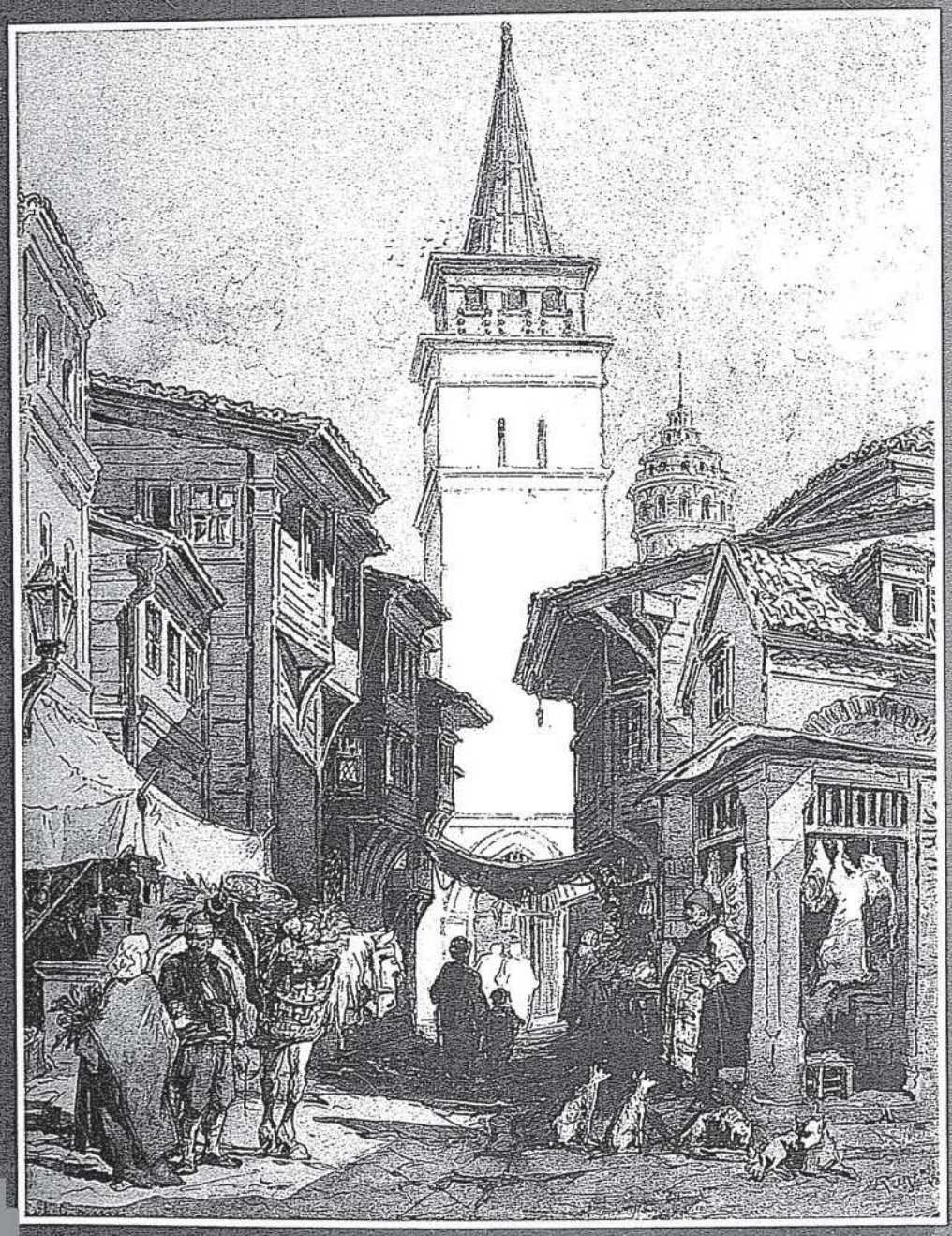
ISTANBUL AS SEEN FROM A DISTANCE

Centre and Provinces in the Ottoman Empire



Edited by
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SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL

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A Glimpse from the Periphery: Medina in the Young Turk Era

HASAN KAYALI

The repeated failures of Ottoman governments to stem the loss of large European territories to nationalist and secessionist movements throughout the 19th century shifted the focus of their centralising policies in the last quarter of the century to the Asian periphery, including Eastern Anatolia, Syria, Iraq and Arabia.[1] This reorientation had relatively little effect on the province of the Hijaz in Western Arabia, in part due to its distance from the capital, but more especially because the province traditionally held a unique place in the Ottoman order. The privileges that the Hijaz enjoyed set it apart from the Arab societies in the Fertile Crescent that were being more closely integrated into the imperial centre. It also lacked the large urban centres with agricultural hinterlands in which the relationship between the imperial government and local society was subjected to renegotiation under the pressure of novel economic forces. Yet at the beginning of the 20th century, the town of Medina, situated in northern Hijaz, emerged as a site of Ottoman penetration of the Arabian frontier. Particularly after 1908, when the centralist policies of the Young Turk governments brought a new dimension to Ottoman integration of the provinces, one that was less dependent on the sultan's patronage, the relationship of Medina to Istanbul, and together with it, the mutual vantages from the imperial centre and northern Arabian peninsula, underwent transformation. This chapter will examine the immediate impact on Medina of the twin forces of regime change in Istanbul and the town's incorporation into the Ottoman railroad network.

The Hijaz had always been a focal point of the Ottoman order. The possession of the holy places imparted legitimacy to the Ottoman administration and the House of Osman and was a crucial expedient in maintaining hegemony over vast lands populated by Muslims. In contrast to the rest of the Arabian peninsula and the remote periphery of the empire elsewhere, the Ottomans paid particular attention to preserving and reinforcing their authority in Mecca and Medina and their environs. They achieved this by direct patronage of the grand sharifs of Mecca, descendants of the Prophet's family, who were recognised as hereditary overseers of the holy sites and were held in esteem within the empire and beyond. While acquiescing in tribal feuds and the consequent shifts of local power from

1 See, for instance, Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998) and Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

one shaykhly family to another throughout the peninsula, Istanbul strove to protect the sharifs of Mecca from the depredations of neighbouring power-seekers. It devised mechanisms to maintain the sharifs' loyalty to Istanbul, not the least of which was keeping the scions of the sharifian family under watchful eyes in the capital, and, in the late period, granting them high office during their uncertain wait to be appointed amir of Mecca.

The distance to the Arabian peninsula and difficulty of communication made supervision difficult. The Ottoman government confronted vital threats to its hegemony, occasionally in the form of challenges from the grand sharif himself in alliance with local elements, but more ominously, from neighbouring chiefs defying sharifian authority as well. The Wahhabi predations in the holy places, motivated by an ideology that justified violence within the holy sites in the name of preserving the purity of religion, was the most significant of these challenges after the turn of the 19th century,[2] while the revolt of Sharif Hussein in 1916 with British encouragement and assistance constituted the most consequential act of defiance by a grand sharif in office. Such exceptions notwithstanding, the Ottomans succeeded in preserving their authority in the Hijaz for several centuries, despite the distance, through dexterous deployment of politics and coercive power. The patronage of the grand sharifs, coupled with the usual functions of the provincial governor seated in or near Mecca, secured the Hijaz for the Ottoman government.

This Ottoman success owed in part to techniques of governance that were peculiar to the Hijaz and to the special dispensations the province enjoyed. In the 19th century, Mecca and Medina were islands in a vast frontier region. As the locus of the pilgrimage, both towns, particularly Mecca, were well-plugged into Ottoman and global circuits, as was Jidda, the Hijaz's entrepôt for the pilgrimage. However, the Hijaz preserved prerogatives more characteristic of the unincorporated open frontier. The Hijazis were exempt from military service and most forms of taxation, the two institutions that provided for contact between local society and the seat of government, generated bargains and partly determined a province's perceptions of the centre. Unlike in other tribal regions, sedentarisation did not become a deliberate or systematic policy in the case of the Hijaz Bedouin.

The politics of notables that flourished in the Fertile Crescent applied to the Hijaz only in superficial ways in the absence of commercialisation based on land or merchant capital circulating beyond the region and taxed by government authorities. While the sharifs of Mecca can be considered to have belonged to a bureaucratic elite (even though the office of the grand sharifate was outside the administrative hierarchy), the Hijaz lacked a bureaucratic-landed or bureaucratic-commercial elite, and thus contrasted with territories that became politically and socioeconomically integrated into the centre.[3] The region was not pulled by the centrifugal forces generated by the Tanzimat, but rather enjoyed an exceptionalism that ensured the sway of local custom and established practice, as is evident, for instance, in the perfunctory enforcement in the province of the mid-

2 Zekeriya Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti: Vehahabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti'nin Ortaya Çıkışı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998), 24-8.

3 See, for instance, Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Rogan, *Frontiers*.

ثروت فنون

پنجشنبه کونلری چیقار منافع ملك و دولته خادم مصور عثمانلی غزته‌سی

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Making headlines in the weekly press. Inauguration of the Dera-Zerka section of the Hicaz railway, 16 October, 1902.

19th century ban on slavery.[4] The pilgrimage managed by imperial authorities closed the Hijazi frontier precociously, albeit partially, without engendering fundamental sociopolitical transformations on the ground. Thus, the absence in the

4 The concession was in deference to the intricate relations between the grand sharif and his tribal allies and interlocutors, who not only owned slaves but continued to trade in them. Hasan Kayalı, "Hicaz Vilayetinde II. Meşrutiyet: Değişim ve Devamlılık," in *II. Meşrutiyet'i Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Ferdan Ergut (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), 134-5.

Hijaz of the kind of politics of notables that developed in the northern Arab provinces, coupled with the province's unique position from a religious point of view, engendered atypical mutual perceptions between the capital and the Hijaz. The pilgrimage oriented the centre towards the Hijaz more than the converse: while important segments of local society in the Fertile Crescent increasingly looked to Istanbul,[5] the Hijaz had only a blurry view of the centre until the beginning of the 20th century.

The town of Medina, a *sancak* (or sub-province) of the Hijaz province (headquartered in Mecca after 1841), shared the general characteristics of the Hijaz province and its relationship with Istanbul. As the northernmost of the three major towns, the other two being Mecca and Jidda, it was closer to the "core" of the empire and within relatively easier reach by land. The Ottoman government gave the designation *muhafızlık* to Medina, which suggests that it was a military outpost, but its administrative status was the same as an ordinary *sancak*. Its designation as a military outpost had to do with the safe conduct of the pilgrim caravans coming from the north. It did not signify an extension of administrative power into the Hijaz or a higher degree of incorporation of Medina. On the contrary, Medina continued to be removed from the gaze of both Ottoman central authorities and the foreign consuls.

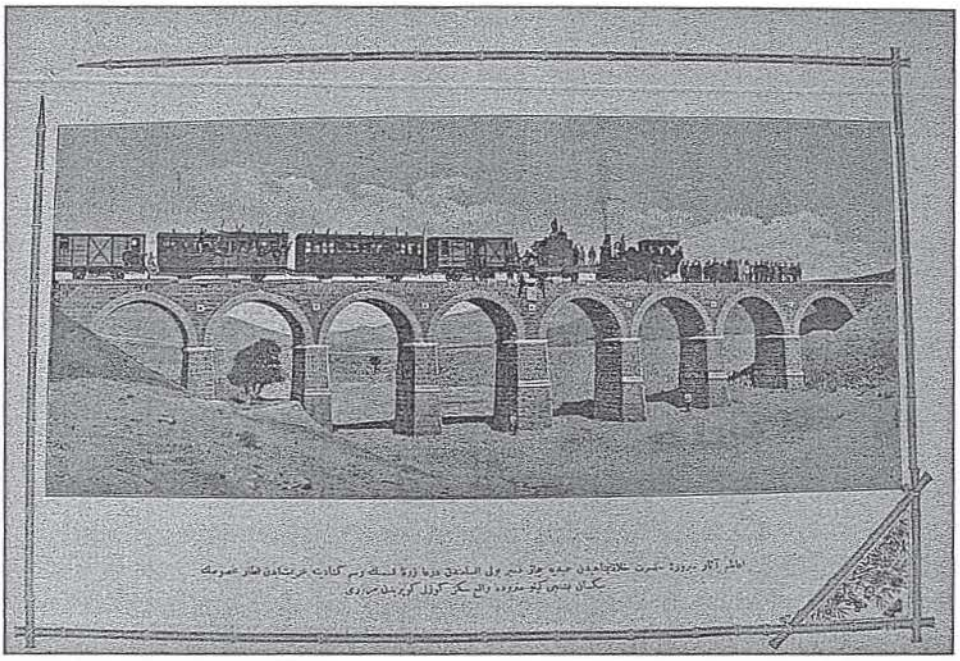
At the turn of the 20th century, Medina did not witness the pre-revolutionary anti-Hamidian political ferment seen in some parts of the empire. The Hijaz railway project[6] and the town's tradition as a centre of religious learning had symbolically placed the Holy Cities at the forefront of Sultan Abdulhamid's Islamic policy. Medina was removed from Young Turk centres of dissidence. Unlike other distant localities such as Libya or Egypt, it was not a destination of exile for Young Turk activists. Its name came up, however, in association with subversive schemes. As early as 1879, 35 years in advance of Sharif Hussein's fateful cooperation with Britain against Istanbul (Arab Revolt), the British consul in Jidda, James Zohrab, schemed to separate the Hijaz for the British in order to better secure the colony of India. He believed that a secret society sought to establish an Islamic state with Medina as its centre and wrote, "Medina, which confined within itself all the requirements, that is remoteness from Europe, difficulty of access, sacredness of the city and purity of the Mussulman character, indicated itself as the natural centre of the faith".[7] Medina had been similarly mentioned among *salafi* circles as the envisaged site of an anti-Hamidian intrigue, namely a meeting of Arab notables to discuss an Arab caliphate to supplant the Ottoman sultan.[8] As late as June 1908, "rumours of a pan-Islamic conference in

5 In Damascus, for instance, wall-paintings in the residences of the local notability started to depict scenes from Istanbul, reflecting the increasingly cohesive links between Damascus and the capital forged during the 19th century. Stefan Weber, *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808-1918)*, 2 vols. (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2009), vol. 1, 290-301. Residences in Istanbul, on the other hand, depicted illustrations of the holy sites in the Hijaz. J.B. Harley and D. Woodward, *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 217.

6 On the Hijaz railway, see William Ochsenwald, *The Hijaz Railroad* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980); Ufuk Gülsoy, *Hicaz Demiryolu* (Istanbul: Eren, 1994); Murat Özyüksel, *Hicaz Demiryolu* (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 2000).

7 Martin S. Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 13-14.

8 In 1900, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi published in his *Umm al-Qura* a fanciful description of an Arab congress to elect a new caliph. Rumours of congresses held in the Hijaz circulated for many years. Ibid., 33.



An eight arched railway viaduct on the Dera-Zerka section of the Hicaz railway.
Irfan Dağdelen Archive

Medina" circulated in British consular documents.[9] The choice of Medina as the possible site of the proposed meeting had to do first and foremost with its isolation, though as the seat of the Islamic state under the Prophet and the rightly-guided caliphs it would have been the right venue for a conference on the fate of the caliphate. However, any such scheme was outside the mainstream of Young Turk opposition that eventuated in the 1908 revolution.

* * *

In the early summer of 1908, an observer in Medina would not have seen the Young Turk Revolution coming. When the events of July ushered the revolution in, and the news reached Medina, he would have been hard-pressed to envisage any implications for remote northern Arabia. At that very juncture, however, the same observer might have expected significant transformations for his town in anticipation of the imminent completion of the Damascus-Medina stretch of the Hijaz railway, with its potential to radically transform the town's communications. The railway opened within a few months, on 1 September 1908. As it ushered in both anticipated and unanticipated transformations, it also became integrally intertwined with the emanations of the 1908 revolution in the Hijaz and beyond.

The events in Istanbul and the opening of the railway reinforced each other to establish Medina as an important site from which to deploy administrative and ideological power into the Arabian periphery during the Second Constitutional Period. As the central government consolidated its rule in northern Hijaz, Medina's administrative status changed to reflect the new relationship. The

9 "Reports ... state that conference assembles shortly at Medina for the purpose of discussing the desirability of proclamation by the Pan-Islamic League of a general war against unbelievers." FO [United Kingdom National Archives/Foreign Office] 195/2273, 20 June 1908.

enhanced pilgrim traffic through Medina provided opportunities for the new regime to buttress its legitimacy as the new communications altered traditional power relations and societal dynamics. The year 1908 marked a salient point in the impingement of Ottoman modernity on Medina and the larger province.

Medina did not share some of the usual modes in which 19th century modernity insinuated itself into the Ottoman provinces, particularly as far as the role of foreign interests was concerned. In other words, the changing relationship between the centre and Medina was not modulated significantly by colonial forces or capitalist penetration.[10] Despite the magnitude of the Damascus-Medina railway line as an infrastructural project, Medina was spared the dislocations associated with enterprises of similar size elsewhere in the empire, typically constructed with foreign know-how, by foreign personnel and with massive foreign funding. The construction of the Hijaz railway entailed relatively little foreign involvement. Its chief architect, Meissner Pasha, and the technical advisors were German. Some 1,000 Italian workers were employed in the construction in areas that were not off-limit to non-Muslims.[11] The railway was largely subsidised by the government and contributions of Muslims all over the world, and the workforce consisted mostly of enlisted men of the Ottoman army.

The strict interdicts against non-Muslim entry into the holy places and the absence of Christian communities in the Hijaz kept the missionaries out. Thus, the infrastructural reinforcement that accompanied missionary activity elsewhere and brought educational, health-related and other services was nonexistent in the Hijaz.[12] Resources of the central government went to Medina to extend the reach of the centre, but Istanbul was not primarily motivated by a need to compete with European capitalism or missionary institutions. For local actors, the absence of the foreign missionary and merchant precluded the possibility that foreign powers could be played off against one another or against the centre to enhance local power. The European powers were not entirely indifferent to the Hijaz, of course. European consuls followed the rituals of the pilgrimage, including the quarantines, closely from their headquarters in Jidda because of the large scale participation of their colonial Muslim subjects. The British, in particular, used Muslim consular officials to monitor the pilgrimage, as the venues were closed to non-Muslims. Medina, situated some 250 miles to the north of Jidda and Mecca, remained relatively elusive.

The completion of the railway altered the economic and political equilibrium in the largely tribal society of northern Arabia and the Hijaz province. The railway also became the conduit for the emanations of the revolutionary upheaval in the capital, further impacting the status quo in the region. Even before the actual completion of the project, the implications of the railway for caravan trade and transport did not escape the notice of tribal groups inhabiting the desert land

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10 In this regard, the impact of the major infrastructural projects in Beirut and Medina can be compared. In Beirut, the construction of the port during the preceding decade reflected and engendered a triangulation of power relations between local actors, the imperial government and European capitalism. Jens Hanssen, *Fin De Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). In Medina, there was hardly any local initiative and involvement in the construction of the railway.

11 Ernesto Mario Bolasco, *Damasco-Medina: Ferrovia Avveniristica (1901-1908): Mille Operai Italiani Nel Deserto Dell'hedjaz* (Italy: F. Angeli, 1999). (I thank Dr. Nora Lafi for this reference.) Non-Muslims were not allowed south of al-cUla, some 400 kilometres north of Medina.

12 For a discussion of the missionary factor in Transjordan, see Rogan, *Frontiers*, 122-59.

Construction work along the Hicaz railway.
Istanbul Municipality Atatürk Library

between Damascus and Medina. Some tried to hamper the progress of the construction and agitated against the government forces. However, the major consequences of the railway, including rebellion and sabotage, came only after the first train cars rolled into the Medina station in September 1908.

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In 1908, unrest was palpable in Southern Syria and the Hijaz. Railway construction, as it approached Medina from Damascus, threatened vested economic interests. Between Medina and the coast, unruly Bedouin behaviour, such as the March attack on the Egyptian caravan, which was attributed by the German consulate in Cairo to Bedouin agitation against the railway, may have been motivated by the anticipation of the railway's adverse consequences on their trade.[13] The aggrieved Bedouin made their opposition to the railway absolutely clear by attacking Kazım Pasha, the minister responsible for the Hijaz railway and, as such, the highest Ottoman official to be stationed in the Hijaz, 50 kilometres from Medina, killing and wounding soldiers in his retinue.[14] The ferment was not restricted to the north of Medina. The impending arrival of the line to Medina also disturbed the Bedouin between Medina and Mecca, even though the railway was still far from reaching its prime destination, Mecca. Further south, the merchants of Jidda, Mecca's Red Sea port, feared the competition from the railway too. Even though the new railway did not have significant implications for the mainstay of Jidda's economy, the transport and provisioning of pilgrims from the southern seas, the anticipated decline in the import of barley, the primary camel food for which demand would decline, became a concern for Jidda merchants.[15] For the Bedouin engaged in caravan trade between Jidda and Mecca, there was the added threat that the government was now turning to the construction of a railway line from coastal Jidda to Mecca.[16] Conversely, the resi-

13 Auswärtiges Amt (AA) [German Foreign Ministry] Türkei 165/Band 28/29, Cairo, 13 March 1908.
14 FO 618/3, Damascus, 1 April 1908.
15 FO 195/ 2286, Jidda, 3 Feb 1908.
16 Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv [Austrian State Archives] (HSS) Politisches Archiv (PA) Türkei 38/341, Jidda, 17 April 1908.

dents of Rabigh, a seaport midway between Medina and Mecca, close to which the Medina-Mecca portion was planned to pass along a main pilgrim caravan route, favoured the Hijaz railway.[17] The railway and the prospects of further extension not only pitted segments of local society against an impending governmental reach of unprecedented nature but also crystallised conflicts of interest at the local level.

The military authorities in Istanbul informed the grand vizier that the military forces necessary to neutralise the intrigue and opposition the railway had set afoot in northern Hijaz were lacking. Istanbul resorted to the time-honoured policy of sticks and carrots. Little could be done beyond sending the *muhafiz* cash and supplies and asking him to offer the "right advice" to the local notables in order to seek their compliance.[18] The ministry of finance approved the redirecting of funds from budgetary allocations for the Anatolian and European provinces. Just before the outbreak of the revolution in Istanbul, a Hamidiye cavalry force of some 1,000 Kurdish troops arrived to protect the railway.[19] In the second half of 1908, bloody battles took place between the military forces based in Medina and surrounding tribal groups. Longstanding conflicts of interest may have been aggravated by perceived threats from the railway. In July, tribesmen from the Masruh division of the Harb tribe attacked troops camped two miles from Medina at Bir Ruma, possibly charged with the protection of the wells. The battle resulted in the death of some 300 Bedouin.[20]

Confronted with the extension of direct government authority into the Hijaz, the province's highest officials had to determine their stance in the face of changing power relations. Both Vali Ratib Pasha, the governor of the Hijaz, and Grand Sharif 'Ali had forged alliances with local groups in the region, granting them freedom of action in return for personal benefits. The Hamidian government tolerated these symbiotic relations for the sake of maintaining tranquillity. Such was the lure of material gain that Ratib Pasha had remained as governor for 13 years. The British consul characterised Ratib as "an 'old Turk' of a bad type", acting in collusion with the equally corrupt grand sharif.[21] Ratib Pasha abetted the Bedouin opposition to the railway and allied himself with "local Arab magnates in opposing the extension of the railway which would ultimately deprive [him], the Grand Sharif, and others of sources of illicit private income derived from their organized extortion in connection with the camel transport".[22]

In the midst of the commotion about the railroad, the revolutionary events of July 1908 do not appear to have resonated in Medina. The city had enjoyed telegraphic connectivity since 1901, and it is unlikely that the news reached the Hijaz late. The more plausible explanation for the seeming ignorance or indifference was that the import of the upheaval in Istanbul and the European provinces may not have been fully appreciated: it may have been seen as a passing disturbance, or, more likely, the news may have been deliberately sup-

17 FO 195/2286, Jidda, 3 Feb 1908.

18 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi [Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives] (BOA), Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BEO) 247962, 5 May 1908.

19 FO 618/3, no. 26, Damascus, 22 July 1908.

20 FO 195/2286, no. 62, Jidda, 30 July 1908.

21 FO 195/ 2286, no. 34, Jidda, 8 May 1908.

22 FO 195/ 2286, no. 13, Jidda, 29 February 1908. (Quoted text from marginal note dated 15 March 1908). Also FO 195/ 2286, no. 30, Jidda, 14 April 1908.

pressed by the top administrators, who more than suspected the implications for their careers.

After the Young Turk takeover, the confluence of the prospect that the railway would allow for the extension of central rule into the Hijaz and the revolutionary government's determination to purge the bureaucracy of Abdulhamid's men led to immediate changes in top administrative positions in the Hijaz. The shuffle exacerbated the turmoil that the completion of the railway had set afoot. The new government ousted not only Ratib Pasha but also the Grand Sharif 'Ali and the governor of the *sancak* of Medina, Osman Pasha. The incumbents tried to protect their positions with the assistance of local forces, inciting them to rebellion. Once they were removed, their replacements could not be determined immediately, and when they were, it took time for them to arrive in the Hijaz. Thus, the dismissals allowed a power vacuum and opportunistic jostling for power by tribal chiefs and other notables.

The British consul in Jidda expressed surprise at *Muhafiz* Osman Pasha's protests against the new regime and his dismissal.[23] He opined that "it was thought Medina would receive with favor liberal and progressive ideas". There is no indication in his report why Medina would have been more amenable to such ideas. The language betrays the perennial difficulty of the consuls in obtaining reliable information about Medina, a concern to which they frequently gave voice with a degree of frustration, even paranoia. Indeed, the provincial governors based in Mecca seemed to share the same difficulty in keeping abreast of developments in Medina. Its distance from Mecca and Jidda was primarily responsible for this. Medina was also avoided by many pilgrims, especially those from South and Southeast Asia arriving in Jidda by boat, since the visit to the Prophet's mosque is not a formal ritual of the pilgrimage. As a result, Medina fell outside full consular surveillance. Osman Pasha was taken to Damascus, where he was accused of stalling on making the news of the revolution public and rebuked for his harsh treatment of Young Turk sympathisers.[24]

The moral authority of the grand sharifs of Mecca as the custodians of the holy places, ordinarily backed by the political and military support of the central government, was always strong in Medina. Sharif 'Ali's ultimate replacement, Sharif Hussein, arrived in the Hijaz at the beginning of December 1908, resolved to establish his influence. No sooner had he set foot in Jidda than he reported to Istanbul that, on the authority of his brother Nasir, who had served as deputy grand sharif until Hussein's arrival, the 5,000 camel-strong pilgrim caravan was safeguarded near Medina. Istanbul instructed Hussein to take the proper measures to bring peace and quiet to Medina.[25] In October, two tribes had attacked a caravan destined for the coast near Medina. In the ensuing battle, one Ottoman officer and 21 soldiers had been killed. The British consul reported 220 Bedouin casualties.[26] Hussein sent an emissary, Gazi Bin Jalal, to negotiate with the discontented tribes and ensure peace and understanding between them and the Medina *muhafiz*.[27]

23 FO 618/3, Damascus, 25 August 1908.

24 FO 618/3, no. 38. Damascus, 2 September 1908.

25 BOA, BEO 258620. 5 December 1908.

26 FO 195/2286, Jidda, 18 November 1908.

27 BOA, BEO 258766, Husayn to Grand Vizierate, no. 506, 10 December 1908.

A semblance of peace and security seemed to have been established by the end of the year on the eve of the pilgrimage, which, despite the new train service, still heavily depended on the caravans. In order to assuage the restive Bedouin of Medina, the authorities hired the camels these Bedouin made available for the procession coming from Syria.[28] They lifted the security measures taken outside the perimeter of the walls, collected the arms that had been distributed to the townspeople and then banned the bearing of arms.[29] In an attempt to forestall renewed attacks by the Juhayna tribe, the officials of the Hijaz railway met and negotiated with the leaders.[30] The newly appointed *Muhafiz* Basri urged the formation of camel-mounted troop formations in order to protect the railway, in addition to placing guards in each train.[31] Meanwhile, Sharif Hussein asked Nasir to meet with tribal leaders during his return trip through Medina.[32] Irrespective of any of the achievements of such direct talks, before the spring's end the sharifian forces were engaged in an armed encounter with the Mutayr tribe.[33]

In the spring of 1909, Medina appeared better tuned-in to the events in the capital than the rest of the province. The French consul in Jidda reported that the incident of 31 March, the unsuccessful counter-revolutionary insurrection in Istanbul that was carried out by loyalist army units and resulted in the deposition of Sultan Abdulhamid II, did not have repercussions in the major Hijazi towns except Medina. The defiant act by some 60 troops of taking refuge in the Prophet's mosque and demanding discharge from service occurred just before the insurrection in Istanbul and cannot have been directly related to the 31 March incident, despite the suggestion of such an association in the Istanbul press.[34] The governor in Mecca corroborated the consul's observation about the repercussions of the Istanbul events in his province.[35] His recommendation to establish a camel-mounted security force in Medina probably had less to do with any anticipated politically motivated insurgency than with the troubles with the Mutayr and other tribal groups.

The ministry of the interior studied a report that had been drafted (in Arabic) regarding reforms in the peninsula by 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ahmad Ilyas, a religious scholar in Medina. The report may not have been solicited by the new government, but was given close attention in Istanbul.[36] The author identified three main problems in the broader region: the spread of ignorance among the Bedouin, massive arms smuggling and autocratic and malicious acts by officials. He made the case that military reinforcement was insufficient as a remedy and emphasised the need for the dispatch of instructors and opening of schools in order to spread religious tenets and laws among the tribal population with the objective of bringing them into a civilised state and submission (*taht-ı medeniyet ve inkiyad*).[37] The Council of Ministers discussed the reform pro-

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28 FO 195/ 2320, no. 4, Jidda, 20 January 1909.

29 *Takvim-i Vekai*, 27 December 1908.

30 BOA, BEO 261004, 22 January 1909.

31 BOA, BEO 264339, Medina, 25 Mar 1909.

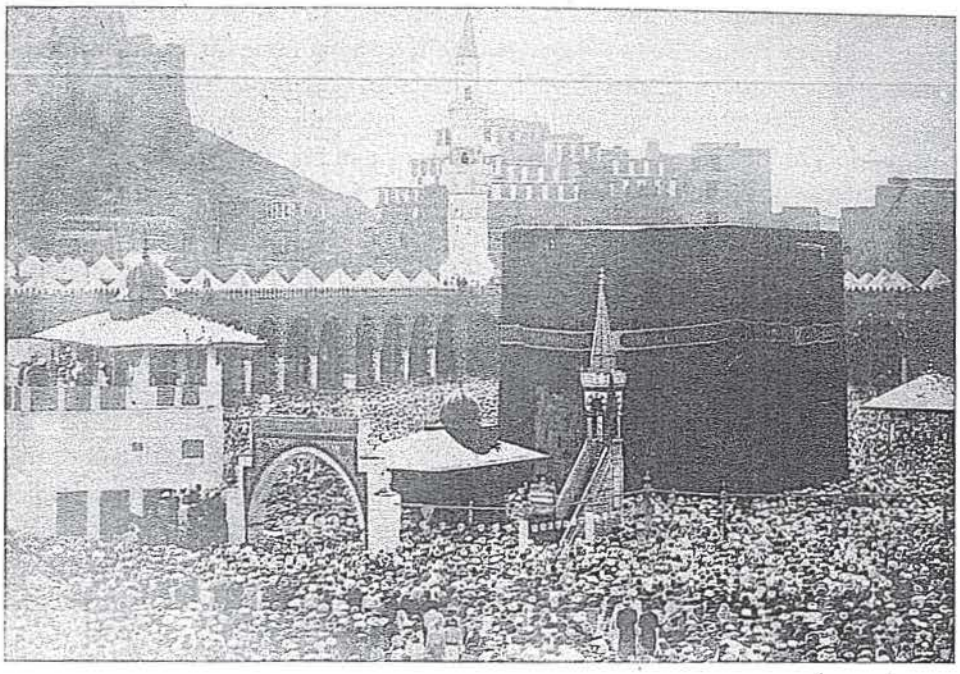
32 BOA, BEO 263604, Mecca, 1 March 1909.

33 FO 195/2320, Jidda, 30 May 1909.

34 *Tasvir-i Efkar* reported the arrival of the "reactionary soldiers in Medina" in Istanbul on 14 June 1909.

35 BOA, BEO 266358, 19 May 1909.

36 A document dated 4 July 1909 refers to 'Abd al-Rahman Ilyas's visit to Istanbul during the "previous year". It is possible that his advice had been sought by the old regime. BEO 269189.



Mecca in the 1890s. Photograph.
Irfan Dağdelen Archive

gramme and decided to allocate a 2,000 *kuruş* salary to 'Abd al-Rahman to oversee such an educational programme in tribal areas.

The Istanbul daily *Tanin*, an organ of the Committee of Union and Progress, published in the spring and early summer of 1910 a series of reports from a correspondent in Medina by the name of Abu'l Fikret Tahir. *Tanin*'s publication of articles on Medinese affairs reflects the greater attention paid to the *sancak* in Istanbul. The author is sympathetic in his reports to the new order in Medina, although also quite vocal about hardships suffered by the townspeople, pilgrims and Bedouin alike, particularly the logistical issues plaguing the pilgrims. Despite the promise of speedy travel offered by the new railway, more than two months after the completion of the pilgrimage rites in Mecca in mid-December large numbers of pilgrims were still congregated in Medina. Winter weather was a problem. Tahir reported that rains unseen for many years significantly slowed the pilgrim groups' movements. A prolonged drought that had preceded the rains had decimated the camel population in the region, leading to a severe shortage of transport animals that stranded the pilgrims for days.[38] The decline in the number of beasts of burden placed the Bedouin in economic hardship,

37 BOA, BEO 258601, Istanbul, 10 February 1910. Reform discourses of a similar kind and the projects they engendered since the Tanzimat have been subjected to close scrutiny in recent historical scholarship as manifestations of an Ottoman Orientalism and colonialism. See, for instance, Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains* and his more recent "'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): 311-342; Birgit Schäbler, "Civilizing Others: Global Modernity and the Local Boundaries (French, German, Ottoman, Arab) of Savagery," in *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity*, ed. Birgit Schäbler and Leif Stenberg (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 3-29; Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 768-96.

38 *Tanin*, 26 March 1910.

inducing as few as five or six desperate Bedouin to attack several-thousand strong pilgrim groups. Tahir disparaged the railway administration for its ineptitude and helplessness, notwithstanding its fancy (*cicili bicili*) advertisements that boasted transport from Medina to Damascus within 66 hours. He accused the builders of having constructed shabby roads and bridges that easily fell into disrepair and bemoaned the woeful inadequacy of the Medina town arteries to cope with such throngs.

Writing for *Tanin*, Tahir – not surprisingly – lauded the activities of the Committee of Union and Progress and the new *muhafız*, Ali Rıza Pasha, in their struggle against ignorance and conservatism. He referred to an Egyptian *"şeyh"*, presumably a passing pilgrim, who decried the railway in a speech. The Egyptian argued the railway would lead to emulation of the Europeans and declared that the Hijaz would share the same fate as Egypt, where railways built all over the country had led people down the path of error. Tahir spoke well of the *muhafız* for arresting the speaker.[39] He ascribed the clashes with the Bedouin to their ignorance and praised the CUP club for founding a school called "Harbinger of Unity" (*Burhan-ı İttihad*) for their benefit. In doing so, he also chastised the ministry of education for its torpor in building schools. This critical tone in the report about the government and *Tanin*'s willingness to publish it reveal the still incomplete sway of the CUP over the administrative cadres in Istanbul.

The reports are especially revealing about the activities and propaganda efforts of the CUP club in this remote and hitherto cut-off corner of the empire. One project was the opening of a CUP charter school (*Nümune-i İttihad*), where children, including the Bedouin, received Turkish instruction. The school held public exams to showcase its modern teaching methods. In a later report, Tahir mentioned that he had been invited as an examiner to Medina schools in subjects such as morals, law, economics and civics. He compared the students' level of knowledge favourably with that prevalent under the old regime, emphasising the "freedom of question and answer".[40] The state of education in Medina also received tentative endorsement by the British consul in Jidda. Consul Monathan dispatched at almost the same juncture a confidential report comprising an elaborate summary and assessment of changes in the Hijaz since the revolution. Declaring "of Medina I hear but little", he focused his remarks on Mecca and Jidda and concluded that the condition of the province now differed little from its condition under the old regime. His appraisal of schooling in the province was consistent with the report's overall tenor, except he related that "there is said to be a rather superior school in Medina".[41]

In other fields, the local Committee organised an auction for the benefit of the Navy Association (*Donanma Cemiyeti*), which had just been formed in Istanbul to raise funds for the Ottoman navy. Taking advantage of the passage of religious and lay intellectuals through Medina, the CUP engaged with them for propaganda purposes about the virtues of Islamic unity in order to bolster the domestic and international legitimacy of the new regime. In one instance, a speaker from Japan, Omar Efendi, gave lectures in Russian to massive applause (led, presum-

39 Ibid., 29 March 1910.
40 Ibid., 28 June 1910.
41 FO 195/2350, Jidda, 7 June 1910.

ably, by pilgrims from Russia), especially when he related the activities of a 35-strong society in Tokyo to disseminate the religion of Islam.[42]

The government's and the CUP's proactive policy in Medina presaged the implementation of fundamental administrative restructuring in 1910. First, the rudimentary form of municipal organisation consisting of the office of the assessor (*Daire-i İhtisab*) and presided over by an appointee of the *muhafız* was replaced by a municipality with an elected mayor and municipal council. Medina was not alone in implementing municipal reorganisation: it followed on similar reforms in Mecca. There was also now a precedent for elections, namely in the determination of Medina's single deputy to the restored parliament in 1908, even though those elections can hardly be assumed to have conformed to the letter of the Electoral Law of 1877, restored in 1908. If the 1908 elections elsewhere in the Hijaz are any indication, the first stage of indirect elections, where primary voters voted for electors, may have been disregarded in the parliamentary election altogether. What the electoral procedure was in the municipal elections of 1910, and in the concurrent elections for the *sancak*'s administrative council, is unclear. Tahir's account suggests, however, that the process took several days before a Shaykh Muhammad Saman was elected mayor. The mayor and the council members were ushered from the government house to their offices accompanied by a band and began their work following prayers.[43]

More important than municipal reform was the government's reconfiguration of the *sancak* of Medina within the administrative structure of the empire. In the summer of 1910, Medina was reconstituted as an "independent *sancak*" in order to strengthen its administrative bonds with the centre, enable the government to exert a greater degree of direct control over the *sancak* and implement a forward policy in the broader region.[44] This change in the administrative structure of the *sancak* occurred against the background of political crises that involved the grand sharif, who sought to establish his primacy as the foremost political authority in the Hijaz, especially in the eyes of the Bedouin. The first crisis pitted him against the governor in Mecca, Fuad Pasha. Sharif Hussein censured the governor, and ultimately caused his recall, for his unwillingness to take action against the local newspaper over its criticism of the sharif's campaign against the Mutayr tribe as well as for his imputation of anti-constitutionalist motives to Sharif Zayd, the grand sharif's representative in Taif.[45]

The second conflict concerned Sharif Hussein's other representative, Sharif Shahat in Medina. In the prolonged tussle from the spring into the fall of 1910, *Muhafız* Ali Rıza Pasha implicated Shahat in aiding an exile, who had been convicted of supporting the counter-revolutionary uprising in Istanbul, to escape to Egypt.[46] The formal separation of Medina from the province of the Hijaz as an independent *sancak* occurred in July 1910 during the course of the prolonged

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42 *Tanin*, 13 March 1910.

43 *Tanin*, 11 April 1910.

44 Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 159-61.

45 Ibid, 153-4. Also, BOA, BEO 269031, Mecca, 6 August 1909; BOA, BEO 272822, Istanbul, 19 September 1909.

46 BOA, BEO 286312 (280413), 6 April 1910.

conflict and gave broader meaning to the discord. Sharif Shahat went to Mecca, most likely fearing reprisal. Ali Rıza urged Istanbul that Sharif Shahat should not be allowed back to Medina. Further, he recommended that Sharif Hussein should henceforth administer his affairs in Medina through the office of the *muhafız*. When Sharif Hussein insisted on reappointing Shahat,[47] Ali Rıza warned that Shahat's return would signify the collapse the government's moral authority. Thus, when Sharif Hussein sent Shahat as his representative to Medina in November, *Muhafız* Ali Rıza prevented him from entering the town. Hussein protested to the grand vizierate that the *muhafız*'s actions targeted his person. He was told that the ministry of the interior would counsel *Muhafız* Ali Rıza, but that Shahat's reappointment as the grand sharif's representative in Medina would be unacceptable.[48] The government assured Sharif Hussein that his office's traditional authority in pilgrimage and Bedouin affairs would be recognised in both Mecca and Medina. However, Hussein perceived the administrative changes as curtailing his prerogatives and engaged in a tug-of-war with the *muhafız* of Medina for influence in the broader region. The backdrop to the administrative restructuring of Medina was the persistent attempt by Sharif Hussein to preserve his influence to the north of Mecca and the *muhafız*'s resolve to temper that influence.

Istanbul sought to achieve balances of power between the grand sharif and the *muhafız*, but also among other high officials. It was customary for the ministry of foundations to appoint to Medina an official holding the title *şeyhülharem*, who served as custodian of the Prophet's mosque and controlled a chest of money donated to the mosque. In September 1908, Muhtar Efendi was transferred to this position from his post at the ministry of war.[49] Before long, telegrams of complaint arrived in Istanbul from Medina residents about Muhtar's high-handed and corrupt conduct.[50] He was accused of confiscating the annual payments to the poor and needy of Medina made by Tunisian Muslims. The ministry wanted to replace him with first the Bursa deputy Ömer Fevzi Efendi and then the *mutasarrıf* (district governor) of Lattakia, but neither seems to have taken the position.[51] The administrative council of Medina approved *Muhafız* Ali Rıza as caretaker *şeyhülharem*. However, the council's decision was rejected in Istanbul, and Muhtar was eventually reappointed, but with his salary docked by half, which elicited a plea for reinstatement to the salary level of the *muhafız*.

As the CUP gradually gained control of the government in Istanbul, a process that started with the appointment of Unionists in the cabinets formed after the counter-revolutionary attempt of 1909 (31 March incident), Medina became both the object and the advance front of the government's centralising policies. Some of the implemented reforms were superficial or even symbolic, others contravened practice elsewhere, such as the expansion of the jurisdiction of the sharia courts. Medina did not become integrated into the sociopolitical order that had been restructured in the core areas of the empire since the Tanzimat. But cooptation and tutelage, aided by improved communications, were conducive to an ori-

47 Ibid., 9 October 1910.
48 BOA, BEO Defter 705, no. 72, Istanbul, 17 November 1910.
49 *Tanin*, 27 September 1908.
50 BOA, BEO 266513, Istanbul, 18 May 1909.
51 BOA, BEO 275690, no. 2419, Istanbul, 14 December 1909.

entation of at least segments of the local society towards the centre. They "enhanced interaction" with the state and fostered new modalities of governance.[52]

The extension of more direct forms of rule into Medina was not a one-sided process. Demands also came from the local society, leading to negotiations. Petitions sent to Istanbul contain not only the usual complaints about corruption and abuse of authority by local authorities, but also seek state services. Exemption from direct taxation may have been a time-honoured prerogative of the Hijazis, but tributary relations existed in the Hijaz, as evidenced by some tribal leaders' recognised right to collect the *zakat*, which prompted petitions to Istanbul demanding *zakat* collection by the state. Other petitions sought state services or special dispensations, as in the request by some Medina residents to be allowed to take advantage of the train at half fare, which was denied.[53] The government solicited reform proposals from Medina. The submitted proposals claimed for Medina some of the institutions implemented in central parts of the empire. At the same time, Medina advocated the preservation of local practice in other spheres, chief among them being the administration of justice. Negotiation between the state and the independent *sanjak* became the norm.

Sharif Hussein's revolt in Mecca in June 1916 reverberated in the rest of the Arab provinces and found adherents there, especially as the Ottoman forces lost battles against the British in Syria and Iraq. Nearby Medina is known for its dogged defence against a siege by sharifian forces that lasted well beyond the armistice the Ottoman government was forced to sign in October 1918.[54] Medina was the Ottoman holdout that fell to enemy forces last. This prolonged resistance was possible more for reasons other than the valour of the Medinese, or their support or loyalty to the Ottoman government. Rather, it had to do with the presence of a sizeable military force within the town's fortifications, the idiosyncrasy of its commander, Fahrettin Pasha, and perhaps, in the absence of good communications, the ignorance of the defending troops of how desperate their cause had become following the Ottoman defeats to the north. However, there is also evidence that the Young Turk governments built trust and support in Medina after 1908.

Immediately upon the outbreak of the revolt in June 1916, a French report maintained that "the success of the operation against Medina, where the population supports the Turks, looks doubtful".[55] According to British reports, Sharif Hussein began to undermine the Ottoman war effort several months before he declared his revolt. For instance, he sent Faisal to Medina to ensure that "neither camels nor any other kind of help reaches the Turks". Yet these efforts were not entirely successful. During the siege, Medina merchants delivered 11,000 sacks of flour to the defending troops. Sharif Hussein confiscated the flour and imprisoned the merchants.[56] The Ottoman wartime propaganda emanating from Damascus seems to have been effective in Medina.[57]

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52 Rogan, *Frontiers*, 12-13.

53 BOA, BEO 282344, 4 June 1910.

54 Feridun Kandemir, *Peygamberimizin Gölgesinde Son Türkler: Medine Müdafaası* (Istanbul: Yağmur, n.d. [1974?]) and Naci Kaşif Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası: Hicaz Bizden Nasıl Ayrıldı?* (Istanbul: Sebil, 1971).

55 Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères [French Foreign Ministry Archives] Guerre 1679, Paris, 17 June 1916.

56 FO 371/2767, no. 16, Cairo, 24 January 1916.

57 HHS PA 38/369, Damascus, 22 June 1916. "The local press of Damascus, which has a wide circulation in Medina, defends the Turkish caliphate with all possible arguments."

Undoubtedly, some Medinese cooperation was secured through intimidation. The decision to exile 170 Medinese, including Medina's member of parliament Ma'mun Barri, to Anatolia in January 1917[58] suggests there was also opposition. The Ottomans combined cooption and coercion, which were motivated by the centralising policies of Young Turk governments, inspired by an integrative Ottomanist ideology and facilitated by the infrastructural capacities of the Hijaz railway. These efforts, which entailed negotiations with local society, tend to get lost in histories that ascribe to the Young Turk governments the neglect of the Arab provinces and the ultimate imposition of alien authoritarian power.

58 AA Türkei 165/41, Damascus, 5 January 1917.