

614/1217, the Zaydī house was split, al-Hādī Yaḥyā b. al-Muḥsin, a descendant of al-Hādī ila 'l-Ḥaḳḳ Yaḥyā, declaring himself *imām* in Ṣa'da, while al-Manṣūr's sons asserted their right to the imāmate further south. An attempt to heal this long-standing rift within the dynasty was made by

❧1. AL-MAHDĪ LI-DĪN ALLĀH AḤMAD B. AL-ḤUSAYN. His genealogy would appear to have been clearly established by the usually reliable Rasūlid genealogist, al-Malik al-Aṣḥraf 'Umar b. Yūsuf (*Turfat al-aṣḥāb*, 101-2), as follows: Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. al-Kāsim b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Kāsim b. Aḥmad b. Ismā'īl b. Abi 'l-Barakāt b. Aḥmad b. al-Kāsim b. Muḥammad b. al-Kāsim Tardjumān al-Dīn b. Ibrāhīm Tabātabā b. Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abi Ṭālib.

In 646/1248 Aḥmad proclaimed himself *imām* in the fortress of Thulā, north-west of Ṣan'ā', with the support of the Banū Ḥamza Zaydīs, his father's family, and with the possible connivance of the Rasūlid fief-holder of Ṣan'ā', the sultan's nephew, Asad al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, whose loyalty to his family was at best only lukewarm. Aḥmad's position was strengthened by the murder in 647/1250 of Nūr al-Dīn 'Umar, the Rasūlid sultān, a crime which may have had the support of Asad al-Dīn Muḥammad. The latter continued his fickle behaviour into the sultanate of al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf, son of Nūr al-Dīn 'Umar, at times appearing to support his family, the Rasūlids, against the Zaydī *imām* al-Mahdī Aḥmad, at times flirting with the latter and showing open rebellion against the Rasūlids. The mystery is why such an astute leader as al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf put up with such behaviour, for his nephew seems to have been able to patch up his quarrels and disloyalties with his uncle, the sultan, with no difficulty on more than one occasion. The position of al-Mahdī Aḥmad improved for a time, for he was able to take Ṣan'ā' in 648/1250; although harassed by Asad al-Dīn, who held the fortress of Birāsh close by, he was able to extend his influence south as far as Dhamār. But within the year al-Mahdī Aḥmad had to abandon Ṣan'ā'. Asad al-Dīn sold him Birāsh, but it was on account of this that the final breach between them occurred. Asad al-Dīn yet again made his peace with his uncle, al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf. Al-Mahdī Aḥmad's fate, however, was not to be decided by the Rasūlids but within the Zaydī camp. Quarrels arose and a rival *imām*, Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad, was announced in 652/1254 in Ṣa'da. In the next year a Zaydī assembly pronounced Aḥmad's deposition. He fought on with the remainder of his followers, but was killed in 656/1258 and buried in Dhu Bīn (invariably written Dhībīn in the sources).

Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad, who adopted the official title of al-Mutawakkil and recognised the Rasūlids as his overlords, was at once challenged by a rival *imām* in the person of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Wahhās. A number of other *imāms* were recognised before

❧2. AL-MAHDĪ LI-DĪN ALLĀH AḤMAD B. YAḤYĀ B. AL-MURTAḌĀ b. Aḥmad b. al-MurtaḌĀ b. al-Mufaḍḍal b. Manṣūr b. al-Mufaḍḍal b. al-Ḥadjīdjīdjī b. 'Alī b. Yaḥyā b. al-Kāsim b. Yūsuf al-Dā'ī b. Yaḥyā al-Manṣūr b. Aḥmad al-Nāṣir. The last named was the son and second successor of al-Hādī ila 'l-Ḥaḳḳ Yaḥyā. After the death of the *Imām* al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, killed in 793/1391 when thrown from his mule which had been frightened by a bird, a *ḳādī*, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Dawwārī, with

other Zaydī notables, continued the Zaydī administration for a time on behalf of his sons who were all minors. The Zaydī *ulamā'*, however, assembled in the Djamāl al-Dīn mosque in Ṣan'ā' and appointed Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā as *imām*. 'Abd Allāh al-Dawwārī thereupon had 'Alī, the son of al-Nāṣir, proclaimed *imām*, and al-Mahdī Aḥmad and those supporting him left for Bayt Baws where they were immediately besieged by the rival *imām*, 'Alī. For the remainder of that year and into 794/1392 the two claimants to the Zaydī imāmate fought for supremacy. Al-Mahdī Aḥmad was caught in Ma'bar, south of Ṣan'ā', by forces of his rival, 'Alī, and languished in prison until 801/1399, a period of over seven years. In that year he was freed with the help of his jailers. He lived on, however, until 840/1437, when he died near Ḥadjdja of the plague. Ironically, enough, his erstwhile rival the *Imām* 'Alī died in Ṣan'ā' of the plague in that same year.

The choice of Ibn al-Murtaḍā as *Imām* was a mistake, inasmuch as he lacked the necessary military and administrative ability. On the other hand, he had another qualification in perfection. As a result of a careful education and a thirst for learning from his youth upwards, he wrote a great deal, dogmatic, legal and paraenetic; he was also a poet and worked at grammar and logic. The kindness of his warders, who supplied him with ink and paper, enabled him to compose the law book *al-Azhār fī fiḳḥ al-a'imma al-aḥḳār* (Berlin ms. 4919) on which he wrote a commentary. His most valuable work is still his theological and legal encyclopaedia, *al-Baḥr al-zakḥḳhār* (Berlin mss. 4894-4907) on which he likewise wrote a commentary. Although not the work of an original scholar, it is a rich and well-arranged compilation, which deserves attention, if only for the part of the introduction which compares the various religions, as the distinctions between them are seen from quite a different point of view to that of al-Ash'arī or al-Shahrastānī.

About 80 years after al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, from 922/1516 onwards, the Turks had begun to occupy Yaman and to hold it with varying fortunes (see Kuṭb al-Dīn al-Makki, *al-Barḳ al-yamānī fī 'l-faḳḥ al-'Uḥmānī*, in S. de Sacy, in *Notices et extraits*, iv, 412-504, and A. Rutgers, *Historia Jemanae sub Hasano Pascha*, Leiden 1838). In his struggle with them al-Manṣūr bi'llāh al-Kāsim b. Muḥammad, a descendant of al-Hādī in the seventeenth generation, was able in ca. 1000/1591 to restore the present imāmate in Ṣan'ā' (see A. S. Tritton, *The rise of the Imams of Sana*, Oxford 1925). Of his sons, Muḥammad al-Mu'ayyad succeeded him. Even in his reign, but still more after his death in 1054/1644, when his successor Ismā'īl, another son of al-Kāsim, was making his way with difficulty against his many brothers and nephews, one of al-Kāsim's grandsons began to come to the front, afterwards the *Imām*

❧3. AL-MAHDĪ LI-DĪN ALLĀH AḤMAD B. AL-ḤASAN B. AL-KĀSIM. His father was not *Imām*, but distinguished himself in the wars against the Turks and was also a scholar. In 1048/1639 Aḥmad appeared in the hills of Wuṣāb; in 1051/1641 he was in Mecca with many members of his family on the pilgrimage. Just at the accession of Ismā'īl, he set out with another cousin against Ṣan'ā'. At first he came to terms with the *Imām*, but then fought in different places for his own hand, e.g. at Thulā and again in the Djabal Wuṣāb. In 1070/1659 he won Ḥaḍramawt for Ismā'īl, to which the Zaydīs had been summoned by the disputes for the throne. When in 1087/1676