concept of law as a code, a “stand-alone-form.”

At one level, retaining the penal code and the *mecelle* as the basis for the administration of justice in Yemen reflected the government's determination to uphold a central aspect of its sovereignty over the new province. At the same time, however, it sheds light on the nature of the institutionalization of difference in this part of the empire. By dismantling the *nizāmīye* courts, decision makers in Yemen and Istanbul confirmed their perception of the indigenous population as “savages” who could not be ruled like more civilized Ottoman subjects in other parts of the empire. While the upgrading of the *sharī'a*

⁶⁴ Messick, *Calligraphic State*, 188.

⁶⁵ See Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 88–97.

courts formalized and solidified this aspect of local “savagery” (*vahşet*) through specific administrative structures and practices and thus created difference, the specific format of these courts suggests that creating difference did not mean “freezing” local ways as they were. Rather, it meant ordering and domesticating “the local” and, thereby, creating something new. This became even more apparent in the context of the attempt to establish a “native army” during the early 1880s.

Native Uniforms for a Native Army

Ever since their return to the Tihāma in the late 1840s, the Ottomans had recruited mercenaries from among various local communities, particularly the Yām tribe in the far north of Upper Yemen, in an attempt to reinforce their regular military forces in southwest Arabia on an ad hoc basis for specific campaigns. This occurred, for instance, in the context of Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa’s advance on Şan‘ā’ in the spring of 1872.⁶⁶ In 1880, however, the governor-general of Yemen, İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī Paşa launched an attempt to recruit military units locally along very different lines. In two reports, dated 23 March and 12 April 1880, he informed the ministry of war and the Palace that recently he had begun recruiting an infantry unit from among the local people. In honor of the sultan these troops would be called the “Hamidian soldiers” (‘*Asākir-i Ḥamīdiye*).⁶⁷

In various reports, İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī also provided his superiors in Istanbul with a description of the uniforms the soldiers of the Ḥamīdiye corps were supposed to wear. The uniforms that had been handed out to the new recruits, the governor-general wrote, were “...similar in style to the clothes of the common people among the [local]

⁶⁶ See Farah, *Sultan’s Yemen*, 82.

⁶⁷ BOA./Y.EE. 1–5, doc. 2, İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī Paşa to the ministry of war, 11 Mart 1296/23 March 1880; BOA./Y.A.HUS. 167–74, doc. 5, İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī Paşa to the Palace, 31 Mart 1296/12 April 1880. Further research will have to explore possible parallels between these Ḥamīdiye troops in Ottoman Yemen and those that were formed during the 1890s in Tripolitania, al-Ḥasā’, and among various Kurdish tribes. See, for instance, Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, 149–50; Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 185–86. There is evidence that the Ḥamīdiye units that were formed in Tripolitania around 1897, too, were wearing “native” uniforms, see *Ma‘lūmāt* 95 (7 Ağustos 1313 [19 August 1897]), photo, front cover showing a local Ḥamīdiye cavalry unit on parade and *Ma‘lūmāt* 96 (14 Ağustos 1313 [26 August 1897]), photo, front cover showing a local Ḥamīdiye infantry unit.

population,” consisting of a black shirt and a white kilt (*fūṭa*).⁶⁸ Also, they would wear a brass badge with the number given to the individual soldier and the crescent and star emblem of the Ottoman state.⁶⁹ İsmâ‘îl Hâkķî notified the grand vizier that he had photographs taken of the new soldiers and had dispatched them to the capital with an officer of his staff (see the front cover of this book).⁷⁰

While in creating the Hāmīdiye troops İsmâ‘îl Hâkķî seems to have acted upon his own initiative, his plans were endorsed by his superiors. On 3 Haziran 1297/15 June 1881, the official provincial newspaper *Şan‘ā’* reported that a detachment of ten Hāmīdiye soldiers had been received by the sultan in Istanbul during a recent *selâmlık* ceremony;⁷¹ in December of the same year a commission of war ministry officials lent its support to the new recruitment policy in Yemen in a detailed memorandum for the Palace.⁷² By that time, the Hāmīdiye troops consisted of some six hundred soldiers, an artillery unit, and a band.

In his text, *Ta‘rih al-Yaman* [History of Yemen], first published in AH 1346/1927–8, ‘Abd al-Wāsi‘ b. Yaḥyā al-Wāsi‘i emphasizes the effectiveness of the new infantry:

...and among the advantages of this Hāmīdiye [corps] was the fact that when disturbances occurred in Yemen, İsmâ‘îl Paşa would send a battalion of these aforementioned ones and they showed extraordinary bravery in the suppression of the disturbances. One battalion of these would replace many battalions of the Turks, to the extent that rebellious people of Yemen surrendered and submitted as soon as these soldiers appeared.⁷³

These lines may say more about al-Wāsi‘i’s patriotic pride in a “Yemeni” infantry unit than about the actual quality of the ‘Asâkir-i Hāmīdiye. However, senior officials in *Şan‘ā’* like the tax controller (*rūsūmât nâzırı*), ‘Ali Rızâ Efendi, noted that the Hāmīdiye infantry had become an “excellent battalion.”⁷⁴

⁶⁸ BOA./Y.EE. 1–5, doc. 2, İsmâ‘îl Hâkķî Paşa to the ministry of war, 11 Mart 1296/23 March 1880.

⁶⁹ BOA./Y.EE. 1–5, doc. 4, İsmâ‘îl Hâkķî Paşa to the grand vizier, 1 Nisan 1296/13 April 1880, 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁷¹ *Şan‘ā’* 36 (3 Haziran 1297 [15 June 1881]), 2.

⁷² BOA./Y.MTV. 8–26, doc. 3, 12 Kanun-i evvel 1297/24 December 1881.

⁷³ al-Wāsi‘i, *Ta‘rih al-Yaman*, 264.

⁷⁴ See BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 9–60, ‘Ali Rızâ Efendi to the Palace, no date (date penciled on ibid., 4: 1298), 3.

Both the governor-general and war ministry officials suggested that the creation of the 'Asâkir-i Hâmîdiye could be a first step toward tapping into the human resources of the province in order to provide the imperial army with a substantial increase in manpower. Based on the enthusiasm that people from all over the Province of Yemen had allegedly shown to enlist as volunteers for the new unit and on the fact that the local Muslim population numbered an estimated three to four million, İsmâ'il Hakkî seemed confident that in the long run, a substantial, disciplined force could be set up that would add considerably to the strength of the imperial army.⁷⁵ Particularly after the disastrous war with Russia in 1877–78, the *paşa*'s argument reflected a general concern among Ottoman military planners.⁷⁶ According to İsmâ'il Hakkî, recruiting locals for the Ottoman army would free existing resources, in addition to opening up new ones. The governor-general suggested that with the 'Asâkir-i Hâmîdiye's increase in manpower, it would eventually be possible to reduce the presence of regular army units in Yemen. These troops, consisting primarily of Anatolian conscripts, suffered heavy losses as a result of diseases caused by the local food and water and the extreme climatic conditions. Replacing parts of the *nizâmîye* troops with Hâmîdiye soldiers would not only help reduce the loss of manpower caused by disease, but also save the imperial treasury considerable funds that would otherwise be spent on supplying the Anatolian soldiers with imported foodstuff from Egypt and Iraq and on replacing garrison troops at regular intervals with fresh units from Anatolia.

It is clear both from these early reports and from subsequent government correspondence and related articles in *Şan'â'*, that the 'Asâkir-i Hâmîdiye were neither intended to be a makeshift body of local levies recruited only for a specific campaign, nor to be swiftly absorbed into the regular (*nizâmîye*) army regiments once their training was complete. Rather, the fact that they were given their own colors and were expanded to include their own artillery unit and corps of musicians, suggests that the military planners in *Şan'â'* and Istanbul considered

⁷⁵ BOA./Y.A.HUS. 167–74, doc. 2, İsmâ'il Hakkî Paşa to the grand vizier, 10 Kanun-i evvel 1397/23 December 1881.

⁷⁶ In this context, Selim Deringil argues that "... as the Ottoman Empire found itself increasingly short of usable manpower, the urgent requirements of defense meant that the sultan had to squeeze the population for the last reserves of fighting men." See Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 69.

the Ḥamīdiye corps an integral, albeit separate, part of the Ottoman armed forces. In a report to the grand vizier, the governor-general stated that the new soldiers were trained by officers of the regular Ottoman army, in order to turn them into a body of troops that were just as disciplined as the *nizāmīye* units.⁷⁷ İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī Paşa’s remarks can be read as an attempt to distinguish the Ḥamīdiye corps from auxiliary forces that continued to exist alongside the regular units of the Ottoman army. These auxiliaries were often referred to as *başıbozuk* and were generally known for their lack of discipline.⁷⁸ It also emerges from these sources that the Ḥamīdiye soldiers retained their distinctive uniforms; that is, uniforms provided to the new soldiers had not been an ad hoc solution caused by a temporary shortage of regular army uniforms. We may ask: if the new units had all the formal trappings of the *nizāmīye* battalions garrisoned in Şan‘ā, if they marched together with them in the same parades and presented arms just the way they did, why did the local troops not wear the same uniforms as the soldiers from Adana, Aleppo, or Haifa? While the officials involved in the creation of the Ḥamīdiye corps did not state explicitly why they chose this particular uniform, there is evidence that this difference in appearance was not related to military folklore at all.

In fact, manpower for the Ottoman army was not the only objective İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī Paşa and the war ministry commission were pursuing when they set up the ‘Asākīr-i Ḥamīdiye. As is clear from his report of April 1880, the governor-general was convinced that military service in the new units could play an important part in the effort to “civilize” (*temeddün*) the population of Ottoman Yemen and, hence, to strengthen the bond of loyalty between them and the sultan-caliph.⁷⁹ Through service in the ‘Asākīr-i Ḥamīdiye, so the argument went, the local population would be imbued with the military aspect of Ottoman civilization. This, in turn, would advance the ordering of the Province

⁷⁷ BOA./Y.A.HUS. 167–74, doc. 2, İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī Paşa to the grand vizier, 10 Kanun-i evvel 1397/23 December 1881, 1–2.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2007), 457. Aksan refers to the *başıbozüks* as “. . . undisciplined tribesmen who were tolerated, *faute-de-mieux*, as Ottoman irregulars, who were ever-present at the edge of the Tanzimat order, and routinely escaped justifiable punishment by commanding officers.”

⁷⁹ BOA./Y.A.HUS. 167–74, doc. 5, İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī Paşa to the Palace, 31 Mart 1296/12 April 1880.

of Yemen.⁸⁰ The civilizing aspect of military service was also emphasized in an article published in the newspaper *Şan'ā* in August 1881. There, the *Ḥamīdiye* troops were referred to as “*Şan'ā*'s school for education and good manners” (*Şan'ā'nın mekteb-i edeb ve terbiyesi*).⁸¹ This brings to mind Meḥmed 'Alī's attempt in the 1820s to introduce in Egypt, through his new type of army, “...a new mode of authority, which operated by the physical confinement of groups, the continuous monitoring of behaviour, the control of movements and gestures, and the careful construction of hierarchies.”⁸²

Likening the *Ḥamīdiye* troops to a school suggests, however, that the Ottoman military instructors were aiming not only at disciplining the bodies of the recruits, but also at controlling their minds. Thirty years later, both Brigadier-General Rüşdī Paşa and 'Abdülḡani Senī, who was then serving in Yemen as head of the governor-general's chancery (*vilāyet mektūbcısı*), expressed similar views, arguing that in the training of local soldiers, drill would have to be accompanied by “mental education” (*terbiye-i fikrīye*). This would create an obedient “element” (*unşur*) that would be useful to the state.⁸³

Military service was considered only one of several civilizing instruments that the modern state had at its disposal. As seen in chapter 3, the creation of a network of provincial administration, too, was regarded as essential to “rescuing” the local population from the “state of savagery” (*ḥāl-i bedevīyetden*) in which they were supposedly living.⁸⁴ Education on the Ottoman model, however, was meant to play a particularly important role in this context. For instance, *Ḥamīd Vehbī*, in his capacity

⁸⁰ Ibid.: “...an...effort has been made to advance the ordering of the province a step further...since the people of the land of Yemen are sharing in the exalted military aspect of the enviable Ottoman civilization through an army being organized and established from among the people of the province.” (“...ahālī-i vilāyetden bir 'asker tertib ve tanzīm olunarak hitta-i yemāniye halkı medeniyet-i maḡbūte-i 'osmāniyenin cihet-i celile-i 'askerīyesinden dahi behredār-i iftihār...olmasından tolayı intizām-i vilāyet bir katdaha teraḡkīdār olması emrine 'acizāne ve ḡaşırāne teşebbüs...olunmuş...”).

⁸¹ *Şan'ā* 43 (22 Temmuz 1297 [3 August 1881]), 1.

⁸² Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 40.

⁸³ Rüşdī, *Yemen hātırası* (Dersā'adet: Maḡba'a-i 'Osmāniye, AMal 1325/[1909–10]), 195, 197; 'Abdülḡani Senī, “Yemen'niñ esbāb-i āsāyişinden milis-i 'askerī,” *Mülkiye* 8 (1 Eylül 1325 [14 September 1909]), 37.

⁸⁴ See, for instance, BOA./ŞD. 2254–17, doc. 4, Province of Yemen, administrative council to the ministry of the interior, 10 Haziran 1296/22 June 1880; BOA./ŞD. 2259–2, Province of Yemen, administrative council to the ministry of the interior, 10 Teşrin-i sani 1304/22 November 1888.

as editor-in-chief of the provincial newspaper *Şan'ā'* in 1880–81, suggested that it was the duty of the Ottoman government to raise the local people through education (*ma'ārif*) and modern science (*'ulūm-i cedīde*) to the cultural level of the population in the more “developed” parts of the empire.⁸⁵ As early as July 1872—at a time when the Ottoman expeditionary force was still fighting to control Upper Yemen—the official, playwright, and editor of the *'İbret* newspaper, Nāmık Kemāl, expressed similar views.⁸⁶

As Eugene Weber and others have shown with reference to nineteenth-century metropolitan France and Britain, the concept of a civilizing mission was not used exclusively in the context of colonial power relations; it was also used with reference to the urban poor and the rural population in those countries.⁸⁷ It is, therefore, important to note that although the *Ḥamīdiye* troops were to conform to the professional standards of the *nizāmīye* regiments, these were not what the new troops were modeled on. As both İsmā'īl Ḥaḳḳī and the war ministry pointed out, in creating the *Ḥamīdiye* corps they intended to set up a body of troops “similar to India’s native troops” (*Hindistān'ın yerli askerine mümāsıl*).⁸⁸ Thus, their principal point of reference was the locally recruited regiments of Britain’s colonial army on the Subcontinent. Like those units in India, the *'Asākīr-i Ḥamīdiye* would consist of volunteers. More important, outfitting their indigenous troops with exotic headgear was one of the ways in which the British sought to rigidify the differences between themselves and the local population after the uprising of 1857–58.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ For Ḥamīd Vehbī, see Ursinus, “Provinzzeitung,” 178–79.

⁸⁶ Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Namık Kemal ve İbret gazetesi* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1997), 67–68.

⁸⁷ Susan Thorne, “The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain,” in *Tensions of Empire*, ed. Cooper and Stoler, 238–62; Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 150–55; Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 3–22, 303–38.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, BOA./Y.EE. 1–5, doc. 2, İsmā'īl Ḥaḳḳī Paşa to the ministry of war, 11 Mart 1296/23 March 1880; BOA./Y.MTV. 8–26, doc. 3, ministry of war, military commission of inspection to the Palace, 12 Kanun-i evvel 1297/24 December 1881, 1.

⁸⁹ See Bernard S. Cohn, “Cloth, Clothes, and Colonialism,” in *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, ed. Bernard S. Cohn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 123–24.

Thus, the rhetoric about the Ottomans' civilizing mission, together with the reference to British India, suggests that grouping these local recruits into separate units and distinguishing them visually from the regular Ottoman troops through specific uniforms was intended as a way of marking them off as different from, and culturally inferior to, their commanding officers and fellow soldiers from other parts of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, the uncivilized, to whom the civilizing efforts of the state were to be directed, had to be dressed differently.

While choosing these particular uniforms for the *Ḥamīdiye* corps can, at one level, be interpreted as an ordering gesture of the imperial authorities, at another level, it reflected an awareness among senior Ottoman officials that the Province of Yemen as an imperial borderland could not be ruled in the same way as provinces of the empire where the state had a stronger foothold. From the 1881 memoranda drawn up by *İsmā'īl Ḥaḳḳī* and the war ministry officials, it appears that although the Ottoman authorities were determined to use the new province as a source of recruits for the military, they realized that Ottoman rule was too insecure to allow for the introduction of conscription anytime soon. As the war ministry stated, the creation of the *Ḥamīdiye* corps was a first step toward introducing conscription at some point in the future.⁹⁰

Seen from this perspective, setting up units of volunteers and issuing them uniforms similar in style to their everyday clothes would seem to be a way of making service in the Ottoman military more palatable to the local population. This was stated much more explicitly in a number of commission reports and memoranda that were drawn up by war ministry officials and members of the general staff between 1884 and 1911, i.e., at a time when the Ottoman authorities faced increasing local opposition, not least under the leadership of the *Zaydī imāms*.

While the *Ḥamīdiye* corps was disbanded in 1882, some of these later recruitment schemes featured two key elements of *İsmā'īl Ḥaḳḳī*'s recruitment policy, namely, the creation of volunteer units and the issuance of uniforms that were similar in style to the everyday clothes of the recruits. Like the appointment of officers from among the local

⁹⁰ BOA./Y.MTV. 8–26, doc. 3, ministry of war, commission of military inspection to the Palace, 12 Kanun-i evvel 1297/24 December 1881, 3.

elite, these measures were meant to attract local recruits to military service.⁹¹ Both this specific form of recruitment and the style of the uniforms, therefore, indicates that the balance of power in Ottoman Yemen was weighted in favor of the local population. While I have not found evidence that the outfitting of the Ḥamidiye troops occurred in reaction to concrete protests or acts of resistance on the part of recruits, this appears to have been the case when, in the early years of the Second Constitutional Period, a new attempt at raising local units was made.⁹²

Military planners in Istanbul and Şan‘ā’ thus realized that, at least for the time, the task of incorporating the male population of the Province of Yemen into the imperial army had to be accomplished without the instruments of the census and conscription. As we have seen, the authors of most memoranda recommended the approach—broadly speaking—of adapting recruitment strategies to local conditions. This brings us to an important point: the relation between knowledge and power. The census as a form of collecting and organizing knowledge did not play a role in the recruitment strategies that the war ministry officials and the members of the general staff advocated. These strategies were, nevertheless, informed by the notion that administrative power was based on the efficient use of facts about the society that was to be governed.⁹³ In suggesting that the task of turning local peasants into soldiers would be facilitated by issuing uniforms that were similar in style to the everyday clothes of the recruits and by appointing their officers, in part, from among the local elites,⁹⁴ the authors of the memoranda were indicating the importance of understanding local customs and mechanisms of power as a critical step toward controlling

⁹¹ See, for instance, BOA./Y.MTV. 17–16, doc. 2, report, general staff to the Palace, 21 Rebiülahir 1302/7 February 1885; BOA./Y.MTV. 46–119, ministry of war, commission for general military inspection to the Palace, 19 Teşrin-i sani 1306/ 1 December 1890, 4.

⁹² See A. J. B. Wavell, *A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca and a Siege in Sanaa* (London: Constable, 1912), 255–56: “The ‘Millah’ were the irregular Arab troops raised by the Turks at the time when the enthusiasm for ‘constitutional’ methods was at its height... At first they were dressed in khaki, like the regular soldiers, but as they objected to this a uniform was devised for them more nearly corresponding to their ordinary attire, in which, with their natural aptitude for drill as for everything connected with the soldier’s trade, they looked on parade a very smart body of men.”

⁹³ See, for instance, Cohn, “Introduction,” in *Colonialism*, 4.

⁹⁴ See, for instance, BOA./Y.MTV. 46–119, ministry of war, commission for general military inspection to the Palace, 19 Teşrin-i sani 1306/1 December 1890, 4.

the population of Ottoman Yemen. Thus, here, as in the case of the judicial system, officials sought to objectify “the local” for the purposes of the Ottoman state in ways very similar to those elaborated by contemporary British, French, or Russian colonial rulers.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any government correspondence from the first half of the 1880s that explains why Meḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa, İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī’s successor as governor-general, disbanded the Ḥamīdiye corps in 1882, after only two years. In his book, *Yemen hāṭırası* [Memoirs of Yemen], published in 1909–10 (AMal 1325), Brigadier-General Rüşdī Paşa suggests that the principal reasons were security concerns and the need to cut expenditures.⁹⁵ Similarly, a memorandum from the years 1895–97 implies that Meḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa had doubts about the loyalty of the ‘Asākır-i Ḥamīdiye, fearing that in the event of an uprising, they would side with the Zaydī *imām*.⁹⁶ The memorandum, however, was clearly written under the impact of the uprising of 1891–92, which makes it problematic to project its perspective back to the 1880s. Interestingly, the creation of the Ḥamīdiye corps occurred in October/November 1880, precisely when rebels led by the Zaydī *imām* al-Ḥādī Sharaf al-Dīn b. Muḥammad won their most important victory against Ottoman military forces by conquering and temporarily occupying the fortress of Zafır Ḥajja.⁹⁷ Yet there is no indication whatsoever that either the governor-general or the central government in Istanbul saw the uprising as a reason not to proceed with the build-up of the new troops. The fact that İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī’s successor viewed two infantry battalions and an artillery unit of native troops as a serious security risk more than a year *after* Zafır Ḥajja had been re-conquered by government forces suggests that there was significant disagreement among senior officials as to the actual status of Ottoman rule in the new province. Moreover, it shows that the Zaydī *imāms* were still not perceived as posing as serious a challenge to Ottoman rule as they were in the 1890s and after. While various

⁹⁵ Rüşdī, *Yemen hāṭırası*, 52.

⁹⁶ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 34–125, 9. While this memorandum is undated and bears no signature, an archivist’s remark on the verso of its last page suggests “evvail 1313,” i.e., the beginning of either AH 1313 [beg. 24 June 1895] or AMal 1313 [beg. 13 March 1897] as a probable date. Since the author states in *ibid.*, 9 that the ‘Asākır-i Ḥamīdiye existed “in the time of the predecessors of this humble servant” (*eslāf-i çākerānem zamānında*) we can assume that he was Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, one of the successors of İsmā‘il Ḥaḳḳī and Meḥmed ‘İzzet paşas as governor-general of the Province of Yemen.

⁹⁷ Kruse, “Takfir und Ğihād,” 442.

schemes of local military recruitment were discussed in government circles over the next decades, it was not until the Second Constitutional period that a new attempt was made to create “native” army units. In the meantime, the military recruitment of locals remained restricted to the gendarmerie. Dispersed over the entire province and without artillery, this auxiliary force was unlikely to pose any threat to the units of the Seventh Imperial Army.

Contesting Categories of Knowledge

As in the context of other imperial states, there is, of course, no question of viewing the categories of knowledge on which the elaboration of difference in Ottoman Yemen critically depended as either “objective” renderings of local realities or simply as inventions. Rather, it seems more useful to conceive of categories, such as *shaykh*, tribe, *sayyid*, *faqīh*, or *sharī‘a* as “contested domains” that were shaped through contestations involving groups of government officials and the indigenous population seeking to promote their own interests.⁹⁸ These categories of knowledge, therefore, represented the outcome of multiple power struggles. These were waged on the local level and in the larger imperial context, but they also reflected a competition that pitted the Ottoman government against its European rivals both in the southern Red Sea region and throughout the empire as a whole.

Ottoman officials were not the first to formulate the idea that *shaykhs*, *‘ulamā’*, and *sāda* controlled local society in Yemen. When faced with the task of establishing Ottoman rule over southwest Arabia, soldiers and administrators were able to draw on the experience that they and other representatives of the *Tanẓīmāt* state had gained in North Africa, Ottoman Iraq, geographical Syria, and the Ottoman Balkans. As we have seen, Muṣṭafā ‘Aṣım referred to successful methods of co-opting local leaders in Tripolitania and the Iraqi provinces when he spoke in favor of installing *shaykhs* and *sāda* as district officers in parts of the Province of Yemen. The fact that, as a former governor-general

⁹⁸ See, for example, Nicolas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 125–228, for instance 164–69; I borrow the term “contested domain” from Huri İslamoğlu, see idem, “Property as Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858,” in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 3–61.

of Tripolitania, he could speak from personal experience might have lent his argument additional weight. Similarly, it is hardly coincidental that ʿOsmān Nūrī Paşa was appointed governor-general of Yemen after having served for many years as *vāli* of the Hijaz. It is interesting that both governors were later posted to the Province of Syria, where they dealt with fierce opposition to Ottoman rule among the population of the Ḥawrān region. Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, who, through long years of service in Yemen had developed the reputation for “knowing” this part of the empire particularly well, was appointed governor-general of Province of Baghdad in 1902. The new perspective on borderland peoples that Ottoman officials had adopted as a result of the *Tanzīmāt* informed the notion that governmental experience in Tripolitania or Ottoman Iraq was potentially relevant to establishing control over southwest Arabia. Part of perceiving borderland peoples as “savages” at the lower rungs of a hierarchy of civilizations was the idea that local differences notwithstanding, there were “essential” features that marked these peoples as “uncivilized.” Among these markers of “savagery” were the existence of tribes, the unchecked power of local elite figures, and the absence of the rule of law. It was only with this essentialist notion of the “uncivilized” in mind that officials like Muştafā ʿĀşım could draw parallels between strategies of domination in Yemen and those in British India.

Despite this tendency to essentialize “the local,” officials did not claim that conditions in Tripolitania and Yemen were identical, that all borderland people were alike. As we have seen earlier, the notion that Ottoman modes of governance had to be re-fashioned on the basis of *local* knowledge was central to the institutionalization of difference. In Yemen, however, just as in colonial Africa and South Asia, the elaboration of categories like “tribe” was not a process of unmediated “observation” on the part of the conquerors. Like their British and French counterparts, Ottoman officials depended on the knowledge of local elites, who “...sought to manipulate the creation of knowledge for their own purposes.”⁹⁹

While the available sources on this issue for Ottoman Yemen in the 1870s and 1880s are extremely limited, they nevertheless offer a glimpse into the dynamics of these politics of knowledge production.

⁹⁹ Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire*, idem, 11.

For instance, in the case of the categories of *sayyids* and *fuqahā'*, it is interesting to compare Ottoman perceptions of the role of these groups in local society with the findings of the Austro-Hungarian epigrapher and linguist Eduard Glaser (1855–1908), who traveled through the territory of Hāshid and Arḥab in the highlands north of Ṣan'ā' in 1884. As noted earlier, officials like Muṣṭafā 'Āṣım and 'Osmān Nūrī stressed the paramount, unrivalled influence of the *sāda*, particularly, but not exclusively, among the Zaydī population of the region. They also portrayed itinerant *fuqahā'* who “made their rounds” (*dolaşmak*) in the rural areas as central to conflict resolution throughout the province. By contrast, Glaser presents a much more complex picture. He shows, for instance, that in this part of the region at least, the position of legal scholars and those who claim *sayyid* status (in fact, jurists are often *sayyids*) was indeed a privileged one vis-à-vis other members of local society. But this privileged position is only rarely described as being related to the kind of unequivocal authority that Ottoman accounts seem to ascribe to these groups. Rather, it is often derived from a specific form of protection (*hijra*) that a given tribe may grant to *sayyids*, jurists—who often belong to families of “judges” (*quḍāt*)—and their descendants.¹⁰⁰ The specificities of protection are usually

¹⁰⁰ See Eduard Glaser, *My Journey through Arḥab and Hāshid*, trans. David Warburton [from *Petermann's Mitteilungen* 30 (1884): 170–83, 204–13], introduced by Daniel Martin Varisco (Westbury, NY: American Institute for Yemeni Studies, 1993), 4: “The *hijra* community usually reside in one or more villages, inhabited exclusively by *ashrāf*... scholars and *quḍā'* (judges). Such a village is never taken in war, being regarded to some extent as sacrosanct... The tribe gives each member his own individual certificate confirming this. The *hijra* attends to religious affairs, and those legal ones resolved according to the Quran. Some individual members of the *hijra* also reside scattered among the villages of the *qabā'il*, as scribes for shaykhs, prayer leaders, etc. Otherwise their unofficial role in tribal life is that of intrigue and diplomacy, working at times for a shaykh, an Imam, or even the Turkish government. The members of the *hijra*, especially the *sāda*, are greatly revered. If, e.g., at a *khubr* (when members of various tribes chance upon one another and exchange news) a *sayyid*... is present, it is he, and not the shaykh who conducts business. Otherwise, however, they are without influence on tribal life.” See also *ibid.*, 6: “If conflict arises between two parts of the same tribe... the other shaykhs or other important people such as a *sayyid* take it upon themselves to make peace... Any respected man can mediate in a conflict or war, whether he lives in the tribal area or comes from further abroad, e.g., the members of the *hijra*, any shaykh, even a foreign *sayyid*.” Cf. also Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 139: “Qadis made *hijrah* were accorded the tribesmen's own ability to take others into their peace and to provide protection. At the same time they were not subject to collective levies on the tribe... and were protected by the tribesmen. In tribal terms their status was thus certainly privileged. They were not, however, granted authority, any more than is a notable shaykh who receives *hijrah* status, and

laid down in *hijra* documents, which in many cases are periodically renewed. *Hijra* status can, therefore, extend over several generations. As Dresch suggests, individual *qāḍīs* and *sayyids* were, indeed, very influential at various points throughout the history of Upper Yemen. Ottoman perceptions were certainly also informed by their encounter with manifestations of such influence, as, for instance, in the case of Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Kibṣī (1823–90), who declared and led a *jihād* against Ottoman rule in 1877.¹⁰¹ What is striking, however, is the similarity between Ottoman perceptions and the self image of both *sayyids* and jurists. Neither leaves any room for contingency or for the dimension of tribal protection. That is, Ottoman perceptions do not reflect elements of tribal perspectives for these groups. At the same time, *sayyids* and ‘*ulamā*’ were prominent among those Ṣan‘ānī leaders who welcomed the re-establishment of Ottoman rule over the highlands and negotiated the handover of Ṣan‘ā’ to Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa. Since they were key allies of the Ottomans in and around the new provincial capital at this stage, we can assume that Ottoman officials crucially depended on their “local knowledge.” For instance, Aḥmed Muhtār Paşa mentions in his memoirs that he appointed a prominent Ṣan‘ānī ‘*ālim*, Qāḍī Husayn Jaḡmān, as his correspondence secretary; he would deal with the complaints and requests of local petitioners. This was necessary because he found both the written and spoken Arabic of the locals incomprehensible and because he needed someone whom he could approach when it came to finding out more about the situation of each petitioner.¹⁰² It can be argued, then, that Ottoman notions about the influence of *sayyids* and ‘*ulamā*’ were, to an important degree, informed by the perspective of these local “informants.”

the extent to which they could dispense Islamic law, or indeed any form of justice, to the tribesmen around them must have depended largely on personal standing and ability.” [emphasis original] See also *ibid.*, 143–44: “The sayyids may judge by Islamic law, but there is no promise that tribesmen will ask them to do so, or that, if they did, they would abide by the decision. The sayyids are praised as a source of justice, but an optional source, on the tribesmen’s sufferance. What is not open to question is their claim to protection. The agreement is binding on the tribesmen and their descendants...to be handed on to the next generation...”; and *ibid.*, 144: “...in most *hijrah* documents...one also finds somewhere the phrase *mā la-hum ‘alay-him*, meaning ‘what they are due is due from them’; any offence by a sayyid against his tribal protectors is to be fined with the same severity as an offence by them against him. The status of *hijrah* is singular. It is not one of unequivocal superiority.” [emphasis original].

¹⁰¹ Kruse, “Takfir und Ğihād,” 442.

¹⁰² See Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Anılar. Sergüzeşt-i hayatımın cild-i evveli*, ed. Nuri Akbayar (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), 82.

It is also important to remember that members of these groups had been influential office-holders under the Qāsīmī regime and that the relative importance of their position had declined after the breakup of the Qāsīmī state.¹⁰³ It is, therefore, conceivable that many *sayyids* and ‘*ulamā*’ saw the advent of Ottoman rule and the re-establishment of a centralized state in Yemen as an opportunity to regain some of their former importance and presented themselves to the new rulers in a way that would stress their usefulness as judicial personnel and administrators.

A memorandum that the above-mentioned Qāḍī Ḥusayn Jaghmān submitted to the Palace secretariat during a visit to Istanbul in 1886 illustrates that local ‘*ulamā*’ did not hesitate to pursue their own interests at the highest levels of government. The *qāḍī* stressed the aversion that the local people felt toward the remaining *niẓāmīye* courts and proposed that the latter be replaced with a single court in Ṣan‘ā’ that would be staffed exclusively with local ‘*ulamā*’.¹⁰⁴

At the same time, there is evidence that the adaptation of the judicial system during the 1880s, as an important aspect of the institutionalization of difference in Ottoman Yemen, was also shaped in the context of the Ottomans’ competition with the Zaydī *imāms* for the loyalty of the local population. It seems that in particular al-Hādī Sharaf al-Dīn b. Muḥammad, who succeeded al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin as Zaydī *imām* in 1879, encouraged the population in the northern parts of the province to rise against the Ottoman government on the grounds that its representatives did not uphold the sacred law of Islam (*sharī‘a*) and therefore did not exert legitimate rule.¹⁰⁵ While already in the fall of 1880 rebels loyal to al-Hādī had won a major victory against the Ottomans by conquering the fortress of Zafīr Ḥajja, it was only in the mid-1880s that senior officials in Ṣan‘ā’ appear to have viewed the “Zafīr incident” (*Zafīr vaḳ‘ası*) as an indication that the *imām* posed a serious challenge to Ottoman rule.

It was ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa who, during his brief tenure as governor-general in 1888–89, acted to prevent al-Hādī from becoming the paramount political force in the northern highlands. The governor-general sought to make alliances with the dignitaries of Ṣa‘da in the north, the

¹⁰³ See Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 70–71.

¹⁰⁴ See BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 72560, doc. 2.2, undated memorandum; *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, İdris Bostan, “Muhammed Hilâl Efendi’nin Yemen’e dair iki layihası,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies* 3 (1982), 316.

rulers of Wādī Jawf, the leader of the Ismāʿīlī community in the far northeast, and with other major local leaders who seemed to oppose the *imām*'s bid for domination in the area.¹⁰⁶ While ʿOsmān Nūrī was unwilling or unable to support his prospective allies with Ottoman troops, he sought to cement these alliances by honoring the respective leaders or their emissaries in Ṣanʿāʾ with elaborate receptions and robes of honor and, more importantly, by paying them stipends.¹⁰⁷ As part of the larger effort to prevent a setback like the loss of Zafīr Ḥajja from reoccurring, the governor-general also stressed the necessity of respecting the “manners and customs” (*ahlāk ve ʿādetler*) of the local people.¹⁰⁸ ʿOsmān Nūrī did not, in this particular context, or in his requests for authorization to dismantle the *niẓāmīye* courts, make any explicit reference to the challenge posed by the *imām*. However, he emphasized that judicial reform, in accordance with local custom, was crucial in order to win support for Ottoman rule. I would argue that this stance, and the insistence that failure to push through these reforms would have a negative effect on the political situation, suggests that the dismantling of the *niẓāmīye* courts was one element of the governor's effort to “contain” Imām al-Hādī.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the judicial reforms of 1888–89 seem to have been part of the government's attempt to elaborate “...a locally tailored shariʿa politics of their own to counter that of the imams.”¹¹⁰

Not all of the province's senior officials shared ʿOsmān Nūrī's determination to abolish the *niẓāmīye* courts. In a letter to the minister of justice, Muḥammad Hilāl Efendi, the president of the court of appeals

¹⁰⁶ See BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 12–62, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, ʿOsmān Nūrī Paşa, to the ministry of the interior, 16 Haziran 1304/28 June 1888; BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 13–121, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, ʿOsmān Nūrī Paşa, to the Palace, 19 Kanun-i sani 1304/31 December 1888.

¹⁰⁷ In a memorandum that he wrote after the end of his tenure as governor-general of Yemen, ʿOsmān Nūrī describes how he received from the northern highlands two influential *sayyids* and their retinue of three hundred armored cavalry in Ṣanʿāʾ and gave them stipends, houses, and various other presents; see BOA./Y.EE. 8–18, doc. 2, memorandum, 7 Teşrin-i evvel 1306/19 October 1890. The event is also described in detail by the anonymous author of the *Ḥawliyyāt Yamāniya*; see Anonymous, *Ḥawliyyāt Yamāniya*, 331–33.

¹⁰⁸ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 12–62, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, ʿOsmān Nūrī Paşa, to the ministry of the interior, 16 Haziran 1304/28 June 1888, 3.

¹⁰⁹ See BOA./Y.MTV. 37–73, governor-general of Yemen, ʿOsmān Nūrī Paşa, to the Palace, undated but referring to an earlier dispatch from 3 Ağustos 1304/15 August 1888.

¹¹⁰ Messick, *Calligraphic State*, 50–51.

in Şan‘ā’ and the highest-ranking legal official in Yemen, strongly criticized the governor-general’s policy. In his view the dismantling of the *nizāmīye* tribunals undermined the effort to “spread justice and civilization” (*neşr-i ‘adālet ve medeniyet*) in this part of the empire. Far from winning the government local support, he believed it would, on the contrary, generate hopes of independence among the indigenous population. Moreover, Muḥammad Hilāl disagreed with the governor’s view that the courts were almost universally rejected, and cited reports of the administrative council of ‘Asir that had called for the creation of a *nizāmīye* court in the district of Ghāmid.¹¹¹ ‘Osmān Nūrī, in turn, complained about his critic to the minister, claiming that Muḥammad Hilāl’s insistence on retaining the *nizāmīye* courts reflected mere self-interest and caused people to resent the authorities.¹¹²

The appeals court judge disagreed with the governor-general on more than just judicial policy. In a memorandum that he probably wrote after his return from Yemen, Muḥammad Hilāl did not portray Imām al-Hādī as a major threat, and he dismissed those ‘*ulamā*’ who supported him as a group of men who preferred inciting people to rebellion because they knew that they were not yet strong enough to stand up to the Ottoman army.¹¹³ More importantly, the memorandum suggests that the disagreement between ‘Osmān Nūrī and Muḥammad Hilāl over judicial matters reflected a broader disagreement over the

¹¹¹ BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 4548, doc. 10, president of the court of appeals in Şan‘ā’, Muḥammad Hilāl Efendi, to the ministry of justice, 15 Eylül 1304/27 September 1888.

¹¹² See BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 4548, doc. 6, governor-general of Yemen, ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa to the ministry of justice, 3 Ağustos 1304/15 August 1888. This controversy continued among senior officials in the imperial capital. Aḥmed Cevdet Paşa, the minister of justice, refused to support the reforms requested by ‘Osmān Nūrī. He was willing to formally abolish the remaining *nizāmīye* courts, but wanted to see as many of their features as possible preserved in the new *sharī‘a* courts, especially in the field of criminal justice. For example, *nizāmīye* criminal court procedure was to be followed, only the Ottoman penal code should apply, the members of the *nizāmīye* criminal courts were to continue under a different name, and the province would receive one public prosecutor. The members of the commission of jurists at the ministry of the *şeyhü ‘l-islām*, however, favored ‘Osmān Nūrī’s initiative and criticized Aḥmed Cevdet Paşa’s proposal as mere window dressing that would defeat the purpose of winning the support of the local population. As we have seen, the council of ministers finally adopted a compromise; see BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 4548, doc. 5, Aḥmed Cevdet Paşa’s memorandum, 5 Kanun-i evvel 1304/17 November 1888, 2; *ibid.*, doc. 3, memorandum of the commission of jurists at the ministry of the *şeyhü ‘l-islām*, 22 Cemaziyelevvel 1306/23 February 1889, 4–5.

¹¹³ See Bostan, “Muhammed Hilāl,” 315–16.

direction of the Ottoman provincial government in Yemen in general and their perspectives on the local population in particular. Very much in contrast to the governor-general, the appeals court judge was convinced that, by and large, the institutions of the *Tanzīmāt* state were accepted in Yemen and should not be scaled down. He considered the censuses and cadastral surveys not only necessary, but also possible to undertake without great difficulties, and he called for more, rather than less, centralization. Whereas ‘Osmān Nūrī emphasized that the local people were “uncivilized,” Muḥammad Hilāl dwelled on their “pleasant customs” (*ahlāk-i ḥasene*) and stressed their overall acceptance of Ottoman rule. While he acknowledged the need to “civilize” and educate the Yemenis, he did not advocate politics of difference. In this sense, the central government’s endorsement of large portions of ‘Osmān Nūrī’s proposal for judicial reform was emblematic of the ascendancy of the politics of difference among government circles in the capital.

However, the Zaydī *imāms* were not the only ones to challenge Ottoman rule in Yemen. Since the mid-1870s, imperial competition in the southern Red Sea region had greatly intensified. As a result, Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire, as well as Italy, and, to a lesser extent, France, competed for spheres of influence in this area and, the Ottomans believed, for the loyalty of the local population. An 1891 memorandum that was drawn up by Meḥmed Žiyā’, a former district governor (*kāymaḳām*) of Mukhā in the southern coastal region of Yemen, provides a good example of the seriousness with which some officials took this issue.¹¹⁴ During the two decades since the creation of the province, he claimed, the Ottomans had managed to alienate the local people through their methods of rule to such a degree that the latter referred to officials as “Christians” (*naṣrānī*).¹¹⁵ According to Meḥmed Žiyā’, this state of affairs threatened the Ottoman presence in Yemen because it made the local people highly receptive to the

¹¹⁴ See BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 22–93, memorandum, former *kāymaḳām* of Mukhā, Meḥmed Žiyā’, to the Palace, 27 Mayıs 1307/8 June 1891. The fact that copies of Meḥmed Žiyā’'s memorandum can be found in two other sections of the BOA. (Y.EE. 9–12, doc. 1 and ŞD. 2261–17, doc. 20) suggests that it was widely circulated within the imperial government.

¹¹⁵ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 22–93, memorandum, former *kāymaḳām* of Mukhā, Meḥmed Žiyā’, to the Palace, 27 Mayıs 1307/8 June 1891, 1.

overtures of both the British and the Italians.¹¹⁶ The reform measures that the former *kāymakām* proposed to address this situation, such as the exiling of all *shaykhs* as a precondition for carrying out censuses and cadastral surveys and, hence, for determining more equitable tax rates,¹¹⁷ do not contain any reference to the notion of governing in accordance with the *sharī'a*. However, Meḥmed Žiyā's memorandum does raise the concern that a failure on the part of the Ottoman government to present themselves as righteous Muslim rulers would lead locals to transfer their loyalties to the British, French, or Italians. This question may also have motivated Ottoman “*sharī'a* politics” in Yemen.

Difference and Exclusion

Thus, in the Ottoman as well as in the British, French or Dutch colonial contexts, politics of difference served the same purpose, namely to secure the conquerors' domination over a conquered territory and its population. Yet, in the context of Ottoman Yemen, difference was conceived in ways that differed from how it was understood among the protagonists of these western European colonial powers. Among the latter, the differences between the European conquerors and indigenous peoples were often believed to be permanent and unbridgeable. These notions of “essential” differences predominated toward the end of the nineteenth century and drew, to an important degree, but by no means exclusively, on racial theories that placed different groups and races in a hierarchy of progress that was critical to policy formation within the colonies.¹¹⁸ Race-thinking was not uncommon among Ottoman authors and bureaucrats who wrote about the people of Yemen.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 3; for earlier concerns that overtaxation in particular would prompt local people to transfer their loyalties to the British, see BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 64553, doc. 2.2, memorandum, commander-in-chief of the Seventh Imperial Army, Division General İsmā'īl Ḥakḫī Paşa, to the Palace, 31 Teşrin-i evvel 1295/12 November 1879, 2; BOA./Y.EE. 12–14, memorandum, Colonel Muştafâ Şabri, Fifth Regiment, Seventh Imperial Army, 19 Kanun-i evvel 1295/31 December 1879, 2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁸ See, for instance, Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 18–22; Conklin, *Mission to Civilize*, 78; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 52–59.

¹¹⁹ The same holds true for Ottoman perspectives on the inhabitants of the empire's Arab provinces more generally; for a nuanced discussion of this issue see Zeynep Çelik, *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830–1914* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 252–66; I borrow the term “race-thinking” from Çelik; see *ibid.*, 252.

Indeed, prominent voices, such as Nâmiḳ Kemâl, equated being Arab with being “backward.”¹²⁰ Yet, most of these observers seem to have conceived of the hierarchies that supposedly separated them from the local people in cultural, not racial terms. More importantly, perhaps, both cultural and racial hierarchies were mostly viewed as temporary: they would be erased, so the argument ran, once the government’s civilizing mission was accomplished. Still, Ottoman perspectives on this were hardly uniform. Some senior officials, such as ‘Osmân Nürî Paşa, insisted that Arabs would always remain subordinate to Turks.¹²¹

In the context of French West Africa or British India, the boundaries that were established through the politics of difference by and large separated citizens from subjects. With very few exceptions, these boundaries kept the local population outside the confines of the nation to which the conquerors belonged and denied them the political rights that the latter enjoyed as citizens of France or Great Britain.¹²² In the context of Ottoman Yemen, however, these distinctions were not so easily made. First, the peoples in the newly-conquered territories in southwest Arabia acquired Ottoman nationality upon the creation of the Province of Yemen. Also, during both constitutional periods (1876–78 and 1908–18, respectively) the province was granted parliamentary representation, even though the imperial government considered its local population “uncivilized” and culturally inferior.

Further, there is evidence that even though the government institutionalized and reproduced difference through the dismantling of the *niḫâmîye* courts and the creation of “native” military units, there were officials who still considered the local people fellow Ottomans. For instance, reporting on the Ḥamîdiye corps and on a comparable recruitment project in Tripolitania, the official provincial newspaper *Şan‘â* on 30 November 1881 stressed that maintaining the power of

¹²⁰ See Özön, *Namık Kemal ve İbret gazetesi*, 67–68.

¹²¹ Selim Deringil has argued that ‘Osmân Nürî Paşa, like Ahmed Cevdet, “had a clear notion that the Turks constituted the ‘fundamental element’ (*unsur-u asli*) of the empire” and quotes the *paşa* as saying in a memorandum: “Although it is possible for the whole of the Islamic population to become part of the fundamental element time is not yet ripe... Even when this happens, and the other Muslims, by application of effective policies, will be blended [into the fundamental element] they will be as the boughs and branches of a tree, whose trunks and trees will still be made up of the Turks.” See Deringil, “Nomadism and Savagery,” 328.

¹²² Conklin, *Mission to Civilize*, 74, 102–106; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, ix–x.

the fatherland was the duty of all the sultan’s soldiers.¹²³ Two weeks later a short notice referred to the residents of the district of Ibb as “compatriots” (*vaṭandaşlar*), praising their plans to raise funds for a local *rüşdiyye* school as an act of patriotism (*hamîyet*).¹²⁴ These statements raise some important questions: Who really considered these Yemenis fellow Ottomans? Who, among the local population, did this category include? And finally: What did it actually mean to be considered an Ottoman in the Province of Yemen? Only further research can provide answers to these questions. However, it seems that the absence of censuses, cadastral surveys, land registration, conscription, and the *nizâmîye* court system meant that the local people were clearly outside what, from the government’s perspective, constituted the realm of *civilized* Ottoman subjects. Thus, what characterized Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen was not so much a dichotomy of citizens versus subjects, but rather a hierarchy of subjects that assigned to the local people the status of Ottomans of a lesser kind. It is this particular integrative subordination that I described earlier as “colonial Ottomanism.”

A prominent feature of British, French or Dutch colonial rule over India, Algeria, West Africa, and the East Indies during our period were efforts to uphold the distinction between colonizers and colonized in these territories by creating dual structures of governance, among them separate legal forums and codes of law. Attempts to regulate and police sexual relationships between “Europeans” and “natives” served the same purpose. In the context of Ottoman Yemen, the short-lived experiment of the ‘Asâkir-i Ḥamîdiyye emphasized the visual and institutional distinction between soldiers from outside the province and locally recruited troops. Similarly, it seems that local administrators were exempted from government regulations that required Ottoman bureaucrats to wear the fez while on duty.¹²⁵ Some officials from outside Ottoman Yemen seem to have associated “native” dress with “backwardness” and “inferiority.” For when, in 1898, Governor-

¹²³ “Trâblusgarb’da Kuloğlı Efrâdı—Yemen’de ‘Asâkir-i Ḥamîdiyye,” *Şan’â* 58 (18 Teşrin-i sani [1297] [30 November 1881]), 1–2.

¹²⁴ “İbb kaçâsı ahâlisinin hamîyeti,” *Şan’â* 60 (5 Kanun-i evvel 1297/[17 December 1881]), 1.

¹²⁵ See William Ochsenwald, “The Impact of Ottoman Rule on Yemen, 1849–1914,” in *V. Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisat Tarihi Kongresi. Tebliğler. Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyet Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi. İstanbul 21–25 Ağustos 1989* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1990), 258.

General Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa required all civil servants from outside the province to wear turban and cloak (*jubba*) while on duty (see chapter 5), the governor of the *sancağ* of Hūdayda apparently refused to comply.¹²⁶ There were, however, no comparable distinctions made in the legal sphere. The judicial reforms carried out during the governorships of Muṣṭafā ‘Āşım and ‘Osmān Nūrī were not concerned with the creation of separate legal codes and forums for “backward” locals on one side and “civilized” residents from outside the province on the other. Indeed, both the new *sharī’a* courts and the courts of administrative justice dealt with locals and people from outside Ottoman Yemen.

Moreover, the anxieties of British, Dutch, or French administrators that sexual relations between “Europeans” and “natives” might blur and destabilize the racial boundaries between colonizers and colonized have no equivalent in the published accounts and official correspondence of Ottoman officials in Yemen and Istanbul. We may explain this with the fact that Ottoman officials came from very diverse ethnic backgrounds and were not united by any common racial identity. The surviving *sharī’a* court records from the second period of Ottoman rule, potentially the most important corpus of sources on sexual and marital relationships between locals and individuals from outside the province, have not been made accessible to researchers by the government of the Republic of Yemen. As a result, only scattered pieces of evidence on this subject are available. These suggest, for instance, that marital (and non-marital) relationships between local women and Ottoman soldiers and administrators from outside Yemen were quite common and not frowned upon in government circles as miscegenation. By contrast, it seems that local families, with the exception of the poor and members of the *banū l-khums*, were very much against their daughters marrying Ottoman officials and servicemen and that this prompted some Ottoman officers to abduct their future spouses to other parts of the empire.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ See ROY4, 390, S. Aḥmad, British vice-consul, Hūdayda to G. I. Devey, British consul, Jidda, 26 June 1898.

¹²⁷ See, for instance, Walter Dostal, *Ethnographica Jemenica. Auszüge aus den Tagebüchern Eduard Glasers mit einem Kommentar versehen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993), 44; I thank my colleague Najwa Adra for bringing the issue of abduction to my attention; e-mailed communication from Najwa Adra, 25 April 2009.

But did the fact that Yemenis were considered outside this realm of civilized Ottoman subjects and subject to these politics of difference lead to concrete forms of exclusion and disenfranchisement for the local population, as compared to other subjects in the more “developed” parts of the empire? As we have seen, an important dimension of the Ottoman quest for a form of governance that would draw on “local” mechanisms of power was the assumption that local jurists, often *sāda*, commanded great respect and influence in local society. Co-opting these ‘*ulamā*’ in the hope that they would influence local inhabitants in favor of the government became an important priority within the broader attempt to make Ottoman rule acceptable to the indigenous population. Consequently, a substantial number of these legal scholars, who were often from an urban elite background, found employment in the Ottoman judiciary of the Province of Yemen. In fact, the personnel files of these employees that are kept at the Archives of the Mufti of Istanbul¹²⁸ almost read like a biographical compendium of Yemen’s prominent ‘*ulamā*’ families. For instance, we find members of the al-‘Amrī, al-Kibsi, al-Judayri, al-Daylamī, and al-Thūr families from Upper Yemen, as well as individuals who hailed from the cities of Ibb and Ta‘izz in Lower Yemen, such as Qādi ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Alī al-‘Ansi, Qādi Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Akwa‘, and ‘Abdulkarīm b. Muḥammad al-Mujāhid.¹²⁹

It is interesting to note that although many of the jurists whose names are recorded in the Şeyhülislâmlık Arşivi eventually rose to the rank of district judge (*każā’ nā’ibi*), they were almost never posted outside the Province of Yemen.¹³⁰ *Madhhab* affiliation may explain

¹²⁸ Şeyhülislâmlık (Bâb-i Meşihat) Arşivi [ŞBMA].

¹²⁹ See, for instance, ŞBMA/SAMUSD 1955 for Ḥusayn al-‘Amrī Efendi, appointed president of the court of appeals in Şan‘ā that was created after the signing of the Da‘ān agreement in October 1911; see also ŞBMA/SAMUSD 3195 for Sayyid Aḥmad al-Judayri, ŞBMA/SAMUSD 3287 for Sayyid Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullāh al-Daylamī, ŞBMA/SAMUSD 3312, 3317, 3320, 3321 for members of Bayt al-Kibsi; ŞBMA/SAMUSD 3306, Qādi ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Thūr; ŞBMA/SAMUSD 1031, Qādi ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Alī al-‘Ansi; ŞBMA/SAMUSD 2847, Qādi Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Akwa‘.

¹³⁰ The ŞBMA holds the files of 124 individuals who were born in the Province of Yemen. Of these, only two appear to have served in other provinces of the empire. These are Muḥammad Sa‘īd Efendi al-Yamanī, who appears to have served first as district judge of Mukhā between AH 1274 (beg. 22 August 1857) and AH 1284 (beg. 5 May 1867) and then went on to various postings as district judge in Cyprus and geographical Syria, see ŞBMA/SAMUSD 2156, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ahdali Efendi b. Ḥasan al-Ahdali. Shaykh Muḥammad was born in the *sancağ* of Ḥudayda in AMal 1260/1844–45. Around the year AMal 1311/1895–96, he appears to have secured a

this to some extent. A substantial number of these individuals were trained in the Zaydī tradition of jurisprudence, and this might have made it difficult to post them to districts where Sunnīs predominated. However, among those who found their careers restricted to positions in Ottoman Yemen, there were also many jurists who had studied in important centers of the Shāfi‘ī legal tradition, such as Ta‘izz or Ibb. Moreover, since *shari‘a* judges throughout the empire, including the Province of Yemen, were required to use the *mecelle*, *madhhab* affiliation must have been of secondary importance to an individual’s posting. Conversely, jurists from other parts of the Ottoman Empire were given judicial appointments in Yemen, even though their *madhhab* did not “match” those of the local population.¹³¹

Similar patterns of employment appear to have applied to those ‘*ulamā*’ and *sāda* who entered Ottoman civil officialdom. For instance, ‘Alī b. ‘Abdullāh al-Akwa‘ Efendi reached the high point of his career on 26 Şubat 1328/11 March 1912, when he was appointed to the position of district governor of Yarīm after he had spent his entire professional life in Yemen.¹³² Similarly, when Sayyid ‘Abdullāh al-Daylamī Efendi was appointed deputy district governor of Qa‘taba on 31 Mart 1326/13 April 1910, he could look back to a career that was entirely local.¹³³ Even if we take into account that many of them might have been reluctant to serve in places that were far from their home province, the most plausible explanation for this practice appears to be that these men were useful to the government only as “locals,” i.e., in the specific social setting where they could perform what was—according to administrators’ perceptions—their characteristic role in local society. The very idea of establishing a “school for tribes” (*aşiret mektebi*) in the 1890s followed, I would argue, the same logic of seeking to fix, contain, and order the local that was considered “uncivilized” and “troublesome.” The Istanbul-based *aşiret mektebi* trained the sons

position as *awqāf* administrator in the Province of Aleppo; from 16 Eylül 1316/28 September 1900 to his retirement on 25 Haziran 1330/8 July 1914 he served as a *mufti* in the same province; see ŞBMA/SAMUSD 1610.

¹³¹ See, for instance, Sadık Albayrak, *Son Devir Osmanlı uleması. İlmiye ricalinin teracim-i ahvâli* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1996), vol. 1, 109–10, for ‘Abdulra‘ûf Murtaḍâ Efendi from Jaffa, who served from November 1914 until the end of World War I as a judge in the *kaẓā*’ of Ḥujjūr in the Province of Yemen.

¹³² See BOA./Sicill-i Ahvâl Defteri 191–8 for ‘Alī Efendi’s personnel file.

¹³³ See BOA./Sicill-i Ahvâl Defteri 198–133 for Sayyid ‘Abdullāh’s personnel file.

of tribal leaders from the Albanian-, Kurdish-, and Arabic-speaking parts of the empire for careers as civil servants, teachers, and military officers in their *home provinces*. The idea was to educate the “natural leaders” of these local societies to be loyal, reliable servants of the government.¹³⁴ The notion of educating a loyal elite that would remain “local” was already reflected in an 1890 memorandum drawn up by a war ministry commission. The authors of the memorandum insisted on the importance of co-opting members of local elites from the Yemen *vilāyeti* with a view to using them to ensure the loyalty of the indigenous population vis-à-vis the imperial government. Moreover, the war ministry officials emphasized that the government agencies involved should pay particular attention to ensure that the children sent to Istanbul for educational purposes were really from local *sāda*, *ashrāf*, and *a’yān* families.¹³⁵

This perspective on local society would seem to account for the fact that the careers of officials from elite Yemeni families were quite different from, and far more limited than, those of many of their peers from geographical Syria, who often served outside their home provinces, including in departments of the central government in Istanbul or even in the Ottoman foreign service.¹³⁶

To be sure, there are parallels between the ways in which officials represented the “difference” of the population of the Yemen *vilāyeti* and the perspectives of other Ottoman observers on communities, for instance, in geographical Syria. Overall, however, the Syrian provinces were viewed as being much closer to the center than were places like Yemen. What clearly mattered in terms of how Ottoman bureaucrats measured “civilization” and “backwardness” was the degree to which a particular region conformed to the standards of *Tanzīmāt* governance, as expressed in the application of censuses, cadastral surveys, conscription, and the implementation of the *niẓāmiye* court system. In both geographical Syria and Yemen, tax-farming persisted and local elites retained a substantial degree of influence, yet, in places like Jerusalem, Beirut, Damascus, or Aleppo, these local elites were absorbed

¹³⁴ For further details on the *‘aṣīret mektebi*, see Eugene L. Rogan, “*Aṣīret Mektebi*: Abdülhamid II’s ‘School for Tribes’ (1892–1907),” *IJMES* 28 (1996), 83–107.

¹³⁵ See BOA./Y.MTV. 46–119, ministry of war, commission for general military inspection to the Palace, 19 Teşrin-i sani 1306/1 December 1890, 7, 11.

¹³⁶ See, for instance, Hanssen, “Practices of Integration,” 72–73.

into an imperial elite to a much greater extent than their counterparts in Yemen were.

Certainly, elite figures from geographical Syria like the Malḥāme brothers were not the only ones to receive influential positions by the Hamidian regime. The case of the sultan's Yemeni aides-de-camp (A.D.C.s) are only one example in this regard. But even here, the difference between those from geographical Syria and the Yemenis was obvious. The Malḥāmes held positions with responsibilities that concerned the empire as a whole.¹³⁷ By contrast, the Yemeni A.D.C.s appear to have been useful only as "locals"; the sultan hoped to benefit from what was perceived as their characteristic role in local society. This is illustrated, for instance, by a report sent to the Palace in June 1902 by the commander-in chief of the Seventh Imperial Army in Yemen, 'Abdullāh Paşa. In the report the *paşa* tried to refute the serious criticism that one of the sultan's Yemeni A.D.C.s, Sayyid Aḥmad [al-Khabbānī], had voiced against the military strategy that he had pursued against Imām al-Manşūr. More importantly, he attempted to discredit his critic by claiming that the latter was not from a *sāda* family, but an impostor: "It is clear," 'Abdullāh Paşa held, "that Aḥmad Bey is... nothing but an... ordinary Zaydī..." (Aḥmed Bey'in 'ādī... bir Zeydiden başka bir şey olmadığı... meydān... dadır).¹³⁸ In Yemen itself and in the imperial capital, Yemenis, it seems, did not transcend the boundaries of the "local" and therefore retained an inferior, subordinate position among Ottoman elites.

It also appears that the people of the Yemen *vilāyeti* were at a disadvantage in matters relating to taxation and the administration of justice. For instance, after governor-general 'Osmān Nūrī Paşa ordered the dismantling of the remaining *nizāmīye* courts in 1888, the local Ottoman judiciary no longer included a court of appeals. Thereafter, all appeals were referred from the local *sharī'a* courts to the office of the *şeyhü 'l-islām* in Istanbul. Government correspondence suggests that this arrangement caused immense discontent among the local

¹³⁷ Najib Paşa Malḥame (ca. 1856–1927) served as Ottoman imperial commissioner in the autonomous principality of Bulgaria from July 1898 to March 1902; his brother, Salīm Paşa Malḥame (1851–1937) held the post of minister for forestry and mining from February 1893 to August 1908; see Kunalalp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, 113, 120; see also Jens Hanssen, "Malhamé—Malfamé: Levantine Elites and Transimperial Networks on the Eve of the Young Turk Revolution," *IJMES* 43 (2011), 36–38.

¹³⁸ See BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 182–99, commander-in-chief of the Seventh Imperial Army, 'Abdullāh Paşa, to the Palace, 12 Haziran 1318/25 June 1902, 1–2.

population because it often took years before a case could be heard and brought to a conclusion.¹³⁹

Throughout the period studied tax collection in most parts of the province took the form of military expeditions that would often force the rural population to pay at gun point. While many observers identified the threat and use of force on the part of local administrators and military commanders as one of the main reasons for widespread opposition to the imperial government, there is evidence that officials sought to justify this approach by referring to the supposedly lower civilizational status of the local population. In 1888, for instance, Tevfik Efendi, a former director of finances (*defterdâr*) of the Yemen *vilâyeti*, argued in a memorandum to the council of ministers that tax collection through tax collectors and gendarmerie, which he described as the standard procedure in other provinces, was impractical in Yemen as long as the local people had not been brought into the "realm of civilization" (*dâ'ire-i medenîyet*).¹⁴⁰ The idea that ruling the "uncivilized" necessitated a degree of state violence that would not be acceptable toward the more "developed" peoples of the empire was even more clearly expressed in another memorandum drawn up at about the same time. Its author, an official in the governor-general's secretariat, went as far as to maintain that an armed confrontation in the context of tax collection was inevitable, since not giving the tribesmen the opportunity to show resistance before paying would be against their code of honor.¹⁴¹ As early as 1875, the governor-general, Muşafâ 'Âşım Paşa, had argued along similar lines, claiming that it was essentially the demonstration of superior force that was most likely to ensure the loyalty of the "natives."¹⁴²

How closely did Ottoman governmental practices in Yemen during the period from the late 1870s to the early 1890s resemble those in the Hijaz, the other Ottoman territory on the Arabian Peninsula where the central government had reasserted its presence from the 1840s? And to what extent did Ottoman methods of rule in the Hijaz

¹³⁹ See, for instance, BOA./Y.EE. 8–20, doc. 2, Division General Ferid Paşa's memorandum, no date [probably drawn up in March 1907].

¹⁴⁰ BOA./İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus 4087, doc. 3, former *defterdâr* of the Province of Yemen, Tevfik Efendi, to the council of ministers, 11 Şubat 1303/23 February 1888, 1.

¹⁴¹ BOA./Y.EE. 8–25, memorandum, Şükri Efendi to the Palace, 10 Ramazan 1304/2 June 1887.

¹⁴² BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 49751, doc. 6, governor-general of Yemen, Muşafâ 'Âşım Paşa, to the grand vizier, 2 Teşrin-i evvel 1291/14 October 1875, 2.

inform those in Yemen? Since the withdrawal of Meḥmed ‘Alī Paşa’s troops in 1840, the Ottoman presence had, on the whole, enjoyed much greater acceptance in the former province than in southwest Arabia and could therefore be considered more successful. While both the Hijaz and Yemen were organized as *vilāyets* around the same time (between 1863 and 1873), the central government did not introduce the more intrusive practices of the *Tanzīmāt* state, namely censuses, cadastral surveys, and conscription, in either of the two provinces. In a memorandum that ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa wrote after the end of his tenure as Yemen *vālisi* (December 1887–June 1889) he urged the central government to place stronger emphasis on employing *sāda* as administrators in the provinces of Yemen and the Hijaz, because of what he considered their almost unrivalled influence over local society.¹⁴³

It is here, however, that the similarities end. Whereas the Hijaz was taxed only lightly and even received substantial subsidies in cash and in kind, the tax burden on the Province of Yemen was considerable, even more so if we factor in the widespread practice of illegal taxation.¹⁴⁴ From the 1840s, the central government had renewed a long-standing political arrangement, whereby a governor-general sent from Istanbul and the *amīr* of Mecca jointly governed the Hijaz.¹⁴⁵ The responsibilities of both positions remained ill-defined, the result being frequent power struggles between *vālīs* and *amīrs*. On two occasions, in 1855 and 1882, the central government deposed the *amīr*, ‘Abdulmuṭṭalib b. Ghālīb (r. 1851–55 and 1880–82), because of serious doubts about his loyalty. Overall, Ottoman sultans were more likely to recall a governor-general than to depose an *amīr* for fear of alienating the Dhawī Zayd and the Dhawī ‘Awn, the two rival *sharīf* families from among whom the *amīr* was appointed. Even though ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa succeeded temporarily in dominating provincial politics during his first term of office as *vālī* of the Hijaz, the *amīrs* were more powerful than the governors-general for most of the period between the 1860s and World War I.¹⁴⁶ Still, ‘Abdülḥamīd II rejected suggestions to do away with

¹⁴³ BOA./Y.EE. 8–18, doc. 2, memorandum, 7 Teşrin-i evvel 1306/19 October 1890, 4.

¹⁴⁴ See Ochsenwald, “The Impact of Ottoman Rule on Yemen,” 257.

¹⁴⁵ Throughout the period under study, it was customary to appoint the *amīr* from among the members of two rival *sharīf* families, the Dhawī Zayd and the Dhawī ‘Awn; see Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, “The Hijaz, Abdulhamid II, and Amir Hussein’s Secret Dealings with the British,” *MES* 31 (1995), 102.

¹⁴⁶ See Ochsenwald, *Hijaz under Ottoman Control*, 139, 153, 182, 186–91; see also Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, “Vying for Power and Influence in the Hijaz: Ottoman Rule, the

the *amīrs* altogether. Clearly, he considered ruling the Hijaz through the *amīrs* the most cost-effective way of retaining control over the province.¹⁴⁷ By contrast, before the early 1900s, the Hamidian regime was unwilling to devolve to any local leader in Yemen the degree of power it allowed the *amīr* of Mecca to exercise in the Hijaz. Local realities and the larger significance of the Hijaz for Ottoman dynastic rule explain these differences in governance. First, the Hijaz had a much smaller tax base than Yemen, and its pastoralist population would have been much more difficult to tax than the sedentary farmers of southwest Arabia. Further, while the *amīrs* were willing and able to rule the Hijaz as junior partners of the central government, attempts to control parts of Yemen, including ‘Asīr, through local rulers between 1840 and the late 1860s ended in failure and threatened to undermine Ottoman rule in Yemen altogether. As a result, the Ottoman central government had abandoned the idea of ruling Yemen along these lines by the time Aḥmed Muhtār’s expeditionary corps occupied Ṣan‘ā’ in April 1872—even though the Imām al-Hādī Ghālīb b. Muḥammad would have been willing to exercise a role comparable to that of the *amīr*. During the following two decades, both al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin and al-Hādī Sharaf al-Dīn refused to accept Ottoman sovereignty. As we shall see, it took the large-scale uprisings led by al-Manṣūr and Yaḥyā, and the changed political circumstances at the turn of the twentieth century for the central government and the Zaydī *imāms* to again consider a power sharing arrangement similar to that in the Hijaz.

In the period from roughly the early 1870s to the late 1880s, a form of governance arose in Ottoman Yemen that reflected the precarious position of the *Tanzīmāt* state in the empire’s southernmost borderland. This form of governance was significantly informed and shaped by the perspectives of Ottoman bureaucrats who perceived the local population as “backward” and “uncivilized.” Insofar as it translated perceived local difference into governmental institutions and practices, this form of governance was more than just a “regime of exceptions,” as Eugene Rogan has suggested in the case of Ottoman Transjordan.¹⁴⁸ It was, in fact, a regime that displayed important elements of colonial rule, but did not draw and maintain clear boundaries between

Last Emirate of Abdullmuttalib and the British (1880–1882),” *Muslim World* 95 (2005), 1–22.

¹⁴⁷ Buzpınar, “The Hijaz,” 101–104.

¹⁴⁸ Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 214.

colonizers and colonized and between metropole and colony. It was a regime that also prominently featured practices of provincial governance as they had existed in different parts of the Ottoman Empire before the *Tanzîmât*. In particular, by adopting a “policy of bargaining, cooptation, limited military pressure and of playing the various tribes off each other,” Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers, to an important degree, practiced the kind of minimalist governance that had characterized Ottoman imperial rule for many centuries up until the 1840s, when the central government succeeded in establishing a more intrusive presence in the more tightly controlled parts of the empire’s European, Anatolian, and Arab provinces. In this respect, Yemen closely resembled other borderlands of the Ottoman Empire, such as northern Albania.¹⁴⁹ These similarities transcend the Ottoman context. Like Ottoman rule in Yemen, European colonial rule in Africa during the same period relied on the ability of the Europeans to defeat and intimidate local opponents through the concentration of military force and on a similarly minimalist form of governance that placed a strong emphasis on the co-optation of indigenous elites.¹⁵⁰

We may note yet another parallel between Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia and that of the British and the French in parts of Africa: as we have seen, by the late 1870s, Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa’s confidence that within a short period of time even some of the more intrusive features of *Tanzîmât* governance could be instituted in Yemen had given way to a strong awareness among policy makers in Istanbul and Şan‘ā’ of the limits of Ottoman power. They came to insist that because of their “backwardness” the locals had to be governed according to their customs and dispositions. The claim that a culturally inferior people could, nevertheless, be mastered through the use of knowledge about their ways can also be read as a compensatory strategy that helped Ottoman officials come to terms with the discrepancy between the ideology of a civilizing mission and the realities on the ground. In

¹⁴⁹ See Maurus Reinkowski, “Double Struggle, no Income: Ottoman Borderlands in Northern Albania,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (2003), 246–47; this quote: 253.

¹⁵⁰ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 157; see also Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History,” *AHR* 99 (1994), 1529: “Colonial rule [in Africa] was empire on the cheap, creating a patchwork of economic exploitation rather than systematic transformation, ruling through an often ossified system of ‘tribal’ authority rather than trying to create the docile individual subjects of supposedly modern governmentality.”

this respect, too, Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers resembled their British and French counterparts in Africa.¹⁵¹ Over the following two decades the contours of this regime were further elaborated, primarily through the Ottoman state's conflict with the Zaydi *imāms* and various European powers.

¹⁵¹ Cooper, "Conflict and Connection," 1531: "Imperial conquerors began by thinking they could remake African society and rationalize the exploitation of the continent; by World War I, they were largely frustrated in such endeavors and began to make—through policies of 'indirect rule' and 'association'—their failures sound like a policy of conserving African society and culture..."

CHAPTER FIVE

STRUGGLING FOR A RIGHTEOUS ORDER: THE RISE OF THE ZAYDĪ *IMĀMS* AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF DIFFERENCE, 1890–1908

Throughout the 1870s and 1880s Zaydī *imāms* were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to expand their power beyond the unoccupied parts of the Yemeni highlands. However, pressure on the Ottoman position in Yemen increased considerably when, in 1891–92, 1898–99, 1904–7, and 1910–11, Imām al-Manṣūr and his son and successor Yaḥyā succeeded in carrying their insurgencies deep into the Province of Yemen. It was during the period from 1891 to 1911 that Yemen became one of the most notorious trouble spots of the Ottoman Empire: counter insurgency operations became larger and longer (and hence, an even bigger drain on the empire’s human and financial resources), but remained inconclusive. For an increasing number of soldiers conscripted from the Provinces of Ankara, Trabzon, or Syria, Yemen became a place of no return. As the political stature of the Zaydī *imāms* grew, so did the central government’s concern that their claim to the caliphate posed a serious threat to this crucial element of the sultan’s legitimacy. During the same period, robust colonial expansion of the British, French, and Italians along the Red Sea coast, the Horn of Africa, and the Persian Gulf made the Ottomans in Yemen even more vulnerable.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which categories of knowledge and Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen changed during the roughly two decades from the early 1890s to the beginning of the Second Constitutional Period (1908–18) as a result of these new political realities. I argue that the 1891–92 uprising marks the beginning of a new period in the history of Ottoman Yemen. More specifically, I show that the unprecedented degree of local opposition not only led to major government efforts to explore the causes of the uprising, but also forced senior bureaucrats in Istanbul and Ṣan‘ā’ to revisit the question of what it meant to govern the local people according to their “customs and dispositions” and how incorporation and differentiation should be balanced in this connection. As the government’s

competition with the *imāms* over the loyalty of the local people intensified, senior bureaucrats and military officers raised serious doubts about the politics of difference as it had been elaborated since the late 1870s and sought to refashion it in ways that the inhabitants of Ottoman Yemen could accept as righteous Muslim rule. It was in this context that Governor-General Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa banned, from 1898, the production and sale of alcohol throughout the province, required officials to adopt the dress code of local *‘ulamā’*, and reorganized the *tevzī* system that had left provincial revenue collection largely in the hands of local *shaykhs*. At the same time, increasing opposition under the leadership of the *imāms* helped establish sectarian affiliation as the principal category through which soldiers and administrators tried to explain people’s political actions and loyalties. The near collapse of Ottoman rule in 1904–5 prompted policy makers in Istanbul and Şan‘ā’ to rethink their notion of the customs and dispositions of the local people in ways that would include the idea of a Zaydī community leader.

The 1891–92 Uprising

Imām al-Hādī Sharaf al-Dīn b. Muḥammad died in early June 1890. In the course of that summer, Sayyid Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn, a Şan‘ānī *‘ālim*, left the provincial capital of Ottoman Yemen and succeeded in winning broad recognition as successor to Imām al-Hādī in the region of Şa‘da. The new *imām* adopted the name al-Manşūr bi’llāh (lit., ‘victorious through God’), and took over the rudimentary state structures created by his predecessor, including his treasury.¹ Al-Manşūr then began to systematically mobilize the tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl and their leaders in Upper Yemen, as well as prominent elite figures of Lower Yemen for a large-scale uprising against the Ottomans: in numerous letters to these local elites he announced his accession to the imamate and summoned them to join him in what he framed as the righteous struggle (*jihād*) against the oppression (*ẓulm* or, in Ottoman Turkish, *ẓulüm*) of Ottoman rule.² It seems that the new *imām*

¹ See Vincent Steven Wilhite, “Guerilla War, Counterinsurgency, and State Formation in Ottoman Yemen,” Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2003, 243–45.

² The Ottoman provincial government of Yemen intercepted some of these letters; among the addressees were ‘Abdulwāhid b. Muḥammad, the *shaykhu l-mashāyikh* of Ibb, and Nu‘mān b. Muqbil, one of the most prominent elite figures in the Ḥujjariya

was supported in his efforts by many *sāda* and *qāḍīs*. These urged local villagers during Friday prayers to join al-Manṣūr's *jihād* and mediated between various tribal groups in order to overcome inter-tribal conflicts that stood in the way of a broader anti-Ottoman coalition.³ The Ottoman provincial government tried to frustrate al-Manṣūr's efforts by disbursing generous stipends to a large number of Ḥāshid chiefs, but in vain. By late May and early June 1891, when fighting broke out between supporters of the *imām* and Ottoman military forces around 'Amrān, near the unoccupied part of highland Yemen, al-Manṣūr had succeeded in forging alliances with prominent *shaykhs* of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, such as Nāṣir Mabkhūt al-Aḥmar, Aḥmad Ḥubaysh, Naqīb Nājī 'Abdullāh Juzaylān, and Nājī Abū Ra's. In so doing, he had established himself as the paramount leader throughout the region that was not under Ottoman occupation.⁴

What first appeared as a local uprising similar to those that had occurred in the very same part of the Province of Yemen in the early 1880s, soon took on an unprecedented dimension: within four weeks, rebel forces overran the Ottoman garrisons north and west of Ṣan'ā' or forced them to retreat. By mid-July, supporters of Imām al-Manṣūr controlled the Jabal Ḥarāz region between the coast and the provincial capital, as well as most of the districts between Ṣan'ā' and the British sphere of influence in the south. Ṣan'ā' itself came under siege. Many people throughout Jabal Ḥarāz and Upper Yemen joined the rebellion and turned against the local allies of the Ottomans. To the east of Manākha, for instance, the tribes of al-Ḥayma took the local judge, Qāḍī 'Abdulraḥmān b. Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Mujāhid, prisoner, conquered the fortress of al-Manṣūra, and sent the captured Ottoman garrison, as well as their arms and provisions to the *imām*. Hearing about the siege of Ṣan'ā', many inhabitants of Yarīm and Dhamār rejoiced at what they saw as a sure sign that the collapse of Ottoman rule and hence the domination of their own *shaykhs* were imminent. In a desperate attempt to preserve their positions of power, these local

region south of Ta'izz; see BOA./Y.EE. 65–11, doc. 4, undated letter of al-Manṣūr to Nu'mān b. Muqbil; *ibid.*, doc. 5, undated letter of al-Manṣūr to 'Abdulwāhid b. Muḥammad.

³ Wilhite, "Guerilla War," 251–52, 254–57.

⁴ Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 220; Wilhite, "Guerilla War," 265–66.

elites then declared their allegiance to al-Manṣūr.⁵ Unable to quell the rebellion with the military forces present in Yemen, the imperial government was constrained to dispatch massive reinforcements under the command of Field Marshal Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa to southwest Arabia. Having fought their way through Jabal Ḥarāz, Feyzī Paşa's expeditionary corps relieved the defenders of Ṣan'ā' in October 1891. They then moved on to counterattack the rebels in the southern districts and areas north of Ṣan'ā'. The government declared martial law over the area affected by the uprising in an attempt to strike as effectively as possible against remaining pockets of rebellion and thus to regain control over this part of the province.⁶ Walter B. Harris, a correspondent for the *Times* of London who happened to travel through Ottoman Yemen during the last few weeks of the uprising, described the counter-insurgency measures taken by Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa as follows:

Proclaiming military law, which in this case meant almost no law, throughout the country, the new Governor-General offered a reward for the head of every rebel brought to him, and turned loose upon the Arabs his Turkish troops to loot and plunder their villages... There is no nation in the world that can put down a rebellion as the Turks can... Yet, in spite of the fact that his relations with Ahmed Feizi Pasha were a little strained, he [sc. the author] cannot but testify to his admirable activity and soldier-like bearing—an admiration dimmed only by the cruelty, almost necessary of some of his commands. Thus it will be seen that, from the day Ahmed Feizi Pasha took over the governor-generalship of the Yemen, the tide of events had completely changed. A series of Arab victories had ended in a series of Arab defeats.⁷

⁵ This is suggested by the chronicler 'Alī 'Abdullāh al-Iryānī; see idem, *Sīrat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Yahyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn*, ed., Muḥammad 'Īsā Ṣāliḥiyya (Amman: Dār al-Bashīr, 1996), vol. 1, 285, 305.

⁶ See BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 1, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-evvel 1307/8 November 1891.

⁷ Harris, *Journey through the Yemen*, 111–12. To be sure, Harris's portrayal of the *vālī's* counter-insurgency operations was certainly informed by the anti-Ottoman bias that was widespread in the British public of the time, particularly as a result of the "Bulgarian massacres" of 1877; this bias often found expression in the cliché of the "terrible Turk." It is interesting to note, however, that his perspective is supported by official Ottoman correspondence. For instance, when, in 1903, an uprising in the sub-province of 'Asīr quickly threw Ottoman military forces on the defensive, the author of a memorandum urged the government to put Feyzī in charge of the operations against the rebels. No one, he claimed, could deal with insurgents as effectively as the former governor-general. In support of his point, the official stated that throughout Yemen people would scare naughty children with the words: "Feyzī is coming!" See BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 48–64, doc. 1, [signature illegible] to the Palace, 6 Teşrin-i evvel 1319/19 October 1903, 2.

Moreover, by the summer of 1892 the provincial government in Şan‘ā’ had arrested some fifty-seven alleged supporters of the uprising. They were subsequently exiled to the Aegean island of Rhodes, where they remained until after 1908, when the new constitutional regime in Istanbul released them. Only by mid-1892 had the government re-established a measure of control over those areas that had been affected by the rebellion.⁸

The reasons for the uprising and the objectives of those involved are complex. In several letters to the imperial government and local leaders, al-Manşūr represented the attack on Ottoman military forces as a righteous struggle against oppressive rule (*khurūj*). A key element in this connection was the *imām*’s claim that the representatives of the imperial government (usually referred to as *ma’mūrūn*) should be considered unbelievers (*kuffār*), on the grounds that they had violated crucial aspects of the notion of righteous order embodied in the term *sharī‘a*; and therefore needed to be fought. In so doing, al-Manşūr employed the idiom that the “charismatic” Zaydī *imāms* had used to establish their claim to legitimate rule before the creation of a dynastic state under the later Qāsimīs in the second half of the seventeenth century. Even though they used the language of the “classical” Zaydī imamate, both al-Manşūr and—from 1904—Yaḥyā sought to restore a dynastic state (*dawla*) not unlike the one that the Qāsimīs had created. However, both *imāms* related their bid for power with a territorial concept of Yemen, and, in so doing, differed considerably from the ways in which earlier Zaydī *imāms*, and especially the Qāsimī rulers, had portrayed themselves.⁹

Like their Qāsimī predecessors, both al-Manşūr and Yaḥyā led minimalist states that were limited in terms of their reach and objectives: “manifestly implementing *sharī‘ah* law, which was vital to their legitimacy as Muslim rulers; collecting taxes; maintaining and expanding their domains; and fending off internal and external rivals.”¹⁰ As had been the case during the eighteenth century, state governance was

⁸ See, for instance, Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 220–21.

⁹ Dresch, *History of Modern Yemen*, 6–7; see also Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 7.

¹⁰ See Shelagh Weir, *A Tribal Order*, 234–35.

...small-scale and personalized. Their “governments” or *dīwāns*, based in their highland fortresses or palaces, comprised a coterie of *sayyid* and *qāḍī* officials, supported by secretaries and storekeepers, who had charge of judicial, military, and fiscal matters, religious endowments (*waqf*), and “tribal affairs.” And a similar, smaller contingent, headed by a governor (*‘āmil*), was based in each province and in major towns and ports.¹¹

Imamic governmental practices during this period are particularly well documented for Jabal Rāziḥ, a region located between Ṣa‘da and the northern Tihāma. Once they had obtained the allegiance of the people of Rāziḥ, the *imāms* sought to secure control over the region by taking hostages from each of the local tribes and by sending a small number of governors and judges as their official representatives. Moreover, they claimed half of the *zakāt* that local *shaykhs* collected from their tribes for the two ruling families of Rāziḥ, Āl Muṭahhar and Āl al-Sharafī. Other than these measures, local governance remained unchanged: *Shaykhs* ran their tribes much as before and remained entitled to a specified fraction of the *zakāt*. And it seems that Āl Muṭahhar and Āl al-Sharafī, as well as local *qāḍī* families, were confirmed in their positions and privileges.¹²

The increasing availability of modern breech-loading rifles in the northern highlands from about the second half of the 1880s is one of the factors that helps explain why the two *imāms* and their supporters were able to strike much more forcefully against the Ottomans from the early 1890s than the rebels led by al-Hādī Sharaf al-Dīn b. Muḥammad had in 1880–81.¹³ At the same time, the 1891–92 uprising, and those of 1898–99 and 1904–7, ought not to be seen solely in terms of the *imāms*’ state-building ambitions. For instance, there is evidence that Ottoman attempts to seize the land of one of the most powerful local leaders, Shaykh Nāṣir Mabkhūt al-Aḥmar of Ḥāshid, contributed significantly to sparking open resistance to Ottoman rule in 1891.¹⁴ In addition, various communities in the northern districts

¹¹ Ibid., 235.

¹² Ibid., 258–59.

¹³ As R. J. Gavin has shown, these weapons came into southwest Arabia from across the Red Sea, mainly from the port city of Obokh and later from the nearby French colony of Djibouti, where French merchants established the main entrepôt for the arms trade in the Red Sea region after 1880. It seems that the *imāms* imported firearms primarily through the port of Mīdī in ‘Asīr. See Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 204–5, 215.

¹⁴ See Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 220.

of the Province of Yemen seem to have welcomed the advance of the *imām*'s fighters as an opportunity to take up arms against those Ottoman officials and their local allies who had overtaxed them, apparently on a massive scale. To an important degree, then, these uprisings reflected not only a conflict between the Ottoman central government and its opponents, but also the competition among various local communities and their leaders for access to, and control over, economic resources.

Environmental factors and the region's ecology provide additional explanations for the causes and principal centers of the uprisings. The tribal communities who supported the *imāms* from the beginning, or joined the uprisings at a later stage, all lived in parts of the northern highlands where only rain-fed agriculture was possible. To some extent, in 1891–92, and definitely in 1898–99 and 1904–7, severe drought and the specter of starvation prompted many locals to join the ranks of the *imām* because the fighters received at least daily food rations.¹⁵

Casting Doubt on the Politics of Difference

On being informed about the beginning of hostilities in the northern highlands, the central government almost immediately resorted to an instrument of crisis management that had been common since the early years of the *Tanzīmat*: it decided to dispatch—independently of each other—a number of inspectors to Yemen to explore the causes of the uprising. Moreover, they were instructed to establish contact with the *imām* with a view to convince him to surrender and submit to Ottoman rule. By October 1891, two of these inspectors had started their work “on the ground.” They were Colonel ‘Alī Muthannā al-Ḥusaynī al-Rijāmī, one of the sultan's A.D.C.s (*yāver*) and a native of Ṣan‘ā’, and a certain Muṣṭafā Şevket, whose rank and institutional affiliation within the central government I was unable to ascertain. During the following year, yet another official, Nāmīk Efendi,

¹⁵ For crop failure in connection with the 1891–92 uprising, see Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 220; for drought, crop failure, and famine as factors that helped fill the ranks of the *imām*'s supporters in 1905, see Kopp and Wirth, *Sanaa*, 38: “...les troupes de l'imam se recrutèrent essentiellement parmi de jeunes Yéménites qui n'avaient plus rien à manger; en se mettant au service de l'imam, ils pouvaient au moins compter sur une distribution quotidienne de trois rations alimentaires.”

from the ministry of finance, carried out an extensive inspection tour of the Yemen *vilāyeti*.

Official correspondence related to the dispatch of the envoys does not explain why the government chose to send at least three separate missions to Yemen.¹⁶ It seems obvious, however, that policy makers in the capital were interested in getting as broad a range of information and opinions on the issue of the uprising as possible. Moreover, by having the inspectors also report about each other's work, their superiors clearly sought to retain control over the process of investigation. It is important to note that Gāzī 'Osmān Paşa, one of the sultan's closest advisers at the time, and a war ministry commission both recommended 'Alī Muthannā's appointment as a government envoy because he was "from among the respected notables of Yemen" (*Yemen'in mer'iyü 'l-hāṭır mu'teberānından*) and possessed "local knowledge" (*ma'lūmāt-i mevķ'iye*) that 'Osmān Paşa defined as "being familiar with the customs and dispositions of the Arabs" (*Arabların 'ādāt ve ahlāklarına vuķūfi*).¹⁷ According to the *paşa*, the A.D.C.'s familiarity with local ways was a result of his origin.¹⁸ Here again we come across the notion that local elite figures were particularly capable of influencing the indigenous population in favor of the government. In other words, the government would send an official because, by virtue of his origin, he was especially qualified to establish contacts with local leaders and rebels.

¹⁶ Kruse, "Takfir und Ğihād," 444–45 mentions that the government sent on a separate mission the *mufti* of Ḥamā', Sayyid Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Harīrī al-Rifā'ī. He was instructed to deliver a message from the sultan, demanding the *imām*'s submission to Ottoman rule. Apparently, the *mufti* was chosen as an envoy on the recommendation of one of the sultan's advisers, the Rifā'īya *shaykh* Abū 'l-Hudā al-Şayyādī; see *ibid.*, 444–45n6.

¹⁷ BOA./Y.MTV. 52–16, doc. 2, İbrāhīm Derviş Paşa, Şakir Paşa, and Meḥmed Şakir Paşa to the Palace, 24 Haziran 1307/6 July 1891; *ibid.*, doc. 6, Gāzī 'Osmān Paşa to the war ministry commission, 22 Haziran 1307/4 July 1891. The commission recommended that Colonel 'Alī Muthannā be dispatched as a member of a commission that was to consist entirely of Yemenis. As further members they suggested Captain (*yüzbaşı*) Ḥusayn Bey from the Seventh Imperial Army and two local elite figures, Sharīf Aḥmad and Shaykh 'Abdullāh, who happened to be in the capital at the time; see *ibid.*, doc. 1, İbrāhīm Derviş Paşa, Şakir Paşa, and Meḥmed Şakir Paşa to the Palace, 29 Haziran 1307/11 July 1891. However, it seems that only 'Alī Muthannā was sent to Yemen.

¹⁸ BOA./Y.MTV. 52–16, doc. 6, Gāzī 'Osmān Paşa to the war ministry commission, 22 Haziran 1307/4 July 1891.

As they proceeded with their investigations, the inspectors reported their findings back to the Palace and the grand vizier in the form of memoranda, to which they often attached petitions and letters of complaint from local residents. Neither 'Alī Muthannā nor Nāmīk Efendi succeeded in arranging a meeting with Imām al-Manşūr, though the former was at least able to send home two official messages for the sultan that he had received from the *imām* through an intermediary.¹⁹ While the inspectors did not always specify their informants, it is clear from their reports that for the most part they spoke with members of the local elite: village headmen, '*ulamā*', merchants, civil servants, and military officers. While 'Alī Muthannā appears to have focused almost entirely on the provincial capital, Şan'ā', and its environs, both Muşţafā Şevket and Nāmīk Efendi traveled widely throughout the districts that had been affected by the uprisings.

In their reports and in the letters of complaint that they forwarded to the Palace and the grand vizier, all three inspectors, without exception, assessed the causes of the revolt, casting serious doubt on the validity of the categories of knowledge of local society that had been elaborated since the late 1870s. In so doing, however, they also questioned the politics of difference that were premised on these categories; those which the government had pursued in the Province of Yemen since the governorship of Muşţafā 'Āşım Paşa in the late 1870s. As we have seen in the previous chapter, governors-general like Muşţafā 'Āşım and 'Osmān Nūrī had argued that because *shaykhs*, *sayyids*, and '*ulamā*' commanded immense influence over the indigenous population, securing their cooperation by integrating them into the structures of provincial government was a vital aspect of upholding the Ottoman presence in southwest Arabia.

However, in a report dated 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, Muşţafā Şevket maintained that the co-optation of these local leaders had done virtually nothing to prevent the uprising from spreading through large parts of the province. In each district, he provided a long list of *sāda*, '*ulamā*', and *shaykhs* who had not only failed to ensure that the local population were loyal to the government, but who, worse still, had actively supported the *imām*. Among those he

¹⁹ See BOA./Y.MTV. 60–27, doc. 4, letter bearing the official seal of Imām al-Manşūr, 7 [?] Rebiülâhîr 1309/9 November 1891; *ibid.*, doc. 8, letter bearing the official seal of Imām al-Manşūr, 16 Cemaziyülahîr 1309/17 January 1892.

singled out was Sayyid ‘Abdullāh, the *mūdīr* of the Jabal al-Sharq *nāḥiyesi* in the district of ‘Amrān northwest of Şan‘ā’. Muştafā Şevket accused the *sayyid* of having secured for himself a post as the *imām*’s governor (*‘āmil*) in this part of the province; he insisted that the *sayyid*’s removal from office was imperative.²⁰ The inspector regarded the case of Muqbil Dağhış, a lieutenant (*mülāzim-i evvel*) in the provincial gendarmerie forces (*zabtiye*) and the paramount *shaykh* (*shaykhu ‘l-mashāyikh*) of the *nāḥiye* of Banū Ḥārith and Banū Ḥuşhaysh that commanded the principal access to Şan‘ā’ from the north, as even more serious. According to Muştafā Şevket, the *shaykh* sided with the *imām* and helped secure the village of al-Rawḍa for the rebel forces. As a result, the *imām* had been able to lay siege to Şan‘ā’. Several other gendarmes from Muqbil’s family were also among those local elite figures in this part of the war theatre, and they too transferred their loyalties to al-Manşūr.²¹

Cases of alleged cooperation between local dignitaries and the Zaydī *imām* were neither limited to the rural parts of the province, nor to its smaller sub-centers. The police commissioner (*polis komiseri*) of Şan‘ā’, Sayyid ‘Alī Qāyī’, stood at the very top of Muştafā Şevket’s list of the *imām*’s supporters and sympathizers among local members of Ottoman provincial officialdom. He had apparently kept one of the *imām*’s field commanders informed about conditions inside the city during the siege of Şan‘ā’.²² Another example was the *imām* of the great mosque of the provincial capital—he had joined the rebel forces in the village of al-Rawḍa a few miles north of the city and read the *khuṭba* after Friday prayers in the name of al-Manşūr, thereby openly defying Ottoman sovereignty over Yemen.²³

In his report, the inspector mentions a few tribal leaders who had supported the government forces throughout the uprising and emphasized the preliminary character of his findings. Overall, however, Muştafā Şevket considered the practice of incorporating locals into the apparatus of provincial government a high security risk. More specifically, he claimed that the local members of the province’s administrative

²⁰ BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muştafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

²² *Ibid.*, 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

council were all closet supporters of Imām al-Manşūr and suggested that officers and men of the Şan‘ā’ police force and the gendarmerie, district judges, and members of the provincial administration of religious endowments (*awqāf*) should no longer be recruited locally.²⁴

And yet, it was not only the disloyalty of these Yemeni officials that Muştafā Şevket viewed as one of the principal reasons for the uprising. Very much like Nāmıķ Efendi, he pointed out that, to an important degree, the fiscal system and, more specifically, the modes of tax collection, had alienated large parts of the local population from the government and eventually contributed heavily to sparking the rebellion.²⁵

In a report drawn up in late October 1891, Şevket argued that throughout the province, taxes were collected through local village headmen and *shaykhs* because the indigenous population was still “uncivilized.” As there was no direct link between the government and the individual taxpayer, this mode of tax collection left these intermediaries in a position to oppress the local people. Since taxpayers did not know what they actually owed the government in taxes, village headmen and *shaykhs* were able to demand payment several times per year. As a result, an individual who owed one hundred *ķurūşes* in taxes actually ended up paying three or four times as much. Even worse, since people were generally not given receipts, they had no way of proving their payment to the government, which, in turn, was left to presume that no taxes had been paid; the entire sum usually ended up in the pockets of the collectors. At the same time, the local intermediaries of the government relied on the Ottoman military to force people to pay at gunpoint. The result was a proliferation of armed confrontations and violence throughout the province.²⁶

This rather general and unspecific assessment was followed in October 1892 by a series of more detailed reports that elaborated on the points Muştafā Şevket had made during the previous year by focusing particularly on districts in the eastern Jabal Ħarāz region and on the

²⁴ BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muştafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 1, 3.

²⁵ See BOA./ŞD. 2261–17, doc. 6, Nāmıķ Efendi to the grand vizier, 17 Teşrin-i sani 1308/29 November 1892, 1–2.

²⁶ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 23–34, doc. 2, Muştafā Şevket to the Palace, 18 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/30 October 1891, 1.

areas of Yarīm, Dhamār, Ta‘izz and Ibb. In these reports, the inspector drew the picture of a close cooperation between indigenous elites and Ottoman officials from outside the province—a collaboration that completely disregarded imperial laws and regulations, apparently with the sole objective of extracting as much revenue as possible from local peasant farmers. The essence of Şevket’s argument was that people in this part of the province had rebelled against those local elites who owed their position to the presence of the Ottomans. It was these tax-farmers, *shaykhs*, civil servants, and gendarmerie officers who were the prime targets of the local violence. They were the individuals who often acted in unison with Ottoman officials from outside the province, who tended to staff the higher ranks in both the military and the civil service, typically as regimental commanders or district governors. In his assessment of the causes of the rebellion Muşţafâ Şevket was much more nuanced and thorough than ‘Alī Muthannā. The sultan’s A.D.C. chose to elaborate on the case of only one local official, the former mayor of Şan‘ā, ‘Alī Bilaylı Paşa, whom he accused of having exercised virtually complete control over which tribal leader rose or fell in the government’s favor. Otherwise, ‘Alī Muthannā failed to specify which forms of oppression (*zulüm*) the local people had suffered at the hands of government officials who remained unnamed.²⁷

These forms of oppression are particularly well illustrated by Muşţafâ Şevket’s reports on the areas of Ibb and Ta‘izz, respectively. As in his earlier memorandum, Şevket claimed that exorbitant over-taxation in the range of three- to four-hundred percent was the norm in this part of the province. To realize these levels of revenue, local tax-farmers around Ibb hired groups of up to one hundred fifty mercenaries from the tribes of Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn on a yearly basis. These mercenaries used brute force, including the destruction and looting of peoples’ homes, to extract the projected sum.²⁸ Another form of extortion was related to the practice of selling the posts of the administrators in charge of sub-districts to members of local elites. In order to recover the amount that he had paid for his position, a new *müdü*r would often imprison local residents under the pretext of a fabricated charge and release them only in return for a substantial

²⁷ See BOA./Y.MTV. 60–27, doc. 2, ‘Alī Muthannā to the Palace, 10 Şaban 1309/10 March 1892.

²⁸ BOA./Y.PRK.TKM. 26–34, docs. 3.4–3.6, Muşţafâ Şevket to the Palace, 29 Eylül 1308/11 October 1892, 1.

“fine.”²⁹ In his November 1891 report, Muṣṭafā Şevket had already pointed out that it was common practice among the officers and men of the locally recruited gendarmerie to demand money from headmen or *shaykhs* whenever they were sent to a village for an investigation. As a result, these leaders would then try to recuperate the amount from the villagers.³⁰

While Muṣṭafā Şevket emphasized the high degree to which local members of the provincial administration were actively involved in the extortion of money from the indigenous population, he did not downplay the role that Ottoman officials from outside the province played in this context. Enriching themselves, he argued, was the main reason why some officials wanted to serve in Yemen: “... it is known that... a number of incapable officials heard that in Yemen money grew on trees and, therefore came here...”³¹ For a share in the profit, these officials would usually turn a blind eye on the extortionate practices of local tax-farmers. With reference to the sub-district of Makhādir near Ibb, the inspector reported that the district governor had made sure that any sub-district governor (*mūdīr*) who tried to proceed according to the regulations was quickly transferred—in order not to upset his lucrative cooperation with the tax-farmers.

One of the inspector’s most important observations on the causes of the rebellion was the generally unsuccessful efforts of locals who sought support from the higher levels of provincial administration for their complaints against the tax-collection methods of their local leaders. This was true, in large part, because these senior bureaucrats or military commanders were themselves often implicated in extortion and other illegal practices. Emblematic in this respect were the developments that led the people of Kuhlān in the area of Yarīm south of Şan‘ā’ to support Imām al-Manşūr. In his memorandum from 29 Eylül 1308/11 October 1892, Muṣṭafā Şevket states that the people of Kuhlān voiced their complaints about (unspecified) forms of “oppression” (*zulüm*) they claimed to have suffered at the hands of their paramount *shaykh*, ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥusayn Şalāḥ, to the *kāymaqām* of Yarīm. However,

²⁹ BOA./Y.PRK.TKM. 26–34, docs. 7.1–7.4, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 5 Teşrin-i evvel 1308/17 October 1892, 2.

³⁰ BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 3

³¹ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 23–34, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 18 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/30 October 1891, 1.

neither the *kāymakām* nor the commander of the local garrison, Colonel Muṣṭafā Nāfīz Bey, had done anything to investigate the allegations brought against the *shaykh*. When the locals turned to Aḥmed Rüşdī Paşa, the officer in charge of a column heading south from Şan‘ā’ to fight rebels around Ta‘izz and Ibb, Şalāḥ successfully bribed the *paşa* into ignoring the complaints of the people of Kuhlān. It was only at this stage that the latter approached a field commander of the *imām* for help and indeed received the support of about three hundred fighters. This force was then joined by people from the areas of Yarīm and Dhamār, and together they succeeded in occupying the fortress of Kuhlān. Unable to evict the rebels from the fortress, Muṣṭafā Nāfīz finally obtained their withdrawal in return for a considerable amount of money that Shaykh ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥusayn Şalāḥ had raised “through the use of force” (*şūret-i cebriyede*) from local residents.³²

Thus, the reports by Muṣṭafā Şevket, ‘Alī Muthannā, and Nāmıḳ Efendi suggest nothing less than the complete failure of a crucial element of the politics of difference as it had been elaborated from the late 1870s onward. The idea had been that the “natural” leaders of local society, in their capacity as civil servants, tax collectors, or gendarmerie officers would help make Ottoman rule acceptable to the indigenous population. This, in turn, was meant to be one of the necessary preconditions for eventually introducing those homogenizing institutions and practices of the modern state that would render the politics of difference unnecessary. Ottoman bureaucrats had believed that through the politics of difference, the locals would somehow come to appreciate Ottoman rule to a degree that, at some point, they would no longer object to censuses, cadastral surveys, and conscription. Central to this idea was the assumption that local power figures could be enlisted to reliably play their part in a government scheme, the ultimate objective of which would be the significant reduction of their influence: in other words, by helping to create the conditions “on the ground” that would allow for the introduction of censuses and conscription, they would cooperate in paving the way to institute a form of power that would bring the individual within reach of the state. This form of power would then render the functioning of provincial government far less dependent on the services of *sayyids*, ‘*ulamā*’ or *shaykhs*.

³² BOA./Y.PRK.TKM. 26–34, docs. 3.1–3.3, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 29 Eylül 1308/11 October 1892, 1–2.

The reports of the inspectors, however, clearly showed that these local leaders, with very few exceptions, had not played the role they had been assigned by the government. Instead of making sure that the local population was loyal to the imperial government, they had used their newly-won positions in the Ottoman state apparatus to pursue their personal interests. This often meant that they took advantage of the institutional backing, personal connections, and weaponry provided by the government to enrich themselves. But, in so doing, they had come to be identified with the Ottoman state and thereby increased peoples' aversion to, not acceptance of, Ottoman rule.

The critique of administrative and fiscal practices in the Province of Yemen that Muştafâ Şevket and Nâmîk Efendi formulated was not entirely new. For instance, in a memorandum for the Palace drawn up on the eve of the uprising, in May 1891, a former *kâymağâm* of Mukhâ, Meḥmed Žiyâ', had made very similar observations. He, too, had identified illegal taxation on the part of local *shaykhs* and officials in connection with often excessive violence against the indigenous population as the major reason for the profound alienation of the local people from Ottoman rule. What is interesting about the arguments of the *kâymağâm* and those made by the inspectors in 1891–92 is the way in which they strongly differed from perspectives on local conditions that we see in reports from the late 1880s, written by the governor-general, 'Osmân Nûrî Paşa, and some other senior officials within the provincial government.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, two key officials in the province's fiscal administration at the time, Şükrî Bey and Tevfik Efendi, defended the use of force on the part of the military for tax collection purposes by referring to the cultural inferiority of the local population. More importantly perhaps, in several dispatches throughout 1888 and 1889, 'Osmân Nûrî Paşa had urged the government in Istanbul to dismantle the remaining *nizâmîye* courts, thereby creating the impression that upgrading the *sharî'a* courts was the central issue to make Ottoman rule appear legitimate to the locals. Nowhere in his reports did he refer to the issues raised by Meḥmed Žiyâ' and, later, by inspectors like Muştafâ Şevket or Nâmîk Efendi. Meḥmed Žiyâ', by contrast, presented a completely different picture. Without mentioning the issue of the *sharî'a* courts, he argued that it was state violence and disproportionate taxation that kept the Ottomans from being recognized as legitimate Muslim rulers by the local population. Even before the uprising, Meḥmed Žiyâ' had not been alone in making these

observations. Ironically, before his appointment to the post of Yemen *vālisi*, ‘Osmān Nūrī himself had complained to the Palace about the reckless ways in which many Ottoman officials in Yemen enriched themselves.³³

These points certainly shed light on a very different aspect of the politics of difference as it was elaborated by the Ottomans throughout the 1880s, not least through the initiative of senior officials like ‘Osmān Nūrī. From these reports, we can see that a number of high-ranking officials advocated and defended this particular way of governing “in accordance with the customs and dispositions of the local people” because it brought them material benefit and allowed them to secure substantial additional income. As his earlier comments suggest, ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa was well aware of illegal taxation as a crucial problem of Ottoman rule in Yemen. Yet, as governor-general, he chose not to “tamper” with these practices, arguing instead that the lack of Ottoman legitimacy in Yemen derived from the judicial system. It is not entirely clear whether he did so for personal gain. In his study on Eduard Glaser’s travels in Yemen during ‘Osmān Nūrī’s tenure as governor-general, Walter Dostal suggests, on the basis of the local chroniclers al-Wāsiī and Zabāra, that the *vālī* backed down against the opposition of a number of senior officials who were anxious to preserve their lucrative sources of income.³⁴ In light of Dostal’s observations it would seem that the governor’s judicial reforms reflected a *modus vivendi* that he had arranged with high-ranking officials. Dismantling the *niḡāmīye* courts, then, was a political move that promised to guarantee the governor the backing of his administrators because it did not touch their vested interests. It was also likely to win him government favor because it was relatively easy to implement, and it promised to stabilize Ottoman rule while at the same time saving the imperial treasury substantial expenses.

Thus, both Meḡmed Žiyā’ and the government inspectors recognized that the current administrative and fiscal practices in Yemen served the personal interests of military officers, administrators, and the local allies of the Ottoman government, and they knew these practices were

³³ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 5–62, governor-general of Hijaz, ‘Osmān Nūrī Paşa, to the Palace, 17 Kanun-i sani 1298/29 January 1883, 2.

³⁴ Walter Dostal, *Eduard Glaser—Forschungen im Yemen. Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung in ethnologischer Sicht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), 99.

not conducive to rationalizing the exploitation of the province. Even worse, as the uprising seemed to prove, they put the continuity of Ottoman rule itself at risk. More specifically, their reports not only raised serious doubts about the usefulness of the politics of difference as a method of upholding the Ottoman presence in southwest Arabia, but they also suggested that the central government had failed to create one of the key conditions necessary for the functioning of a rational bureaucratic form of governance, namely, ensuring that its agents put the interests of the government before their own.

This was a problem that was not specific to Yemen; rather it was common to all levels of Ottoman administration throughout the empire during the period under study. From the 1830s on, the central government proved incapable of securing a sufficient and stable financial basis for the enormous expansion of the empire's administrative and military apparatus, as undertaken under the auspices of the *Tanzīmāt*.³⁵ Partly as a result of the government's heavy indebtedness to European financial institutions, irregular pay of civil servants and military personnel was a perennial problem till the end of empire in the aftermath of World War I. "Making a living in a bankrupt bureaucracy" was, therefore, among the most serious issues that Ottoman officials were facing during these decades.³⁶ Moreover, Engin Akarlı suggests, with reference to 'Abdülhamid II, that "...[b]y distributing and withholding his favor and the more powerful positions within the government, he played [senior officials] against one another, thereby keeping their conflicting interests and views in check."³⁷ These politics might explain the high level of job insecurity that contemporary observers often noted in relation to the living conditions of high-level bureaucrats. For instance, a governor-general could never be sure how long he would remain in his current position and—just as important—when and if he would receive a new posting thereafter.³⁸ In these circumstances, Ottoman officials often resorted to "survival strategies"

³⁵ See, for instance, Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 57–58; Zürcher, *Turkey*, 48.

³⁶ Carter Vaughn Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 293.

³⁷ See Engin D. Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire and Its Sultan," in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 275.

³⁸ See, for instance, Harris, *Journey through the Yemen*, 95–96.

like the taking of bribes or illegal taxation in an attempt to secure additional “income.”³⁹

While Meḥmed Žiyā’, ‘Alī Muthannā, Muṣṭafā Şevket, and Nāmıķ Efendi criticized the politics of difference as it had been instituted over the fifteen years prior to the uprising of 1891–92, they maintained the notion that the indigenous population was culturally inferior to, and hence different from, the conquerors. For instance, Meḥmed Žiyā’ represented the locals as hapless victims of their *shaykhs*, just as Ottoman observers had throughout the 1870s and 1880s. In so doing he confirmed one of the most important ways in which, early on, local difference had been framed; namely, the idea that the local people were devoid of individual agency. In one of his dispatches, Nāmıķ Efendi insisted that showing equal justice toward the local people was a crucial part of stabilizing and winning acceptance for Ottoman rule. But in the same sentence, he reaffirmed cultural hierarchies by emphasizing that even “the most savage peoples” (*eñ vaḥşī aķvām*) would not fail to appreciate such an approach on the part of the government.⁴⁰

It is noteworthy that even ‘Alī Muthannā, the Sultan’s Şan‘anī A.D.C., framed his work for the government within the positing of cultural hierarchies. Before his departure for Yemen he assured the war ministry commission that had recommended him for the appointment as an inspector that he felt honored to contribute through his mission to the civilizing of the local people who were still living “in a state of savagery” (*ḥāl-i vaḥsetde*). By arguing that the particular mode of tax collection that he identified as one of the major causes of the uprising had been adopted because the indigenous population was still “uncivilized,” Muṣṭafā Şevket was implying that the rebellion had been due, in part at least, to the cultural inferiority of the locals.⁴¹ At the same time, he viewed local agency in a more nuanced way than, for instance, Meḥmed Žiyā’ or Nāmıķ Efendi did. To be sure, he, too, portrayed the locals as victims of their leaders. But in his report on the uprising around Kuhlān, the local people were represented as rational individuals who sought to escape, through a variety of strategies, the oppression to which they were subjected. Among these, armed resis-

³⁹ Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 293–305; Kasaba, *World Economy*, 58.

⁴⁰ BOA./ŞD. 2261–17, doc. 8, Nāmıķ Efendi to the grand vizier, 23 Şubat 1308/7 March 1893.

⁴¹ BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891.

tance against government forces was the last resort after other options had proved ineffective. Thus, in this case, local violence in support of the *imām* was not portrayed as “eruptive,” or unthinking, or as the result of manipulation on the part of rebel leaders; rather, it was viewed as the result of a rational choice of local actors. Muṣṭafā Şevket’s perspective on local difference did not, however, remain uncontested. As we shall see, high-ranking military commanders like Aḥmed Feyzî Paşa and ‘Abdullāh Paşa who significantly shaped Ottoman politics in Yemen over the following decade until 1905, viewed local difference in much less nuanced terms.

*Debating Change: Controversies over a Reform of
Provincial Government*

Whereas the authors of the above-mentioned reports and memoranda formulated critiques of the politics of difference and the lack of central government control over its administrators in Yemen, their recommendations were very different. It is clear from Muṣṭafā Şevket’s reports that he wanted the government to abandon its strategy of co-opting local leaders by integrating them into branches of government, such as the judiciary, gendarmerie, or the police force. But his argument was not simply about replacing locals in these government agencies with personnel from outside the province in general; rather he called for these institutions to be staffed exclusively with Turks.⁴² The racial dimension of his suggestions was particularly explicit in relation to the selection of district judges for the local *sharī’a* courts. Here, Muṣṭafā Şevket strongly criticized as unsafe the current practice of recruiting most of these judges from among the population of geographical Syria and the Hijaz “...because of their racial affiliation and ethnicity...” (*bunların cinsiyet ve kavmiyet mülāsebesiyle*).⁴³ These lines reflect the concern about the specter of an ethnic Arab nationalism that rendered doubtful the loyalty of Arab government officials in positions of governing other Arabs. Similar concerns resurfaced during the uprising of 1904–7, when many senior bureaucrats were

⁴² BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 1, 3.

⁴³ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 23–34, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 18 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/30 October 1891.

highly skeptical about the reliability of army units from geographical Syria in combating local rebels led by Imām Yaḥyā. Whereas, in the latter case the government appears to have responded by increasing the percentage of troops from the European parts of the empire, it is important to note that the framing of local disloyalty in racial terms was exceptional among senior Ottoman officials throughout the period under study and was, as far as I can see, never translated into a concrete recruitment policy.

By contrast, Meḥmed Žiyā' insisted that although the local people were different, they nevertheless could and must be governed just as the people in more developed parts of the empire were. Just as the appeals court judge, Muḥammad Hilāl Efendi, had in the late 1880s, the former *ḳāymaḳām* recommended further centralization as a remedy. The sacking of all "dishonest" officials should be, he said, accompanied by the removal and exile of all *shaykhs* and the subsequent carrying out of censuses and cadastral surveys to rule out over-taxation once and for all.

Files kept at the Prime Ministry Archives in Istanbul show that the government took into consideration these ideas, as reiterated by Meḥmed Žiyā' in a slightly updated version of his earlier memorandum written during or shortly after the uprising. His recommendations, however, were not incorporated into the comprehensive policy plan for the Province of Yemen that Nāmıḳ Efendi, the governor-general, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, and the four members of a new commission of inspection sent from Istanbul formulated in August 1893. Like Meḥmed Žiyā', the authors of the reform plan argued that in order to avoid illegal taxation in the future it was crucial to end the practice of devolving tax collection to *shaykhs* in the context of the *tevzi'* system. Yet, they were not willing to actually remove these local leaders from Yemen, nor were they ready to recommend the implementation of censuses and cadastral surveys. Instead, they proposed a form of collecting the personal tax (*vergü*) that would bypass the *shaykhs* and rely on the next lower level of indigenous local leaders, the elders (*'uqqāl*), who often acted as headmen of their villages. In the absence of censuses and cadastral surveys, a headman would still be responsible for assessing the tax volume of his village and for apportioning the total amount to its various households. However, in an attempt to achieve greater transparency and thus preclude any manipulation on the part of the *'uqqāl*, the authors of the reform scheme stipulated that a record of the amount owed by each household should be kept by the office

of every district governor and be distributed in print to the villagers prior to the yearly tax-collection season. Moreover, in order to further reduce the likelihood of confrontation between representatives of the government and local residents, officials and the military would not be allowed to enter the villages for tax collection purposes. Rather, every village headman would be required to deposit the collected tax amount in person with the treasurer of his district. In the case of the tithe (*a'ṣār*), the reform plan proposed to end the practice of auctioning off tax-farms that comprised entire sub-districts and districts. Instead, individual *a'ṣār* tax-farms would be limited to the tithe revenues of a single village or, at most, one *'uzla*. Just as importantly, the authors of the reform plan insisted that officials' salaries had to be raised significantly in order to put an end to the extortion of money from the locals and similar irregularities that had contributed to alienating people from Ottoman rule.⁴⁴

The reform plan itself did not provide any explanation of why the more radical solution of introducing a mode of taxation based on censuses and cadastral surveys was not adopted. However, a telegram sent by Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa to the Palace in August 1892 sheds light on possible reasons for this decision. The governor-general argued that there was no question of carrying out censuses and cadastral surveys in Yemen because these measures would only increase local support of the government's opponents. Since the local people were still "uncivilized," it would be easy for "Shī'ī leaders" (*ṣī'ī rū'esāsī*)—in other words, for the Zaydī *imām* and his lieutenants—to incite them against the government by claiming that censuses and cadastral surveys were nothing but innovations (*bida'*) not sanctioned by the *sharī'a*.⁴⁵ Both Feyzī Paşa's telegram and the reform plan authored a year later, therefore, reflect an awareness that the Ottoman government was in competition with the Zaydī *imām* for the loyalty of a significant portion of the local population. Thus, in order to appear legitimate to the "uncivilized," the politics of difference had to be upheld, unchanged. Even though rebel forces had suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the Ottoman military, the *imām* had not been taken prisoner, nor had he surrendered to the government. As he made clear in the letters

⁴⁴ See BOA./Y.PRK.ML. 15–5, reform memorandum concerning the Province of Yemen, 15 Ağustos 1309/27 August 1893, 1–2, 5.

⁴⁵ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 25–24, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the Palace, 24 Ağustos 1308/5 September 1892.

transmitted to 'Ali Muthannā, there was no question of him giving up his opposition to Ottoman rule.

The August 1893 reform plan thus represented a compromise between positions advocated by earlier governors like Muṣṭafā 'Āṣım or 'Osmān Nūrī, and the more radical centralization scheme proposed by Meḥmed Žiyā' in his memorandum. With the earlier advocates of the politics of difference, the authors of the reform plan shared the concern that implementing the whole range of institutions and practices of the *Tanzīmāt* state in Yemen would provoke local opposition to a degree that might jeopardize Ottoman rule. However, like Meḥmed Žiyā', they seemed convinced that a greater measure of centralization was inevitable in order to establish a form of governance that would render Ottoman rule legitimate in the eyes of the indigenous population.

Given the high priority that had been placed on investigating the causes of the uprising, the government was remarkably slow to respond to the reform plan. A year later, in August 1894, when the council of state and the cabinet finally presented their opinions, the suggestions of Nāmīk Efendi, Aḥmed Feyzī, and the members of the commission of inspection received only qualified support. Specifically, while the grand vizier and the other members of the cabinet and the council of state endorsed the key ideas of the reform plan, they refused the request of the authors of the memorandum to make available to the treasury of the Yemen *vilāyeti* the customs revenues of Ḥudayda, which had been allocated to the provincial government of the Hijaz even before 1872. Moreover, they rejected the request for financial assistance from the imperial treasury to help finance the projected pay raises and the additional administrative personnel necessary to create new districts and sub-districts. Any additional funds, they insisted, would have to come out of more efficient tax-collection in Yemen itself.⁴⁶ Their refusal to endorse the financial arrangements that would make possible the projected restructuring of tax-collection and the pay raises for officials in Yemen effectively blocked the plan and took the momentum out of the reform effort. Indeed, in 1899, when a new and much more comprehensive reform scheme was drafted not least on the initiative of the

⁴⁶ BOA./Y.A.RES. 71–47, doc. 2, council of state to the Palace, 7 Ağustos 1310/19 August 1894; BOA./Y.A.RES. 72–29, doc. 2, 1–6, council of state to the Palace, 25 Temmuz 1310/6 August 1894; *ibid.*, 6–7, council of ministers to the Palace, 16 Safer 1316/18 August 1894.

governor-general Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa, no action whatsoever had been taken to put into effect the measures proposed in August 1893.

While Nâmiğ Efendi and Aḥmed Feyzî Paşa seem to have agreed on the direction that long-term reform measures for the province as laid down in the above-mentioned memorandum should take, there is evidence that the government inspector and the governor-general took very different views on how to stabilize Ottoman rule in Yemen in the immediate aftermath of the uprising. In a series of reports sent to the grand vizier in March 1893, Nâmiğ emphasized that upholding justice was central to any attempt on the part of the government to win back the loyalty of the local population. This was all the more important, so the inspector's argument went, because the *imâm* kept denouncing Ottoman rule as oppression (*zulüm*) and stressing the disregard of government officials for the *sharī'a*.⁴⁷ Like Meḥmed Ziyā', Nâmiğ insisted that disciplinary action against officials who had been accused of maladministration of any kind was central to a government-sponsored *sharī'a* politics that were committed to fighting *zulüm* by enforcing justice (*'adālet*). However, Nâmiğ was not content to wait for the report of a commission of inspection that the central government had dispatched to Yemen to look into the professional record of those soldiers and administrators whom Nâmiğ and Muṣtafâ Şevket had accused of breaking the law. Convinced that it was essential to provide more immediate proof of the government's commitment to crack down on administrative abuses, the inspector suggested that all those district governors who were implicated in charges, but whose appointments to their posts in Yemen had not yet been confirmed by the government, be relieved of their positions and ordered back to the capital. We see that Nâmiğ complained, in one of his dispatches, that the governor-general had categorically rejected this idea, insisting on the conclusion of formal investigations.⁴⁸ What was more, Aḥmed Feyzî took a step that Nâmiğ considered even more detrimental to any Ottoman attempt to project a credible image of "just rule" over Yemen. The governor-general imprisoned and exiled some rebel leaders who had surrendered and pledged allegiance to the government.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, BOA./ŞD. 2261-17, doc. 8, Nâmiğ Efendi to the grand vizier, 23 Şubat 1308/7 March 1893; BOA./ŞD. 2261-20, docs. 2-3, Nâmiğ Efendi to the grand vizier, 2 Mart 1309/14 March 1893.

⁴⁸ BOA./ŞD. 2261-17, doc. 15, Nâmiğ Efendi to the grand vizier, 2 Mart 1309/14 March 1893.

In so doing, he had breached the general pardon (*‘afv-i ‘umūmī*) that the sultan had proclaimed in an attempt to regain the support of some of the local elites who had sided with Imām al-Manṣūr during the uprising.⁴⁹

Ultimately, neither the projected changes in the province’s fiscal system, nor the issue of disciplinary action against officials who had been accused of administrative abuses were tackled. There is no evidence that Nāmīk Efendi received any support from the government for his idea to have at least some of the accused district governors recalled as a signal to the locals that the imperial center was serious about dealing in a resolute fashion with administrative malpractices. While a commission of four government inspectors in fact conducted a long investigation of those cases raised by Nāmīk during his mission, it seems that there were no trials or convictions following the report of the inspectors.⁵⁰ Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa opposed Nāmīk’s initiative to have the district governors recalled, and it is clear from several of his memoranda on the political situation in Yemen in the aftermath of the uprising that cracking down on administrative abuses was not one of his political priorities. In his account of the uprising and its aftermath a local chronicler, Qāḍī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Jirāfī, noted that Nāmīk and the governor-general fell out because of the inspector’s insistence on investigating the abuses committed by government officials.⁵¹

Moreover, it appears that although Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa had been among the signatories of the August 1893 reform plan, he took no initiative to make a case for fiscal reform or for the disempowerment of the *shaykhs*/tax-collectors during his remaining term as governor-general. In fact, in a memorandum addressed to the minister of the interior a few weeks earlier, on 20 July 1893, Feyzī had dismissed the idea of shifting the responsibility for collecting taxes from the *shaykhs* to the village headmen as impractical because of the perceived cultural inferiority of the local population. Since the locals were ignorant and uncivilized, he argued, they did not recognize any authority figure

⁴⁹ BOA./ŞD. 2261–20, docs. 2–3, Nāmīk Efendi to the grand vizier, 2 Mart 1309/14 March 1893.

⁵⁰ This is suggested, for instance, by the anonymous author of the *Ḥawliyyāt Yamāniyya*; see Anonymous, *Ḥawliyyāt Yamāniyya*, 524.

⁵¹ See Ḥusayn b. ‘Abdullāh al-‘Amrī, ed., *Ḥawliyyāt al-‘Allāma al-Jirāfī, 1307–1316h./1889–1900* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1992), 104.

other than their *shaykhs*. The only way to implement the projected changes in the mode of tax-collection, the governor-general claimed, was to introduce the new system gradually, at the request of the population in the immediate vicinity of the district capitals.⁵²

Thus, by 1894, the central government and its representatives at the provincial level had not followed up on any of the recommendations of the inspectors that addressed what the latter believed to be the structural causes of the rebellion. The only measures that had been taken to deal with the uprising had been of a repressive nature and directed entirely against those individuals who were suspected of having supported the Zaydī *imām*.

Redefining Sharī'a Politics

The above-mentioned writings of the inspectors, the governor-general, the Yemen reform commission, and Meḥmed Žiyā' reflect not only the controversy over whether, or how, to reconfigure the Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen, but also the various efforts at redefining Ottoman *sharī'a* politics. As I argue in the previous chapter, during the 1880s these had focused primarily on the issue of the best legal forum in which to administer justice in Yemen. Now, there was a discernible and significant shift toward a focus on competing notions of "just" taxation. What the above-mentioned observers shared was a sense that illegal taxation equaled oppression (*zulüm*) and that implementing a fiscal system that would ensure an equitable tax burden was a crucial element of the larger effort to elaborate a form of governance that the indigenous population could accept as a righteous order and, hence, as legitimate Muslim rule. There was, however, considerable disagreement over how this might be achieved. As noted earlier, it was Meḥmed Žiyā' who distanced himself most strongly from the position prevailing in the 1880s, whereby *sharī'a* politics was, to an important degree, also politics of difference. By contrast, in his memorandum he argued the opposite, namely that *sharī'a* politics meant that the politics of difference had to be overcome through further centralization. The compromise solution presented in the August 1893 reform plan retained the idea of a more centralized fiscal system but, implicitly

⁵² BOA./ŞD. 2261-5, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the ministry of the interior, 8 Temmuz 1309/20 July 1893, 13-14.

at least, rejected the notion that the politics of difference could be lifted. The connection between *sharī'a* politics and centralization is also apparent in Nāmı̄k Efendi's insistence on the need to take swift disciplinary action against officials who had been accused of administrative abuses.

It is clear, particularly from Nāmı̄k's reports and Aḥmed Feyzī's August 1892 telegram, that these efforts at redefining Ottoman *sharī'a* politics were made in response to the *sharī'a* politics of Imām al-Manṣūr. The two letters that the *imām* sent to the imperial government through 'Alī Muthannā suggest that al-Manṣūr also conceived of *sharī'a* politics—to an important degree—in terms of “just” taxation. For instance, this is evident in his denunciation of the Ottomans for levying more than the canonical taxes sanctioned by the *sharī'a*.⁵³ The issue of taxation shows quite clearly that it is only at first sight that Ottoman officials and the *imām* conceived of *sharī'a* politics in similar terms (as, for example, the centrality of the idea of *'adālet* vs. *zulūm* suggests). A closer look, however, reveals a very different picture. In the 1880s, Ottoman *sharī'a* politics in the context of judicial reform was not geared to enforcing the *ḥudūd* or abolishing the *mecelle*. Similarly, in regard to their attempts to elaborate a new form of *sharī'a* politics that would strongly focus on “just” taxation, Ottoman officials, at this point, did not suggest that accepting the terms of the *imām* might be an option. For them, *'adālet* did not mean reducing the tax burden to the canonical taxes, but levying taxes exactly as stipulated by the central government.⁵⁴

Sectarianizing the Local

The governor-general sought to shift the focus of the debate on the causes of the 1891–92 uprising away from the structures and practices of Ottoman rule in Yemen; this is suggested by both Aḥmed Feyzī's opposition to Nāmı̄k Efendi's reform plans and the memoranda that he wrote on the results of an inspection tour through the Province of Yemen in the summer of 1893. For the governor-general, the rebellion

⁵³ See BOA./Y.MTV. 60–27, doc. 4, letter bearing the official seal of Imām al-Manṣūr, 7 [?] Rebiūlahir 1309/9 November 1891; *ibid.*, doc. 8, letter bearing the official seal of Imām al-Manṣūr, 16 Cemaziyūlahir 1309/17 January 1892.

⁵⁴ Messick, *Calligraphic State*, 50.

was not related to the forms of governance in this part of the empire, rather, he seemed to view the events of 1891–92 first and foremost as a Zaydī uprising. In other words, he saw sectarian affiliation as the factor that was most influential in shaping the political behavior of the indigenous people. The use of the term “sectarian” for these Ottoman perspectives and politics requires some explanation. In Ussama Makdisi’s work “sectarian” refers to a religiously defined, communal identity and identity politics that were produced in mid-nineteenth century Ottoman Mount Lebanon through the encounter of European colonialism, Ottoman imperial reforms, and local political actions. A crucial dimension of this process was the creation of a new political and social order in which the local people were defined by European diplomats, Ottoman officials, and by themselves first and foremost as members of Muslim, Maronite Christian, and Druze communities.⁵⁵ We will see in this chapter and in chapter 6 that sectarian politics in Mount Lebanon and Yemen differed in several respects. For instance, the inhabitants of Ottoman Yemen embraced sectarian affiliation to a far more limited degree as part of their identity and as a rationale for their politics than the people of Mount Lebanon. In Yemen, sectarian politics was primarily pursued by Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers in order to contain and control the influence of the Zaydī *imāms*. Again in contrast to Mount Lebanon, this politics did not provide a formula for the political order of post-Ottoman Yemen. What the cases of Mount Lebanon and Yemen share and what justifies the use of the term “sectarian” in the context of Yemen is the belief of many Ottoman officials that affiliation with a religious community was something primordial and essential that explained the political loyalties and actions of most locals. Further, in Mount Lebanon and Yemen this perspective was part of a larger vision of the local as “backward” and “uncivilized” and as part of the condition of belonging in a lower rung of a hierarchy of civilizations.

While Aḥmed Feyzī elaborated this perspective more clearly over the following decade, particularly in the context of the uprisings of 1898–99 and 1904–7, his position was already discernible in the above-mentioned reports about his inspection tour. For instance, in a dispatch dated 8 Temmuz 1309/20 July 1893, Feyzī emphasized the importance of government-sponsored road construction with a view to

⁵⁵ See Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, chaps. 1, 8, and epilogue.

facilitating and speeding up the movement of Ottoman military forces throughout the province. Enhancing the province's infrastructure was crucial, he argued, because the risk of a new uprising had still not been eliminated. The *imām* continued to incite the locals against Ottoman rule.⁵⁶ Two weeks earlier he had made a similar point, claiming that "the Zaydī leaders have not changed their minds, they are just defeated..." (*Zeydī ekābiri henüz tahvīl-i efkār etmemiş ve yalnız mağlūb olmuş...*).⁵⁷ To be sure, their numbers had decreased because some had been exiled, while others had been killed in clashes with government forces. Still, the governor-general was particularly concerned about the continuing presence of Zaydī 'ulamā' in districts with a Zaydī population (...*ahālisi Zeydī olan każā'larda...*), the implication being that these scholars sought to win over the locals for the *imām*. Even though the provincial government had made every effort to arrest them, he reckoned that in each of these districts one or two of these scholars were still at large.⁵⁸ Aḥmed Feyzī thus sought to explain the influence of these leaders in sectarian terms; that is, they were able to mobilize the population not merely on account of their social status and influence as 'ulamā', but because they were Zaydī 'ulamā'.

Yet another of Feyzī Paşa's reports from this period adds an interesting aspect to this perspective. In March 1893, he wrote to the Palace asking for government funds to renovate the tombs (*türbeler*) of three prominent saints from the Tihāma, as well as the mosques that were connected to these burial sites.⁵⁹ As enclosures, he forwarded petitions from the keepers of the shrines (*türbedārılar*) that explained in considerable detail the biographies of the saints and the nature of the requested renovation work.⁶⁰ In his report, Feyzī Paşa urged the government to make the required funds available because, in light of the recent political events in Yemen and because the people in this particular part of the province were all Shāfi'is, such a gesture would make

⁵⁶ BOA./ŞD. 2261-5, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the ministry of the interior, 8 Temmuz 1309/20 July 1893, 17-18.

⁵⁷ BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 27-76, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the Palace, 24 Haziran 1309/6 July 1893.

⁵⁸ BOA./ŞD. 2261-5, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the ministry of the interior, 8 Temmuz 1309/20 July 1893, 17.

⁵⁹ BOA./Y.MTV. 75-216, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the Palace, 2 Mart 1309/14 March 1893.

⁶⁰ For the petitions see BOA./Y.MTV. 75-216, docs. 2-4.

an extremely favorable impression on the local population.⁶¹ Thus, the governor-general argued that the central government was well advised to assure itself that the Shāfiʿī population of the *vilāyet*, on account of their sectarian affiliation, were more likely to stand loyal to the sultan than the Zaydīs. Similarly, he maintained that establishing proper government control over the district of Radāʿ in the southeast of the province would not present major difficulties because its population was Shāfiʿī.⁶²

To be sure, Aḥmed Feyzī's perspective was not entirely new. Already in the late 1870s the governor-general of the Yemen *vilāyeti*, Muṣṭafā ʿĀşım Paşa, and, during the 1880s, a few other administrators had considered sectarian affiliation a key category by which to make sense of the political dynamics of the highland regions of Yemen. For instance, in a letter to the grand vizier written in connection with a smaller uprising that had taken place in parts of the *sancağ* of Şanʿā in 1876, Muṣṭafā ʿĀşım had expressed the view that the local population would always tend to side with the Zaydī *imām* (in this case al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin) simply because they were Zaydīs.⁶³ In other words, the fact that a person was Zaydī made him a potential rebel, someone whose loyalty was always in doubt and who therefore needed to be watched carefully by the authorities. At about the same time, the governor-general elaborated on this point in a series of reports to Istanbul about an inspection tour through the *sancağ* of ʿAsīr. While Muṣṭafā ʿĀşım emphasized that the population of ʿAsīr was far more “backward” and “savage” (*vaḥşī*) than the people in highland Yemen or the Tihāma, he argued that establishing Ottoman rule among the former was much easier, mainly because ʿAsīr did not feature what he referred to as “sectarian politics” (*mezheb politikası*).⁶⁴

The notion that sectarian affiliation was something that was, in fact, considered part of an individual's natural disposition was evoked even more explicitly in a memorandum that high-ranking war ministry

⁶¹ BOA./Y.MTV. 75–216, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the Palace, 2 Mart 1309/14 March 1893.

⁶² BOA./ŞD. 2261–5, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa to the ministry of the interior, 8 Temmuz 1309/20 July 1893, 8.

⁶³ See BOA./İrade-Şura-yi Devlet 1680, doc. 2.2, governor-general of Yemen, Muṣṭafā ʿĀşım Paşa, to the grand vizier, 31 Haziran [sic] 1292/13 July 1876, 3.

⁶⁴ See BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 60761, doc. 1, governor-general of Yemen, Muṣṭafā ʿĀşım Paşa, to the grand vizier, 15 Kanun-i evvel 1292/27 December 1876.

officials quoted in a detailed policy review written for the government on the eve of the uprising, in December 1890. As part of a whole range of measures meant to undercut the influence of the Zaydī *imāms* and to form a population that would be loyal to the Ottoman state, the quoted officials had affirmed the importance of "...gradually removing the sect of Zaydism from the minds of children..." (*Zeydilik mezhebiniñ refte refte ezhān-i etfāldan çıkarılması*) in the context of state-sponsored primary education. This was to be accomplished, in part, by hiring teachers from among the Shāfiī population of the Ḥudayda and Ta'izz areas.⁶⁵ These perspectives on sectarian affiliation stood in marked contrast to those that Aḥmed Rāšid had expressed only a few years earlier in his *Tārīh-i Yemen ve Şan'ā'*. As noted in chapter 3, he insisted that the rule of the Zaydī *imāms* had rested on coercion alone.

Muştafā 'Aşım, however, proposed to order provincial space according to the degree of loyalty that the various tribes showed toward the imperial government, and not according to sectarian affiliation. Moreover, throughout the 1880s, Ottoman governors of Yemen, such as 'Osmān Nūrī Paşa, had insisted on the importance of local attachment to the *sharī'a* and the influence of *sayyids*, '*ulamā'*, and *shaykhs* as the central categories of knowledge that would allow the government to secure its domination over the newly-conquered province. Interestingly, in his May 1890 memorandum, Mehmed 'Ziyā' had not mentioned the *imāms* and sectarian affiliation at all.

During the uprising and in its immediate aftermath, even Muştafā Şevket and Nāmıķ Efendi made the point that sectarian affiliation was one of the factors that sparked the rebellion in the first place.⁶⁶ In one of his earliest memoranda, Muştafā Şevket had even argued that Zaydism (*Zeydilik*) was probably the main driving force behind the uprising.⁶⁷ However, as we have seen, in subsequent reports the inspector strongly qualified this assessment by pointing out the very different reasons, motivations, and contingencies that explained why people in different parts of the province at various times chose to support İmām

⁶⁵ BOA./Y.MTV. 46–119, ministry of war, commission of general military inspection to the Palace, 19 Teşrin-i sani 1306/1 December 1890, 7.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, BOA./ŞD. 2261–17, doc. 6, Nāmıķ Efendi to the grand vizier, 17 Teşrin-i sani 1308/29 November 1892, 1–2.

⁶⁷ See BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muştafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 1.

al-Manşūr. Similarly, Nāmıķ Efendi had drawn attention to the fact that Şāfi'īs had also been among the rebels.⁶⁸

It is precisely these nuances and qualifications that were absent from the reports on the causes of anti-Ottoman opposition that Feyzī Paşa wrote in the aftermath of the 1891–92 uprising and in connection with the uprisings of 1898 and 1904–7. While Muştafā Şevket and Nāmıķ had acknowledged that in certain cases the rebels had legitimate reasons to rise against the government's representatives, the governor-general sought to demonstrate that ultimately the uprisings could be explained in terms of the locals' difference and alien ways. This is particularly apparent in a report dated 30 Nisan 1314/12 May 1898, in which Aḥmed Feyzī informed the Palace about the start of an uprising in the district of Ānis, southeast of Şan'ā'. From the very beginning, the governor-general vehemently rejected the idea that both the current and the previous uprising had anything to do with "oppression" on the part of government officials. The *imām* and the Zaydī tribes who had started the fighting, he argued, lived in areas that were not part of the province. This meant that the locals did not pay any taxes to the Ottoman government. Moreover, the letters that the *imām* had sent out to incite the local people to rise said nothing about oppression, but called on them to join the *jihād* against the government. Thus, for Aḥmed Feyzī, the uprising was an expression of the enmity that the Zaydīs had felt "from of old" (*ötedenberü*) against Sunnīs.⁶⁹ Yet, the governor-general also suggested that the leaders of the uprising were pursuing concrete political objectives. The *imām* himself, he wrote, and the several hundred "*sayyids, fuqahā*, and ignorant folk," who constituted his permanent following, were all from Şan'ā' and its immediate environs. Many of them had benefitted from the political conditions that prevailed before the advent of Ottoman rule and were eager to return to the previous status quo. According to Feyzī, however, they also derived immediate material benefit from the hostilities because among Zaydīs, declaring *jihād* was the only legitimate reason to levy the *zakāt*.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ BOA./ŞD. 2261–17, doc. 6, Nāmıķ Efendi to the grand vizier, 17 Teşrin-i sani 1308/29 November 1892, 2.

⁶⁹ BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 137–96, governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, to the Palace, 30 Nisan 1314/12 May 1898.

⁷⁰ Ibid. This claim seems doubtful; as Shelagh Weir has shown, Zaydī *imāms* tried to collect the *zakāt* on a regular basis, not just in connection with a *jihād*; see Weir, *A Tribal Order*, 252.

The notion that opposition to Ottoman rule in the northern highlands was, first and foremost, due to an “ancient” anti-Sunnī sentiment on the part of the Zaydīs featured prominently in a detailed memorandum on the political situation in the province that the commander-in-chief in Yemen, ‘Abdullāh Paşa, prepared for the Palace in May 1902.⁷¹ Only a few weeks earlier, ‘Abdullāh and the governor-general, Hüseyin Hilmî Paşa, had jointly authored a report to the sultan that not only echoed the assessment formulated in Feyzî’s May 1898 memorandum, but also concluded that sectarian opposition to Ottoman rule was an issue that posed a challenge to the legitimacy of the sultan-caliph, and, hence, to Ottoman dynastic rule as a whole.⁷²

It was not only the government’s administrators in Yemen who viewed “Zaydism,” with its rival claim to the caliphate, as the principal driving force of anti-Ottoman opposition. For instance, an undated note from the Palace secretariat (most probably written during or shortly after the 1891–92 uprising) suggests that Sayyid Faḍl Paşa al-‘Alawî, one of the sultan’s principal advisers on Arabian affairs, also shared this perspective on local politics.⁷³ Moreover, it was Abū ‘l-Hudā al-Şayyādî who initiated the *mufî* of Ḥama’s mission to al-Manşūr in the summer of 1891, a mission that was meant to convince the *imām* to submit to Ottoman rule. This mission viewed the uprising primarily as a rebellion against the legitimate caliphal authority of the sultan.⁷⁴ This was also the gist of a memorandum that Abū ‘l-Hudā drew up in Safer 1309/September–October 1891.⁷⁵

There is no doubt that this new tendency to explain the political dynamics of Yemen primarily in sectarian terms was, in large measure, due to the experience of large-scale resistance to Ottoman rule under the leadership of the *imām*. At the same time, however, it was in keeping with a major element of the Hamidian regime’s politics of legitimacy. One of the central elements within the larger effort of the

⁷¹ BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 182–2, commander-in-chief, Seventh Imperial Army, ‘Abdullāh Paşa, to the Palace, 8 Mayıs 1318/21 May 1902, 2–3.

⁷² BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 181–22, governor-general of Yemen, Hüseyin Hilmî Paşa, and commander-in-chief, Seventh Imperial Army, ‘Abdullāh Paşa, to the Palace, 6 Nisan 1318/19 April 1902.

⁷³ BOA./Y.EE. 5–22, undated note [note penciled on verso: 18...[?] 307], Palace, dā’ire-i kitābet [?].

⁷⁴ Kruse, “Takfîr und Ğihād,” 445.

⁷⁵ See BOA./Y.PRK.TKM. 25–39, memorandum by Abū ‘l-Hudā al-Şayyādî, dated Safer 1309/September–October 1891.

Hamidian state to achieve internal cohesion against real and perceived separatist tendencies among the empire's population and the encroachments of the European imperial powers was an attempt to transform the earlier concept of the Ottoman sultan as a Sunnī (i.e., "orthodox") caliph into an imperial ideology with strongly homogenizing, proto-nationalistic tendencies.⁷⁶ And yet, Aḥmed Feyzī's argument that anti-Ottoman resistance was entirely *madhhab*-based did not go unchallenged. In 1904–5, a commission chaired by the minister of the interior, Memdūḥ Paşa, and a memorandum authored by the two division generals, Ferīd Paşa and Şākir Paşa, in 1907 insisted on a more nuanced explanation for the uprisings, which, by the fall of Şan'ā' in April 1905 had brought Ottoman rule in Yemen to the brink of collapse. But even though these bureaucrats identified multiple causes for the rebellions, they did not deny that "sectarian differences" (*mezheb ihtilāfātı*) were among their principal causes. As we shall see in chapter 6, these notions were particularly important in the context of Ottoman politics in Yemen during the Second Constitutional Period.

While Ottoman officials saw the Zaydīs as a major cause for anti-government opposition in the Province of Yemen, they also found governing communities that they identified as Shāfi'īs to be less than straightforward. In the report of his inspection tour of Lower Yemen and the Tihāma, Aḥmed Feyzī noted the extent of resistance that segments of the population in the coastal plain or Jabal Rayma showed toward Ottoman tax collectors. Similarly, until the eve of World War I, bureaucrats in Yemen and in Istanbul devoted many a memorandum to the issue of how to extend government control to the entire Tihāma region. And, several larger uprisings in 'Asīr necessitated the dispatch of substantial military contingents to this part of the province. To many officials, however, resistance in these parts of the province was less threatening because the local people, though they might try to withhold taxes, did not question the claim of 'Abdülḥamīd II to the caliphate and hence the overall legitimacy of Ottoman rule. As a result, political arrangements could be worked out with some of these rebels, while such arrangements were impossible—at this point—with the Zaydī *imām*. From this, we gain a sense of the extreme importance

⁷⁶ See, for instance, Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 108.

that the Hamidian regime attached to their claim that the sultan was the only legitimate caliph.

Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa and the Politics of Difference

By the mid-1890s, several factors had contributed to the central government's choice to leave the politics of difference intact, despite the doubts that the inspectors had raised in the aftermath of the uprising of 1891–92. In arguing to leave the collection of taxes in the hands of the *shaykhs*, Aḥmed Feyzī was insisting on the validity of a central category of knowledge that undergirded the Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen. He thus showed that these leaders were indeed so key to local society, that the government could not afford to alienate them—if it had an interest in retaining control over the province.

There are several reasons why Feyzī may have held on to these notions. For instance, while Muṣṭafā Şevket had shown in his inspection reports that the locals were capable of rising against the Ottoman authorities, even though their leaders were allies of the government, his reports did not present a clear-cut, homogeneous picture, but also included cases that seemed to suggest the opposite. For example, Muṣṭafā Şevket reported that the *shaykh* of Banū Ḥārith, who was also an officer in the local gendarmerie, had sided with the *imām*, apparently because the government had imprisoned him for some time for alleged tax-collection irregularities. More importantly, when defecting to the rebels, he had largely succeeded in convincing the people of his community to do the same.⁷⁷

At the same time, Aḥmed Feyzī might have argued for the preservation of the status quo for a set of very different reasons. As the cases of 'Osmān Nūrī and of his predecessor 'Azīz Paşa in the 1880s suggest, a governor's survival in office often depended to an important degree on his ability to secure the support of other officials within the provincial government. When 'Azīz Paşa moved against illegal tax-collection practices from which his subordinates benefited, they obstructed his work to such a degree that he finally preferred to resign. Similarly, Aḥmed Feyzī may have hesitated to abolish tax collection through the *shaykhs* because he did not want to act against

⁷⁷ See BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 2.

the vested interests of other government officials in Yemen who often shared with the *shaykhs* the benefits of over-taxing the local population. This would also explain why he did not go out of his way to push for more severe and determined disciplinary action against officials who had been accused of illegal tax collection practices. Local leaders were capable of forming alliances with members of the Ottoman administration to protect their own vested interests against reform-minded governors—this is clear from a report that S. Aḥmad, the British vice-consul in Ḥudayda, sent to his immediate superior, the vice-consul in Jidda, in the fall of 1894. Referring to the departing *mutaşarrıf* of Ḥudayda, İbrāhīm Edhem Paşa, he wrote:

...Ibrahim Adham, a Turk arrived here on the 8th September 1893 as Governor of Hodeidah...Some months ago he was not in good terms with a powerful Arab chief, named Surahi Pasha, who is also Chairman of the Municipality of Hodeidah and whom he dismissed for some reason from his post. I have been informed that this circumstance coupled with some rising of the Arabs in the Interior of Yemen, which fact has been ascribed by the Governor-General of Yemen to the mis-administration of Ibrahim Adham caused the removal of him from Hodeidah...He had no supporters in his staff to assist him to carry out any reforms that he intended to introduce. Later on despairing of obtaining any help either from the Governor General of Yemen, or from any other Turkish officials here who were in a body against him and in favour of Surahi Pasha whose money worked wonders, Ibrahim Adham lost his head, and began to do everything in a very high handed manner.⁷⁸

Moreover, there is at least some evidence to suggest that the governor-general acted in this way not only to stay in office, but also because he himself took advantage of the status quo. For instance, on 1 January 1908, a group of merchants, *‘ulamā’*, and *shaykhs* from the *sancaḡ* of Ta‘izz wrote to the Palace, complaining about the fiscal practices of the provincial government, which, from August 1905 was again headed by Field-Marshal Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa. The petitioners claimed that several local leaders, such as the *ḡāymaḡām* of Ḥujjarīya; the *shaykhu l-mashāyikh* of Ibb; his son, *müdü*r of Jibla; and one of his relatives, *müdü*r of Makhādir, regularly shared three-quarters of the tax revenues they collected with the governor-general. Thus, only twenty-five percent of what the local population had to pay actually found its

⁷⁸ TNA (PRO)/FO 195/1847, S. Aḥmad, vice-consul, Ḥudayda to Dr. Abdur Raz-zack, vice-consul, Jidda, 29 October 1894.

way into the state coffers. In the case of the *kāymaqām* of Ḥujjariya, they stated explicitly that, as a local (*yerli*), he bought his post from the *vālī*.⁷⁹

Together this evidence suggests that as *vālī*, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa forged a series of alliances with tax-farmers, local officials, and officials from outside the Province of Yemen for his own benefit *and* in an attempt to uphold Ottoman rule in the empire's southernmost province. For a substantial share in local tax-revenues, elite figures like the above-mentioned mayor of Ḥudayda, Aḥmed Shurā'ī Paşa, or the *shaykhu 'l-mashāyikh* of the Zaydīya district, 'Abdullāh Bawnī Paşa, were expected to ensure the loyalty of their own communities, and also provide the imperial government with auxiliary forces against the Zaydī *imāms* if need be.⁸⁰ Similar alliances seem to have existed under previous governors. However, Feyzī's insistence on the importance of favoring Shāfi'ī communities in the Tihāma through measures like the renovation of saintly tombs suggests that the 1891–92 uprising actually increased the bargaining power even of "Shāfi'ī" elite figures like Shurā'ī Paşa, despite their supposedly "natural" disposition toward Ottoman rule. In other words, local leaders like the mayor of Ḥudayda could demand a higher price for their loyalty. This may be yet another reason that the governor-general did not support the *mutaşarrıf* of Ḥudayda in the confrontation with the mayor mentioned in the British vice-consul's dispatch.

But why did the government in Istanbul endorse the governor's policy? First, it seems that key policy makers in the capital, just as Aḥmed Feyzī himself, were still convinced that local leaders did indeed command a high degree of influence over the local population. The very fact that the sultan launched the school for tribes (*'aşıret mektebi*) project in 1892 testified to the continued belief in the category of the

⁷⁹ BOA./Y.A.HUS. 517–185, memorandum drawn up by various local *shaykhs* and merchants for the Palace, 27 Zilkade 1325/19 Kanun-i evvel 1323/1 January 1908, 1–2, 3.

⁸⁰ On Bawnī Paşa see, for instance, ROY5, 584, Vice-Consul Richardson to Marling, January 13, 1911; for Feyzī's support of Shurā'ī Paşa see ROY5, 493, "Report by Vice-Consul Richardson respecting the Yemen Vilayet, Political, Administrative, and Economic, during the period from November 1, 1905, and June 30, 1906," 22 July 1906; Aḥmad Shurā'ī Paşa organizing auxiliary forces to support Ottoman troops, ROY5, 426, vice-consul, Ḥudayda, G. A. Richardson to Consul Devevy, 20 December 1904; Aḥmad Shurā'ī Paşa acting as an intermediary between the Ottomans and Imām Yahyā's rival, Sayyid Hasan al-Qāsīmī, ROY5, 509, Vice-Consul Richardson to Dr. Hussain, 6 November 1906.

“natural leaders.”⁸¹ The central government sought to recruit the sons of those whom it considered tribal leaders for the student body of the new school, initially from the Arabian Peninsula in general, and later from Yemen in particular.⁸² Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that, in response to Muştafâ Şevket’s advice, steps were taken to discontinue the practice of recruiting members of local elites for the gendarmerie forces or other branches of government in the Province of Yemen. For instance, it is clear from personnel files kept by the central government in Istanbul that members of prominent ‘ulamâ’ and sâda families from Şan‘â’, Yarîm, or Dhamâr continued to serve as *sharîa* court officials or in other local government agencies. These views may have prevailed at the time, in part because of the political influence of the former governor-general, ‘Osmân Nürî, who actually drew up the curriculum for the ‘aşîret mektebi.⁸³

It is also important to note that Aḥmed Feyzî was not just any high-ranking official, but probably the senior administrator with the longest experience of active service in Yemen, beginning with the campaigns of 1871–73, when he served as a major in Aḥmed Muhtâr Paşa’s expeditionary force. Later, he held key positions in provincial government, for instance, that of *mutaşarrîf* of ‘Asîr under Muştafâ ‘Âşım Paşa, and, for two years during the 1880s, that of governor-general. The official provincial yearbook of the Yemen *vilâyeti* for AH 1308/1889–90 claimed that Aḥmed Feyzî “possessed excellent knowledge of local ways and customs and of administrative and military matters...”, a remark that is conspicuously absent from the *sâlnâme*’s short entries on the terms of office of both his predecessors and successors in the post of governor-general.⁸⁴ More importantly, it is possible that the *paşa*’s success in quelling the 1891–92 uprising within a few months gave his judgment and opinion particular weight in government circles in the capital. To be sure, Aḥmed Feyzî was not above self-promotion and clearly did his part to advertise his accomplishments in office. For instance, the provincial yearbook of AH 1314/1895–96 published by the government in Şan‘â’ under the responsibility of the governor-general, featured an eighteen-page account of the suppression of the

⁸¹ See Rogan, “School for Tribes”; Alişan Akpınar, *Osmanlı devletinde Aşîret Mektebi* (Istanbul: Göçebe Yayınları, 1997), 21, 23.

⁸² Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 101.

⁸³ Akpınar, *Aşîret Mektebi*, 20, 20–28.

⁸⁴ *Yemen Sâlnâmesi* 7 (AH 1308 [1890–91]), 84.

uprising and the subsequent years of Feyzî's governorship that praised the *vālî* to an extent that bordered on the panegyric.⁸⁵

Overall, it seems that the central government was willing to endorse the governor-general's policy as long as it ensured the absence of a major uprising against Ottoman rule. This also meant that, as long as Aḥmed Feyzî succeeded in keeping open resistance to a minimum, the Palace appears to have been prepared to turn a blind eye on the illegal taxation practices with which the governor-general and his allies among both officials and local leaders lined their pockets. At one level, this was in keeping with the "minimalist" approach of the Hamidian regime toward governing frontier regions of the empire—an approach that Stephen Duguid and Engin Akarlı have highlighted with reference to some eastern Anatolian provinces and parts of geographical Syria. According to this perspective, both scholars argue, maintaining Ottoman sovereignty had priority over implementing the full range of practices and institutions of the *Tanzîmât* state.⁸⁶ The case of Aḥmed Feyzî, however, indicates something that neither Duguid nor Akarlı have explored, namely, the fact that the bargaining process on which this approach of the Hamidian regime was premised was not restricted to the central government and local elite figures, but also included a governor-general as an actor with an agenda of his own. It seems that his knowledge of the local people and how to "handle" them—validated through his success in suppressing the 1891–92 uprising and his apparent ability to prevent the occurrence of another revolt for six years—put the *vālî* in a bargaining position vis-à-vis the central government that allowed him to amass considerable wealth during his tenure. It is possible that members of the central government were just as torn in their assessment of Aḥmed Feyzî as the British Vice-Consul Richardson, who noted the *paşa*'s penchant toward enriching himself, but who also acknowledged that the *vālî* was the only administrator capable of keeping the *imâm* in check.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Yemen Sâlnâmesi* 9 (AH 1314 [1896–97]), 327–56.

⁸⁶ See Engin D. Akarlı, "Abdülhamîd II's Attempts to Integrate Arabs into the Ottoman System," in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, ed. David Kushner (Jerusalem and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 80–85; Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia," *MES* 9 (1973), 139, 141, 145, 146.

⁸⁷ See, for instance, ROY5, 501, Vice-Consul Richardson to Sir N. O'Connor, 6 September 1906; ROY5, 536–37, ROY5, 526–27, 531, Vice-Consul Richardson, "Report on the Yemen Vilayet, administrative, political and economic, for the period 1st

Emphasizing Incorporation?

It is not entirely clear what exactly prompted the government's decision, first, to relieve Aḥmed Feyzī from his duties as governor-general, and then, to appoint him commander-in-chief of the Sixth Imperial Army with headquarters in Baghdad a few months later. One might argue that the new uprising led by Imām al-Manṣūr during the spring and summer of 1898 convinced policy makers in Istanbul that a profound restructuring of Ottoman governance in Yemen was needed after all to put the imperial presence in southwest Arabia on a firmer basis. Quite clearly, Feyzī's policy of leaving the politics of difference intact while, at the same time, attempting to co-opt or exile those he considered rebel leaders had not prevented the *imām* from assembling a coalition that effectively tied down government forces in Yemen and necessitated the dispatch of substantial reinforcements from other parts of the empire. As during the 1891–92 uprising, fighters of the *imām* attacked Ottoman positions around Manākha and reached the outskirts of Ṣan'ā', where they looted the village of al-Rawḍa.⁸⁸ But this time, the uprising did not spread to Lower Yemen. By October 1898, Ottoman counter-insurgency operations led by the new commander-in-chief in Yemen, 'Abdullāh Paşa, had shifted to the highland region north of Ḥajja. In June 1899, Ottoman military forces won a major victory by capturing the principal rebel strongholds around Shāḥil. Thereafter, the fighting petered out.⁸⁹ It seems that al-Manṣūr's position was far weaker than it had been in 1891–92, perhaps because, since 1897 he had been facing a rebellion of tribes in Jabal Rāziḥ who opposed his attempts to limit their privileges and autonomy.⁹⁰

The new governor-general, Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa, shared the views of both his predecessor and the commander-in-chief in Yemen concerning the central importance of sectarian affiliation, and its role in local politics and society. Yet, in spite of this, his governorship marked perhaps the most determined attempt on the part of the central government to reduce the degree of differentiation in the context of provincial

November 1907 to 30th April 1908," May 10, 1908; Richardson to Sir G. Lowther, October 28, 1908; ROY5, 543, Richardson to Sir G. Lowther, March 1, 1909.

⁸⁸ Kruse, "Takfir und Gihād," 444.

⁸⁹ ROY4, 469–471, Colonel J. G. Ponsonby, British military attaché in Istanbul, to Ambassador Sir Nicholas O'Conor, 3 July 1899.

⁹⁰ See Weir, *A Tribal Order*, 260–62.

governance and thus to emphasize incorporation and to pave the way for greater centralization. While determined to fight the *imām* militarily, the governor-general at the same time sought to act upon many of the recommendations made by Nāmıķ Efendi and the authors of the August 1893 reform plan.

The arrival of the new *vālī* in Yemen with a four-member commission of inspection was clearly meant as a signal to the local population that the government was serious about reform. The orders that the commission received and the measures that Hüseyin Hilmī took during the early months of his governorship suggest that those who authorized his appointment as *vālī* and the dispatch of the inspectors intended to continue where government envoys like Nāmıķ Efendi left off five years earlier.

For instance, in keeping with the recommendations of the August 1893 reform plan, during his first year in office the governor-general took steps to further centralize taxation by transferring responsibility for tax collection from the *shaykhs* who had been in charge of fiscal units ranging in size from five to one hundred villages, to individual village communities: the old system of tax collection, the *vālī* argued, had effectively enabled the *shaykhs* and their accomplices among the Ottoman military and civil officialdom to illegally tax the local population on a massive scale. It was, therefore, one of the principal causes of local hostility to Ottoman rule. He therefore considered the restructuring of the tax collection system as the most effective reform, one that might make Ottoman rule acceptable to the population of the Yemen *vilāyeti*.⁹¹ Moreover, in pointing out that the *shaykhs* had attained their considerable influence only with the support of Ottoman officials, he also challenged the view of his predecessor Aḥmed Feyzī, who had asserted that these men were the natural leaders of the indigenous people.⁹² As Hüseyin Hilmī explained, the provincial administration had recently begun to implement a new system, whereby the inhabitants of every village elected a headman to be responsible for collecting the personal tax (*vergü*) from their community. In the case of the tithe (*a'şār*), tax-farming was retained, albeit in a modified form. Tax-farms were limited to the tithes paid by a single village and were auctioned

⁹¹ BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, doc. 60, governor-general of Yemen, Hüseyin Hilmī Paşa, to the council of state, 8 Eylül 1315/20 September 1899, 1–2.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1–2.

to its inhabitants or to bidders who were not influential enough to abuse their rights.⁹³

Moreover, very much like Nāmık Efendi, the governor-general stressed the importance of taking firm disciplinary action against officials who had committed administrative abuses. For instance, on 20 Haziran 1317/3 July 1901, he reported about the provincial government's continuing efforts to prosecute officials suspected of misconduct (*sū'-i ahlāk*) and corruption (*irtikābāt*). While the *vālī* did not specify what, exactly, he meant by the latter term, it is clear from the report that what he had in mind was primarily the involvement of officials in the extortion of money from the locals.

However, the governor-general and the members of the commission of inspection held that beyond these immediate measures, a more far-reaching restructuring of the province's administration was needed in order to firmly establish Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia. To this effect, they presented a reform plan, which, at its core, proposed the partitioning of the Yemen *vilāyeti* into four provinces, by elevating the existing sub-provinces (*sancaqs*) of 'Asir, Ḥudayda, Ta'izz, and Ṣan'ā' to the status of *vilāyets*. The idea was to create smaller administrative units that would allow for more effective policing of rural areas and, hence, a significantly higher degree of government control over the local population.

It was in relation to these plans that Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī and the members of the commission also called for substantial modifications in the province's judicial system. More specifically, they proposed the partial re-introduction of the *niẓāmīye* courts that had been abolished during the 1880s. What the commission proposed in two memoranda dated 21 Teşrin-i evvel 1314/3 November 1898 was again a compromise—a compromise, however, that would provide for a judiciary much closer

⁹³ Ibid., 2. Indeed, throughout the summer of 1899, local informants reported to the British authorities in Aden about the measures that the governor-general was taking against the *shaykhs*. See ROY4, 472, under-secretary of state for India to under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, 8 November 1899, enclosure: "News received from a Native Agent at Sanaa": "...Sanaa, July 26, 1899. The VALI has proceeded to Damar, Yerim, Ka'taba and other places where he is removing the present Sheikhs and appointing new Sheikhs [presumably the village headmen that Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa mentioned in his correspondence with Istanbul] in their places for the benefit of these regions. The Sheikhs so removed are being brought up to Sanaa. The Commanding Officer and the Turkish soldiers are still at Sanaa...Sanaa, September 17, 1899. The Turks have brought to Sanaa about sixty Sheikhs from the countries of El Hida, Odain, and other places, and put them in prison."

to the standards stipulated in the regulations of 1879. The members of the commission argued that while Yemenis were not yet capable of understanding the Ottoman judicial system in its entirety, people in the urban centers, as well as the *'ulamā'*, had sufficient understanding of the Ottoman penal code to allow the government to set up new *nizāmīye* criminal courts in the centers of the sub-districts, districts, and in the provincial capital itself. Moreover, they believed the authorities should provide for a court of appeals for criminal cases in Şan'ā'.⁹⁴ Civil cases, however, should remain the responsibility of the *sharī'a* courts. The members of the commission were well aware that long delays caused by the fact that all appeals in civil matters had hitherto been referred to the office of the *şeyhü 'l-islām* in Istanbul had resulted in serious public discontent. Therefore, they called for the appointment of an inspector of judges (*müfettiş-i hükâm*) who would decide civil cases of appeal of up to ten thousand *ķurüş* on the provincial level.⁹⁵

It is clear from these documents that the government, again, was forced to make concessions in order to keep the peace in Yemen. In fact, the Ottoman authorities saw themselves in competition with the Zaydī *imām* for legal authority over the Zaydī population of the province. This was stressed by Hüseyin Hilmî Paşa in a memorandum dated 8 Eylül 1315/20 September 1899. The governor-general stated that the measures recommended by the commission were intended to win the government greater popularity among the local people and, thus, to reduce the influence of the *imām*.⁹⁶ To implement these measures, the provincial government and its superiors in Istanbul, however, needed the cooperation of the local *'ulamā'*, who, in turn, demanded a price for their willingness to cooperate. In a memorandum to the grand vizier, leading Şan'ānī *'ulamā'*, among them members of the al-Kibsi, al-'Amrī, and al-Jirāfi families, largely agreed with the ideas of the commission. In contrast to the recommendations of the commission, the *'ulamā'* demanded that the local members of court who were to be appointed from among their ranks be accorded the status of *shuhūd al-ħukm* (officially sanctioned witnesses in court proceedings) and

⁹⁴ BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, doc. 10, governor-general of Yemen, Hüseyin Hilmî Paşa, and reform commission to the grand vizier, 21 Teşrin-i evvel 1314/3 November 1898.

⁹⁵ BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, doc. 11, Hüseyin Hilmî Paşa, and reform commission to the grand vizier, 21 Teşrin-i evvel 1314/3 November 1898.

⁹⁶ BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, doc. 60, Hüseyin Hilmî Paşa to the council of state, 8 Eylül 1315/20 September 1899, 3.

have a voice in the decisions of the court, most notably, they should have the right to disagree with the decisions of the presiding judge.⁹⁷ After discussions between the minister of justice and senior legal officials in Istanbul, it was decided that the Şan'ānī 'ulamā' should be granted these rights.⁹⁸ However, it seems that these judicial reforms, like the larger administrative reorganization of the province, were not implemented.

It is crucial to note that Hüseyn Hilmî presented these measures explicitly as steps to reduce the degree of differentiation in relation to provincial governance. Indeed, in a report prepared in September 1899 for the council of state in Istanbul, the governor-general suggested that moving away from the politics of difference in Yemen in their present form was a realistic goal. As a result of centuries of political fragmentation and conflict, he argued, Yemen was certainly less civilized than any other part of the Arabian Peninsula. Twenty-eight years of Ottoman rule had, therefore, not been sufficient to create the conditions that would allow for the implementation of those governmental structures that could be found in other parts of the empire. Still, the local population, he claimed, was now beginning to understand the effort that the imperial government had made toward civilizing and developing the province. As a result, it would be possible to govern the Province of Yemen—with only minor modifications—along the lines of all the other imperial provinces. While the governor-general did not provide any evidence for the changing attitude of the local people toward Ottoman rule, his statement is important insofar as it suggests that by the late 1890s the existence of politics of difference in Yemen had become a commonly accepted fact among government officials.⁹⁹

However, the political order that the governor-general sought to establish throughout the province differed in more than minor ways from the supposedly empire-wide standards that he invoked in his memorandum. As we have seen, Hüseyn Hilmî neither advocated the carrying out of censuses and cadastral surveys, nor did he propose the

⁹⁷ BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, doc. 9, memorandum of several Şan'ānī 'ulamā', Teşrin-i evvel 1314/October–November 1898, 1.

⁹⁸ BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, docs. 13, minister of justice to the grand vizier, 12 Kanun-i evvel 1314/24 November 1898; *ibid.*, doc. 53, memorandum by the president of the court of cassation, the chief prosecutor at the court of cassation, and the director of criminal affairs, 2 Mayıs 1316/15 May 1900; *ibid.*, doc. 54, ministry of justice to the council of state, 3 Mayıs 1316/16 May 1900.

⁹⁹ BOA./ŞD. 2264–32, doc. 60, governor-general of Yemen, Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa, to the council of state, 8 Eylül 1315/20 September 1898, 1.

introduction of conscription. His position was, therefore, much closer to the more cautious recommendations of the August 1893 reform plan than to the radical centralization scheme that Meḥmed Žiyā' had submitted in the early 1890s. And yet, with his efforts to centralize tax collection and the projected modification of the judicial system that were meant to re-introduce key elements of the *nizāmīye* courts, the *vālī* moved toward abolishing two important elements of the Ottoman politics of difference in southwest Arabia. Not unlike the appeals court judge Muḥammad Hilāl Efendi, who had vehemently opposed the dismantling of the *nizāmīye* courts during the 1880s, Hüseyn Hilmî appears to have considered the politics of difference as something that potentially undermined the civilizing mission of the Ottoman state in Yemen. This is reflected, for instance, in his remark that taking from the *shaykhs* their responsibilities as tax collectors would contribute to reducing the savagery (*vahşet*) of the local population. In the educational section of his July 1901 memorandum, he implied that he was, in fact, resuming the civilizing mission that had been neglected by his predecessors. Reporting about his efforts at expanding state education throughout the province, Hüseyn Hilmî remarked that educating children to become loyal servants of the state was among the urgent issues that needed to be dealt with.

In moving Ottoman governance in Yemen toward greater centralization and hence away from the politics of difference, Hüseyn Hilmî sought to transform the imperial presence into something that the local population could accept as a righteous order and legitimate rule. Again, in his July 1901 memorandum he affirmed that the measures he had taken so far during his term as governor-general were meant to “correct and remove the absurd beliefs that the tribes and people in general, both Zaydīs and Shāfi‘īs, have acquired against the exalted government and to ensure that they enjoy the exalted justice of His Majesty the caliph.”¹⁰⁰ In government correspondence, therefore, the *vālī* framed righteous order in a way that was informed by the concept of “the ruler’s justice” (*‘adālet*). This had been a key element of Ottoman notions of legitimacy at least since the sixteenth century. An

¹⁰⁰ See Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa’s memorandum, 20 Haziran 1317/3 July 1901, in ‘Âtıf Paşa, *Yemen târihi* (Dersa’âdet: Manzûme-i Efkâr, AMal 1326/1910–11), 222: “...zeydi ve şâfi‘î bil-‘umûm kabâ’îl ve ahâliniñ hükümet-i seniye ‘aleyhine ḥâşıl etdikleri zunûn-i bâtileniñ taşhîḥ ve izâlesiyle ma’delet-i seniye-i ḥâzret-i hilâfetpenâhiden müstefid olmalarınıñ te’mîni...”

important aspect of *'adālet* was the ruler's commitment to protecting the peasants of his realm against excessive, illegal taxation on the part of imperial officials in the provinces.¹⁰¹ That is, rule was considered just as long as taxation remained within what the central government chose to define as the "proper limits" (*ḥadd*). This was precisely what Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī attempted to do by reining in government officials and by restructuring the system of tax collection throughout the Province of Yemen.

A closer look at both government correspondence and local chronicles shows that toward the indigenous population this righteous order was also represented in idioms of rule that officials deemed quintessentially "local." For instance, in his account, the Ṣan'ānī chronicler Qāḍī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Jirāfi says that shortly after his arrival in Ṣan'ā, Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī summoned the "*ulamā'* of Ṣan'ā as well as its *sāda*, *a'yān*, and merchants" and assured them that it was "...incumbent upon him to be just and to apply the noble *sharī'a*..."¹⁰² The fact that the government sought to appropriate "local" notions of legitimacy was not lost on al-Jirāfi. He continued,

And he [the governor-general] wrote to the entire country concerning the spread of justice toward the subjects and the application of the Muḥammadan *sharī'a* because he had been ordered to do so; and the reason [was the fact] that they had come to learn that the people of Yemen love nothing but justice and the *sharī'a*.¹⁰³

What did the governor-general and the central government mean by applying the *sharī'a*? In January 1900 the British political resident in Aden notified his superiors in Bombay that during the previous year the Ottoman authorities in Yemen had "...prohibited the people from drinking liquor or wine..." and imprisoned the liquor manufacturers.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, a memorandum from the Palace that probably dates from the period just after Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī's governorship emphasized that, for the purpose of winning over the local people, it was crucial that

¹⁰¹ See Halil İnalçık, "State and Ideology under Sultan Süleyman I," in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalçık (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 71–72.

¹⁰² See al-'Amrī, *Ḥawliyat al-'Allāma al-Jirāfi*, 168.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 169: "Wa-kataba ilā jamī'i 'l-buldāni bi-nashri 'l-'adli fi 'l-ra'iyati wa-iqāmati 'l-sharī'ati 'l-muḥammadiyati, li-annahū ma'mūrun bi-dhālika; wa-'l-sababu annahum 'alimū anna ahla 'l-Yamani lā yuḥibbūna illā 'l-'adla wa-'l-sharī'ata."

¹⁰⁴ ROY5, 345–46, political resident, Aden to secretary to government, political department Bombay, 16 January 1900.

both the governor-general and the *sancağ* governors (*mutaşarrıflar*) behaved “very piously and fatherly” (*gāyet dīndārāne ve pederāne*) during their inspection tours.¹⁰⁵ By the same token, the author of the memorandum noted that lax religious conduct of government officials, such as irregular observance of Friday prayers, made an unfavorable impression on the indigenous population. He therefore recommended the careful selection of appropriate candidates for administrative positions in the Province of Yemen.¹⁰⁶

The idea that the local population in general, and the Zaydīs among them in particular, were extremely strict in their observance of both the legal and ritual aspects of the *sharī'a* can already be found in numerous reports from the 1880s and 1890s. Alcohol consumption on the part of Ottoman officials and their infrequent attendance of Friday prayers, these memoranda argued, contributed significantly to alienating the indigenous people from Ottoman rule.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, in proclamations and letters to representatives of the Ottoman government, several Zaydī *imāms* almost invariably cited specifically the sale and consumption of alcohol as among the reasons they pronounced the *takfīr* (the practice of declaring heretical fellow Muslims) against Ottoman soldiers and administrators in Yemen.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the ban on the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol the government also decided to require all civil administrators

¹⁰⁵ BOA./Y.PRK.BŞK. 74–8, doc. 1, memorandum, Yıldız Sārāy-i Hümāyūnı, başkitābet dā'iresi, no date [note penciled on *ibid.*, verso: “1322.Z.29,” which corresponds to 6 March 1905], 2–3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

¹⁰⁷ See, for instance, BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 74–38, doc. 4, memorandum written by the first secretary of the sultan, Süreyyā Paşa, 23 Temmuz 1307/4 August 1891; BOA./Y.PRK.BŞK. 29–28, Muştafā Şevket Bey to the Palace, 16 Kanun-i sani 1308/28 January 1893; BOA./Y.PRK.UM. 27–96, Province of Yemen, governor-general's office to the Palace, no date [probably AH 1310 (beg. 25 July 1892)].

¹⁰⁸ For instance, in one of his memoranda on the Province of Yemen, Muḥammad Hilāl Efendi stated that Imām al-Hādī Sharaf al-Dīn b. Muḥammad justified his call upon the tribes of Khawlān to rise against the Ottomans with the argument that they were not Muslims because they tolerated the sale of wine in local taverns and did nothing to prevent people from frequenting these places; see Bostan, “Muhammed Hilāl Efendi,” 316. This was one of the tropes of Zaydī anti-Ottoman polemics; for instance, Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, 5, says about Imām Yahyā: “Like his father, he launched a rising in northern Yemen, and all the old calumnies against the Turks from the last time that ‘Turks’ ruled Yemen, in the sixteenth century, were redeployed: that they were corrupt, allowed the drinking of wine, had a taste for small boys, exploited the poor, failed to uphold God's law and, in short, were scarcely Muslims.”

in the Province of Yemen—including the governor-general and his staff—to wear a turban and cloak (*jubba*) instead of fez, frock coat, and European-style trousers while on duty. According to al-Jirāfi, Hüseyn Hilmî ordered this change of attire two weeks after he and the members of the commission of inspection had made their official entry into Şan‘ā’, during which they themselves had worn turbans.¹⁰⁹ A memorandum that the ministry of the interior prepared for the grand vizier specified on what the officials’ new attire had been modeled: “All...civil servants employed in the Province of Yemen are required to wear the form of clothing specific to the ‘ulamā’.”¹¹⁰

While in the early 1880s the government had sought to mark off the locally recruited Hāmīdiye soldiers as “uncivilized” by outfitting them with “native-style” uniforms, the new regulations required officials from outside the province to dress as “locals.” The objective, however, remained the same: in both cases, policy makers in Şan‘ā’ and Istanbul sought acceptance for Ottoman rule by drawing on what they considered knowledge about local ways. More specifically, in donning the attire of the local jurists who were considered the guardians and interpreters of the *sharī‘a*, Ottoman officials sought to appropriate what they perceived as a particularly powerful local symbol of righteous government. In so doing, they hoped to appear as indigenous and hence legitimate rulers. It seems that it was Napoleon Bonaparte’s politics of legitimacy during the French occupation of Egypt between 1798 and 1801 that was in the minds of the bureaucrats who decided to change the dress code for civil servants in the Province of Yemen. The very same memorandum that addressed the importance of government officials appearing as devout Muslims considered Napoleon’s practice of donning a turban “in order to win the hearts of the local people” (*celb-i kûlûb-i ahālî için*) an example that the Ottomans in Yemen should emulate.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ al-‘Amrî, *Hawliyat al-‘Allāma al-Jirāfi*, 167, 169.

¹¹⁰ BOA./Y.A.RES. 117–84, doc. 3, memorandum, ministry of the interior to the grand vizier, no date [forwarded with a note by ministry of the interior Memdüh Paşa, dated 3 Ağustos 1318/16 August 1902], 2: “...Yemen vilâyetinde istihdâm olunan...bîcümle me‘mûrîn-i mülkiye ricâl-i ‘ulemâya mahşûş ziyî-i kıyâfetde bulunacaqdır...”

¹¹¹ BOA./Y.PRK.BŞK. 74–8, doc. 1, memorandum, Yıldız Sarây-i Hümâyûnî, başkitâbet dâ‘iresi, no date [note penciled on *ibid.*, verso: “1322.Z.29,” which corresponds to 6 March 1905], 2–3.

At the same time, however, Ḥüseyin Ḥilmî had no intention of implementing what Zaydî *imāms* had always considered key elements of *sharī'a*-based, and, therefore, righteous government, namely the application of the *ḥudūd* and the restriction of taxation to the levying of the canonical taxes. It is therefore not surprising that the chronicler 'Alî 'Abdullāh al-Iryānî, a supporter of Imām al-Manşūr, would perceive the change of the dress code for civil servants as mere window dressing. He commented on this measure with unveiled sarcasm:

As for the wearing of the turbans [on the part of the officials], the reason lies in the following: the Imām, peace be upon him, wrote to them before and enumerated for them the shameful deeds that they had committed, and among these was the fact that they dressed in the manner of the Christians, and when they heard the [content of the] letter that had arrived from the Imām, they thought that the wearing of the turbans is Islam...¹¹²

Yet, what the government sought to do was rather more complex than merely providing a *sharī'a*-related “cover” for its reforms in Yemen. It was, in fact, a self-conscious attempt to counter the *imām*'s concept of a *sharī'a*-based righteous order, with an Ottoman order that retained “local” elements, but, at the same time, combined them with what Ottoman bureaucrats deemed “civilized” and “modern.” As we have seen, for Ḥüseyin Ḥilmî, upholding the *sharī'a* in judicial matters meant making sure that in the future the *mecelle* would be administered in separate courts without delays and malpractice on the part of court personnel. These perspectives were very close to the notions of *sharī'a* politics that officials like Meḥmed Žiyā' or Nāmîk Efendi had formulated in the early 1890s. Central to these notions was the idea that in order to appear as legitimate Muslim rulers to the local population it was crucial not to “copy” the Zaydî *imāms*, but rather to provide for an administration that would work according to government regulations.

Thus, even though Ḥüseyin Ḥilmî and his superiors in Istanbul sought to dismantle elements of the politics of difference in Yemen,

¹¹² See al-Iryānî, *Sīrat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Hamīd al-Dīn*, vol. 2, 27–28: “...wa-amma libsu 'l-'amā'imi, fa-inna 'l-sababa fi dhālika: anna 'l-imāma—'alayhi 'l-salāmu—kataba ilayhim sābiqan, wa-'addada la-hum al-qabā'iḥa allatī irtakabūhā, wa-min jumlatihā annahum tazayyū bi-ziyyi 'l-naşārā fi libāsihim, fa-ḥīna sami'ū dhālika l-maktūba 'l-wārida mina 'l-imāmi, ḡannū anna libsa 'l-'amā'imi huwa 'l-islāmu...”

they nevertheless felt the need to win acceptance for their reforms by adopting the very approach that earlier advocates of the politics of difference like Muşţafâ ‘Aşım or ‘Osmân Nürî had followed during the 1880s. As discussed in chapter 4, Ottoman judicial reforms after 1880 had incorporated a “local” element of conflict resolution by making *sharī‘a* courts the principal forum of justice. Yet, they retained the *mecelle* and the Ottoman penal code. In so doing, they had created a judiciary that neither replicated the ways in which justice had been administered before the advent of Ottoman rule nor conformed to the system applied in other parts of the empire. This intermediary state was geared, as it were, to “domesticating” rather than eradicating the local, and was a key characteristic of Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen; it was also apparent in the government’s attempt to establish a righteous order that was “local” yet at the same time Ottoman.

It seems that the governor-general’s political initiatives were not very successful. One of Hüseyn Hilmî’s successors as governor-general, Meḥmed Tevfîk [Biren], says in his memoirs that he abolished the new dress code for civil servants shortly after his arrival in 1904 because he did not think that this measure had contributed to making Ottoman rule more acceptable to the local population.¹¹³ He also appears to have reinstated the *shaykhs* deposed by Hüseyn Hilmî.¹¹⁴ More importantly, Hüseyn Hilmî also faced considerable difficulties in his efforts to purge provincial officialdom of those administrators who, in collusion with various *shaykhs*, had systematically overtaxed the local population. Evidence proved difficult to collect, and in June 1902 ‘Abdullāh Paşa, the commander-in-chief of the Seventh Imperial Army, stated in a report for the Palace that only two officials had been arrested.¹¹⁵ It is noteworthy that upon his re-appointment as governor-general in 1905, Aḥmed Feyzî Paşa released the most notorious of them, Maḥmūd Ra’ūf, and appointed him *ḳāymaḳām* of

¹¹³ F. Rezan Hürmen, ed., “Bir devlet adamının” Mehmet Tevfik Beyin (Biren) II. Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke devri hatıraları (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1993), vol. 1, 276.

¹¹⁴ This is suggested by Mevlānzāde Rif‘at, “Yemen hakkında Dāhiliye Nāziri Tal‘at Bey Efendi’ye açık mektüb,” *Yeñi Taşvîr-i Efkâr* 501 (13 Safer 1329/13 Şubat 1911/13 February 1911), 1–3.

¹¹⁵ See BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 182–99, commander-in-chief of the Seventh Imperial Army, ‘Abdullāh Paşa, to the Palace, 12 Haziran 1318/25 June 1902.

Kawkabān.¹¹⁶ Moreover, neither Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī's reform plan, nor an alternative scheme that a commission chaired by Meḥmed Memdūh Paşa, the minister of the interior, presented in the fall of 1904, were implemented. In a study that contrasts the different perspectives of turn-of-the-century Ottoman bureaucrats in Istanbul and Yemen on governing the province, Jon Mandaville has suggested that, to a great extent, budgetary constraints explain why that was the case:

In 1899 provincial income on paper reached 35 million [kuruş] while military expenditures topped 25 million. The military figures were real; the income figures were not, since more than 5 million in taxes could not be collected. Since military expenses took precedence, very little money was left for school and other civilian expenses.¹¹⁷

It can be argued that this privileging of the military partly reflected a perspective on Ottoman Yemen that accorded absolute priority to the neutralizing of the *imām* as a political force. In his July 1901 memorandum, for instance, Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa had insisted that the more sweeping reforms, such as the administrative restructuring of the Yemen *vilāyeti*, could only be implemented after the political power of the Zaydī *imām* had been destroyed. Opposition to Ottoman rule, he argued, could no longer be contained through administrative measures or diplomacy alone. He therefore recommended a substantial reinforcement of the Ottoman troops in Yemen, a force that could carry out a final, decisive military operation against the *imām* and his supporters.¹¹⁸

The government in Istanbul, however, opted for persuasion, not for a military strike. It dispatched a delegation led by the son of Abū 'l-Hudā al-Şayyādī to convince Imām al-Manşūr to submit to Ottoman rule and recognize 'Abdülḥamīd II as caliph. Thus, the governor-general and others in government circles in the capital shared the view that a rival claimant to the caliphate who could count on the support of thousands of well-armed followers constituted such a serious threat

¹¹⁶ See ROY5, 492, "Report by Vice-Consul Richardson respecting the Yemen Vilayet, Political, Administrative, and Economic, during the period from November 1, 1905, and June 30, 1906," 22 July 1906.

¹¹⁷ See Jon Mandaville, "Memduh Pasha and Aziz Bey: Ottoman Experience in Yemen," in *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background*, ed. B. R. Pridham (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1984), 29.

¹¹⁸ See Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa's memorandum, 20 Haziran 1317/3 July 1901, in 'Âṭıf Paşa, *Yemen târihi*, 211–28, 211.

to the legitimacy of the Hamidian monarchy that he had to be eliminated—through co-optation if possible, or by force if necessary. Even though the government did not choose a military expedition as its first option, maintaining a large fighting force in Yemen was necessary to give sufficient weight to any attempt to persuade the *imām* to accept Ottoman sovereignty. Yet, maintaining this level of military presence left hardly any funds for the reforms that the *vālī* had envisaged.

The large-scale uprising that began in October 1904 pre-empted any military action that decision makers in Ṣan‘ā’ and Istanbul might have contemplated after the mission to the *imām* had failed. In April 1905 Imām Yaḥyā and his supporters won their most spectacular victory yet by forcing the Ottoman garrison of Ṣan‘ā’ to surrender. The fall of Ṣan‘ā’ and, later in the spring, the loss of Manākha, the most important government stronghold between the provincial capital and the coast, left the central government scrambling for reinforcements and Ottoman rule in Yemen on the brink of collapse.¹¹⁹ In contrast to the approach adopted during the uprising of 1891–92, Ottoman military efforts this time went beyond re-taking the territory conquered by the supporters of the *imām*. In the fall of 1905, after the re-occupation of Ṣan‘ā’, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa set out at the head of an expeditionary force of 10,000 troops to break the *imām*’s influence in the unoccupied part of the northern highlands and to extend direct Ottoman rule over these territories.

It should be noted that one of the reasons the imperial government was so determined to eliminate the challenge posed by the Zaydī *imāms* was the suspicion, held by decision makers in Ṣan‘ā’ and Istanbul, that other imperial powers in the region—most notably Britain and Italy—were supporting the principal leaders of the resistance in an effort to undermine the Ottomans, their main rival in southwest Arabia and the southern Red Sea region. The idea that Britain delivered weapons to the *imām* and his followers during the uprising of 1891–92 was so common that the British vice-consul in Ḥudayda wrote, “... The Turks and the general public attribute the rise of the Arabs to the British Government, who they say has armed them; but strange to say the Rifles found with the Arabs are of Italian make.”¹²⁰ While the Italians indeed

¹¹⁹ See Farah, *Sultan’s Yemen*, 214–24.

¹²⁰ TNA (PRO)/FO 195/1730, British vice-consul, Ḥudayda, Shaykh Ata Muḥammad, to Dr. Abdur Razzack, acting consul Jidda, 20 September 1891.

supported opposition groups in ‘Asīr by supplying them with firearms during the Ottoman–Italian war of 1911–12, there is no evidence that the British government did so before the beginning of World War I.¹²¹ However, especially during 1899–1900, al-Manṣūr and his supporters received weapons from the Sultan of Laḥj, perhaps the most important vassal ruler of the British in the hinterland of Aden.¹²² Moreover, in 1899 and 1906, al-Manṣūr and Yaḥyā sought—unsuccessfully—to obtain British assistance against the Ottomans. Yaḥyā approached the political resident in Aden for financial support and ammunition and his father even offered to accept a British protectorate over parts of Yemen.¹²³

The key event of Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa’s campaign in the fall of 1905 was an abortive two-month siege of the *imām*’s principal stronghold at Shahāra. Unable to defeat Yaḥyā and his supporters militarily and faced with the immense financial strain of maintaining an army of more than 50,000 troops in Yemen, the central government sought to end hostilities through negotiation. By mid-1907, they were prepared to accept most of the *imām*’s demands for the autonomy of the highland regions of the Yemen *vilāyeti*, provided that he agreed to give up his claim to the caliphate. For the imperial government, this point was not negotiable: there is evidence that this insistence and Yaḥyā’s refusal to renounce the title of “Commander of the Faithful” was the crucial issue that prevented the parties from reaching an agreement by 1907 and actually prolonged the fighting. It was only in the fall of 1908, when the new constitutional government in Istanbul made overtures to the *imām*, with a view to initiate yet another round of negotiations, that Yaḥyā agreed to send two envoys to the imperial capital. It seems that this decision was prompted not least by the *imām*’s increasingly precarious position vis-à-vis Sayyid Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Ḍaḥyānī (d. 1924), a rival pretender to the imamate in the northern highlands.

¹²¹ See John Baldry, “Anglo-Italian Rivalry in Yemen and ‘Asīr 1900–1934,” *WI* 17 (1976–77), 160.

¹²² Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 214–15.

¹²³ See ROY4, 476, political resident, Aden, General G. M. Creagh to the secretary to the government of Bombay, December 5, 1899; al-Manṣūr approached General Creagh through the Sultan of Laḥj, see ROY4, 477–78, for an English summary of the letter from the *imām* to Sultan Aḥmad Faḍl b. Muḥsin of Laḥj; for al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā’s overtures to the British, see ROY5, 506–507, copy of a note of an interview by Major-General E. DeBrath, officiating political resident, Aden, with the *imām*’s emissary, Sayyid Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, 2 November 1906.

In initiating negotiations the imperial government recognized that its financial resources and the power equation in Yemen did not allow for the implementation of those measures that were meant to pave the way for the application of the homogenizing practices of the modern state and thus for a far greater emphasis on incorporation. Achieving recognition for the Sunnī caliphate of the sultan, thereby eliminating the *imām* as an alternative focus of legitimacy and authority, therefore clearly took precedence over the lifting of key elements of the politics of difference.

CHAPTER SIX

AN IMPERIAL BORDERLAND AS COLONY? THE DA‘ĀN AGREEMENT AND THE REAFFIRMATION OF COLONIAL OTTOMANISM, 1905–19

In the course of the 1904–7 uprising, policy makers in Istanbul and Ṣan‘ā’ realized that the empire’s human and financial resources were insufficient to eliminate what at the time seemed to be the most serious challenge to Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia—the coalition of forces in the northern highlands led by Imām Yaḥyā. Perhaps more than at any other point during the previous thirty years of Ottoman rule, the power equations were against the imperial government. Objectives that had appeared realistic to some senior bureaucrats during the governorship of Ḥüseyn Ḥilmī Paşa (1898–1902)—reducing the degree of differentiation, for instance, by taking tax collection out of the hands of local *shaykhs*—were now considered well beyond the reach of an indebted and overstretched imperial power. Increasingly, officials recognized not only that the politics of difference was there to stay, but also that it needed to be refashioned in a way that included a Zaydī community leader.

The years between 1905 and 1911 were marked by various initiatives on the part of Sultan ‘Abdülḥamīd II, successive cabinets, members of parliament, and Imām Yaḥyā himself to end the long-standing conflict between the imperial government and this local opposition leader through a negotiated settlement. These attempts, however, were only successfully concluded with the agreement signed by Aḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa, the representative of the Ottoman government, and Imām Yaḥyā at Da‘ān in October 1911—after the end of ‘Abdülḥamīd II’s autocratic rule in July 1908, another uprising led by the *imām* in 1910–11, and in response to the specific political constellation prevailing at the local and imperial levels. Historians of Yemen have interpreted the Da‘ān agreement as Imām Yaḥyā’s first step toward building an independent Yemeni state, a goal that he eventually realized in the years following the withdrawal of the Ottomans from southwest Arabia in the aftermath of World War I.¹

¹ See, for instance, John Baldry, “Imam Yahya and the Yamani Uprising of 1911,” *AION* 42 (1982), 453.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that this agreement, as well as the political struggles, controversies, and alternative schemes that preceded it, also tell us something important about imperial governance in the late Ottoman Empire. More specifically, I argue that the political arrangements laid down in the agreement marked an unprecedented degree of institutionalizing of difference in Ottoman Yemen. Indeed, they constituted a comprehensive and elaborate attempt to create a form of governance for the Province of Yemen that was in accordance with the “nature and dispositions” of the indigenous people, and thus formalized their perceived cultural inferiority. It is my contention that the issue of how to integrate Imām Yaḥyā into the structures of provincial government posed, in a particularly acute form, the problem of how to accommodate local specificity and give local leaders a stake in Ottoman rule, without the imperial government undermining it. The question of how different Yemen could be, became more pressing not only as a result of Ottoman military defeats during the 1904–7 uprising, but also in light of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the independence of Bulgaria (both in 1908), and the emergence of nationalist voices among the empire’s Arab and Albanian populations. These events, along with the end of the Hamidian regime, prompted (and allowed) Ottoman bureaucrats to become bolder and more daring in experimenting with combinations of different administrative approaches. On the one hand, indirect rule through local leaders in different parts of the British Empire seemed to offer a highly attractive model of governing “backward” peoples in remote parts of the Ottoman lands without the extensive cost in funds and human lives that previous attempts at mastering Yemen had caused. On the other hand, the Ottomans’ own experience with local autonomy and indirect rule over the previous one hundred years raised serious doubts as to how suitable this approach was for an empire that faced the combined pressures of European imperial expansion and separatist movements. After all, for the leaders of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Egypt autonomy and the devolution of power had been little more than a thin veil of Ottoman suzerainty over *de facto* independence which, except in the case of Egypt, had eventually evolved into formal independent statehood.

*After 1905: Debating Imperial Governance,
Knowledge Production, and Difference*

In June 1908, junior officers and civil servants who supported the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the principal oppositional movement against the Hamidian regime, orchestrated a mutiny of the Second and Third Imperial Armies in Macedonia, forcing ‘Abdülhamid II to reinstate the constitution of 1876. As Bernard Lewis argues, the protagonists of the coup primarily sought to remove what appeared to them as “...a fumbling and incompetent ruler and replace him by a government better able to maintain and defend the Empire against the dangers that threatened it.”² While ‘Abdülhamid II was initially allowed to continue as a constitutional monarch, he was deposed in favor of his brother Meḫmed Reşad because of ‘Abdülhamid’s alleged support for a counter-coup in April 1909.³ During the months following what some historians have called the “revolution” of 1908, steps were taken to dismantle key elements of the Hamidian regime and to create a new, constitutional order. For instance, the sultan’s network of informants (*jurnalçılar*) was dissolved and purges were carried out within the officers’ corps and the ranks of the central bureaucracy. Finally, throughout the fall of 1908, empire-wide elections for the new Ottoman parliament were held; it met from 17 December 1908.⁴

The end of ‘Abdülhamid’s autocratic rule and the lifting of censorship created unprecedented opportunities for public debate and the expression of ideas both on the floor of the Chamber of Deputies and in a flood of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and monographs published primarily in the imperial capital, but also in major provincial centers like Salonica, Beirut, and Damascus. Very much in keeping with the objectives of the military officers and bureaucrats who had overthrown the Hamidian regime, these debates centered around the issue of how the empire could be put on a more secure footing.

From the beginning of the Second Constitutional Period in 1908 to the eve of World War I, the issue of how to end the violence and

² See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 208–9.

³ For an account of these events see Sina Akşin, *Şeriatçı bir ayaklanma. 31 Mart olayı* (Istanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 1994).

⁴ Prätör, *Der arabische Faktor in der jungtürkischen Politik*, 9–14.

achieve government control over southwest Arabia remained a central concern of political commentators and policy makers in Istanbul and Yemen. This is not surprising given the immense pressure that Ottoman Yemen had put on the empire's strained human and financial resources. In government circles these debates had begun in 1905, prompted no doubt by the severity of the most recent uprising and the seriousness of Ottoman military setbacks, specifically the temporary loss of Şan'ā' in April 1905 and Aḥmed Feyzi's defeat at Shahāra during the fall of the same year. The specter of the empire's disintegration, which seemed more tangible in light of Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria's declaration of independence, and the secession of Crete, rendered attempts at resolving the "Yemen question" more urgent after the summer of 1908. The revolts in the Jabal Ḥawrān and al-Karak regions in 1910 and the first stirrings of an Albanian quest for independence at about the same time no doubt added to this sense of crisis.

In several respects, observers of Ottoman Yemen before and after the restoration of the constitution reached similar conclusions regarding the causes of anti-Ottoman resistance and possible remedies. Before and after July 1908, the authors of articles, commission reports, and memoranda often attributed anti-government violence to widespread maladministration and illegal taxation, or to the support that rebels were believed to have received from rival imperial powers like Britain and Italy. Discussions of ways to strengthen the government's position in Yemen often focused on the need to tighten security, to improve communications and infrastructure, and to render provincial administration more efficient and reliable. For instance, suggestions were made to upgrade the Ottoman naval presence in the southern Red Sea area in order to combat the influx of firearms from Djibouti and Eritrea, as were calls for the construction of a railroad from Şan'ā' to Ḥudayda. Similarly, authors stressed the importance of tackling the issue of administrative abuses, such as bribery and illegal taxation, by making sure that government employees were paid adequate salaries on a regular basis. Here, the overall concern was to expand the presence of the modern Ottoman state in this outlying part of the empire and to ensure its effectiveness.

At the same time, however, the issue of how to restructure Ottoman governance in Yemen also forced those involved in this debate to revisit the issue of difference and knowledge production. Indeed, as I argue in the following section of this chapter, the controversy

about the extent to which British practices of colonial governance and managing “savage” peoples should be applied to Yemen reflected, in part, an attempt by government officials to highlight a growing sense of distance from the local people. Moreover, in the aftermath of the 1904–7 uprising, a key element of the debate about the future of Ottoman Yemen was a renewed emphasis on the importance of “knowing the natives” and the argument that the failure of Ottoman rule could, in large measure, be attributed to a failure of knowledge production. Finally, the struggle to forge a new political order in the empire’s southernmost province was also a struggle over the ordering of local society and the categories according to which this should be done. Ultimately, then, these debates concerned more than just the future of Ottoman Yemen. They related to the place of the Ottoman Empire among other rival imperial powers, the nature and forms of modern governance at the frontiers of the Ottoman state, and finally, about the position of the local people within the larger framework of an Ottoman Empire bracing itself against the encroachments of its European rivals. The debate about Ottoman rule in Yemen and its forms of knowledge also sheds light on the ways in which local elite figures lobbied for specific political agendas. As we shall see, they not only used the language of Ottomanism, but also framed their political interventions as the claim to speak for Yemeni society as it “really was” and fought for a political order that would reflect these “realities.” Of course, this quest for the elaboration of the “local” was complicated, shaped, and circumscribed by concerns about the growing influence of rival imperial powers both in the Red Sea region itself and at the imperial level as a whole; by pressing financial concerns; and by an emphasis on a Sunnī-led trans-sectarian caliphate as a central element of Ottoman legitimacy.

To be sure, the form in which these ideas were presented to the empire’s Ottoman-Turkish reading public differed greatly. While Division General ‘Āṭıf Paşa discussed the imperial record of the Ottomans in southwest Arabia as part of a military and political history of the Yemen *vilāyeti* from 1872 to the uprising of 1904–7, Brigadier Rüşdî Paşa offered his critique of Ottoman rule and his suggestions in various sections of his book *Yemen hâṭırası* [Memoirs of Yemen]. By contrast, Dr. Ḥasan Qadrî, a former physician with the Seventh Imperial Army, chose an anthropological study of the local population to highlight what, in his view, had gone wrong with Ottoman rule in Yemen. Others, like the MPs for Dersim, Siverek, and Şan‘ā’, preferred the more conventional genre of the memorandum. It was, however,

‘Abdülğani Senî [Yurdman] (1871–1951), a graduate of the prestigious Mekteb-i Mülkiye and the head of the Yemen *vâlîsî*’s chancery (*vilâyet mektûbcısı*), who, in 1909–10, offered what may well have been the most in-depth assessment of the Ottoman presence to appear in print during the Second Constitutional Period.⁵ He seems to have published his observations primarily in a series of eleven articles that appeared in the journal *Mülkiye*, and, to a lesser extent, in various sections of his travelogue *Yemen yolında* [En route to Yemen], which was first serialized by the Istanbul-based illustrated weekly *Servet-i Fünûn* and later re-published as a monograph in two volumes.⁶

The vast majority of the authors with which we are concerned here viewed the thirty-five years of Ottoman rule in Yemen as a failure in the sense that the province was an enormous drain on the empire’s human and financial resources and did not produce any surplus in tax revenues. They asked, why local opponents to Ottoman rule—often under the leadership of Zaydî *imâms*—were able to succeed in organizing large-scale uprisings that could only be put down with substantial financial and military efforts on the part of the central government?⁷ How, they wondered, could Ottoman domination of Yemen be stabilized and secured? Some bureaucrats looked toward the European colonial dependencies along the Red Sea and farther afield for answers to their questions.

⁵ See Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 246.

⁶ See ‘Abdülğani Senî, *Yemen yolında* (Istanbul: Maṭba‘a-i Aḥmed İḥsân, AMal 1325/1909–10) and idem, *Yemen yolında: ‘avdet* (Beirut: Vilâyet Maṭba‘ası, AMal 1331/1915–16). According to his own account, ‘Abdülğani published some seventy articles on Ottoman Yemen in various Istanbul-based newspapers and journals; see Mücellitoğlu Ali Çankaya, *Son asır Türk tarihinin önemli olayları ile birlikte yeni Mülkiye tarihi ve mülikieliler* (Ankara: n.p., 1968–71), vol. 3, 774–79. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate all of these writings. In part, this remarkable figure was due to the fact that *Servet-i Fünûn* serialized ‘Abdülğani’s travelogue, *Yemen yolında* [En route to Yemen]. Moreover, it seems that some of the articles that appeared in *Mülkiye* were also published in other periodicals; see Prâtor, *Der arabische Faktor in der jungtürkischen Politik*, 130n37. For a list of ‘Abdülğani’s articles that were published in *Mülkiye*, see Klaus Kreiser, “Abdulğani Senî (1871–1951) comme Observateur de l’Administration Ottomane au Yemen,” *Revue d’Histoire Maghrébine* 31–32 (1983), 318–19; and Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 246n110.

⁷ See, for instance, Rüşdi, *Yemen hâtırasi*, 2–3; Qadri, *Yemen ve ḥayâtı* (Dersa‘adet: Qader Maṭba‘ası, AH 1328/1912–13), 3.

India, Aden, or the Sudan?
The Politics of Adopting and Adapting a Colonial Model

Both Ottoman officials and European travelers who arrived in Ḥudayda during the two decades before World War I usually drew a gloomy picture about the conditions under which soldiers and administrators in the principal port city of the Yemen *vilāyeti* were living and working.⁸ Echoing the disparaging comments Nāmīk Efendi had made about the province's administrative sub-centers in general during his inspection tour in 1891–92, both the *vilāyet mektübçüsü*, 'Abdülganī Senī, and Brigadier Rüşdī Paşa expressed considerable disappointment at the fact that Ḥudayda lacked those public buildings in the Ottoman style, which, in provincial centers from Manastir to Mecca, symbolized the centralizing authority of the imperial center of the *Tanzīmāt*. While in Şan'ā'—or even in smaller garrison towns such as Manākha⁹—travelers like the Italian geographer Renzo Manzoni or the British journalist Walter B. Harris were impressed by the local army barracks, the municipal hospital, or the building that housed the industrial school (*mekteb-i şanāyī*),¹⁰ nothing of that kind could be found in the administrative center of the Ḥudayda *sancağı*.¹¹ Wavell, who visited Ḥudayda in 1910, added to the picture of the two officials, describing both the government *konağ* and the military installations of the city as having been in a deplorable state.¹² The only buildings

⁸ See Klaus Kreiser, "Ali Emiri (1858–1924)—ein türkischer Bürokrat und Intellektueller im Jemen," in *Studies in Oriental Culture and History: Festschrift für Walter Dostal*, ed. André Gingrich, Sylvia Haas, et al., 199–221 (Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 200–2.

⁹ Harris, *Journey through the Yemen*, 336.

¹⁰ For Manzoni's description of Şan'ā' see Bidwell, "Western Accounts," 112.

¹¹ Upon his arrival in Ḥudayda, 'Abdülganī simply could not find anything that resembled an official building and stated flatly that "...Ḥudayda didn't present anything that would catch my eye" (...Ḥudeyde hiçde gözümde yer tutacak bir şey göstermedi); see 'Abdülganī Senī, "Yemen yolında," *Servet-i Fünûn* 1002 (5 Ağustos 1326 [18 August 1910]), 250–52, 251 and idem, "Yemen yolında," *Servet-i Fünûn* 1011 (7 Teşrin-i evvel 1326 [20 October 1910]), 395–96. Rüşdī, in turn complained about the absence of barracks and the unfinished hospital; see Rüşdī, *Yemen hâfırası*, 66–67.

¹² See Wavell, *A Modern Pilgrim*, 210: "We found the government offices...to be another unstable-looking erection, situated a hundred yards or so from the Casino, facing the sea." See also *ibid.*, 216–17: "The only defensive work, beside the overbuilt town wall, is a small fort to the north of the town, so much in need of repair, or rather reconstruction, that when it is necessary to fire a gun for saluting purposes the piece is taken outside for fear that the concussion might cause the whole fort to collapse." In a report dated 31 March 1904, the British vice-consul G. A. Richardson

that visitors like Harris or Wyman Bury found worth mentioning were the houses of the wealthy and their country houses on the outskirts of the town.¹³ In sum, Ḥudayda lacked the architecture that would create the impression of a visible Ottoman imprint on urban space of the kind that is reflected in Harris' description of Manākha. Referring to the small garrison town in the Jabal Ḥarāz region, halfway between Ṣan'ā' and Ḥudayda, he noted, "The Government offices and the military hospital and barracks give the place quite a European appearance, for they are all built in modern Turkish [sic] style with glass windows and flat roofs."¹⁴

It is important to note that as positive examples of well-ordered space in a port city, the two officials did not cite Salonica or Izmir or Beirut, but colonial port cities, such as Port Sudan, Massawa or Aden. In his book, *Yemen hâtırısı*—published in 1909—Rüşdî Paşa remarks that during more than three decades in Ḥudayda, the Ottomans had not accomplished what the Italians in Massawa had done in less than thirteen years: ordering the city and building both barracks for the troops and a railway.¹⁵ In his view, government buildings in Ḥudayda compared unfavorably to those in Aden and Massawa, which were "of a kind that caused amazement" (*naẓar-i ḥayreti mücib olacağ şürettedir*).¹⁶ In fact, even by 1909 Ḥudayda did not have a real harbor at all, but only a half-crumbling pier which—according to 'Abdülğanî—was not worth the money that the Ottoman government had paid a German company for its construction.¹⁷ As a result, ships had to anchor two miles off the coast while men and supplies were ferried to the pier in small boats.¹⁸ For Rüşdî Paşa, Massawa therefore represented a model of a port city with ordered space, a result of government-sponsored construction of official buildings and transportation facilities, all of which could be emulated in Ḥudayda. 'Abdülğanî,

remarked that "[m]ost buildings are in a dilapidated and crumbling condition giving Hodeida the appearance of a bombarded city," see ROY5, xiii, 420; 'Abdülğanî Senî, "Yemen'in ḥayât-i istikbâli," *Mülkiye* 5 (1 Haziran 1325 [14 June 1909]), 4–7; Rüşdî, *Yemen hâtırısı*, 66–67.

¹³ Harris, *Journey through the Yemen*, 369–70; G. Wyman Bury, *Arabia Infelix or the Turks in Yemen* [sic] (London: Macmillan, 1915), 135–36.

¹⁴ Harris, *Journey through the Yemen*, 336.

¹⁵ Rüşdî, *Yemen hâtırısı*, 66–67, 69–70.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁷ See 'Abdülğanî Senî, "Yemen yolında," *Servet-i Fünûn* 1001 (29 Temmuz 1326 [11 August 1910]), 235–36, 236.

¹⁸ Rüşdî, *Yemen hâtırısı*, 66.

however, proposed a more radical solution by referring to the example of Port Sudan, newly created by the authorities of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Because it possessed a natural harbor, he suggested that Jabāna, a village a few kilometers north of Ḥudayda, should be developed into the principal port city of the province and become the terminus of a future railway between Şan‘ā’ and the coast.¹⁹

The way in which the two authors chose their examples was not accidental. Their arguments went beyond demonstrating that the Ottomans had seriously fallen behind their European imperial rivals in the Red Sea region in the development of port cities. For both, the ordering of urban space through government-sponsored construction projects was only one of many examples that demonstrated the superiority of European governance over their colonies—and clearly suggested that, for the Ottomans to successfully govern the Province of Yemen, they should emulate these methods.²⁰ There is evidence that even before the revolution of 1908, elements of British colonial governance were very much on the minds of those decision makers in Şan‘ā’ and the imperial capital who sought to find a solution to the “Yemen question.”²¹ Throughout the reign of ‘Abdülhamid II, Ottoman bureaucrats appear to have been keen observers of the ways in which Britain—and other European powers—governed their colonial dependencies.²² In the

¹⁹ ‘Abdülğani Senî, “Yemen şimendöferiniñ güzergâhı ve te’sirâtı,” *Mülkiye* 11 (1 Kanun-i evvel 1325 [14 December 1909]), 25.

²⁰ See, for instance, Rüşdî, *Yemen hâtırasi*, 69–70.

²¹ For instance, during the late 1880s an Ottoman delegation under the chairmanship of the later governor-general of the Hijaz, Aḥmed Râṭib Paşa, seems to have toured British India not least with the objective of collecting information on British governmental techniques. See TNA (PRO)/FO 195/1847, fols. 123–25, J. K. Ahmad, vice-consul at Jidda, to Sir Philip Currie, British ambassador to Istanbul, 1 July 1894, reporting about the departing governor-general of the Hijaz, Aḥmed Râṭib Paşa, that “[t]his was his first post as Vali although he has been charged with many civil missions at various times;... One of the most important civil and at the same time secret missions with which the ex-Vali has been charged was in the year 1889 (I think) when he was sent by His Imperial Majesty the Sultan to India over a greater part of which he traveled with a view, no doubt, to the collection of information and the compilation of a report on his return to the capital. He traveled with a numerous suite and in great style and was received everywhere including the Viceregal Court with all the respect due to his rank and that lavish hospitality which is so distinguishing a characteristic of Indian high official life. His Indian tour has evidently left an exceedingly pleasant impression on Ahmed Ratib Pasha...”

²² Similarly, in his *Tārîh-i Devlet-i ‘Osmâniye* [History of the Ottoman state] that was published in 1896–97 and meant to be used as a school textbook throughout the empire, ‘Abdurrahmân Şeref gave a detailed account of British governance in India and concluded that Britain was the most successful among the European powers

early 1880s, governors-general Muştafâ 'Âşım Paşa and İsmâ'îl Hakkî Paşa had forms of indirect rule in British India and the Indian Army in mind when they proposed to rule parts of Ottoman Yemen through local leaders and created the 'Asâkir-i Hâmidîye, respectively. However, it is only from the turn of the century that top-level administrators in Yemen and the imperial capital seem to have taken a greater interest in elements of British colonial governance for the purpose of running the empire's southernmost province. In an undated draft memorandum probably drawn up during or after the completion of a stint in Yemen as a member of a commission of inspection in 1906–7, the official 'Alî Emîrî thought the British policy of paying stipends to the protected chiefs in the Aden hinterland partly applicable to Ottoman Yemen.²³ Similarly, in a dispatch to the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, Britain's ambassador to Istanbul, Sir Nicholas O'Conor, noted on 27 June 1907 that the example of British rule in the Aden hinterland had been referred to during a meeting of the

when it came to governing its colonies. See 'Abdurrahmân Şeref, *Târih-i Devlet-i 'Osmâniye* (Istanbul: Karabet Matba'ası, AMal 1312/1896–97), vol. 2, 456. However, 'Abdurrahmân Şeref did not suggest that British forms of colonial governance should be adopted for administering parts of the Ottoman Empire such as Yemen. Moreover, I have not been able to find any reports by Aḥmed Râṭib Paşa or members of his delegation on their mission to India. For the moment we can, therefore, only speculate what their perspectives on British administration were and whether they recommended them as models to be emulated in certain Ottoman provinces. It is important to note that Ottoman attempts to remain *au courant* of the ways in which the British or the Italians governed the far-flung dependencies of their empires were by no means restricted to high-level diplomatic contacts, as in the case of Aḥmed Râṭib Paşa's mission. Nor was the collection and dissemination of knowledge about these ways always centrally organized as in the case of 'Abdurrahmân Şeref's school textbook. For instance, 'Abdülganî's and Maḥmûd Nedîm's impressions about British and Italian colonial administration were gathered during journeys from Istanbul to Ḥudayda when they called on port cities such as Port Sudan and Massawa. While 'Abdülganî supplemented these first-hand impressions with information gathered in conversations with Ottoman administrators who served with the authorities of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Maḥmûd Nedîm spoke with Italian administrators and businessmen whom he met on board ship during his passage to Yemen. Personal encounters between Ottoman officials and British travelers that led to conversations about strategies of imperial domination are also mentioned in the travelogs by Walter Harris and A. J. B. Wavell. Sometimes, however, these circuits of knowledge were more indirect. A case in point is Rüşdî Paşa, who obtained his information on British judicial policies and "tribal management" in the Sudan from an Egyptian official in the Sinai area who had participated in the Anglo-Egyptian re-conquest of the Mahdist state under Kitchener. Even more interesting is the section of Sa'îd Paşa's memoirs in which he referred to the French politician A. A. G. Hanotaux as an authority on British forms of indirect rule.

²³ Kreiser, "Ali Emîrî," 213–14.

council of ministers ten days earlier in connection with a discussion of an autonomy scheme for the Province of Yemen.²⁴ Apparently, the council had discussed the report of a special commission on Yemen that proposed

...a certain measure of self-government, setting forth that, in order to flatter the native Sheikhs and to satisfy their ambition, it would be well to choose the Kaimakams and Mutessarifs from among their number instead of sending Turkish [sic] officials from Constantinople, the post of Vali being alone retained for a Turk [sic]...²⁵

There are several reasons for the increased interest at this stage. First, the British, French, and Italian conquests of the Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea during the 1880s and late 1890s meant that the Province of Yemen was the imperial frontier where the Ottomans came most directly into contact with various forms of European colonial rule. In this context, the hills of Lower Yemen, where Ottoman and British-Indian spheres of influence met and overlapped were not the only site for imperial encounters. For instance, traveling to Yemen by steamer provided Ottoman officials with opportunities to meet British and Italian soldiers, administrators, and businessmen onboard ship and “talk shop.”²⁶ As seen in the case of ‘Abdülğani Senî and Rüşdî Paşa, stopovers in colonial port cities such as Port Sudan, Massawa, and Aden allowed them to experience some of the most important physical manifestations of European colonialism in the southern Red Sea region.²⁷ More broadly, the very fact that Yemen was part of a region where different colonial powers—and forms of colonial governance—met and competed for influence may have contributed to raising the awareness of Ottoman bureaucrats of the ways in which other imperial powers governed “uncivilized” peoples. This appears to have been the case particularly from the early 1900s, when the Ottoman government faced increasingly stiff opposition from the Zaydî *imāms* while European colonialism in other parts of the Red Sea region and in British India appeared to be successful—despite the defeats that the Italians had suffered at the hands of Ethiopian troops in 1895–96.²⁸

²⁴ See ROY5, 514, Sir N. O’Conor to Sir Edward Grey, 27 June 1907.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See, for instance, Mahmud Nedim Bey, *Arabistan’da bir ömür*, 121–24.

²⁷ See, for instance, ‘Abdülğani Senî, *Yemen yolında*, 116–38.

²⁸ In order to understand the particular interest that Ottoman bureaucrats showed toward British forms of colonial rule at this point in time it is also important to

While Rüşdî Paşa did not explicitly advocate the staffing of the key posts of the provincial administration with local *shaykhs*, or the paying of stipends, he nevertheless urged the government to apply to the Province of Yemen a mode of ruling through these leaders similar to what the British had practiced in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and in the hinterland of Aden.²⁹ Moreover, he recommended the adoption of two other central elements of British governance in the Sudan, namely the retention of local forms of administering justice and the large-scale recruitment of the provincial security forces among local volunteers.³⁰ Thus, Rüşdî suggested that European colonial powers and particularly Britain were successful mainly because they effectively used their knowledge of the mechanisms of local societies to “manage” the latter in a way that made their rule acceptable.

‘Abdülğanî elaborated on this point much more carefully in some of the articles that he published in *Mülkîye*. In contrast to Rüşdî and the above-mentioned officials, the *vilâyet mektûbcısı* was less interested in highlighting particular practices of British colonial governance that could be implemented in Ottoman Yemen and, in fact, strongly cautioned against simply copying elements of British or French administration in India and Algeria, respectively.³¹ Rather, his main focus was on exploring their underlying principles. For instance, he argued that the key to the success of the British in building and maintaining their rule over such a vast empire was primarily their ability to adapt their governmental practices to the civilizational levels of the various peoples in different imperial dependencies. In other words, the British always governed according to the “customs and dispositions” of the local peoples. As a result, ‘Abdülğanî claimed, no territory within the British

remember the considerable influence that Edmond Demolin’s 1897 book, *A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* [What is the secret of Anglo-Saxon superiority?] enjoyed among many educated Ottomans (and Europeans). This book explored the reasons for the success of the British Empire and identified forms of decentralization as one of them. See Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 163; see also Kreiser, “Abdülğanî Seni—ein aufgeklärter Imperialist im Jemen (1909–1910),” *Jemen-Report* 20, no. 1 (1989), 14. However, none of the bureaucrats under study makes explicit reference to Demolin’s work. It is also possible that the swift British conquest of the Sudan in 1896–99 prompted Ottoman literati and officials—just as it did their Egyptian counterparts—to look into the underlying reasons for British imperial success. See Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 162–64.

²⁹ Rüşdî, *Yemen hâtırısı*, 154–55.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 68, 193.

³¹ ‘Abdülğanî Seni, “Haftı’ât,” 56–57.

Empire was governed alike—this was true for Scotland, as well as for Australia, Canada, the Cape Colony, or India.³² Therefore, by applying this principle to the different parts of the Ottoman Empire, the *vilâyet mektûbcısı* meant that areas like Albania (Arnavutluk) or the provinces on the Arabian Peninsula (‘Arabistân) could not be ruled like Anatolia or parts of Ottoman Europe. At the same time, however, he was careful to insist that only Tripolitania and Yemen should actually be ruled as colonies.³³ Making this administrative distinction between these two provinces and other *vilâyets* was imperative, he argued, because of the “disposition and customs” of its inhabitants (*bunlarıñ kendilerine mahşûş... tabâyi’ ve me’lûfâtı*) and “their separation and distance from the center” (*merkezden ayrılıkları, ba’dîyetletleri hasebiyle*).³⁴ While ‘Abdülğanî did not elaborate on the case of Tripolitania, it is clear from some of his other writings that, in his view, the population of Ottoman Yemen still occupied a far lower stage in the hierarchy of civilizations than the people in other parts of the empire.³⁵ The *vilâyet mektûbcısı* subscribed to the idea of a civilizing mission in Yemen, but, unlike the authors of previous memoranda and articles on Ottoman Yemen, he wanted to formalize the perceived cultural hierarchy between the locals and the officials outside the province by placing the province under a special administrative regime. That is, for ‘Abdülğanî, the term colony implied—to borrow Thomas Metcalf’s words—a “demarcation of spaces meant to separate”³⁶ the local population from the more “developed” people in provinces such as Syria or Bursa. At the top of a future colonial administration in Ottoman Yemen, ‘Abdülğanî envisaged a governor-general with decision making powers considerably more extensive than those of an ordinary *vâlî*. In his work he would be assisted by a provincial assembly.³⁷ While Rüşdi Paşa did not recommend that Yemen be formally declared a colony, he emphasized that certain administrative techniques used by European colonial

³² ‘Abdülğanî Senî, “Siyâset-i idâreden bir nümüne—rıfkımı, şiddetmi? —,” *Mülkiye* 5 (1 Haziran 1325 [14 June 1909]), 55–56; idem, “Haṭı’ât,” 46–47.

³³ ‘Abdülğanî Senî, “Siyâset-i idâre,” 57–58.

³⁴ ‘Abdülğanî Senî, “Her vâlîniñ derece-i şalâhiyet bir mi olmalıdır?” *Mülkiye* 12 (1 Kanun-i sani 1325 [14 January 1910]), 35–36.

³⁵ ‘Abdülğanî Senî, “Haṭı’ât,” 46–47, 53–54; idem, “İhyâ-yi ma’ârif,” 39, 45–46; idem, “Yine Yemen’iñ huşûsiyet-i aḥvâlinde,” *Mülkiye* 13 (1 Şubat 1325 [14 February 1910]), 57.

³⁶ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 185.

³⁷ Kreiser, “Abdülğanî Senî—ein aufgeklärter Imperialist,” 12, 14.

powers should be adopted for the purpose of governing “exceptional” (*müstesnâ*) parts of the Ottoman Empire, such as Yemen.³⁸

The perspectives of ‘Abdülganî or Rüşdî on Yemen were generally in tune with the efforts of modern bureaucrats of this period to categorize, manage, and, ultimately, reform social groups that were perceived as “deviant” from those who espoused, by and large, what Selim Deringil has called “the values of the center.” This approach was also reflected in the creation of the “school for tribes” in 1892. The brigadier-general and the *vilâyet mektûbcısı* applied this logic to an entire province and its population. In this sense, Rüşdî’s argument that Yemen was an “exceptional” part of the empire that could only be controlled through techniques from the context of European colonial governance and ‘Abdülganî’s idea of creating a colony of Yemen were only slightly different expressions of the same notion. In the particular case of Yemen, the group that needed to be categorized and thus designated as a “case” or an “issue” to be dealt with by the modern state were not dispersed, as it were, throughout the empire. Rather, they were concentrated in a particular area which could, therefore, be separated by the institution of a specific administrative regime labeled as “colonial.” These bureaucrats thus proposed to carve out a separate space for the “uncivilized” within the larger space of the Ottoman imperial system. In short, for Rüşdî and ‘Abdülganî, colonialism in the Ottoman context meant the territorialization of savagery.

It is noteworthy that even some of the high-ranking soldiers and administrators who were involved in hammering out an autonomy agreement with Imâm Yaḥyâ during the years after 1908 looked toward forms of European colonial rule for models of how to integrate the Zaydî leader successfully into the political and administrative structures of the empire’s southernmost province. Like Rüşdî Paşa, these policy makers favored a solution that centered on the devolution of power to local leaders, not, as ‘Abdülganî had proposed, on a powerful governor-general. On 29 March 1909 the members of an interdepartmental commission on Yemen introduced their recommendations for a settlement that would give Imâm Yaḥyâ a substantial measure of control over tax collection and judicial affairs in the Zaydî parts of the province with the remark that they had taken into consideration the principles and rules (*uṣûl ve kavâ'id*) that some states adopted in

³⁸ Rüşdî, *Yemen hâtırasi*, 69–70.

connection with the administration of their colonies.³⁹ Three months later, Aḥmed ʿİzzet Paşa, the chief of the general staff and a member of the commission who played a key role in the negotiation of the Daʿān agreement during the summer and fall of 1911, specifically pointed out that the form of indirect rule that the British exercised over the princely states of India and the local leaders in the hinterland of Aden provided a model of governance that could be adapted to the conditions of Ottoman Yemen for the purpose of achieving a political settlement with the *imām*.⁴⁰ However, not everyone viewed European colonial practices as a point of reference for administrative reforms in Yemen. For instance, in his 1905 proposal for a sectarian order, the minister of the interior, Memdüḥ Paşa, invoked the Ottoman practice of devolving degrees of autonomy to religious communities, a practice which, in various forms, had been a standard feature of Ottoman imperial rule for several centuries.⁴¹ And in February 1912, he pointed out that there were other Ottoman precedents for the devolution of power to provincial leaders in Yemen, namely the rights (*hukūk*) and special privileges (*imtiyāzāt*) that Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–20) had granted to local elites in Egypt and Kurdistan.⁴²

In making elements of European colonial governance the principal point of reference for the restructuring of the provincial government in Ottoman Yemen, Aḥmed ʿİzzet Paşa, ʿAbdülḡanī Senī, and Rüşdī Paşa also contributed to a larger Ottoman debate about governance more generally. Ottoman bureaucrats and members of various oppositional groups had been discussing the issue of how much administrative centralization or decentralization was necessary to ensure the empire’s survival since before the restoration of the constitution in July 1908. One of the most prominent advocates of administrative decentralization was Şabāḥaddīn Bey, a nephew of ʿAbdülḡamid II and a leading member of

³⁹ See TDV.İSAM./Hüseyn Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 16–1008-A, memorandum, Yemen commission, 16 Mart 1325/29 March 1909, 2.

⁴⁰ See TDV.İSAM./Hüseyn Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 16–1020, memorandum, chief of general staff, Division General (*feriḡ*) Aḥmed ʿİzzet Paşa, no date [This is probably the first page of a memorandum by Aḥmed ʿİzzet Paşa that is dated 6 Temmuz 1325/19 July 1909 and archived as TDV.İSAM./Hüseyn Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 15–1005].

⁴¹ See Memdüḥ [Paşa], *Yemen kıtʿası haḡḡında baʿz-i müḡalaʿāt* (Dersaʿadet: Numüne, AMal 1324/1908–9), 92.

⁴² See Meḡmed Memdüḥ, *Miftāḡ-i Yemen* (Istanbul: Maḡbaʿa-i Hayriye ve Şürekası, AH 1330/1911–12), 19–20.

the opposition in exile before 1908.⁴³ As we shall see, the leaders of the CUP, by contrast, strongly opposed forms of decentralization—including governors-general with extraordinary powers or regional autonomy—and insisted on “the extension of central authority to the widest extent possible and the standardization of administrative and fiscal practices.”⁴⁴ On 4 September 1908, for instance, Hüseyn Câhid [Yalçın], the editor of the Istanbul-based daily *Ṭanîn*, wrote,

If our remote provinces that have not yet attained an advanced stage in their political lives were to be administered on the basis of decentralization, and a kind of autonomous administration evolves in these areas... the result will be lawlessness.⁴⁵

It is possible that for CUP leaders—as for ‘Abdülhamîd II—the terms decentralization and autonomy also conjured up Meḥmed ‘Alî Paşa’s rise to power in Egypt, or the cases of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia, Samos, Crete, or Mount Lebanon, where European powers had pressured the Ottoman central government into accepting measures of local autonomy that either severely limited the latter’s authority on the ground or created the polite fiction of Ottoman sovereignty over de facto independent territories. In other words, for these observers, local autonomy was associated with a hundred years of political fragmentation, territorial contraction, and European dominance, and was thus tainted as a political concept. Referring to forms of autonomy and devolution of power in the British Empire as possible models for governing Yemen was therefore an attempt to rehabilitate these concepts in the context of Ottoman imperial governance and to “re-brand” something that stood for imperial decline into something associated with the modern, scientific, and cost-effective management of large, spread-out, and highly differentiated imperial domains.

Yet, in advocating the introduction of elements of British colonial governance in Yemen, both ‘Abdülḡanî and Rüşdî and the above-mentioned government officials also sought to re-affirm the difference

⁴³ See M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 146–47.

⁴⁴ See Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 78.

⁴⁵ Quoted after Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 78. Hüseyn Câhid’s article is reproduced in Cenk Reyhan, *Osmanlı’da iki tarz-ı idare. Merkeziyetçilik—adem-i merkeziyetçilik* (İstanbul: İmge Kitapevi, 2007), 155–59.

of the local population. The fact that they regarded forms of colonial governance and not the administration of metropolitan France or Britain as examples worth emulating suggests that they saw the Ottoman authorities in Yemen in a position comparable to that of the British and Italian colonial rulers in the Sudan, Eritrea, Aden, or India. In so doing they likened the local population to the “savage” peoples in these European colonial dependencies and thus emphasized that the former were different from, and culturally inferior to, the population in the more developed parts of the Ottoman Empire. While politics of difference had existed in the Province of Yemen since the 1880s, this perspective reflected the growing distance that officials from outside the province felt toward the local population.⁴⁶ This may have been due to the fact that the uprisings from the early 1890s, and especially the one from 1904 to 1907, had created an impression that the locals were more difficult to govern than people in many other parts of the Ottoman Empire. In 1899, Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa had argued that despite their backwardness and cultural inferiority, the population of Ottoman Yemen could, by and large, be governed like the people in other provinces. But, after the 1904–7 uprising, there was broad agreement among government officials that whatever the future character of the Ottoman provincial government in Yemen, the politics of difference was there to stay. Indeed, some observers argued that Hüseyn Hilmî’s attempt to disempower local *shaykhs* had played a crucial role

⁴⁶ As Klaus Kreiser has demonstrated in his articles on ‘Abdūlganî Senî, the *mektûbci*’s suggestions for a more successful form of Ottoman governance were not entirely new. And as we have seen earlier, already from the late 1870s the idea to formalize perceived difference informed Ottoman strategies in this part of the empire to a significant degree. ‘Abdūlganî’s contribution to the Ottoman debate on how to govern the Yemen *vilâyeti* lies, therefore, not so much in the originality of his ideas, but rather in the fact that he, perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, synthesized existing ideas into a detailed, elaborate scheme with a set of theoretical underpinnings derived from the writings of Gustave Le Bon, one of the most influential European social scientists of the period. That is, what mainly distinguished him from administrators who had written about Yemen during the reign of ‘Abdūlhamîd II and those writers and officials who did so during the Second Constitutional Period was his insistence on explicitly naming as colonial a set of perspectives and governmental practices that had informed Ottoman rule in Yemen for at least two decades. In this respect he resembled, somewhat, Sir Frederick Lugard, one of the chief architects of British rule in West Africa after World War I. In his study *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), Lugard coined the term “indirect rule” for a particular approach of British governance of colonial dependencies in parts of present-day Nigeria; an approach that British administrators developed and widely adopted in India from the late eighteenth century.

in triggering the revolt.⁴⁷ In the aftermath of the uprising, policy makers stressed the importance of incorporating these “keys” to local society into future administrative schemes for the province.

At the same time, Rüşdî and ‘Abdülganî clearly attributed this difference to what they perceived as the failure of the government’s “civilizing mission.” For instance, the *vilâyet mektûbcısı* claimed that from the very beginning the government had seriously neglected to educate the locals, thereby missing a crucial opportunity to undermine indigenous power structures.⁴⁸ Similarly, Rüşdî expressed his perception of enduring local difference by remarking, with reference to Yemen’s coastal sub-province: “Administratively, the *sancağ* of Hûdayda was organized just like that of İzmid. But its population has not been made to resemble that of İzmid.”⁴⁹ It is, of course, highly problematic to take these observations at face value. The profound social and economic transformations that other regions of the empire had experienced since the early 1870s seem to have informed these perspectives. And compared to parts of Ottoman Europe, Anatolia, and geographical Syria, the Province of Yemen must indeed have appeared relatively “backward.” We are dealing with a process similar to the one Thomas Metcalf has observed in the case of British perspectives on India, where, for instance, metropolitan notions of Indian cities as “filthy” emerged in tandem with the raising of hygiene standards in London and other cities in Great Britain.⁵⁰

And yet, the ways in which Ottoman bureaucrats drew parallels between the prospective governance of Yemen and forms of European colonial rule also highlights the limits of this distancing from the local people and of the institutionalization of difference. As we have seen, policy makers had no problem emphasizing the difference and inferiority of the local population and formalizing this difference through specific governmental institutions and practices. However, most of them appear to have been reluctant to take their quest for the institutionalization of difference as far as ‘Abdülganî Senî, who demanded that Yemen be declared a colony. Moreover, it seems

⁴⁷ See, for instance, ‘Abdülganî Senî, “Haṭî’ât,” 51–52; Mevlânzâde Rif’at, “Yemen hakkında Dâhiliye Nâziri Tal’at Bey Efendi’ye açık mektûb,” *Yeni Taşvîr-i Efkâr* 501 (13 Safer 1329/13 Şubat 1911/13 February 1911), 1–3.

⁴⁸ ‘Abdülganî Senî, “Haṭî’ât,” 55.

⁴⁹ Rüşdî, *Yemen hâṭırası*, 67: “[Hûdeyde] sancağı[nı]ñ teşkilâtı İzmidîñ ‘aynı yapılmış hâlbuki ahâlîsi İzmid ahâlisine beñzedilmemiştir...”

⁵⁰ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 173.

that no one insisted on denying parliamentary representation to the Yemenis. This might have been because, from the very beginning, Ottoman bureaucrats had often framed the Ottoman re-conquest of highland Yemen as an anti-colonial act. As we have seen in chapter 3, Aḥmed Rāşid represented the campaigns of 1871–73 as a pre-emptive measure to “protect” Muslim territory against the imminent expansion of Christian colonial powers that were in the process of subjugating Muslim lands. In 1894, Aḥmed Feyzî appears to have made a similar argument when he indicated in a letter to Imām al-Manşūr that without Ottoman “protection,” southwest Arabia would fall prey to European expansion.⁵¹ More broadly, M. Şükrü Hanioglu argued that to the Young Turks, “the fact that they were of the same religion as the Arabs was not significant. They saw themselves as bringing civilization to the tribal society of the Arabs and protecting them against Western Imperialism.”⁵² Following this logic, “colonialism” was very much associated with the “Christian” European powers, who, in the course of the nineteenth century, had taken possession of parts of the Ottoman lands, including Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt.

The notion that in the context of Ottoman politics *colonialism* was viewed with disapproval is also reflected in one of ‘Abdülğanî’s articles, in which he clarified that, although he was in favor of governing Yemen as a colony, like, for instance, French Algeria, he strongly criticized France’s “despotic rule” (*idāre-i müstebidde*) in this part of North Africa.⁵³ Also instructive in this regard is the conversation between Maḥmūd Nedīm and Enver Paşa mentioned at the beginning of this study. On hearing from Maḥmūd Nedīm about Horatio Herbert Kitchener’s suggestion that Ottoman Yemen be ruled as a colony, Enver apparently responded: “If we were to administer Yemen as a colony, wouldn’t we cause the locals to rebel against us?”⁵⁴

In their writings, Aḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa and ‘Abdülğanî Senî emphasized that even though Algeria was a colony of France, it was no less a part of France than those territories that constituted the French

⁵¹ Kruse, “Takfir und Ğihād,” 450.

⁵² See Deringil, “Nomadism and Savagery,” 341; he cites *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Reeva Simon, and M. Muslih (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 31, where the article by M. Şükrü Hanioglu, “The Young Turks and the Arabs before the Revolution of 1908,” is referenced.

⁵³ ‘Abdülğanî Senî, “Siyāset-i idāre,” 55–56.

⁵⁴ Mahmud Nedim, *Arabistan’da bir ömür*, 107–108: “...Yemen’i bir müstemleke gibi idare etmeye kalkarsak halkı ayaklandırmış olmaz mıyız?”

metropole.⁵⁵ In so doing, they addressed the concern that declaring Yemen a colony and granting this province a certain degree of autonomy would compromise the unity and cohesion of the Ottoman “fatherland” because these measures implied forms of imperial ties that were somewhat loose and demarcated a political space that was not quite an integral part of the Ottoman lands. Thus, there appears to have been a concern among Ottoman officials that declaring Yemen a colony would undermine central elements of the Ottoman politics of legitimacy, not only in Yemen, but also in the empire’s Arab provinces more generally. These claims were often defined in terms of Sunnī-led Islamic unity under the sultan-caliph. It is possible that officials were also concerned that declaring Yemen a colony would undermine the government’s claim to promote the unity and equality of all the empire’s ethnic and religious communities under the banner of Ottomanism. It was this latter element that gained particular prominence with the restoration of constitutional rule in the summer of 1908. As Hasan Kayalı has demonstrated, the CUP as the principal protagonists of the 1908 revolution “...realized and confronted the problems of outlying provinces, but with a naive conviction that representative government would somehow remedy them, enhance loyalty to the state, and assure territorial consolidation.”⁵⁶ The idea of an “imperial parliament” struck European observers like the British traveler Wavell as peculiar. In his account, *A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca and a Siege in Sanaa*, he remarked with reference to the recently established constitutional regime:

The new rulers...overcame difficulties by simply ignoring their existence. We have not yet seen our way to creating an Imperial Parliament, even in that modified form which would embrace the great English-speaking colonies to the exclusion of our subject races. No one has so far proposed to bring Hindus and Zulus to St. Stephens. Yet this is what the amateur statesmen of Young Turkey were called upon to bring into being—an assembly representative of a great number of different races and creeds having nothing more in common than the allegiance they had been forced to profess to the power, which by calling them together

⁵⁵ ‘Abdülğanî Senî, “Siyâset-i idâre,” 57–58; see also TDV.İSAM./Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 15–1004, memorandum, chief of general staff, Aḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa, to Yemen commission, 10 Mart 1325/23 March 1909, 5–6.

⁵⁶ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 78.

was ipso facto admitting its inability to rule any longer. They attacked the problem; and if they did not succeed in producing an Imperial Parliament, at any rate they produced something that looked like one.⁵⁷

However, the parliament of the Second Constitutional Period seems to have been a crucial element of what I have referred to as “colonial Ottomanism.” Whereas the above-mentioned officials advocated politics of difference in Yemen, the presence of Yemeni deputies in the Ottoman parliament emphasized their inclusion in an Ottoman “nation” in the making. Both measures were, in fact, complementary, because they were meant to stabilize Ottoman rule over the empire’s southernmost province. These officials seem to have been convinced that in the face of European encroachments, the Ottoman government simply could not afford to exclude the Yemenis from Ottomanism. In marked contrast to the example of Britain, Ottoman politics of difference was not meant to keep those who came under the purview of an Ottoman imperial patriotism from those who did not. However, it was among the members of this “nation” in the making, as it were, that the advocates of the politics of difference sought to carve out a separate space for these locals that reflected their status as Ottomans who were still “uncivilized” and hence Ottomans of a lesser kind.

From Usurpers to Natural Leaders? Local Elites Reconsidered

As in the aftermath of the 1891–92 uprising, and after the military setbacks of 1904–5, the debate between imperial bureaucrats and local elite figures about the causes of the most recent insurgency and possible counter measures turned toward the issue of what it meant to rule Yemen according to the “customs and dispositions” of the local population. During the 1890s, government inspectors had pointed to the practice of co-opting local *‘ulamā*, *sāda*, and *shaykhs* into provincial officialdom and to the prominent role of the latter in the fiscal system as principal reasons for large-scale opposition to Ottoman rule. Most importantly, in 1899, Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa had taken a substantial step toward disempowering *shaykhs* by taking tax collection out of their hands and thus dismantling a significant portion of the local

⁵⁷ Wavell, *A Modern Pilgrim*, 187.

tevzi system. This time, however, many argued that these local leaders were indeed the “keys” to local society and that the province could not be governed without them. While there was broad agreement that devolution of power to provincial elite figures was crucial to stabilize Ottoman rule over the empire’s southernmost province, the question of how much power should be devolved to whom caused considerable controversy. As we shall see, the issue of how to integrate the Zaydī *imām* into the structures of provincial government emerged as a new and central element of this debate. In addition, ‘*ulamā*’, *sāda*, and tribal leaders figured prominently in reform plans that were formulated to either complement a future sectarian order in Yemen or to serve as alternative schemes.

As shown in chapter 4, local elites had long played an important role in elaborating the categories that undergirded this element of governance that the Ottomans had sought to establish in the Yemen *vilāyeti* from the late 1870s and that was now re-affirmed and expanded. For the period from the early 1900s on, we have much stronger evidence that *sāda*, ‘*ulamā*’, and tribal leaders tried to impress on policy makers in the provincial capital Ṣan‘ā and in Istanbul that they were indeed the “keys” to local society and, therefore, had to be part of future administrative schemes for the Province of Yemen. Already in March 1905, Colonel Aḥmad b. Muḥammad [al-Khabbānī], a local *sayyid* and one of the sultan’s numerous A.D.C.s, argued in a memorandum to the Palace that filling all the judge positions in the province with those *sāda* who could be considered members of the ‘*ulamā*’ would prevent them from proclaiming themselves *imām* and thus from stirring up yet another rebellion against Ottoman rule.⁵⁸ Another case in point is a detailed memorandum to the Palace that four *shaykhs* from ‘Amrān, Ḥāshid, and Bilād al-Bustān drew up in June 1907. Referring most probably to Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa’s efforts at achieving greater centralization, the authors of the memorandum affirmed that the main reason for the recent uprising had been the government’s dismissal of the major *shaykhs* throughout the province. Since the latter were the ones who truly knew and controlled the local people, they argued, the government had thereby lost its most important device for ensuring the

⁵⁸ See BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 226–120, Colonel Aḥmad b. Muḥammad [al-Khabbānī] to the Palace, no date [note penciled on *ibid.*, verso: 1322. Z. 29, which corresponds to 6 March 1905].

loyalty of the population. Not surprisingly, the reforms that the four authors proposed clearly reflected their efforts to ensure that *shaykhs* would hold key positions in provincial government. For instance, *shaykhs* were to be appointed officers up to the level of colonel in a new Ḥamīdiye regiment that would be recruited from among the members of the tribes of Dhū Muḥammad, Dhū Ḥusayn, and Ḥāshid. Moreover, these local leaders would also serve as members of a special commission of inspection that would look into the affairs of the province. The document, however, is interesting not only in the points its authors make, but also in what remains unsaid. For instance, nowhere in the memorandum did the authors attempt a critique of illegal taxation on the part of *shaykhs* in connection with the *tevzi* system, nor did they propose any measures that would undermine their influence over local society, such as the abolition of tax-farming or the carrying out of censuses and cadastral surveys.⁵⁹

It seems that after the restoration of the constitution in July 1908, members of the local elite took full advantage of the new opportunities that opened up for them under the constitutional regime to pursue similar strategies and to lobby the government in their capacity as representatives for various districts of the Yemen *vilāyeti* in the Chamber of Deputies. Particularly active in this regard were Sayyid Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Kibsi and Sayyid Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī ‘Abdulqādir, two representatives for Ṣan‘ā’ who had won their seats in the Ottoman parliament in by-elections in early 1909.⁶⁰ For example, in a letter to the grand vizier dated 10 Mart 1326/23 March 1910, the two *sayyids* sought to convince the imperial government that they possessed the local knowledge that would allow the authorities to drive a wedge between the *imām* and the local population and thus gain the upper hand throughout the province (... Ahālīniñ [sic] İmāmdan ayrılmağ için tıruk-i karibe-i sehile-i siyāsiye biliriz...). More specifically, they argued that the Province of Yemen could be brought under government control “...through the upholding of justice, the winning of

⁵⁹ See BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 52–50, memorandum drawn up for the Palace by four *shaykhs* from ‘Amrān, Ḥāshid, and Bilād al-Bustān, 9 Cemāziyyülevvel 1325/20 June 1907, 1, 3–4.

⁶⁰ On Sayyid Aḥmad al-Kibsi, see, for instance, Mahmud Nedim Bey, *Arabistan’da bir ömür*, 9–12; Sabine Prātor, “Arabische Stimmen in der Istanbuler Presse der Jungtürkenzeit,” in *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten*, ed. Christoph Herzog, Raoul Motika, and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientverlag, 1995), 123, 127.

people's hearts and by treating with respect the *sāda*, the tribal leaders, and the 'ulamā' (... Yemen icrā[-yi] 'adālet ve celb-i k̄ulūb ve eṣrāf ve rü'esā ve 'ulemānīñ iḥtirām ile iṣlāḥ olabilir...).'⁶¹ A memorandum that both MPs and the deputy for Ḥudayda, the later governor-general of Yemen, Maḥmūd Nedīm Bey sent to the government one day later gives us a sense what the two *sāda* meant by "upholding justice" and treating with respect the above-mentioned elite groups. They suggested, for instance, that local *sāda* and 'ulamā' be put in charge of the province's judiciary, that the district and sub-district governors be chosen from among locally respected leaders (*eṣrāf ve rü'esā-yi maḥalliyeden*), and that the descendants of Zaydī *imāms* (*imāmzādelere*) and impoverished *sāda* receive government stipends.⁶²

In July 1909, Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa made similar suggestions for those parts of the province that did not fall under a proposed autonomy agreement with Imām Yahyā. However, the chief of the general staff had a much clearer idea of the role that tribal leaders (*rü'esā ve meṣāyih*) would play in a reformed provincial administration. He proposed to organize the tribes of Ottoman Yemen according to their size into districts and sub-districts and to appoint their leaders governors of these new administrative sub-divisions. Crucially, Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa wanted to tie the *shaykhs* to their respective tribes and did not envision postings around the province or careers in provincial officialdom for them. These leaders, he insisted, should never be rotated to administer tribes other than their own. By the same token, *kāymaḳām* positions in the larger cities and the governorships for the sub-provinces (*mutaşarrıflar*) should be filled with civil administrators and military officers, presumably from out of the province.⁶³ The reform plans that Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa and the Yemeni parliamentarians presented went beyond re-affirming the importance of *shaykhs*, *sāda*, and 'ulamā' for the purpose of governing Yemen according to the customs and dispositions of the local population. For *shaykhs* in particular, they advocated a much more prominent position in the context of provincial governance than administrators had demanded before the 1904–7 uprising. Moreover, senior officials, such as 'Abdülḡanī Senī and Aḥmed 'İzzet

⁶¹ See BOA./DH.MUİ. 1–9/30, doc. 4, Sayyid Aḥmad b. Yahyā 'I-Kibsi and Sayyid Ḥusayn b. 'Alī 'Abdulqādir to the grand vizier, 10 Mart 1326/23 March 1910.

⁶² See Mahmud Nedim Bey, *Arabistan'da bir ömür*, 128–29.

⁶³ TDV.İSAM./Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 15–1005, memorandum, chief of general staff, Division General (*feriḳ*) Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa, 6 Temmuz 1325/19 July 1909, 1.

Paşa also justified the necessity of governing through these local leaders in new ways. The chief of the general staff did not merely assert that a people had to be governed in accordance with their levels of intellect and civilization. He added that "...the philosophy of history and the social sciences confirm this truth."⁶⁴ Similarly, 'Abdülğanî Senî also emphasized the influence of tribal leaders and hence the need to co-opt them by referring to the writings of the French social scientist Gustave LeBon.⁶⁵ Here we touch on an important point; at one level at least, officials were prepared to reassess what it meant to govern Yemen "according to customs and dispositions of the local people" because the near collapse of Ottoman authority during the 1904–7 insurgency seemed to suggest that it was vital to favor local elites—including even the Zaydî *imâm*—and win them as allies in order to prevent future uprisings. At the same time, the remarks by Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa and 'Abdülğanî suggest that some of these officials were also influenced by ideas popularized by European social scientists that made a connection between people's station in a hierarchy of civilizations and particular forms of governance. Like arguments that associated forms of local autonomy and indirect rule with practices of British colonial governance, attempts to justify devolution of power along these lines as "scientific" reflected a growing distance between administrators from outside Yemen and the local population. The latter were scientifically proven to be on a lower level of human development—or so those from outside Yemen argued. Any attempt to eliminate their natural leaders was, therefore, foolish.

Sometimes, these arguments about governing the "backward" peoples were informed by race-thinking. It was Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa who prefaced his remarks by claiming that, except for the people in certain civilized areas and in large cities, Arabs lived at a primitive level of human development, namely in tribal groups and should, therefore, be governed by tribal leaders.⁶⁶ Similarly, Sa'îd Paşa, during whose grand vizierate the Da'ân agreement was signed, concurred with the French

⁶⁴ TDV.İSAM./Hüseyn Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 15–1005, memorandum, chief of general staff, Division General Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa, 6 Temmuz 1325/19 July 1909, 1.

⁶⁵ See Thomas Kühn, "Ordering the Past of Ottoman Yemen, 1872–1914," *Turcica* 34 (2002), 213–14.

⁶⁶ See TDV.İSAM./Hüseyn Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 16–1020, memorandum, chief of general staff, Division General Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa, no date [this is probably the first page of a memorandum by Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa that is dated 6 Temmuz 1325/19 July 1909 and archived as TDV.İSAM./Hüseyn Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 15–1005]; TDV.İSAM./

historian and politician Albert Auguste Gabriel Hanotaux that Arabs more generally should be governed through forms of indirect rule, as practiced in parts of the British Empire.⁶⁷ ‘Abdülganî Senî, in turn, argued that the state of backwardness that made necessary the integration of *shaykhs* into provincial government was, in part, the result of long decline. This had been caused by the influx of Arabs into southwest Arabia at the end of the Himyarî period.⁶⁸ While these officials associated being “backward” and hence deserving to be colonized, with being Arab, they failed to clarify who, in this larger scheme of things, the colonizers were. Unlike Muştafâ Şevket in the early 1890s, they did not argue that Turks should rule over Arabs in Ottoman Yemen, nor did they articulate the clear sense of Turkish leadership that Ussama Makdisi has found in the post-World War I memoirs of officials, such as Halide Edib [Adivar] and Cemâl Paşa.⁶⁹

While a sectarian order was eventually instituted in Yemen through the Da‘ân agreement of October 1911, it seems that the suggestions made by the Yemeni deputies and Aḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa were never adopted as policy by the central government. There was certainly no attempt to create tribal districts and sub-districts as the chief of the general staff had suggested. However, more *sāda* and some *shaykhs* and elders of the Zarānîq tribe in the Tihāma were awarded stipends.⁷⁰ *Shaykhs* may not have come to dominate administrative positions below the level of *mutaşarrıf*, but the central government did not repeat Hüseyin Hilmî Paşa’s attempt to oust them as the leaders of local ‘*uzlas* and *mikhhlāfs* and the *tevzî*’ system of tax collection was left intact.

Toward a Sectarian Order

It was only during the uprising of 1904–7, after Ottoman military forces had temporarily evacuated the provincial capital of Şan‘ā’ in the

Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa Evrakı 15–1005, memorandum, Aḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa, 6 Temmuz 1325/19 July 1909, 1.

⁶⁷ See Sa‘id Paşa, *Sa‘id Paşa’nın hâşırâtı* (Dersa‘âdet: Şabâḥ Maṭba‘ası, AMal 1328/1912–13), vol. 1, 369.

⁶⁸ See Kühn, “Ordering the Past of Ottoman Yemen,” 207, 217.

⁶⁹ See Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” 791–95.

⁷⁰ See *Düstür, tertib-i sâni* (Dersa‘âdet: Maṭba‘a-i ‘Âmire, AH 1331/1912–13), vol. 4, 609, imperial decree of 30 Temmuz 1328/12 August 1912; the monthly total of these stipends was 17,640 *kurûş*.

spring and summer of 1905 and suffered a serious defeat in connection with their attempts to conquer Imām Yaḥyā's stronghold at Shahāra in the unoccupied part of the highlands in the fall of the same year, that senior Ottoman bureaucrats considered offering a Zaydī *imām* a role in the administration of the Province of Yemen. That is, policy makers in Şan'ā' and Istanbul appear to have realized that the politics of difference in the form in which they had been elaborated since the late 1870s were no longer conducive to maintaining Ottoman rule in this part of the empire. They had to be refashioned in a way that would include a Zaydī community leader.

As a result, we come across plans to reinvent the Zaydīs as a community that would be safely contained within institutional boundaries. This idea of a sectarian order under the auspices of the Ottoman state caused some controversy. As I discuss below, it was dropped by the Hamidian regime, which favored devolution of power along non-sectarian lines. After the end of the Hamidian regime in July 1908, the main political force of the new constitutional order, the CUP also looked on this idea with extreme suspicion. Devolution furthered the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire and threatened the CUP's policies of centralization, devised in large measure to stave off such fragmentation. In the end, however, the specific political conditions prevailing at the local and larger imperial levels forced the CUP to accept a limited measure of autonomy for the *imām* as laid down in the Daʿān agreement.

In December 1905, the minister of the interior, Memdūḥ Paşa, in his capacity as the chairman of an interdepartmental commission on Yemen, proposed an arrangement whereby the members of the Zaydī sect would be guaranteed internal autonomy and freedom from interference by the central government with the proviso that they distance themselves from the current *imām* and elect someone else as their leader who would then represent them to the Ottoman authorities under the official title of "head of the Zaydī community."⁷¹ While the caliphate issue was nowhere mentioned explicitly in Memdūḥ Paşa's memorandum, the very idea of denying the prospective leader of an autonomous Zaydī community the title of *imām* clearly reflects the

⁷¹ See Memdūḥ, *Yemen kıt'ası*, 92–93, quoting "Yemen vilāyeti vekāletine yazılan taḥrīrāt şūreti" (copy of an official letter written to the office of the deputy governor-general of Yemen), dated 20 Teşrin-i sani 1321/3 December 1905.

central concern to create an institutional framework that would formalize the subordinate position of the Zaydīs within the structures of a Sunnī-led Ottoman state. Memdūh Paşa proposed to reinvent the Zaydīs as a community that would be safely contained within institutional boundaries drawn by the central government in Istanbul. In so doing, the government would erase every ambiguity as to the appeal of its leader beyond these Yemeni boundaries. In this way, the *imāms* and their community would be assigned a station within the larger context of Ottoman governance—a position that unambiguously designated them as part of the “backward” and “uncivilized” sphere of the local. This sphere would, however, be ordered and hence made subservient to the imperial sphere represented by the caliphate of the Ottoman sultans.

This understanding was reflected in the minister’s statement, that making the local Zaydī population abandon the belief that there must always be an *imām* to lead them would be impossible because of their large numbers and, more to the point, their “savagery” (*vaḥṣet*).⁷² Thus, the arrangement that Memdūh Paşa proposed was firmly grounded in the larger context of institutionalizing perceived difference. However, his memorandum lacked any specificity as to which elements of autonomy he wanted the government to grant the prospective leader of the Zaydī community in Yemen.

Ideas to devolve a certain degree of power to a Zaydī community leader in return for his recognition of the sultan-caliph were paralleled by proposals that sought to order “native” space according to sectarian affiliation in an attempt to contain Zaydism. Already during or shortly after the uprising of 1891–92 one of the sultan’s advisers on Arabian affairs, Sayyid Faḍl Paşa al-‘Alawī, suggested to the palace secretariat that the Province of Yemen should be partitioned along sectarian lines into two provinces.⁷³ This idea was reiterated in a 1907 reform project drawn up by Division General Ferīd Paşa, whereby Ottoman Yemen was to be reorganized into an independent sub-province of ‘Asīr and two provinces.⁷⁴

The notion of a sectarian geography that neatly divided the local population into two distinct religious communities—Zaydīs and

⁷² Ibid., 92–93.

⁷³ BOA./Y.EE. 5–22, undated note [date penciled on verso: 18... (?) 307], Palace, dā’ire-i kitābet [?].

⁷⁴ See BOA./Y.EE. 8–20, doc. 3, memorandum, Division General Ferīd Paşa to the Palace, no date [date on the seal: 322], 2.

Shāfi'īs—in two separate zones of settlement had not informed Ottoman perspectives on Yemen from the beginning of the conquests in the 1870s.⁷⁵ Moreover, there is no indication that Ottoman perceptions of local sectarian geography shaped the creation of administrative divisions in the early 1870s, or debates about administrative reforms during the following two decades.⁷⁶

It must, therefore, be assumed that the experience of the uprisings of 1891–92, 1898–99, and 1904–7 played a considerable role in shaping a perspective that not only sought to explain the dynamics of local society primarily in sectarian terms, but also viewed local sectarian geography in ways that would allow for administrative schemes like those proposed by Sayyid Faḍl Paşa and Ferīd Paşa. For instance, in a report written by Muṣṭafā Şevket, a government inspector, about the causes of the uprising that had started in June 1891, the author referred to the inhabitants of the sub-provinces of Ḥudayda and Ta'izz as “generally Shāfi'ī,” whereas he designated as Zaydī the population “of the mountain range that extends over a distance of fifty-five to sixty hours from Şan'ā' to the land of 'Asīr and... from the big city of Şa'da which is close to 'Asīr to the district of Yarīm.”⁷⁷

It is crucial to note that in marked contrast, for instance, to Ottoman Lebanon, imperial bureaucrats only rarely portrayed local society in the Tihāma, lower Yemen, and the northern highlands as characterized by the conflict of sectarian groups. As a matter of fact, local backwardness and savagery were mainly represented in terms of tribal conflict and the “despotism” of local lords.⁷⁸ Moreover, though Ottoman officials sought to explain acts of violence as expressions of an age-old enmity of Zaydīs toward Sunnī Muslims, in fact, Zaydī animosity and violence were almost invariably directed not against local Shāfi'ī Sunnīs but against the Sunnī representatives of the Ottoman government, who came, more often than not, from outside the province. For instance,

⁷⁵ For instance, it does not appear in Aḥmed Rāşid's account of sectarian groups in his *Tārīh-i Yemen ve Şan'ā'*, or in Muḥammad Hilāl Efendi's memoranda from the mid-1880s. See Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 1, 278–79; Bostan, “Muhammed Hilāl Efendi,” 316–17.

⁷⁶ To be sure, toward the early 1880s the governor-general, Muṣṭafā 'Aşım Paşa, argued that “sectarian politics” played a crucial role in shaping the internal affairs of the province, with the exception of 'Asīr. However, he proposed to order provincial space according to the degree of loyalty that the various tribes showed toward the imperial government, and not according to sectarian affiliation.

⁷⁷ See BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 2.

⁷⁸ See Rāşid, *Tārīh*, vol. 1, 275; vol. 2, 350.

on 14 May 1905, shortly after the Ottoman garrison of Şan‘ā’ had surrendered to Imām Yaḥyā, the governor-general of Yemen, Meḥmed Tevfik Bey, assured the minister of the interior that because of the sectarian hatred between Shāfi‘īs and Zaydīs it was assumed that the *imām*’s efforts to win over the tribes of the Tihāma would not succeed.⁷⁹ While the governor implied that there was almost a primordial enmity between the two groups, he did not argue that the current uprising could, at one level, be viewed as a conflict between Zaydīs and Shāfi‘īs.

Thus, for Ottoman bureaucrats, creating a sectarian order in Yemen was not about separating two mutually hostile communities that defined themselves in terms of sectarian affiliation. Rather, the policy makers in Şan‘ā’ and Istanbul had in mind an ordering of provincial space and local society in a way that would help contain and control the Zaydīs and the challenge they were perceived to pose to central aspects of Ottoman legitimacy. This idea of containment is reflected in the proposal for the partition of Yemen that Sayyid Faḍl Paşa presented to the Palace secretariat in the early 1890s. The *paşa* suggested that the creation of a separate Shāfi‘ī-dominated province and its development by the government would provide the Ottomans with a stronghold that would ensure its hold over Yemen even if—in a worst case scenario—Zaydī rebels were to gain control over the Zaydī province in the highlands.⁸⁰ Faḍl Paşa’s partition scheme was premised on the assumption that local Shāfi‘īs—as “fellow Sunnis”—had a “natural” predisposition for Ottoman rule. The space that they inhabited could therefore become a bulwark against equally “natural” anti-Sunnī and, hence, anti-Ottoman Zaydīs in the highlands.

It is important to note that al-Manşūr and Yaḥyā may have reinforced Ottoman notions about a territorially-based sectarian order by demanding authority over parts of the province, even though they did not phrase these demands in sectarian terms. For instance, the chronicler ‘Alī ‘Abdullāh al-Iryānī quotes a letter dated 26 Muharrem 1312/30 July 1894, in which Imām al-Manşūr proposed to the governor-general of Yemen, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, a partition scheme for Yemen whereby he would receive “a small part of the land of our fathers and ancestors”

⁷⁹ Hürmen, ed., “*Bir Devlet adamının*,” vol. 1, 354.

⁸⁰ BOA./Y.EE. 5–22, undated note [note penciled on verso: 18...[?] 307], Palace, dā‘ire-i kitābet [?].

(*jāniban yasīran min mamlakati aba'inā wa-ajdadinā*).⁸¹ A closer look at other memoranda on this issue that were drawn up over the next two decades suggests that administrators, though they often tended to affirm the inclination of local Shāfi'īs to support Ottoman rule, also had serious doubts about whether this loyalty could actually be taken for granted. In the spring of 1900, Muṣṭafā Şevket, on yet another inspection tour in Yemen, sharply criticized the governor-general Hüseyn Hilmī Paşa for sending individuals who had until recently fought for the *imām* as teachers to Shāfi'ī parts of the province after only a few weeks of training. These men, the inspector claimed, still had the “seed of sedition” within them and were therefore likely to encourage disloyalty in the Shāfi'īs, despite their inherent sympathies for the sultan-caliph.⁸² Similarly, in January 1906, the governor of Gümüştane, Muṣṭafā Zihnī, held that both an administrative reorganization of Ottoman Yemen into three provinces and the establishment of “good government” (*hüsn-i idāre*) would prevent the Zaydī tribes from exerting any negative influence on the local Shāfi'īs and their ideas about politics and administration.⁸³ The governor argued that Shāfi'ī loyalty toward Ottoman rule might not be entirely stable but, rather, susceptible to Zaydī subversion; thus a reordering of provincial space through the rearrangement of existing administrative units might be a measure to address this issue.

At this stage, however, the Ottoman government did not consider any of these suggestions feasible. Rather, it seems to have been willing to conceive of the integration of the *imāms* into Ottoman state structures in a nonsectarian way. That is, to a certain point, the regime of 'Abdülhamīd II was prepared to go along with their demands for authority over Muslims beyond the Zaydī sect in the Province of Yemen on the condition that, through their recognition of the Ottoman caliphate, this limited exercise of trans-sectarian authority be rendered an unequivocally local affair. According to these arrangements, proposed in the fall of 1906 and the spring of 1907, respectively, the *imām* would administer the *sharī'a* or appoint the district

⁸¹ See al-Iryānī, *Sirat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Yahyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn*, vol. 1, 449.

⁸² BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 40–8, doc. 5, Inspector Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 12 Nisan 1316/ 25 April 1900, 8–9.

⁸³ BOA./Y.EE. 8–15, doc. 2, memorandum, governor of Gümüştane (Gümüştane *mutasarrıfı*), Muṣṭafā Zihnī, to the Palace, 15 Kanun-i sani 1321/28 January 1906, 6–7.

and sub-district governors throughout the entire province in cooperation with tribal leaders. It is noteworthy that the central government's proposal of late 1906 offered Imām Yahyā a position similar to that of the *amīr* of Mecca, including the title *amīr*. In both instances, negotiations failed because the *imām* demanded significantly larger measures of autonomy and because he was not prepared to recognize the sultan as caliph.⁸⁴

The variety of ideas about how to deal with anti-Ottoman opposition points to serious controversies among bureaucrats about the nature of this opposition and, by extension, the nature of local society or its customs and dispositions. A closer look at government papers from the 1890s and 1900s shows that many struggled to understand what really drove the uprisings from 1891 on. For instance, government inspectors who looked into these matters in 1891–93 and 1904–7 rarely explained these revolts in crudely essentialist terms, that is, purely as a consequence of Zaydism.⁸⁵ Rather, they cited a variety of factors, such as excessive overtaxation by Ottoman officials and their local allies, the bleak economic conditions in the northern highlands, or, importantly, the “intrigues” of the European rivals of the Ottomans in the Red Sea region, most notably Britain and Italy. But few were actually prepared to reject sectarian affiliation entirely as an explanatory category. Among them was Ḥasan Qadrī, who claimed in his book, *Yemen ve hayātī* [Yemen and its life], that the pursuit of material gain ultimately caused the uprisings in Yemen. If sectarian affiliation was so central, he asked, how could one explain Shāfi'ī opposition to Ottoman rule?⁸⁶ The revolt of Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Idrīsī in particular cast serious doubt on the validity of sectarian affiliation as a central category of knowledge through which the dynamics of local society could be explained and, hence, controlled by the government. Al-Idrīsī, a leader

⁸⁴ It seems that the idea to offer the *imām* a position similar to the one held by the *amīr* of Mecca was first proposed to the sultan in the spring of 1905 by one of his Yemeni A.D.C.s, Colonel Aḥmad b. Muḥammad [al-Khabbānī], and then proposed to Imām Yahyā by a delegation led by *Sharīf* amza b. 'Abdullāh al-Ḥasanī of Mecca; see BOA./Y.PRK.ASK. 226–120, A.D.C. to the sultan, Colonel Aḥmad b. Muḥammad [al-Khabbānī] to the Palace, n.d. [date penciled on *ibid.*, verso: 1322. Z. 29, which corresponds to 6 March 1905], 2; ROY5, 508, Vice-Consul Richardson to Dr. Hussain, 6 November 1906; Baldry, “Imām Yahyā and the Yamani Uprising of 1904–1907,” 66.

⁸⁵ See, for instance, BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 20–67, doc. 2, Muṣṭafā Şevket to the Palace, 27 Teşrin-i evvel 1307/8 November 1891, 3; BOA./Y.EE. 8–20, doc. 3, memorandum, Division General Ferid Paşa to the Palace, n.d. [date on the seal: 322], 2.

⁸⁶ See Ḥasan Qadrī, *Yemen ve hayātī*, 106–7.

of the Aḥmadiya Sufi order, succeeded in uniting various tribal communities in ‘Asir from around 1906–7. Here, after all, was a Sunnī leader who had united a large percentage of the local people under his banner (that had happened before in the case of various uprisings under the leadership of the ‘Ā’id dynasty), and also framed his rebellion as a fight for the implementation of the *sharī’a*. What the government faced was, therefore, a rebellion that displayed an ideology similar to that of the Zaydī *imāms*, but under Sunnī colors, as it were. This, therefore, raised the question of whether or not the revolts of the Zaydī *imāms* in fact had anything to do with sectarian affiliation and could be explained in these terms.⁸⁷

This skepticism was also reflected in the writings of ‘Abdūlganī Senī, who eschewed sect (*madhhab*) as a category of knowledge in his scheme to reform the governance of the Yemen *vilāyeti*. For instance, in his article entitled “Yemen’de maḥākim-i şer’iye. Ārzü-yi halk” [Sharī’a courts—the wish of the people] the *vilāyet mektūbcısı* defended his position, whereby implementation of the *sharī’a*, not *madhhab*, was critical to understanding Yemeni society. If local uprisings were related to the implementation of the *sharī’a* and—as he argued in another article—socio-economic conditions, then the influence of leaders like al-Idrīsī and Imām Yaḥyā could be easily undermined by the imperial government: *sharī’a* courts needed to be established that would operate according to the Shāfi’ī and Zaydī schools of the sacred law. At the same time, the government had to offer employment to local tribesmen—for instance, through the creation of a local militia army—that would pay more than the *imām* was able to offer. It is, therefore, not surprising that ‘Abdūlganī advocated neither the partition of the Yemen *vilāyeti* along sectarian lines nor the devolution of power to Imām Yaḥyā.⁸⁸

One might explain the attachment of many bureaucrats to sectarian affiliation as an explanatory category by the fact that in other parts of the empire, such as in Mount Lebanon or Kosova, Ottoman officials—often under the influence of the European powers—had often used it to make sense of local society.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ See ‘Abdūlganī Senī, “Yemen’de maḥākim-i şer’iye. Ārzü-yi halk,” *Mülkiye* 14 (1 Mart 1326 [14 March 1910]), 34–36.

⁸⁹ See Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*; for Kosova, see Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 95.

Moreover, there is evidence that local political actors, including Imām Yaḥyā, actually reinforced these notions through attempts to cater to Ottoman perspectives on local society in order to further their own agendas. For instance, at one point during the negotiations that punctuated the 1904–7 uprising, Imām Yaḥyā tried to represent himself to Maḥmūd Nedīm Bey, one of the government’s negotiators and later the last governor-general of Yemen, as the leader of the Zaydī sectarian community.⁹⁰ This is particularly significant because his demands were usually not framed in sectarian terms and because his ambitions clearly went beyond ruling over members of the Zaydī sect.⁹¹ What we see here is, most likely, his attempt to adopt “the language of sectarianism” in order to obtain—at the very least and as a pragmatic first step—his own sphere of influence as a community leader under Ottoman sovereignty. Similarly, in a petition to the Palace dated 21 Haziran 1323/4 July 1907, a number of local elite figures from the sub-province (*sancaḡ*) of Ta‘izz sharply distanced themselves from Imām Yaḥyā’s political actions and affirmed that no sectarian, material, or ideological ties existed between them and the former. Thus, they asked the sultan to turn the *sancaḡ* of Ta‘izz either into a separate province or into an independent *sancaḡ* answerable directly to the government in Istanbul.⁹² It is possible that in so doing these local leaders were influenced by the impact of the hardships and the severe fighting that they had experienced during the 1904–7 uprising, when supporters of the *imām* invaded the *sancaḡ* of Ta‘izz and besieged not only its capital, but also the town of Ibb.⁹³ However, another petition sent to the Palace six months later, on 19 Kanun-i evvel 1323/1 January 1908, suggests that what members of the local elite really wanted was not so much to ensure “Shāfi‘ī” independence vis-à-vis the Zaydī *imām*, but rather to rid themselves of the governor-general of Yemen, Aḡmed Feyzi Paṣa. The latter, they claimed, had organized a network of local allies and members of his extended family for the purpose of carrying

⁹⁰ This is suggested, for instance, by Mahmud Nedim, *Arabistan’da bir ömür*, 20–21.

⁹¹ See, for instance, the terms of Imām Yaḥyā’s negotiating position in 1906 as reproduced in al-Wāsi‘ī, *Ta’riḡh al-Yaman*, 365–66.

⁹² BOA./Y.PRK.AZJ. 54–19, doc. 5, petition from various “notables” from the sub-province (*sancaḡ*) of Ta‘izz to the Palace, 21 Haziran 1323/4 July 1907.

⁹³ See Messick, *Calligraphic State*, 46.

out illegal taxation on a vast scale within the *sancağ*.⁹⁴ The creation of an independent province or *sancağ* of Ta‘izz, the petitioners hoped, would lead to the appointment of a different governor, and hence an end of these extortionate practices. The authors prefaced their petition with the remark that the state stood to benefit from the proposed administrative measures because they would shield the area from the incursions of the *imām*, to whom they referred as the “notorious bandit” (*ṣaḳī-i ma‘hūd*); in so doing, they adopted the designation often used by members of the Hamidian regime.⁹⁵

Those policy makers in Istanbul who were involved in the task of ending violence and stabilizing Ottoman rule in Yemen after the advent of a constitutional regime in July 1908—for instance, the grand vizier and former governor-general of Yemen, Hüseyn Hilmî Paşa—favored Memdūh Paşa’s proposal of a sectarian order and combined it with the idea of partitioning the province along sectarian lines. But they also realized that under the prevailing circumstances, devolving power to a Zaydī leader of the government’s choosing would not be practical. To them, then, Imām Yaḥyā appeared as the principal “key” to controlling the Zaydī community. Co-opting him through a form of indirect rule along sectarian lines therefore seemed to offer the best chance to quell opposition. However, the *imām*’s position was ambiguous; he claimed the leadership over all Muslims of Yemen and the title of caliph. Limiting his authority strictly to Zaydīs meant not only neutralizing him as a potential threat to the sultan’s legitimacy, but also assigning him a position in which he would still be useful as an ally of the government.

Bureaucrats like Hüseyn Hilmî did not, in principle, reject the argument that the influence of the *imām* could be undermined by developing the province’s educational or economic infrastructure or by forming a large native army of highland tribesmen. However, they appear to have come to the conclusion that these solutions were long-term measures and thus of little help in a situation in which the most urgent priority was the immediate diffusion of opposition. Thus, there appears to have been consensus among policy makers that there was a need to modify their notion of the customs and dispositions of

⁹⁴ BOA./Y.A.HUS. 517–185, memorandum drawn up by various local *shaykhs* and merchants for the Palace, 27 Zilkade 1325/19 Kanun-i evvel 1323/1 January 1908, 1–2, 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

local society, which they viewed as “uncivilized” and “inferior.” This notion now included sectarian affiliations and leadership of the Zaydī sect through an *imām*. Attempting to institute a form of indirect rule along sectarian lines under Ottoman sovereignty thus meant reconfiguring the ways in which perceived difference was institutionalized in Ottoman Yemen. The struggles over how, exactly, the authority of the *imām* should be defined within this general framework can therefore be viewed as struggles over the specifics of this process.

A number of factors shaped this order during the three years between the fall of 1908 and October 1911. Among them was the competition between the Ottomans and their European rivals, at both the imperial and regional levels. Equally important were the political and economic objectives of local leaders such as Imām Yaḥyā and Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Idrīsī and the competition that developed between the two. Al-Idrīsī, as a leader of the Aḥmadiyya, succeeded in uniting various tribal communities in ‘Asīr from around 1906–7. By 1911, his influence as a leader of anti-Ottoman opposition rivaled that of Imām Yaḥyā. With the logistical support of the British and the Italians during World War I, he established a state in ‘Asīr that eventually came under Saudi rule during the 1920s.⁹⁶

The autonomy plan that the grand vizier, Hüseynin Hilmī Paşa, proposed in the spring of 1909 envisioned Imām Yaḥyā as a Zaydī ruler under Ottoman sovereignty. More specifically, he would be appointed governor-general of a province that would consist of those districts of highland Yemen that the grand vizier considered overwhelmingly Zaydī. The imperial government would continue to rule directly over Şan‘ā’ and the remaining districts of the former Province of Yemen. Moreover, Ottoman military forces would evacuate the new province governed by the *imām*.⁹⁷ Thus, what Hüseynin Hilmī Paşa proposed was essentially an Ottoman withdrawal from the highlands. Just like Sayyid Faḍl Paşa al-‘Alawī more than ten years earlier, the grand vizier wanted to contain the Zaydīs by segregating them administratively from the supposedly loyal Shāfi‘ī areas of Ottoman Yemen. The latter would then be turned into a stronghold from which the Ottoman government could control southwest Arabia.

⁹⁶ See Reissner, “Die Idrisiden in ‘Asir,” 170–90.

⁹⁷ Baldry, “Imām Yaḥyā and the Yamanī Uprising of 1911,” 429.

Ḥüseyin Ḥilmî Paşa's plan gave the *imâm* a status comparable to that of the khedive of Egypt or, more important perhaps, that of the prince of Bulgaria before his unilateral declaration of independence in October 1908. It is, therefore, not surprising that reactions to his initiative among the members of the recently elected Ottoman parliament were not enthusiastic. Past experience seemed to suggest that autonomy along these lines, in which Ottoman sovereignty became purely nominal, was, in fact, the last stage before a given territory gained its complete independence.⁹⁸ In light of the political situation in the Albanian areas of Ottoman Europe, this arrangement seemed to set a dangerous precedent that would encourage secessionist demands from this and other regions of the empire. Similarly, Ḥüseyin Ḥilmî's plan was opposed for regional and geo-strategic reasons by those officials who were prominently involved in negotiating the Da'ân agreement in 1911. For instance, Maḥmūd Nedîm Bey, the last governor-general of Yemen, argued that it would encourage British expansion toward Şan'â'.⁹⁹ He thought Ḥüseyin Ḥilmî's autonomy scheme allowed for a degree of difference that would undermine Ottoman rule in southwest Arabia. More important, when, in the spring and early summer of 1909, an uprising under the leadership of Muḥammad b. 'Alî al-Idrîsî began to spread quickly throughout the sub-province of 'Asîr, the new minister of the interior, Ṭal'at Bey (CUP), decided to suspend all autonomy plans—apparently to allow the government to suppress the rebels in 'Asîr and to negotiate from a position of strength.¹⁰⁰ However, it seems that the government's decision was also due to the fact that Ṭal'at Bey and other members of the CUP had strong reservations against any form of decentralization and, hence, were opposed to the idea of granting a measure of autonomy to the *imâm*.¹⁰¹ Over the next

⁹⁸ See Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: From the End of Byzantium to the Present Day* (London: Phoenix, 2003), 101.

⁹⁹ Mahmud Nedim, *Arabistan'da bir ömür*, 132–33.

¹⁰⁰ ROY5, 550, Lowther to Grey, 27 August 1909.

¹⁰¹ See Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 78. This reservation was also apparent in the way in which the government dealt with al-Idrîsî in 1909–10. By early 1910, the two Ottoman commanders who had led military operations against the uprising in 'Asîr had succeeded in taking important steps toward a political settlement with al-Idrîsî by promising him a form of autonomy. See ROY5, 567–68, Vice-Consul Richardson to Sir Gerald Lowther, 4 April 1910. It was the failure of the imperial government to deliver upon these promises that led to a renewal of hostilities a few months later. See ROY5, 579, Marling to Grey, 4 January 1911; ROY5, 584–85, Richardson to Marling, 13 January 1911. Similarly, Maḥmūd Nedîm notes in his memoirs that Ṭal'at Bey

eighteen months, the government took steps to tighten its grip over the Province of Yemen with the objective of building a position of strength clearly superior to that of the *imām* and al-Idrisī and thus to counteract anything that to them could be likened to decentralization.

In September 1909 Tal'at Bey dispatched twelve battalions of *nizāmīye* infantry to Yemen. This was followed by a substantial naval build-up off the coast of the province, in order to combat more effectively the influx of weapons and ammunition into the Yemen *vilāyeti* and thus to target one of the principal military supply lines of the two leaders and their supporters. By the summer of 1911, the Ottomans had concentrated a total of nine gunboats, torpedo cruisers, and patrol ships in the southern Red Sea region—a flotilla that was stronger both numerically and in terms of firepower than the Italian naval contingent in these waters.¹⁰²

In addition to transferring more units of the Ottoman army and navy to southwest Arabia, the government also made a serious effort to build-up local auxiliary forces. This included a complete reorganization and enlargement of the province's gendarmerie.¹⁰³ The Ottoman authorities also launched an experiment to create volunteer units of locally recruited infantry, their first effort since the creation of the 'Asākir-i Hamīdiye in the early 1880s. These were now referred to as *milla* or—in Ottoman Turkish—*millī taburlar*.¹⁰⁴ Potentially their

reacted with extreme skepticism when, in the spring of 1910, the MP for Ḥudayda and two MPs for Şan'ā, Sayyid Aḥmad al-Kibsi and Sayyid Ḥusayn b. 'Abdulqādir, presented a reform plan to the government that reserved key positions in the *vilāyet's* administration, judiciary, and police force to members of the local elites. While the three parliamentarians vehemently argued for an alliance (*i'tilāf*) with the *imām*, the government did not pursue this option. See Mahmud Nedim Bey, *Arabistan'da bir ömür*, 130.

¹⁰² See ROY5, 637, Richardson to Lowther, 25 October 1911.

¹⁰³ Among those who were positively impressed with the new gendarmerie units was the *vilāyet mektūbcısı* 'Abdūlganī Senī; in contrast, George Wyman Bury, who visited Ottoman Yemen slightly later, in 1912, emphasized their uneven quality. See 'Abdūlganī Senī, "Yemen vilāyeti jandarma tensikāti ve 326 bñdcesi," *Mñlkiye* 10 (1 Teşrin-i sani 1325 [14 November 1909]), 48–52; Wyman Bury, *Arabia Infelix*, 167–75.

¹⁰⁴ BOA./DH.MUİ.1–11/43, doc. 5, 30 Kanun-i sani 1325/12 February 1910. Cf. BOA./DH.MUİ. 15–4/4, doc. 4, ministry of the interior to governor (*mutaşarrıf*) of 'Asir, 27 Mayıs 1326/9 June 1910; BOA./Y.EE. 1–5, doc. 8, note, treasury to the ministry of the interior, 4 Temmuz 1327/17 July 1911; Wavell, *A Modern Pilgrim*, 255–56. These *millī taburlar* existed throughout the remaining years of Ottoman rule in Yemen and took part in all campaigns in southwest Arabia during World War I; see See *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk harbi. VI nci Cilt: Hicaz, Asir, Yemen cepheleleri*

most important step was the parliament's ratification of the long-debated plan to build a railway from Ḥudayda to Ṣan'ā'.¹⁰⁵ By the late fall of 1909, the imperial government had signed a contract with a French–Ottoman banking consortium to finance the railroad's construction. In early 1910, French and Italian engineers began to survey the prospective track in the Tihāma and the foothills up to Hujayla. On 2 March 1911 the actual construction started on the outskirts of Ḥudayda with an official ceremony presided over by the commander-in-chief of Yemen, Field Marshal Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa.¹⁰⁶

The Da'ān Agreement

The *imām* rejected the arrangement proposed by Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī because he sought autonomy over a much larger part of the highlands, including areas that were not considered predominantly Zaydī.¹⁰⁷ Given the military build-up ordered by Ṭal'at Bey, he may have decided to launch a full-scale attack on the Ottoman military forces in December 1910 because he wanted to secure his political objectives before the government's position became too strong. At the same time, it is quite possible that despite his recent alliance with al-Idrisī, one of the

ve Libya harekâtı 1914–1918, ed. Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı (Ankara, 1978), 419, 449–51, 796.

¹⁰⁵ The idea to connect the province's capital and its principal port city with a railway can already be found in Aḥmed Râşid's *Tarih-i Yemen ve Ṣan'ā'*, though it was not until the late 1890s, when the Zaydī *imāms* came to pose an increasingly serious challenge to Ottoman rule, that bureaucrats like Ḥüseyin Ḥilmī Paşa and Ferid Paşa began to stress the extreme urgency of tackling this project. A railway from the coast to Ṣan'ā', they pointed out, would greatly facilitate the transfer of troops to the usual theaters of conflict in the hinterland and thus increase the government's ability to project its power in this part of the empire. See BOA./Y.EE. 8–20, doc. 3, memorandum, Division General Ferid Paşa to the Palace, n.d. [date on the seal: 322], 1. The experience of the 1904–7 uprising in particular, with the temporary loss of Ṣan'ā', seems to have heightened this sense of urgency. For instance, in 1906 the Yemen *vâlisi*, Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa, apparently told British Vice-Consul Richardson that without the railway between Ḥudayda and Ṣan'ā' the Ottoman government would probably be unable to hold Yemen in the long run. ROY5, 501, Richardson to O'Connor, 5 September 1906.

¹⁰⁶ ROY5, 597, Richardson to Lowther, 2 March 1911. For the—ultimately aborted—Ottoman project to build a railway connection between Ḥudayda and Ṣan'ā', see also Jacques Thobie, "Pouvoir, Espace, Finance: le Hodeida-Sanaa—un Chemin de Fer dans les Sables 1899–1913," in *Türkische Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte von 1071 bis 1920. Akten des IV. Internationalen Kongresses, München 1989*, ed. Hans Georg Majer and Raoul Motika (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995), 321–36.

¹⁰⁷ See Baldry, "Imām Yahyā and the Yamani Uprising of 1911," 429.

motives behind the uprising was his assumption that a decisive victory over the Ottomans and possibly the capture of Lower Yemen's rich tax base would result in his receiving broad support among the highland tribes and thus help reestablish a dominant position vis-à-vis the 'Asīrī leader. Al-Idrīsī posed a serious threat to the *imām's* influence since he had obtained, in 1909 "...the allegiance of regions which Imām Yaḥyā also claimed—the Yemeni Tihāmah, and adjacent mountains including those of 'Uqārib, Jabal Rāziḥ, and most of the rest of Khawlān ibn 'Āmir..."¹⁰⁸ Control over the coast, and hence over important entrepôts of regional trade, allowed al-Idrīsī to generate significantly more revenue than the *imām*. He was, therefore, in a position to attract tribesmen and their leaders quite effectively by distributing tax collection privileges, stipends, and weapons.¹⁰⁹

By May 1911, however, both sides faced uncertainty: while the *imām* had not achieved his military goals, the government forces under Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa had also not succeeded in winning a decisive victory beyond driving the rebels back to where they had come from.¹¹⁰ It was under these circumstances that a new round of talks began between Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa, as the representative of the central government, and representatives of the *imām*; these talks eventually led to the conclusion of the Da'ān agreement on 20 October 1911. The minutes of the council of ministers give us a greater understanding, not only into the various stages of the negotiations between the Ottomans and Imām Yaḥyā, but also of the tensions and controversies within the government itself. For instance, it is clear from the minutes of 26 Mayıs 1327/8 June 1911 that there were voices within the government that advocated the resumption of hostilities and, more specifically, a military expedition with the objective of capturing the *imām's* principal stronghold at Shahāra. These cabinet members wanted to accomplish what Aḥmed Feyzī Paşa had failed to do in 1905–6, namely, destroy the *imām's* power base in the northern highlands once and for all. However, it is equally clear that Aḥmed 'İzzet Paşa strongly objected to this idea, and ultimately prevailed.¹¹¹

As shown, Ḥüseyn Ḥilmī Paşa's plan of spring 1909 proposed a partition of the Province of Yemen into two provinces along sectarian

¹⁰⁸ Weir, *A Tribal Order*, 263.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 263–64.

¹¹⁰ See Baldry, "Imām Yaḥyā and the Yamanī Uprising of 1911," 448–49.

¹¹¹ BOA./MV. 153–13, 26 Mayıs 1327/8 June 1911.

lines. The Da‘ān agreement kept the idea of sectarian “zoning” for administrative purposes, but to a far more limited degree. Imām Yaḥyā did not become governor-general of a separate province that would have been coterminous with a Zaydī “zone” in the highlands. Rather, the Province of Yemen remained intact and under the authority of a governor-general from outside the region. However, an imamic-Ottoman condominium was created over the *sancaḳ* of Şan‘ā’ and those districts of the *sancaḳ* of Ta‘izz where Zaydīs constituted at least fifty percent of the population.¹¹² Here, the *imām* exercised authority in so far as he nominated the judges who would deal with cases involving members of all sects from the area covered by the agreement according to the Zaydī version of the *sharī‘a*, as well as the presiding judge and members of a court of appeals that would be based in Şan‘ā’.¹¹³ At the same time, cases among Ḥanafī Sunnis from outside the area to which the agreement applied would fall under the responsibility of judges appointed by the central government.¹¹⁴ Moreover, mixed courts would be created for cases involving Zaydīs and those members of other Muslim sects who did not hail from the area covered by the agreement.¹¹⁵ Finally, only the canonical taxes were to be levied.¹¹⁶ At the same time, all the other administrators continued to be appointed by the central government, and Ottoman garrisons were to be maintained. But even in judicial matters, the *imām*’s authority was limited. The imperial government reserved the right to approve the *imām*’s judicial nominees. More important still, in cases that involved penal judgements based on the principle of retaliation (*kişāş*) the ultimate decision remained in the imperial capital.¹¹⁷

Especially in matters relating to taxation and the judiciary, the government made important concessions to the demands of the *imām*.¹¹⁸

¹¹² See article 1 of the Arabic version of the agreement: BOA./A.DVN.NMH. 37-1, doc. 19, 27 Şevval 1329/7 Teşrin-i evvel 1327/20 October 1911.

¹¹³ See articles 3 and 4 of the agreement, *ibid*.

¹¹⁴ See article 7 of the agreement, *ibid*.

¹¹⁵ See article 8 of the agreement, *ibid*.; the mixed court would be composed of Zaydī and Ḥanafī judges.

¹¹⁶ See article 13, *ibid*.

¹¹⁷ See article 5 of the agreement, *ibid*.

¹¹⁸ The same holds true for a clause in a secret annex to the agreement to which Şükrü Hanioglu has drawn attention. The clause stipulates that the Jews [of Yemen] were to be administered “according to the peace contract of [the second Caliph] ‘Umar’”, that is as *dhimmi*s, or subordinate protected people under Muslim rule. This, however, was against the principle of the equality of all religious groups throughout

The Da‘ān agreement, therefore, granted a Zaydī *imām* a substantial measure of authority within the Province of Yemen for the first time since 1872. He nevertheless remained a junior partner of the Ottomans. The very fact that by the fall of 1911 Imām Yaḥyā was prepared to accept a settlement that offered him a more limited degree of autonomy than the plan of 1909 shows that his political influence had declined. While the Ottoman central government was certainly eager to diffuse at least one major source of conflict in southwest Arabia with a view to bracing itself for an impending conflict with Italy over Tripolitania, at this point the *imām* also needed the alliance with the imperial government in order to hold his position against al-Idrīsī and his allies among the tribes of the northern highlands.¹¹⁹ In fact, it was this particular political constellation that suggests that through the Da‘ān agreement, Imām Yaḥyā became something like a dependent ruler under Ottoman sovereignty. Not only did he become the recipient of a yearly government stipend, but he also received the support of the Ottoman military against the allies of al-Idrīsī. The *imām* became even more dependent on Ottoman support when Nāṣir Mabkhūt al-Aḥmar and other *shaykhs* of Ḥāshid joined al-Idrīsī in opposition to the Da‘ān agreement.¹²⁰ Ottoman troops, weapons, and money allowed him to reconquer the regions of Khawlān b. ‘Āmir and Rāziḥ against the fierce resistance of pro-Idrīsī tribesmen in 1913–14.¹²¹ As part of the military assistance rendered by the imperial government, an Ottoman garrison was established in the *imām*’s capital Khamir.¹²² Thus, for the first time since the 1870s, the highlands outside the Province of Yemen proper came under Ottoman influence through a formal political arrangement.

There is no doubt that the Ottoman government also concluded the Da‘ān agreement with the objective of reducing the immense drain on its financial and human resources that previous conflicts in Yemen had caused. Maḥmūd Nedīm affirmed that the province had to be run without outside funding from the central government.¹²³ But it would be wrong to assume that the agreement was the government’s first

the empire as laid down in the Ottoman constitution; see Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 298, 489n81.

¹¹⁹ This is argued by Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 72.

¹²⁰ Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 223; Weir, *A Tribal Order*, 264.

¹²¹ Weir, *A Tribal Order*, 264–65.

¹²² See Wyman Bury, *Arabia Infelix*, 38, 39–40, 158–59.

¹²³ See Mahmud Nedim, *Arabistan’da bir ömür*, 108.

conscious step toward disengagement from the empire's southernmost province.

Did the agreement resolve the issue of whether or not the *imām* actually contested the sultan's claim to the caliphate? It is clear from the papers of the council of ministers in Istanbul that one of the basic demands of the Ottoman government for entering into negotiations with Imām Yaḥyā was that he would adopt the title Amīr of Shahāra and Zaydī Imām (*Şahāra Emīri ve Zeydī İmāmı*) and refrain from using the title Commander of the Faithful.¹²⁴ While the official titles of the *imām* are not specified in the text of the agreement, the British vice-consul in Ḥudayda, G. A. Richardson, claimed in late October 1911, that with his signature to the agreement, Yaḥyā was indeed "renouncing his claim to the Islamic Caliphate and acknowledging the Sultan of Turkey [*sic*] as the true Caliph."¹²⁵ However, in a letter to Sultan Meḥmed V dated 28 Şevval 1329/22 October 1911, the *imām* referred to the sultan as "the Sultan of Islam and of the Muslims" and signed as "the Imam who trusts in God the Most High Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Hamīd al-Dīn."¹²⁶ Similarly, in Sālim's collection of documents from Yemen, one comes across letters by Imām Yaḥyā from the period after the signing of the Daʿān agreement in which he still refers to himself as Commander of the Faithful.¹²⁷ One explanation could be that officials had come to accept that the *imām* used this title only with reference to the members of the Zaydī sect (not the community of believers in general), as Maḥmūd Nedīm claimed in his memoirs.¹²⁸ At the same time, it is quite possible that those bureaucrats who had negotiated and approved of the agreement had come to the conclusion that since he had accepted responsibilities strictly within the area covered by the agreement, the *imām* could not possibly be (or even be perceived as) a rival claimant to the caliphate.

To the extent that Imām Yaḥyā remained an ally of the imperial government until the end of its rule in the aftermath of World War I, Ottoman bureaucrats had been at least partially successful in integrating

¹²⁴ See BOA./MV. 153–13, 26 Mayıs 1327/8 June 1911; BOA./MV. 153–50, 6 Haziran 1327/19 June 1911.

¹²⁵ See ROY5, 638, Vice-Consul Richardson to Sir G. Lowther, 25 October 1911.

¹²⁶ BOA./İrade-Dahiliye 2142–14, doc. 4, Imām Yaḥyā to Sultan Meḥmed V, 28 Şevval 1329/22 October 1911.

¹²⁷ Sayyid Muştafā Sālim, *Wathā'iq yamāniya: Dirāsa wathā'iqiya ta'rikihiya* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'at al-Fanniya, 1982), 289–91, 295–97.

¹²⁸ Mahmud Nedim, *Arabistan'da bir ömür*, 20.

him into the empire in a way that stabilized their position in south-west Arabia. They were less successful, however, in their attempts to achieve control over all Zaydīs through an alliance with the *imām*, as many supposedly Zaydī tribes sided with al-Idrīsī. The continued use of the title Commander of the Faithful might reflect the government's limited ability to confine Yaḥyā to the role of a community leader. Indeed, there is evidence that the *imām* continued to appeal to the loyalty of people beyond the Zaydī sect.¹²⁹ Blumi has suggested that the Ottomans in Yemen, like other imperial rulers, found that the categories of knowledge that informed their governmental strategies did not correspond to the social and political complexities on the ground.¹³⁰ While the Da‘ān agreement helped ensure Imām Yaḥyā's political survival until the end of World War I, John Willis argues that the *imām* drew heavily on Ottoman military and administrative expertise in his efforts to build an independent state with distinctly modern features after the end of Ottoman rule in early 1919. For example, he adopted the administrative sub-divisions of the former Province of Yemen, and created a new, standing army on Ottoman lines with the help of soldiers and military officers who had chosen to stay. In terms of its concepts and practices, this new state differed significantly from the dynastic state that Yaḥyā's Qāsimī predecessors had run.¹³¹

What kind of political space was Ottoman Yemen on the eve of World War I? How imperial was it? How colonial? By the time the Ottoman Empire entered World War I as an ally of Germany and Austria–Hungary, more than two decades of struggles and contestation at the local and larger imperial levels had produced a political order that still reflected a crucial tension of empire, namely the dilemma of how to accommodate local particularity in ways that would give the local people and their leaders a stake in Ottoman rule without undermining it. In October 1911, the central government accepted key demands of Imām Yaḥyā, but it did not make him the autonomous ruler over the Zaydī parts of Ottoman Yemen. The *imām* was incorporated into the structures of provincial government, but the Da‘ān agreement restricted his functions within the Province of Yemen to that of a Zaydī community leader who exercised judicial authority over the indigenous

¹²⁹ See, for instance, Wyman Bury, *Arabia Infelix*, 159, 203; Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, 7.

¹³⁰ Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, chaps. 1, 3–4.

¹³¹ See John M. Willis, “Unmaking North and South: Spatial Histories of Modern Yemen,” Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2007, 283–84, 337.

population of a specific part of the highlands yet who was under the sovereignty of the Sunnī sultan-caliph. While the removal of *shaykhs* and the cancellation of their tax collection privileges were no longer on the government's agenda, these local elites did not receive the prominent position in provincial government that Aḥmed ʿIzzet Paşa and several Yemeni parliamentarians had demanded in 1909–10. Similarly, the changes in the province's fiscal system and judiciary differentiated Yemen to an unprecedented degree from many *vilāyets* in Anatolia and geographical Syria. At the same time, however, policy makers in Şan'ā and Istanbul withdrew from taking differentiation a step further and declaring Yemen a colony because they were concerned that this might undermine their claims to imperial unity and the equality of all Ottomans, and thus further the empire's fragmentation. Ottoman Yemen was an imperial space also in the sense that rights and privileges were assigned differentially according to membership in social and sectarian groups, be they tribes, *sāda*, Shāfi'īs or Zaydīs. Most importantly, the Daʿān agreement gave Zaydīs a status and an officially sanctioned community framework that resembled those of the empire's Christian and Jewish denominations. Yet, the agreement created a zone of Zaydī domination under Ottoman sovereignty, not a Zaydī millet: after all, the *imām* was accorded significant judicial authority over all individuals who hailed from the area to which the agreement applied. The strong position of local intermediaries in the context of provincial governance was also an important element of imperial rule.

At the same time, Ottoman Yemen was a colonial space insofar as the political order that had come into existence by 1914 reflected the idea of Ottoman bureaucrats—that the “backward” could not be ruled like the “civilized” and that local difference and “backwardness” needed to be tamed and ordered in a way that ensured the continuity of Ottoman domination. The degree to which these bureaucrats advocated the co-optation of local elites was in tune with the colonialist idea that the locals should evolve slowly within a system of governance that took into account their customs and dispositions. Government officials emphasized the need to recruit these elites as administrators and military officers at the provincial level, not to send them to other provinces or to prepare them for service in the ministerial bureaucracy. While there were no legal barriers preventing Yemenis from serving in these parts of the empire, the personnel files of *sharī'a* judges and civil administrators suggest that co-optation did, indeed, remain largely local. However, even by 1914, ethnic or legal boundaries that divided the colonizers from the colonized could not be found.

CONCLUSION

From the conquest of highland Yemen in 1871–73 to the end of World War I, Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers sought to maintain their presence in southwest Arabia by using a range of concepts and strategies that shared many characteristics with those adopted by contemporary European colonial regimes in various parts of the world, but differed from these in crucial ways. First and foremost, Ottoman policy makers and their European counterparts shared the fundamental dilemma common to all imperial rulers, namely the problem of how to balance incorporation and differentiation. Further, they expressed this dilemma in an idiom of rule that emphasized the need to remake the local peoples in the name of a civilizing mission, but insisted, at the same time, that the “backward” could not be ruled like the (more) “civilized” in the metropole. In both Ottoman Yemen and European colonial contexts, this insistence was reflected in governmental institutions and practices that were meant to tame and contain, but not to erase local “backwardness” and, hence, difference. Politics of difference was therefore central to the ways in which Ottomans and Europeans governed local peoples. However, in contrast to what occurred in French West Africa, British India, or the Dutch East Indies, in Ottoman Yemen it is less clear to what extent differentiation demarcated boundaries of discrimination and exclusion that clearly separated the colonizers from the colonized. In the legal sphere, for instance, there was no attempt to distinguish natives from and subordinate them to officials and civilians from out of the province. Until 1911, at least, all residents of Yemen fell under the authority of the same courts.

Just as important, we have seen that Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen did not produce a clear binary of “self” and “other.” To be sure, Ottoman officials often disparaged the local people as backward and uncivilized, and emphasized that they could not be governed like Ottoman subjects in other provinces; yet, the same officials rarely specified what, exactly, these other provinces were, or, compared to whom the people in the Province of Yemen were supposed to be backward and uncivilized. In other words, the “other” in this context was

juxtaposed to a rather vague “we.”¹ By the same token, most officials we have encountered in this study would have agreed that Yemen was not part of the metropole; who and which provinces in fact constituted the metropole was much less clear. It is, therefore, not surprising that anxieties about officials going native, the blurring of racial boundaries, or of locals “mimicking” Ottoman officials were largely absent both from official discourse about local peoples and as factors of policy making. By contrast, it seems to have been locals who were concerned about the demarcation and crossing of boundaries between Ottoman and local, as evidenced by the refusal of local officials to wear frock coat and fez, the ridicule that local chroniclers reserved for Ottoman officials donning turban and *jubba*, and the refusal of *sāda* families to allow marriages between officials from outside the province and their daughters.

Ottoman bureaucrats began by assuming that they could—in the words of Adeeb Khalid—“conquer” the difference of the local population within a short period of time and integrate them politically, if not culturally, into the more uniform imperial structures that had been established in other parts of the empire since the *Tanẓīmāt*.² Already by the late 1870s, however, this optimism had given way to the notion that provincial governance, in significant ways, had to be adapted to the “customs and dispositions” of the local people. What these were and how different exactly Yemen could be, remained intensely contested among officials, local notables, and the Zaydī *imāms*: no stable rule of difference ever emerged. As a result, the balance between incorporation and differentiation changed frequently during the period under study. In this context, it is interesting to see what the central government considered, at different points in time, the limits of differentiation. For example, while they were prepared to dismantle the *niẓāmīye* courts in the course of the 1880s, discontinuing the application of the Ottoman criminal code and the *mecelle* was not an option until after the end of the Hamidian regime in July 1908. Similarly, while policy makers in Istanbul and Şan‘ā’ showed considerable flexibility in terms of adapting taxation to local conditions, before the Da‘ān agreement it was not prepared to limit taxation to the collection of the canonical

¹ For a similar observation in the context of imperial Russia see Burbank, “An Imperial Rights Regime,” 404.

² See Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization,” 238.

taxes, as frequently demanded by the Zaydī *imāms*. Similarly, appointing Imām Yaḥyā governor of the Zaydī portion of the province or declaring the Yemen *vilāyeti* a colony outside the realm of regular Ottoman provinces were measures that were debated among senior bureaucrats between 1908 and 1910 but—as we have seen—ultimately not adopted. From the central government’s perspective, these measures would have taken differentiation too far and thus undermined Ottoman sovereignty.

During the four decades prior to World War I, the struggles about how different Yemen could be focused to varying degrees of intensity on a range of particular issues, namely law and the judiciary, the devolution of power to local intermediaries (including the Zaydī *imāms*), the practices of tax collection, and the creation of a locally recruited volunteer force. While officials often emphasized the importance of introducing censuses, cadastral surveys, and conscription, there is no evidence that at any point during these four decades did the central government and its local representatives actually attempt to introduce any of these measures anywhere in the Province of Yemen. This distinguished Ottoman Yemen from most imperial provinces, except Shkodër, Tripolitania, and the Hijaz. The Province of Syria or the District of Jerusalem, for example, included areas where these measures were implemented and others where they were not. In this part of the empire Eugene Rogan has identified a frontier of the late Ottoman state that was, on the eve of World War I, still expanding. In 1911 cadastral surveys, censuses, and conscription finally caught up with the people of ‘Ajlūn and Salṭ in Ottoman Transjordan and with the inhabitants of Jabal Ḥawrān. This trajectory of an expanding Ottoman state with a comparable shift away from differentiation toward greater incorporation was absent from Ottoman Yemen. It was in the early 1880s, at the beginning of Ottoman rule over highland Yemen, not in 1914, that the Province of Yemen, in terms of its governmental institutions and practices, was most similar to provinces in western and central Anatolia, or in Ottoman Syria. If we look at Ottoman rule in Yemen as a case of state-building, the Da‘ān agreement marks the failure of a forty-year effort to bring the centralizing *Tanzīmāt* state to this part of the empire’s periphery, and can be seen as the beginning of a transition from empire to a Yemeni (nation) state. However, if we study the Ottoman presence in southwest Arabia after 1872 as a case of empire-building, the integration of the *imām* into the structures of provincial government appears as a remarkable success, especially

given the three decades of fierce struggle with the imperial government that had preceded it.

To an important degree, Ottoman politics of difference was shaped by the fact that Yemen was an imperial borderland where the Ottoman government faced competition not only from local leaders, but also from various European powers who had acquired colonial possessions in close proximity to the Province of Yemen. Further, the terrain of the province itself and its distance from the capital Istanbul and the major areas of recruitment of the imperial army in Anatolia and geographical Syria made it very difficult for the government to project its power effectively—despite steamships, the telegraph, and the Suez Canal. Yemen was, indeed, as a senior official put it in 1910, the empire's "south pole." More important, perhaps, was the fact that most of the region had not been part of the Ottoman Empire since the 1630s, when the Qāsimīs, a local dynasty of Zaydī *imāms*, brought an end to the first period of Ottoman rule in Yemen. Following the expulsion of the Ottomans, the Qāsimī rulers established an independent polity that lasted for the next two hundred years, a polity that was not even nominally under Ottoman sovereignty. As a result, and very much in contrast to what occurred in Egypt or geographical Syria during this period, Yemen did not experience the emergence of a local Ottoman elite.³ At the same time, particularly in the highland regions, the population retained a strong memory of the period before the advent of Ottoman rule, and, in the form of the Zaydī imamate, looked to an alternative concept of legitimacy and authority. In the end, this Zaydī notion of order proved immensely effective in galvanizing discontent with Ottoman rule into a powerful resistance movement. For these reasons, too, the agents of the imperial government found it extremely difficult to find acceptance for the institutions and practices of the *Tanzīmāt* state in this particular part of the empire.

Finally, Ottoman politics of difference in Yemen was also shaped by a number of factors which, in turn, reflected the particular position of the Ottoman Empire as an object of European imperial designs and encroachments. Among these, the serious financial constraints that the central government faced as a result of its indebtedness to European creditors was significant in limiting its capability to project power in southwest Arabia.

³ For this process see Toledano, "The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites," 145–62.

This study also contributes to our understanding of how Ottoman bureaucrats and military officers learned from the British experience of managing “backward peoples.” What Ottoman observers primarily associated with, and found attractive about, British colonial governance was its ability to rule “according to the customs and dispositions” of the local peoples and, more specifically, through their leaders. The principal reason for the success of British colonial rule seemed to be the native chief or local ruler under British sovereignty who governed on behalf of the crown and ensured British domination in a cost-effective way, not the Oxbridge-educated district officer of the Indian Civil Service who managed the locals under his charge. In this respect, policy makers and political commentators in Istanbul and Şan‘ā’ resembled many of their French, German, Japanese, Russian, or U.S. contemporaries who often looked toward forms of indirect rule in various parts of the British Empire for models of how to run distant colonial dependencies. As we have seen, Ottoman interest in this particular form of British colonial governance stemmed not only from the fact that it promised to offer a solution to the perennial problems of running the empire on a shoestring; “indirect rule” also attracted the attention of policy makers because there were precedents for it both in the long Ottoman history of governing a large, spread out, and differentiated empire, and in the way some of the empire’s internal and external peripheries were run.

Associating the devolution of power to the Zaydī *imām* with a style of governance that seemed to ensure the greatness of the world’s foremost imperial power was a way to repackage and rehabilitate a form of imperial rule that had served the Ottomans well in the past, but that many bureaucrats from the early nineteenth century on viewed as furthering the empire’s disintegration. Thus, while the Ottomans did not actually adopt the residency system, or any other specific form of indirect rule practiced in Britain’s Asian or African colonies, the British practice of ruling through local leaders in general inspired those policy makers in Şan‘ā’ and Istanbul who attempted to re-fashion provincial government in the sense that it enabled a debate about the possibilities for local autonomy in Ottoman Yemen. At the same time, the Da‘ān agreement shows the influence of Ottoman forms of communal and regional autonomy. The position of the *imām* as defined in the agreement looked more like that of a millet leader or of the *amīr* and *sharīf* of Mecca than that of an Indian prince. Imām Yaḥyā became a dependent ruler only in areas that were not part of the Province of

Yemen. As we have seen, these arrangements reflected the central government's concern that granting autonomy to a part of the Province of Yemen would encourage nationalist groups in other parts of the empire and invite British intervention in Ottoman Yemen. In other words, real and perceived threats at the regional and larger imperial levels made the adoption of indirect rule as practiced in British India or the hinterland of Aden appear unsuitable. In short, Ottoman readings, especially of British colonial rule, helped fashion the political order that was ushered in through the Da'ān agreement. These readings, in turn, reflected the empire's connections to a larger colonial world dominated by European powers.

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