

ON BOTH SIDES OF AL-MANDAB

من الشَّبوطِ وَأَنَّهُ كَالْبَعْلِ تَرْكِيهَهُ فِي السَّالَةِ وَرَوَّادُ السَّيْرِ لِي وَأَثَلَةُ الْيَاسْرِ بِن
مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ قُرَّةَ ه وَرَعَمَهُ وَالرَّيْمُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ الْمُصَوِّرِ حَضْرَتٌ حَوْضِ لَهَا
عَظِيمٌ لَوْ بَرَكَةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ عَدَا الْبَيْتِ مِنَ الرُّجْبِ وَالْبَيْتِ وَأَيْمَالُ تَخَاطَبُهَا غَيْرُهَا



Yāfi^c, Zaydīs, Āl Bū Bakr b. Sālīm and others: Tribes and Sayyids

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This is my modest tribute to Professor Oscar Löfgren who, with another Swedish scholar, Count Carlo de Landberg, has laid an enduring foundation for the study of south western Arabia of the Islamic era. I am happy to have the occasion to acknowledge my personal debt to Professor Löfgren's scholarship.

Yāfi^c is an ancient and important congerie of tribes – agriculturists and warriors – established in lofty steeply rising mountains lying north of Aden and bordering on the present day Yemen Arab Republic. The name Yāfi^c already occurs in the pre-Islamic inscriptions and places to which reference is made here already figure as Yāfi^c territory in Hamdānī's geography¹. So inaccessible is Yāfi^c country that it rarely comes under a centralizing power and then not for long. It does not for example seem to have paid taxes to the Rasūlids² though Yāfi^cis served them as mercenaries. In Ḥaḍramawt to which they also came as mercenaries in the 11–12th/17–18th centuries (on one occasion at least at the instance of the ʿĪnāt Sayyid house of Bū Bakr b. Sālīm³), they became the dominant power. Many were employed as mercenaries in India, notably Ḥaydarābād. Towards the end of the 19th century and onwards the (British) Indian Government entered into a series of treaties with various Yāfi^c groups, the *naqībs* of al-Mawṣaṭah, the Muflaḥīs, the Ḥaḍramī tribe, and the Ibn Harharah shaykh⁴, aiming to keep other powers out of these areas – the chiefs received tiny stipends in return. In 1909⁵ it was stated that »the Aden Residency has little communication with the Upper Yafai tribes«. It was really only after World War II and the Aden Government's penetration policy that any serious attempt was made to develop relations with Yāfi^c. Aden's troubles with Muḥammad son of Sultan ʿAydarūs of Lower Yāfi^c are rather sketchily discussed by Sir Kennedy Trevaskis⁶ and a Yāfi^c element was part of the small communist NLF to which the 1967 Labour Government resolved to hand over Aden and its dependencies. The iron curtain descended and news of the tribes filters out rarely with refugees. It

¹ *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab*, ed. D.H. Müller, Leiden 1884–91, p. 89; ed. Muḥammad . . . al-Akwa^c, al-Riyād, 1394/1974, p. 176, with some modern notes. Al-ʿUrr, Dhū Nākhīb, Taym, the Banū Qāsid and Yahar, as well as other places are mentioned.

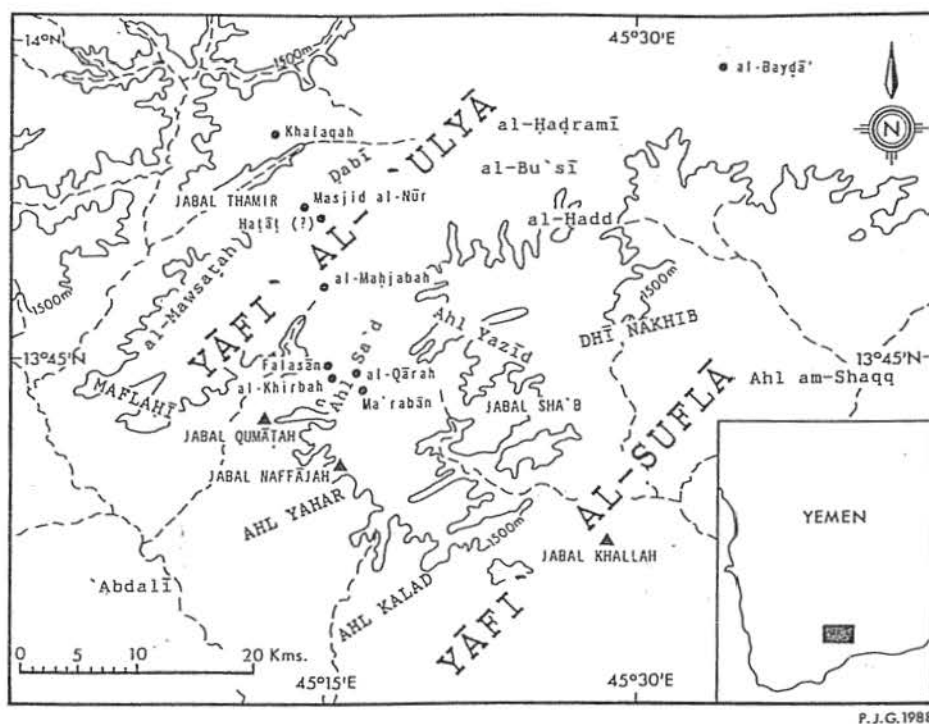
² The *Mulakhkhaṣ al-ḥiṭān* (1411–12) does not list revenue from Yāfi^c.

³ Cf. p. 103.

⁴ Printed in *An Account of the Arab Tribes in the vicinity of Aden*, Government Central Press, Bombay 1909. W.H. Ingrams, *Report on . . . Hadhramaut*, Colonial 123, London 1937, lists the tribes of Lower and Upper Yāfi^c but the spelling and possibly part of the information is unreliable.

⁵ *Account . . . op. cit.*, 63.

⁶ *Shades of Amber*, London 1968, *passim*.



Map of Upper Yāfi' and part of Lower Yāfi'. (Courtesy of Peter J. Grove)

is not, however, to be expected that the junta at present ruling in Aden has control of the mountains of Yāfi'.

Yāfi' divides into Upper (al-*Ulyā*) and Lower (al-*Suflā*) Yāfi'. The high mountain districts are not known to have been visited by Europeans; the maps are mainly based on aerial survey — I have myself flown over Yāfi'. Lower Yāfi' lies partly in the Abyan plain. In ancient times *ʿAd* (ibn Shaddād) and Thamūd were in Yāfi', they say, and point to the Shaddād tribe in the Faḍlī sultanate. Al-Qārah, chosen for its strategic position, was the old capital of the Sultans of Banū Qāsīd, a tribe known to al-Hamdānī⁷. The Sultan had five tribes, Kaladī, Sa'dī, Yazīdī, Yaharī and Nākhibī. The only visit paid by a British official to al-Qārah was that of Sir Tom Hickenbotham⁸ in the fifties, an edgy affair, fraught with danger, political officers told me.

The Upper Yāfi' capital is al-Maḥjabah of the Mashāyikh family Āl Harharah. His tribes are also five — from west to east, al-Muflīḥī, al-Mawsaṭī, al-Zabī/Dabī, al-Bu'sī, al-Ḥaḍramī. According to the 1909 handbook⁹ Sultan Sayf of Lower Yāfi' had in his employ a clerk, Ibn Harharah, much loved by him, an able man to whom he granted by deed of gift, a district called al-Sufāl, from which originated Upper Yāfi'. Perhaps this is not quite consistent with other versions of the Āl Harharah Sultan's antecedents. Aḥmad Faḍl al-*ʿAbdalī*¹⁰ (Ibn Harharah is related to the *ʿAbdalī* Sultans of Lahej) maintains that Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālīm of *ʿInāt*, before his death in 992/1584, appointed (*naṣaba*) the very learned shaykh *ʿAlī* Harharah as a conciliator (*muṣliḥ*) and religious guide

⁷ Al-Hamdānī, *loc. cit.*

⁸ *Aden*, London 1958, p. 134, with pictures at al-Qārah.

⁹ *Account of the Arab tribes*, p. 63.

¹⁰ *Hadiyyat al-zaman fī akhbār mulūk Laḥj wa-ʿAdan*, Cairo 1351 H., p. 108.

(*murshid*) in Upper Yāfi^c – his son Aḥmad succeeded him and the latter's son Šāliḥ followed him. Ibn Harharah, says Ibn Hāshim¹¹ was of the noblest houses of Yāfi^c (*min ashraf buyūtāt Yāfi^c*).

In their fratricidal struggles for power during the twelfth/eighteenth century the rival Kathīrī Sultans of Ḥaḍramawt called in Yāfi^c tribesmen to support them. In 1116/1704–5 the Maṣṣab of ʿĪnāt¹² summoned (*istaṣrakha*) Yāfi^c to his aid, while at the same time the Kathīrī Sultan Muḥammad al-Mardūf sent sacrificial animals (*ʿaqāʿir*) to Jabal Yāfi^c to invoke aid against his rival, Sultan ʿUmar b. Jaʿfar al-Kathīrī, who had adopted the Zaydī school. Though at this point, the Maṣṣab seems to have made common cause with Sultan al-Mardūf, he had also been instrumental, it seems, in bringing Yāfi^cis to support Sultan ʿUmar al-Kathīrī. ʿUmar b. Šāliḥ b. Harharah arrived to support Sultan al-Mardūf with 6,000 Yāfi^cis and gained control over all Ḥaḍramawt. He returned home but left ʿUmar b. ʿAwaḍ al-Quʿayṭī in command of the Yāfi^c tribesmen in Ḥaḍramawt – Yāfi^c dominance there does not however come into our story.

Yāfi^c is famous for its coffee, grown in sheltered places on its lofty mountain sides. Yāfi^cis are also fine masons. They are not unknown as scholars, notably ʿAfīf al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh b. Asʿad al-Yāfi^c the biographer (ob. 768/1367).

The Sultans of Lower Yāfi^c and their Tribes

In the brief and limited discussion I had, mainly with Sultan ʿAlawī b. Aḥmad al-ʿAfīfī, relations between the tribes and Sultan were said to fall into two categories (*al-aḥkām ʿalā nawʿayn*) – *qayd* and *sumʿah wa-tubʿah*.

Qayd seems to mean something like bounden duty or it might mean treaty, but we did not develop this theme.

Sumʿah wa-tubʿah, literally, to hear and follow, means that the *qabāʿil* respond to the summons of the ʿAfīfī Sultan and follow him to war – i.e., when the Sultan declares war they rally to his support, but there is no bond (*qayd*). It seems there are stipulations governing this relationship for the *ḥākīm* (sultan?) says: »If I do you wrong then it is upon my neck (*ḡalamtu-ka – ʿalā raqabatī*¹³). To this the *qabīlī* replies, giving his allegiance; »I undertake by the pact of Allah on the Qurʾān that I will listen to you and obey, and moreover I will pay the tithes (*Anā badayt bi-ʿahd Allāh ʿalā khītmah annī bā akūn sāmi^c lak ṭayī^c, wa-baʿd bā usallim al-ʿushūr*)«. The ʿAfīfī, if they disobey him, would say to them: »If you do not listen to my words (decision?) Allah will bring a calamity upon you (*In mā samīʿt al-kalām ḡaqqī Allāh bā yajʿal lak muṣībah*).«

¹¹ Muḥammad b. Hāshim (of Āl Yaḥyā), *Tārīkh al-Dawlat al-Kathīriyyah*, Cairo 1367/1948, p. 90.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹³ *I.e.*, I am responsible. Cf. C. de Landberg, *Glossaire daḡinois*, Leiden 1920–42, p. 1342. *Raqabah* is the side of the neck.



The Sultan and Wazīr of al-Qārah, capital of the sultanate of Lower Yāfi' in the early 1940s

Like other rulers the ‘Afif Sultans have their ‘*askar al-Sulṭān*, men who have left their tribes and become »sons of the Sultan, under the Sultan’s protection (*ibn al-Dawlah, taḥt ḥimāyat al-Dawlah*).« Of such a soldier it is said: »There is no war/hostility from him or toward him (*Lā minnuh sharr wa-lā lahluluh sharr*¹⁴)«. So the ‘*askarī* can move freely among the tribes who do not molest him. The Sultan of Lower Yāfi‘ used to rule it from al-Qārah which is a *ḥawṭah* inhabited by only the Āl ‘Afif and their hereditary ‘*askar* who are divided into five houses each of which has the function of dealing with its own special *maktab* or tribal section, in collecting ‘*ushūr*, etcetera. There appears also to be a small group (of ‘*askar* ?) dealing with a small tribe or section outside the five *maktabs*, known as Mash‘alī¹⁵ of whom it is said: »The (grain-)measure (*kās*¹⁶) goes to al-Qārah but the head belongs to Upper Yāfi‘ (*Al-kās li-l-Qārah wa-l-rās li-Yāfi‘ al-‘Ulyā*)«. That is they pay their tithes to the lower Yāfi‘ī Sultan but in fact they are rijāl al-Miḥlāhī, i.e. belonging to Upper Yāfi‘. A parallel case is that of certain Faḍlī tribes who pay the ‘*ushūr* to Lower Yāfi‘ī but fight in war on the Faḍlī side.

Of grain crops the Dawlah receives the tenth measure (*al-kaylat al-‘āshūrah*¹⁷) or to be more precise, half of it. The other half goes a quarter to the poor (*miskīn*) and a quarter to the saints (*waliyy*) of the district for the Yāfi‘ tribes used to pay the ‘*ushr al-‘ashar* and the tithe on coffee (*‘āshir al-bunn*) to the Maṣab of ‘Īnāt who was one of the descendants (*aḥfād*) of Ḥusayn b. Abū Bakr b. Sālim. I do not know if the payments were made to ‘Īnāt up to the British withdrawal or if they ceased before that. The same division of the ‘*ushūr* is made for the Ibn Harharah Shaykh and the local poor and saints. This is an act of benevolence (*ḥasanah*) on the part of the tribes, and not exacted by force on Ibn Harharah’s part.

In every district there are of course saints special to it. Lower Yāfi‘ has some *awliyā’* at ‘Azzān and As‘ad b. ‘Alī of Yahar seems to have close links with the ‘Afifis. Ribāṭ al-‘Abbādī of the Mashāyikh Ahl al-‘Abbādī was also mentioned. Ṣāliḥ ‘Umar Muḥammad Ghālib writes to me that Āl ‘Abbād are Umayyads¹⁸ who fled after the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty and today are spread over all districts of Lower and Upper Yāfi‘, coming second in rank after the Sayyids. Before the British withdrawal they used to teach the Qur‘ān and deal with documents relating to marriage contracts and sales (*marāsīm ‘uqūd al-nikāḥ wa-l-buyū‘*). The Ribāṭ is in Yahar of Banī Qāsīd of Lower Yāfi‘. The Āl Bā ‘Abbād of Ḥaḍramawt are connected with the Tomb of Hūd¹⁹. About half a mile west and south of Khanfar rock and west of the road from Khanfar to Ziṅgibar is the Qubbah of ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar b. Bū Bakr al-Saqqāf with old wood carving of some interest. The ‘Afif are buried by the tomb of this Sayyid saint who however seems unknown to the hagiologies.

¹⁴ *Gloss. dat.*, 2033. Cf. T. Nöldeke, *Delectus. . .*, Berlin 1890, p. 87.

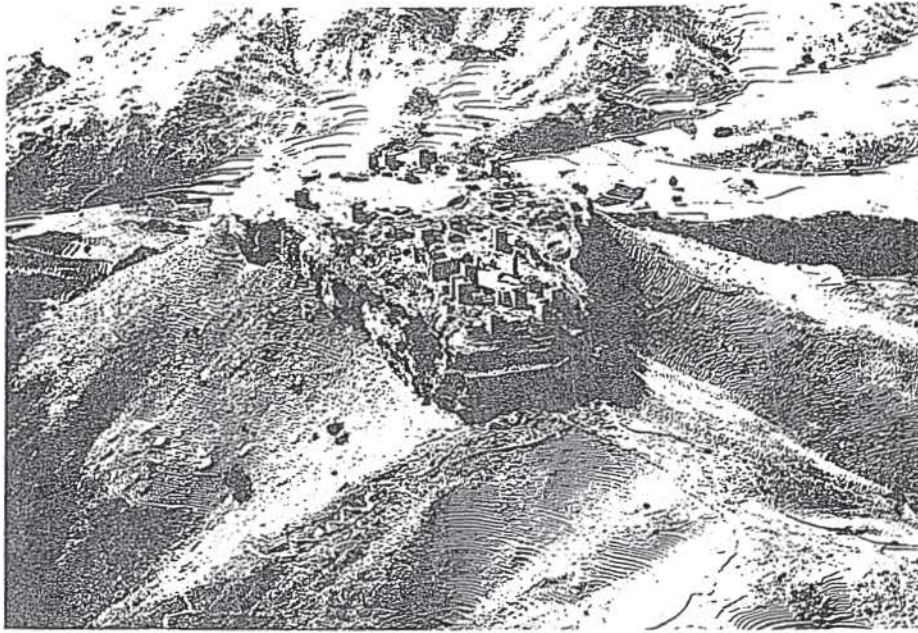
¹⁵ So pronounced, written al-Mashālī.

¹⁶ The *kās* is, in some areas, a fixed cubic measure. In the ‘Awdhalī district of al-Zāhir three *kūs* (pl.) are equivalent to one *kaylah* in that of al-Bāṭin.

¹⁷ Ṣāliḥ ‘Umar says the *kaylah* is a wooden grain measure of 4 *athmān*, approximately 12 kilograms, when the grain has been separated from the stalk and winnowed. They say also *kaylat ‘ishr*.

¹⁸ This tradition is quoted by Sayyid Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭās, *Riṣalah fī ansāb al-qabā’il*, transcript in my possession, writing in 1331/1913. A variant tradition he cites is that they were *mawālī* of the Umayyads.

¹⁹ Cf. my Hūd and other pre-Islamic Prophets of Ḥaḍramawt, *Le Muséon* LXVII, Louvain 1954, p. 130.



AL-QĀRAH. South at the head
 Courtesy of the former Information Office, Aden
 Al-Qārah showing its location in relation to the surrounding countryside. This photograph was probably taken about 1953

The Drum of Yāfi^ʿ and their Wars with the Zaydīs

The drum plays an important role in tribal life both in the Yemen of the Zaydī Imāms and the former Aden Protectorates²⁰. It is, says Landberg²¹, the »prérogative du pouvoir dans le sud« and the Sultans are *ahl al-marāfi^ʿ wa-^ʿl-ṭuwas*, people of drums and kettledrums²². It is the signal of the chiefs and is beaten after the prayer. I heard it in al-Qārah (of north Yemen), headquarters of Imām al-Badr in 1964, beaten in one mountain after another to warn probably of the thrust of Nasserite troops to the north. The copper brass (*nahās/suḥr*²³) drum (*ṭabl*) of Yāfi^ʿ is particularly famous. It is said to have been found in the ruins at Ḥaṭāt (near al-Mawṣatah?). Informants thought the drum might have Ḥimyar writing on it and remount to the time of ʿĀd. It is said to be square-ish in shape and have writings on it described as *ṭalāsīm siḥriyyah*, magic talismans.

For the part played by the Drum in the wars with the Zaydīs that follows I am indebted to ʿAlawī b. Aḥmad al-ʿAfīfi of Ji^ʿār, a Governmental official in 1964.

²⁰ See, in particular, of references in my writings, R. B. Serjeant & Ronald Lewcock, *Ṣan^ʿā: an Arabian Islamic city*, London 1983, indices.

²¹ *Hadramōū*, Leiden 1901, p. 642-3.

²² *Gloss. dat.*, 1337.

²³ In the Yemen *nahās* can mean »brass«. See *Ṣan^ʿā, op. cit.*, p. 226a.



AL-QĀRAH. South at the head

Courtesy of the former Western Aden Protectorate Office

Al-Qārah is a mesa nearly inaccessible and well fortified. The main gateway or Siddah (right front) is in shadow, with roads leading to it. When tribes enter the Siddah they become like brothers (*ikhwān*), hostilities being suspended. The cluster of domed buildings will be tombs of saints. The four domed building is probably the Jilānī Mosque and an earlier photograph shows a minaret on its northern side. A cistern shows at the middle top, collecting the run-off from the rising ground to the left of it. Terracing for cultivation has been constructed wherever possible

»We heard from the old people (*qadīmīn*) that it [the Drum] was in Jabal Jār hill about three miles from the north side (*al-shiqq al-qibli*) of al-Qārah. When the Yemenis occupied bilād Yāfi^c their headquarters (*al-maḥaṭṭah al-rayīsiyy* (sic)) was Masjid al-Nūr. Then the Copper Drum (*ṭabl al-naḥās*) moved (*iḥarrak*), with it being the Amīrah Nūr bint al-ʿAfīf²⁴ and the entire Qāsīdī branch [of Yāfi^c], the Copper Drum beating of its own accord in front of the tribes like a band (*al-muzīkah*), without anyone seeing it, but hearing it. When the Yemeni tribes (*qawm al-Yaman*) heard it and the [Yāfi^c] tribes they fled from Yāfi^c. Yāfi^c al-ʿUlyā and Yāfi^c banī Qāsīd joined together²⁵ against the Yemeni tribes. The last post (*maḥaṭṭah*) with the Yemenis was in al-ʿUrr²⁶ in which they settled for many years. Then Yāfi^c contrived and burrowed in the ground under the mountain until they reached the fort in which the Yemeni tribes were living, using hammers, mallets (*maḍārib*) and chisels (? *f r ṣah*²⁷). They spent fifteen years in burrowing before they came under the fort. As soon as the Yemeni tribes heard the burrowing underneath them they fled beyond Yāfi^c territory (*ḥudūd*) and have stayed in al-Bayḍāʾ up until this time. Then the Copper Drum returned to Jabal Jār. In olden time Jabal Jār was inhabited but now (1964) it is devoid of inhabitants. This is what we/I know«. Masjid al-Nūr is in al-Mawsaṭah and the tomb of Nūr bint ʿAfīf is there. Women were formerly fighters and she was killed while fighting for the ʿAfīfīs. I was told that the Drum is with Haddār b. Muḥammad, a Sultan of Āl ʿAfīf, but I have no further information about this person.

The afore-going narrative displays a recollection of events some two centuries and a half earlier; perhaps this is oral tradition, but perhaps not entirely so for the Ahl Bin ʿUbādī living in the village of al-Najd of Maʿrabān of Yahar who were Quḍāt al-Dawlah, Sultanīc Qādīs, were said to have history (*tārīkh*). Traces of the Zaydī occupation in the form of ruins survive, they say, especially at Qumāṭah, Jāz, al-Ḥadīdah, Wādī Ḥaṭāṭ, Jabal Wādī Ḥummā, Jabal Ṣanam/Sanam²⁸ and a *qaryah* above al-ʿIrqah. I recall also in Faḍlī territory Qaryat am-Qaḥāb, Harlots' Village, said to be so called after the Zaydī soldiers who frequented it!

²⁴ In Yāfi^c as also among the ʿAwdhalīs, the Sultan was called *Amr* and his amīrs were known as Sultan, but there seems to have been a change in nomenclature over latter years.

²⁵ The Arabic is a little ambiguous – it might be that the Amīrah united the tribes, but this is unlikely.

²⁶ Ḥusayn Hādī ʿAwaḍ says al-ʿUrr is near al-Ḥadd and in it is a large building, Ḥuṣn Ibn Kirbāl with writing on pillars.

²⁷ Cf. *Ṣanʿāʾ*, *furas*, etc., pl. *furāṣāt*.

²⁸ I wrote *ṣanam*, but Sāliḥ ʿUmar says *sinam* is correct.

Al-Qārah – its Special Status

‘Alawī b. Aḥmad al-‘Afifī told me that al-Qārah is a *ḥawṭah*. He also distinguished two types of *ḥawṭah*, a saint’s *ḥawṭah* (*ḥawṭat al-waliyy*) and the rulers’ *ḥawṭah* (*ḥawṭat al-ḥukkām*), the latter being an entirely new concept to me – other persons indeed have denied that such a category exists. In the Zabīd district of the Yemeni Tihāmah I found *ḥawṭah* to be used in the sense of a cemetery; as a cemetery generally has at least one saint’s tomb, the term may have come to apply to the sacred enclave in general that surrounds a saint’s tomb. In al-Qārah itself the main mosque is called Masjid al-Jilānī after the famous Ṣūfī saint and there are said to be many mosques in Yāfi‘ bearing his name, but this can hardly be the reason for calling it a *ḥawṭah*. However, be what may, up to approximately one mile out of al-Qārah in all directions is holy (*muqaddas*) territory. Tribes in a state of hostility with other (Yāfi‘) tribes if they go straight into al-Qārah through their own territory would not clash with them, but if they happen to meet with one another on their joint boundaries they might do so, but there is of course no fighting once they are in al-Qārah. Perhaps it is more like the Yemeni *hijrah*²⁹ than a *ḥawṭah*, perhaps its »holy« nature is even pre-Islamic.

Like the other tribes Yāfi‘is have their own tribal slogans³⁰ – Yaḥarīs shout »I am the wolf of Ḥimyar, *Anā dhīb Ḥimyar*«, while the others cry »*Anā dhīb Kalad*«, etcetera. Yāfi‘’s proud boast is:

Into ten parts tribal honour is split.
Yāfi‘ has nine parts – the rest – the tenth bit.

الْقَبُولَةَ عَشْرَةَ قَسُومٍ يَنْقَسِمُ³¹
تِسْعَةَ لِيَاْفِعٍ وَالْبَقِيَّةَ الْعَاشِرِ

To this Āl ‘Umar Bā ‘Umar (of al-‘Awābithah) made the riposte:

Bū Sitt³², prithee, who ’s he when honour ’s split?
With us is he, or you in the tenth bit?

بَأَنْشِدْكَ مَنْ بُو سِتِّ لَمَّا تَقَسَّمَتِ
هُوَ عِنْدَنَا أَوْ عِنْدَكُمْ فِي الْعَاشِرِ؟

The allusion is to the fact that Yāfi‘ has no port or direct access to the sea and used to pay to the Faḍlī Sultan, Bū Sitt, when passing through his territory *‘ushūr*, a capitation tax on each person – which was considered

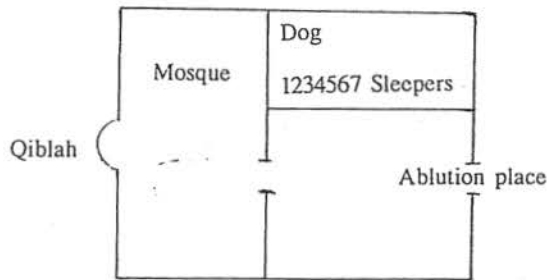
²⁹ See for *hijrah*, *Ṣan‘ā’*, p. 39–43, *passim*.

³⁰ Cf. my ‘Dawlah, tribal shaykhs, the maṣnab of the Waliyyah Sa‘īdah, qasāmah, in the Faḍlī sultanate, South Arabian Federation’, *Mahmūd al-Ghūl Commemoration Volume* (forthcoming), p. 122.

³¹ *Rajaz* metre. In the second line *wa-l-baqiyyah al-‘āshir* is pronounced *wal-baqīyil-‘āshir* which fits the metre, the final *hā’* of *baqiyyah* being eliminated through it is felt to be there. I have noticed a similar phenomenon in Iraqi printed colloquial verse. The verses were quoted to me by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Bā Maṭraf.

³² The nickname of the house of the Faḍlī Sultans. See article cited in fn. 30, p. 129.

the greatest humiliation (*hiyānah*). This was distinct from any tax that might be paid on goods.



Rough sketch of the tombs of the Seven Sleepers in the Sa'dī tribal district

Some Places to which Legends are Attached

In Sa'dī territory the Seven Sleepers (Ahl al-Kahf) have a mosque (*masjid*) and grave/cemetery (*maqbarah*) with special domes (*qubab*) and also a cave in a mountain which I recorded as Jabal Ṣanam³³ but Ṣāliḥ 'Umar writes to say it should be corrected to Sinam, which overlooks Falasān village. The cave is near a village called al-Maṣna'ah. The mountain is said to have the shape of a person prostrating himself in the direction of Mecca, and the cave is situated in relation to the sun exactly as described in Sūrah XVIII,16 – »And you would see the sun when it rose inclining from their cave towards the right and when it set passing them by on the left, while they were in an open part of it. The old town nearby to which the Seven Sleepers, called here al-Sab' al-Sujūd, the Seven Prostrators, went when they woke up, is called nowadays al-Khirbah (map al-Kharibah), the Ruin. It was the place of the family al-Baṭāṭī, known to me in Ḥaḍramawt. Ibn al-Mujāwir³⁴ says the Seven Sleepers' cave is one of the caves of Jabal Ṣabīr of Ta'izz: and I was told in the Yemen that it is still known, east of the mountain under the peak and there is a *masjid* there. If you enter the cave carrying a light it goes out. The Ahl Sa'd and the Sultan often meet together at al-Khirbah.

At Rahwat Jār³⁵ said to be a »white mountain« there is a stone which is a sort of *mashhad* (perhaps best rendered with Lane as »a place of religious visitation«) that belongs to Miryam. Any person passing by it for the first time places some offering there, e.g., sweet basil (*shuqr*³⁶), eggs or stone (*ḥajar*). Where the name Miryam occurs in this and other places in the Yemens I suspect that it is a vestige of Christianity easy to assimilate into Islam.

³³ My informant must have understood the names as *ṣanam*, an idol, because he remarked that if a person indulges in frivolous talk (*kalām khafīf*), it might be said to him: *Ant rūḥ ta'bud al-ṣanam*, You go and worship the idol/Ṣanam mountain!

³⁴ O. Löfgren, *Descriptio Arabiae Meridionalis*, Leiden 1951-54, p. 158.

³⁵ Nigel Groom, *Dictionary of Arabic topography and placenames*, Beirut-London 1983, p. 237, gives as the best sense for *rahwah*, »hillocks on elevated ground«.

³⁶ For *shuqr*, sweet basil, associated with Shaqr the pre-Islamic Moon God, see Walter Dostal, Some remarks on the ritual significance of the bull in pre-Islamic South Arabia, *Arabian and Islamic Studies: articles presented to R. B. Serjeant*, ed. Robin Bidwell & G. Rex Smith, London 1983, p. 197, reading *mashqūr* for *mashkūr*.

Judgement, Trial by Ordeal (*bish'ah*)

The law, customary law in the main we may be sure, and the hearing of pleas, probably follows procedures similar to those I have reported from the Faḍlī Sultanate³⁷; some practices, I noted, were also current in the 'Awdhalī Sultanate. With Sultan 'Alawī al-'Afifī, unfortunately, I only had the opportunity to discuss *bish'ah*³⁸ – conveniently translated as trial by ordeal. I have found an allusion to it in pre-Islamic Yemen³⁹ and it may still not have entirely disappeared in northern Arabia⁴⁰ though there and in the south it comes under heavy attack from Islamic reformists and the 'enlightened' *shabāb*. It used to be practised by the Yaḥarī, Kalādī and Yazīdī/Ahl Yazīd tribes, but with appeal to al-Qārah. Mutual consent of the two parties to a suit to proceed to *bish'ah* is necessary. There are three types, *bish'at al-nār*, *bish'at al-khayṭ* and *bish'at al-qirbah*. For each there is a different formula which is inscribed onto the instrument with which the *bish'ah* is performed. The first and third types were stated, in 1964, to be still current.

Bish'at al-nār is the well known ordeal with the red hot iron. If the tongue, after being flicked with the iron, remains red the accused is innocent (*bariyy*). The *bish'at al-qirbah*, ordeal of the water-skin has a special *sijill* (formula ?) of *ṭalāsīm* and *asmā*², names (probably of Allah) and they write: »So and so, if he be innocent exonerate him and if he be guilty declare him guilty (*Fulān b. fulān idhā hū bariyy ibri-h wa-in hū āthim āthmī-h*)«. The water-skin is then slowly inflated, the two (plaintiff and defendant) standing in front of it. As it expands so does the stomach of the accused *al-mathūm* if he is guilty!

No data on *bish'at al-khayṭ*, the thread ordeal, were forthcoming but Ṣāliḥ 'Umar writes of *al-ḥilyah/ḥulyah* or *bish'at al-khayṭ* that it is a precious stone (*min al-aḥjār al-karīmah*) about the size of a large olive, tied by a thread to the ring (*khātām*) of the person undertaking this process. The two suspects come and seat themselves before the *mubash-shi'* who has in front of him a glass or enamelled iron bowl which he fills half-full of water. On one side of the bowl he writes the name of one of the litigants (*al-mutakhāsimayn*) and the name of his mother and, on the other, the name of the second man and that of his mother also. »Then the *mubashshi'* ups, as if speaking confidentially (*yunājī*) to someone, and goes on stirring the ornament (*ḥilyah*) around in the bowl«. When the stirring stops and the stone comes to rest on one side or the other the process ends and the name of the guilty party is disclosed. Perhaps the names of the parties' mothers, not their fathers, are written because of the existence of the custom of *tawrīd* or provision of a concubine for the guest⁴¹. Ṣāliḥ comments that »all these processes are a sort of sleight of hand (*shah'wah-dhah*) which Islam does not ratify – sometimes they hit and often they miss«.

The occasion did not permit of a systematic enquiry into tribal codes,

³⁷ See article cited in fn. 30, p. 118.

³⁸ Heinrich Freiherr von Maltzan, *Reise nach Südarabien*, Braunschweig 1873, p. 294 *seq.* reports that 'the 'Afifī is the most famous »Gottesrichter« and »Feuerrichter« (*mubashshi'?*) in this part of south Arabia'.

³⁹ Cf. *Cambridge history of Arabic literature*, 1983, I, p. 125 *seq.*

⁴⁰ *Bish'ah* was, up till fairly recently at least, practised in Jordan.

⁴¹ I have not actually heard that *tawrīd* is known in Yāfi' but it was very widely practised in south Arabia as we know from Ibn al-Mujāwir. See p. 94-5 *infra*.

written or unwritten, of offences and penalties, but it was said in the course of conversation that, in the case of a hen or a cock entering standing crops, different fines are imposed – the cock is always looking about him but the hen concentrates on feeding, thus causing greater loss of grain! Likewise with cattle a tail-less animal causes less damage to standing crops than a beast vigorously swishing its tail from side to side! It would be interesting to follow up other aspects of agricultural customary law.

Al-Jarmūzī on the Zaydī Conquest of al-Raṣṣās and Yāfiʿ (11th/17th Century)

Let me now turn from these brief notes on Yāfiʿ made almost in passing which might nonetheless form the basis of further fieldwork, to be correlated also with the Aden archival material housed in the Commonwealth Relations Office Library. In 1964, through the courtesy of the Mukallā Residency I was able to xerox the copy of al-Jarmūzī's *al-Sīrat al-Mutawakkiliyyah* in the Sultanīc Library, which covers the reign of Imām al-Mutawakkil (1054-1087/1644-1676). It gives a vivid account of the resounding victory at Najd al-Salaf in 1065/1654-55 over the Mashriq tribes and the conquest of al-Raṣṣās and Yāfiʿ, followed, in a short space of years by that of Ḥaḍramawt as far as Zafār⁴². The Zaydī leaders seem to have used mainly Zaydī tribal contingents. This was the peak of their expansion but the Imāms' power gradually declined and the tribes broke free of central government. The Yāfiʿī version supra of these events compares with al-Jarmūzī's contemporary report of them; it seems a little blurred into legend but the two accounts are not inconsistent.

Before dealing with the campaign – *al-Makhrāj al-manṣūr ilā jihāt al-Mashriq wa-nawāḥī Ḥaḍramawt*⁴³, al-Jarmūzī gives a revealing description of the Manṣab of ʿĪnāt in Wādī Ḥaḍramawt and of his relations with the tribes of Yāfiʿ.

'Now Yāfiʿī country (*bilād Yāfiʿ*) and what adjoins it exercise authority (*yataḥakkamūn*)⁴⁴ for a man of Āl Abī Bakr b. Sālim of the Ashrāf, the Āl Bā ʿAlawī, it being said that they are of the offspring of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (peace upon him⁴⁵) and of the posterity of Mūsā b. Jaʿfar (peace on them both), as al-Aḥdal⁴⁶ has mentioned in his history called *ʿUmdat al-ṭālib fī ansāb Āl Abī Ṭālib*, and they are devoted to speaking of him, alleging that he has supernatural phenomena (*al-khawāriq*) which exert an influence on the world. They hate people of learning (*ʿilm*), on which [subject] they [talk] at length, and they especially detest the Zay-

⁴² The Zaydīs and Ibādīs of Oman clashed here. See my 'Omani naval activities off the southern Arabian coast in the 11th/17th century from Yemeni chronicles', *Journal of Oman Studies*, VI, I, p. 81 seq.

⁴³ Mukallā Ms. p. 129 seq.

⁴⁴ I have translated *yataḥakkamūn* in accordance with the senses in the lexicons, but I wonder if it means that they take their cases for judgement to ...

⁴⁵ The Zaydī abbreviation *عليه السلام* is always used.

⁴⁶ This is the title of a well known work by Ibn ʿInabah (C. Brockelmann, *GAL., Sup.*, II, p. 271). There is a Zaydī author, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Aḥdal, who wrote *Tuḥfat al-zaman bi-dhikr Sādāt al-Yaman* about the early 9th/15th century. So al-Jarmūzī may have confused the two. One must remember his *Sīrah* was not completed and there appear to be errors and mis-spelling of names in a number of places.

diyyah and other people of learning, though they perform the prayer, fast and go on pilgrimage; music (*ṭarab*) they deem lawful and all musical instruments (*al-malāhī*), considering them obedience (to Allah⁴⁷). The inhabitants of Ḥaḍramawt, its badw and settled folk (*ḥaḍar*) alike, go along with what has already been remarked.'

'My learned cousin (? *al-ṣinw al-fāḍil*), Ghawth al-Dīn b. Muḥammad, God rest him, told me that in the year 1038/1628 or 1039/1629–30 he came across a man from the western districts (*maghārib*) of Dhamār wearing the dress of the inhabitants of Ḥaḍramawt and the patched garment (*khirqah*) of Sufism, with a humility and responsiveness (*iqbāl*) about him. (He continued) 'So I asked him where he had been and he said: »With the Ḥabīb⁴⁸ Ḥusayn«, the account of whom and some of his characteristics comes (later), he having been with his father Abū Bakr b. Sālīm before him. (He added) that he entered into their *ṭarīqah* with them until the strong desire overcame him to put abominations (*istiḥsān al-qabā'ih*) to rights. Then he told them many things about them⁴⁹.'

'One of these was that he met with a man, an inhabitant of a town (*balad*) (which he named – I think it was the town of the Sultan – who was there⁵⁰ with a woman of high standing among them, as had the man also, and (he continued) »whosoever came she had intercourse with them«⁵¹. [So he said], disapproving of them: »Are you not committing evil actions and doing what is forbidden?« and he made much outcry against them. So the two said together: »This is no action of ours; that is the ruling of the decree and determination (*ḥukm al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*) [of Allah] only«⁵². Then their case was disclosed to a person with pretensions to learning (*‘ilm*) and there was a great quoting of authorities (? *‘azuma l-riwāyah*) and mighty volume of highminded talk (*fakhuma l-ḥikāyah*) and [finally] he said: »Praise to Allah who inspired us with the doctrine of the decree and determination (of Allah)«. Then he commanded that everyone should proceed at a trotting pace (*yazuff/yaziff*⁵³) to his house, honoured and respected. (He con-

⁴⁷ A case in point is at the Saqqāf Mosque in Tarīm with its musicians, the Servants of the Saqqāf who sing Sufi songs to pipe and drum. See my *Prose and Poetry from Ḥaḍramawt*, London 1951, p. 40 *seq.* I have attended a *ḥaḍrah* in the Ḥurayḍah Mosque where Sufi *nashīds* were accompanied by music.

⁴⁸ Ḥaḍramī Sayyids are addressed by the title Ḥabīb.

⁴⁹ There is confusion here over the application of the pronominal suffixes.

⁵⁰ Reading *wujida*.

⁵¹ This appears to be an allusion to the custom of *tawrīd*. It is a little surprising to find this tribal custom in Saywūn in the 11th/17th century. In 1964 I noted that the Ḥumūm tribes have a custom (*silfah*) with wife or daughter, that she is lent to a guest. This is a loan in the real sense since the guest will provide the same in return when he is visited by the tribesman who had provided him with this entertainment. The Ḥumūmī says: 'Dayfī, my guest!' and the woman sleeps with him. A Ḥumūmī woman may say of a child of hers: 'Kasabtah', literally 'I earned him', perhaps adding: 'This is the child of a Sayyid', or 'an 'askarī', etc. All this is said quite openly, the child having been conceived while the woman's husband was away. The narrator is a little prudish for similar customs were current in the Yemen of the time of Ibn al-Mujāwir and even today I was told the story of a tribeswoman who asked which of her three daughters would like 'to keep the guest warm'. By implication a *Ḥadīth* indicates that it was recognized that the wife whose husband was away might take a lover in the Prophet's time, but I hope to develop this theme further. What perhaps is most surprising about this case is that a Ḥaḍramī 'ālim seems to have found an argument for tolerating the custom.

⁵² The argument appears to be that since their actions are pre-destined they are not responsible for them, hardly a belief likely to appeal to the Mu'tazilī Zaydis.

⁵³ *Zaffa*, trottinger à petits pas (*Gloss. dat.*), conduct a bride to her husband's house. 'Honoured and respected' is plural.

tinued): »And when I saw this come from them I realised my mistake in entering with them [into the *ṭarīqah*] and myself fled to this country, repentant, withdrawing from staying among them«. As for the badw of them they are the same as the others of them, the description of whom will come [below] if Allah wills.⁴

Al-Jarmūzī now turns to the despatch by the Imām al-Muʿayyad of a shaykh, al-Asadī, a bedouin (*bādī*)⁵⁴, a truthful and religious minded man, to the Sultan of Ḥaḍramawt, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar b. Badr b. Jaʿfar al-Kathīrī⁵⁵ in 1040/1630–31 or 1041/1631–32, with a letter the content of which consisted of imāmīc invocations and exhortations. Al-Asadī's account follows verbatim.

ʿWhen the Sultan acquainted himself with it (the letter), he being at the time in his place (*maḥall*) known as Saywūn, he said to me after (my) staying with him for about a week⁵⁶: »The reply to the Imām will be only after making (it) known to the Ḥabīb⁵⁷ and receiving his honourable advice and you will be with us until his reply comes back«. He, meaning the Sultan, gave orders to his secretary to go to the afore-mentioned Ḥabīb to his place known as ʿĪnāt, sending with him the letter of the Imām (peace upon him). So I said to the Sultan: »And I should like to visit (*ziyārah*) the Ḥabīb«, my purpose being to get to know about his circumstances so as to inform the Imām (peace upon him) of them. So they had me ride with them and we arrived at his place with part of the night still remaining and they left me in a resthouse and the Sultan's man in another, each of us being next to the Domed (Tomb) of his father the shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālīm in which the lamps⁵⁸ were lit but there were no carpets in it and the tomb also was bare while in and around it were about four hundred persons, the majority of them of Yāfiʿ, declaiming *lā ilāha illa ʿllāh* and shouting at the top of their voices: »Yā Ḥabīb, yā Ḥabīb!« meaning the afore-mentioned Ḥabīb, the while beating drums and tambourines (*ṭārāt*) and playing (*yarfaʿūn*) pipes (*shabbābāt*)⁵⁹. (He continued): So I questioned the man who had been put in charge of entertaining us about them, and he said: »There are some who stay a month, some who stay for two months, and less and more, without seeing the Ḥabīb, and sometimes he closets himself with one of them and discloses to him (? *yaḏhur ʿalayhi*) and informs him about himself and the name of his wife⁶⁰, his own name and the name of his village (*balad*)«.

The afore-mentioned shaykh said in his account:

So I realised that he leaves them like that until he become apprised of much information about them and links news of their notables/

⁵⁴ Al-Asadī is described as *min ḥudhdhāq al-ʿawāmm*, (probably) a headman of the ordinary folk. It looks as if he were a village tribal elder.

⁵⁵ Muḥammad b. Hāshim, *op. cit.*, p. 67 *seq.*

⁵⁶ *Thamāniyah ayyām*.

⁵⁷ *I.e.* Ḥusayn.

⁵⁸ *Qanādīl*, perhaps 'candelabra', but in *Ṣanʿāʿ*, p. 230a, *qanādīl* are evidently pottery lamps.

⁵⁹ A Ḥaḍramī *shabbābah* is illustrated in W. H. Ingrams, *Arabia and the Isles*, London 1942, frontispiece. *Yarfaʿūn* lit., 'raising'.

⁶⁰ Yemenis would probably consider it ʿayb that the name of the wife be disclosed.

familiars in their country with him⁶¹. So they spread about in the land⁶² and testify that he has knowledge of hidden things. (He continued): And we/I likewise were/was not permitted [to enter his presence]. As for the Sultan's man he was given permission.

When the second or third day arrived I was permitted (to enter) so I entered his presence and found him in a large room filled with⁶³ his entourage (*ḥadafah*⁶⁴) while various kinds of musical instruments were being played beside him, one after another (*wa-ālāt al-malāhī 'alā 'anwā'i-hā tuttakhadh 'inda-hu shay'an fa-shay'an*)⁶⁵. I perceived him to be a stout man with a lot of hair, his head not shaven⁶⁶, his moustache unclipped, his nails untrimmed. By him stood two women teasing out his hair with combs, wearing fine clothes and jewellery. I asked about them and they said: »[They belong] to the dancers (*min al-la'ābīn*) whom they call beggar minstrels (*shuhḥadh*⁶⁷) whose profession is music (*'ādat-hum al-ṭarab*) and whose women dance at the [places] of the immoral«. They were to be found among the people of the Yemen all over, before the Imāms (peace upon them) took possession of the Yemen. They (i.e. the two women) have devoted themselves (*waqafā anfusa-humā*) solely to the service of the Shaykh (al-Ḥusayn). (He continued): We were thus (engaged) when, from another door at the lower end of the reception room (*al-iwān*⁶⁸), a youth appeared [who looked] as if the hair had (just) begun to sprout on his face. For him was placed a chair upon which he sat, two women being with him, likewise combing his hair for him. So I inquired about him and was told: »This is al-Ḥusayn's son called Aḥmad Jahḥāf«⁶⁹. Then (al-Ḥusayn) began to question me about the Imām, the gist of what he said, though it was more *verbatim*, being: »Where al-Sayyid Muḥammad (Imām al-Mu'ayyad) is concerned there is good (*barakah*) in him, but as for the such-and-such (in terms not per-

⁶¹ Imām Aḥmad of the Yemen is said to have found out details about the relatives of tribesmen and others visiting him and surprised and overawed them by asking them about their fathers, uncles of brothers, sometimes displaying a knowledge of certain intimate details about them.

⁶² Though not actually Qur'ān this phrase reflects Qur'ānic passages.

⁶³ Text, incorrectly, *mamlū-an*.

⁶⁴ *Ḥafadah* can of course mean 'grandchildren' and a Sayyid *majlis* in Ḥaḍramawt could well have many family members.

⁶⁵ I recall having heard either *ma'khadh* or *mawkhadh* somewhere in south Arabia as meaning a certain type of ditty but I have been unable to discover this in my field notes or elsewhere.

⁶⁶ The *ḥadar* in general and certainly the ulema, in my experience, have their heads shaven and for al-Ḥusayn and not to shave his moustache would be an affectation of bedouinism/tribalism. Yāfi'ī soldiery have moustaches.

⁶⁷ See *Gloss. dat.* 2623 *seq.* These dancing girls undoubtedly are of the same class of south Arabian society as the group I encountered in Dathīnah in 1954. See my 'The Ma'ṇ »Gypsies« of the West Aden Protectorate', *Anthropos*, Posieux (Fribourg), LXVI, 1961, p. 737-49. As the so-called Ma'ṇ girls are supposed to come from the Yemen they might even be descendants of, or related to the *shuhḥadh* described by al-Asadī. The Ma'ṇ would move via Mukayras, am-Ṣawma'ah to the top of Wādī Bayḥān to purvey their wares. There are indications that similar groups existed in the time of the first Zaydī Imām al-Hādī ila 'l-Ḥaqq. Cf. 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-'Abbāsī al-'Alawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī ila 'l-Ḥaqq*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār, Beirut 1392/1972, p. 94.

⁶⁸ *Īwān* is probably equivalent here to *dīwān*, Rossi's sala per ricevere.

⁶⁹ Cf. *infra* p. 104. The biographers do not mention the name Jahḥāf.

missible to repeat) al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn⁷⁰ they did this and that with Ḥaydar Pasha, and with ‘Ābidīn Pasha, this and that⁷¹.’

Since the Ḥabīb and those present believe that nobody may contradict him, al-Asadī replies tactfully and rises to kiss his feet. While this was going on —

‘The muezzin gave the call to mid-day prayer and those there said: »The Ḥabīb has left, the Ḥabīb has left«. (He continued): And there he was, still, not moving, as if he were dead, they, the while, saying to one another (*yatalākatūna*⁷²) that he had gone to Mecca. (He continued): So they waited a long time for him — then lo and behold, he stirred and spoke, and they got up to greet him.’

Al-Jarmūzī says that he had heard from others that up until now no private or public reception (*majlis*) is without musical instruments. He was told of a dome in Ḥaḍramawt ‘over one of their ignorant (*jahalah*) persons’, doubtless a saint, with a mosque around it where he attended a *majlis al-qirā’ah* where he heard ‘lying tales and frivolous irreligious stories with music (*fi ḥal-ṭarab*). In a book there on the virtues (*manāqib*) of the Shaykhs it was said of Shaykh Fulān that the Almighty Lord manifested Himself to him, and of Shaykh Fulān that prophethood was offered him on several occasions but that he refused it out of veneration for the Apostle of Allah, and suchlike outlandish things. In the country of the Raṣṣās and adjoining Muṣ‘abayn and Murād tribes not one in a thousand can be found who prays⁷³ or is acquainted with the obligations of the divine law or reason (*al-taklīf al-shar‘ī aw al-‘aqlī*), the badw of them especially who take pride only in hospitality (*diyāfāt*) and security of the roads. An eye-witness told al-Jarmūzī’s son that when Sultan Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Raṣṣās died his corpse ‘was borne from his house on poles accompanied by women on both sides weaving their hair (*nāshirāt*) [their heads] uncovered⁷⁴ to a cemetery of theirs. As for the women playing lutes (*‘awwādāt*), those with musical instruments and the dancers to whom the Mashriq⁷⁵ has become a home and for whom the properties of the inhabitants of it has become a place to eat, they go along by his corpse and shave some of their hair and hock (*ya‘qirna*) their camels, their menfolk doing likewise till, at each pace or paces, there are many ‘*aqīrahs*⁷⁶, while their voices are loud in wailing and lamentation’.

Of the Raṣṣās, al-Jarmūzī remarks that the kings of the Yemen neglected

⁷⁰ Imām al-Mu‘ayyad’s brothers, active in the campaigns leading to the expulsion of the Ottoman Turks.

⁷¹ Ḥaydar Pasha was the last effective Ottoman governor of the Yemen. A. S. Tritton, *Rise of the Imams of Sanaa*, Madras 1925, mentions as following him, Aidin, for which ‘Ābidīn seems a better reading.

⁷² Enquiries have been unable to elicit the sense of this word so the rendering is conjectural. This episode exemplified what is known colloquially as *khaṭwah* or *daḥqah*, lit., ‘step’; it occurs in the hagiologies. The Sufi moves in spirit to some other place, temporarily leaving his body in situ.

⁷³ This is not exaggeration — for tribal ignorance or disregard for the Fast and Prayer see *Ṣan‘ā’*, p. 310.

⁷⁴ For weaving the hair cf. my *South Arabian Hunt*, London 1976, p. 66, 109.

⁷⁵ Al-Mashriq is the eastern side of the Yemen.

⁷⁶ Landberg, *Ḥaḍramoūt*, p. 459, says an ‘*aqīrah* is always ‘en vertu d’un vœu’, adding that ‘le Sādah n’en veulent pas savoir et le considèrent comme *makrūh*’.

them and none paid them any attention except Sinān⁷⁷ Pasha who conquered their country and that of Yāfi^c and the adjoining territories in about four years, but when the Imām rose the Turks removed from them, and they returned to their former state. The Raṣṣāsī Sultan, he says, has no creed (*i^ctiqādāt*) but hate of the Āl Muḥammad (i.e. the Zaydī Imāms)⁷⁸ and has no regard for the Zaydiyyah but orders the non-arms-bearing classes (*ahl al-ḥaḍar*)⁷⁹ in his country to make the *kuḥbah* in the name of the Ottoman Sultan (*Sulṭān al-Rūm*) as also the blessing on him (*al-du^cā lahu*) in imitation of the afore-said Shaykh al-Ḥabīb (Ḥusayn b. Abī Bakr b. Sālim).

In their triumphant progress of conquest of the Yemen following on their expulsion of the Ottoman Turks, the Zaydīs determined to bring the Raṣṣāsīs and other tribes under their domination.

The Zaydī Conquest of al-Raṣṣās and Yāfi^c

The Zaydīs opened their campaign by moving to al-Zahrā⁸⁰ where they established a camp from which to invade the territory of the Sultan al-Raṣṣās. He in turn assembled over 30,000 men from the ‘Awāliq, Yāfi^c and other Mashriq sultanates. They prepared to engage the Zaydīs at Najd al-Salaf⁸¹ ‘it being the gate to their country and the only road to it’, and they imposed a daily levy of dirhams, sheep and grain on al-Baydā².

Al-Ḥabīb Sālim b. Aḥmad wrote to al-Raṣṣās, saying that ‘the Zaydiyyah will be a morsel (*tu^cmah*)⁸² for you’, declaring he had delivered them over to him and sending him a rosary which would take the place of great armies. On a further occasion he despatched one of their ill-favoured banners (*rāyāt-hum al-mankūṣah*)⁸³ with a slave to bear it. The Sultan placed entire confidence in what the Ḥabīb had promised him while the Ḥabīb’s messenger accompanying ‘the banner of error’ declared that the words of his Shaykh were true and that bullets would not hit him⁸⁴ but if

⁷⁷ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī, seemingly the author of the text used by Tritton (perhaps the ‘*akhbār*’ noted by al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-tāli^c*, Cairo 1348 H.; Ms. f. 32a), states that, in 1004/1595–6, Sinān conquered Yāfi^c and built a fort at Khalaqah later besieged by Yāfi^c. ‘The Amīr Sinān used to respect the people of Yāfi^c because of what he had come to know of their great courage at the time of his entering their country and their fighting him in it’. For this reason doubtless the Faḍlī Sultans and certain of their tribes have the slogan (‘*azwah*’), ‘*Anā dhayb Sanān/Sinān* I am the wolf of Sinān’. See *Maḥmūd al-Ghūl Commemoration Volume*, p. 122.

⁷⁸ Al-Jarmūzī was told that the Sultan ‘may, each Friday, pray two *rak^cahs*, not in the proper way of prayer (‘*alā ghayr ṣifat al-ṣalāh*) after washing his hair with *sidr* (*Zizyphus spina Christi*) leaf. He has two women who tease out his hair with the comb. All the people of the afore-said district go in for very long hair’.

⁷⁹ The villagers?

⁸⁰ Ṣāliḥ ‘Umar says this should read Zāhir.

⁸¹ Najd al-Salaf/al-Aslāf or Najd al-Ḥājj is south of Yarīm (Ṣan^cā², p. 80b). Yāfi^c had inflicted a heavy defeat on the Turks there about sixty years earlier.

⁸² *Tu^cmah* is ‘an assigned means of subsistence’ etc. (Lane) but Ḥabīb Sālim has probably in mind the Hadīth: *Wa-qitāl-un ‘alā hādhihi l-tu^cmah* where *tu^cmah* is said by Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāyah*, III, p. 38, to mean *fay²*, booty.

⁸³ *Mankūṣah*, lit., upside down. I have rendered it in the sense given by Dozy, *Supplément*, défavourable, but Ṣāliḥ ‘Umar says that this is a custom – to send a banner reversed – to incite the tribes to one’s aid. The Maṣṣab used to have a green and white *bayraq* with him to indicate his arrival or to protect himself at tribal battles and ‘loosen the interlocking of those fighting oneanother’.

⁸⁴ He would be what the Yemenis term ‘*muṣarraf*’. The late Imām Aḥmad of the Yemen was popularly believed to have immunity from bullets or sword cuts.

they did it would only be to wound him. So the Zaydī musketeers poured lead into him, very few bullets missing, his skull scattered into splinters and he fell down into Hell-fire! His head was cut off and his banner became a plaything for those in the Imāmic sūq.

The Zaydīs advanced to Qā^c al-Rumāh, north-west of Najd al-Salaf around which the Sultan al-Raṣṣās had built a wall to act as a sangar (*matras*) and his tribesmen with those of Banu ʿl-Ard, Murād, Yāfi^c, the ʿAwāliq and others drew up on a front over two miles long. But the tribesmen were defeated, the Sultan al-Raṣṣās was slain and his head cut off, the ʿAwlaqī horse routed, though some of al-Raṣṣās's women escaped on the ʿAwlaqī horses. After the battle the Zaydī leaders collected the women together in a single tent and put them in charge of persons of repute. Later the women and children were sent to Sultan Ṣāliḥ al-Raṣṣās, brother to the slain Sultan who had fled to a place ʿUbarah⁸⁵ in the mountains near Bayḥān as he could find none to give him refuge. Eventually he sought safeconduct (*amān*) which the Imām granted him with a firm pact (*ʿaqd muʿakkad*) to that effect. Sultan al-Raṣṣās's head was sent to the Imām and hung up at al-Ḥuṣayn⁸⁶ so that all might see he had been slain. Following his death *Allāh fataḥa ʿl-amṭār*, opened up the rains⁸⁷.

The Conquest of Bilād Yāfi^c

In the year 1065/1655 when peace had been made in the Mashriq by direct contact or through correspondence Zaydī forces took up position in al-Khalaqah⁸⁸ and Yāfi^c fortified themselves in their high mountains one of which was the inaccessible mountain called al-ʿUrr⁸⁹, constructing on it high walls (*dawāʿir*⁹⁰) and curved sangars (? *matāris mulawwiyah*) that they garrisoned with many men and muskets.

The Zaydīs now invited Sultan Ṣāliḥ al-Raṣṣās to al-Bayḍāʾ where they had established themselves. He was met by the Zaydī leader, obviously bent on a policy of conciliation, who invested him with a splendid robe (*kiswah*) while still on his way there. An eye-witness reports that he nearly refused to accept it 'because they are unaccustomed to the *kiswah*, their costume being, like the other Mashāyikh of the Mashriq, a waist-wrapper (*mīzār*) and shoulder-cloth (*liḥfah*) of the select top quality of al-Shiḥr cloth (*bazz*)⁹¹, and his weapons a musket like others. He is at pains to decorate it and the powderhorn (*yubāligh fī ḥilyati-hā wa-ḥilyat al-ʿiddah*) [with silver mounts⁹²], the chiefs of his fellow (tribesmen) having mostly the same weapons'. The Sultan does not ride horses but goes along with his fellow tribesmen like one of them. 'They wear their hair long and comb it out, so that Sultan Ḥusayn al-Raṣṣās's hair, as one who actually

⁸⁵ Unidentified.

⁸⁶ Unknown to me, perhaps in the Ḍawrān region where al-Mutawakkil had taken up residence.

⁸⁷ This is a sign of *barakah*, perhaps Divine approval of the Zaydī conquest?

⁸⁸ See p. 102 *infra*.

⁸⁹ See fn. 26.

⁹⁰ Sing. *dāʿir* (*Ṣanʿāʾ*, p. 576a).

⁹¹ For Ḥaḍramī cloth in *Ṣanʿāʾ* Sūq see *Ṣanʿāʾ*, p. 182.

⁹² The lawfulness of ornamenting the *bunduq* with silver is discussed by Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn Ibrīq al-Ḥaḍramī al-Ḥabbān, in his *Tahrīd al-ikhwān al-kirām wa-badhī al-naṣīḥah fī ʿl-taḥarruz min Yām al-liyām wa-afʿālī-him al-qabīḥah* composed about 1800 (my photocopy).

saw it told me, was nearly two *dhirā'* (a metre) long and he had servants to comb it out. They do not dwell in settled places (*lā yaskunūn al-ḥaḍar*)⁹³.

Al-Jarmūzī concludes that, following Sultan al-Raṣṣās's submission, came that of the 'Awlaqī Sultan, Maṣūr b. Ṣāliḥ, whose place is a little town called Yashbum – he and the people of his country are *ahl al-ḥaḍar* with many sūqs in their country, and they ride horses. He sought *amān* for his country which was duly granted. The Faḍlī sultan's son also came in, and the Zaydī leader wrote to all districts, receiving responses from the Wāhidī, 'Amūdī⁹⁴ and others.

The Zaydīs now heard that the Ḥabīb Sālim had left Ḥaḍramawt and was making for Yāfi' who had written him many letters. He took the route through the country of Ibn 'Abd al-Māni⁹⁵ and Aḥwar territory⁹⁶. The Zaydīs therefore despatched a contingent of cavalry and infantry to intercept him before he could reach Yāfi'. The infantry were at 'the town of Dathīnah' (probably al-Ḥāfah⁹⁷). When close to Aḥwar the cavalry learned his son the Ḥabīb⁹⁸ with a body of Yāfi' had already passed through and realized that he had given them the slip but they hung about till they confirmed that Sālim al-Ḥabīb (sic) had returned to his home in Ḥaḍramawt. These cavalry when at a place called al-Madārah⁹⁹ were recalled to the Zaydī army and proceeded to it by way of the Thirah pass ('*aqabah*)¹⁰⁰ which they found steep and difficult to climb. They went on to a village of the Banu 'l-Arḍ and there they learned that the Zaydī troops, called by al-Jarmūzī '*junūd al-ḥaqq*'¹⁰¹, had fought and dispersed Yāfi' tribesmen who were driven back to al-'Urr which the Zaydīs apparently took¹⁰² then capturing Marfad¹⁰³, to take houses there belonging to the Shaykh Ibn Harharah. So the cavalry contingent moved to al-'Urr where they prayed and going to a place above Marfad they fired off many rounds. This action further dispirited the Yāfi'is whose chiefs came to the Zaydī camp to ask for safe-conduct (*amān*). They were welcomed by the Zaydī general al-Ṣafiyy and granted *amān* and an investiture; he took them to his brothers who did the same.

'As for the Shaykh 'Abdullāh b. Harharah who is in charge of the collection (*qabḍ*) of the *awqāf* belonging to the afore-said Ḥabīb Sālim, his votive gifts (*nudhūr*) and taxes (*zakawāt*¹⁰⁴) and to whom ultimately come the commodities in Yāfi' which are forwarded to the Ḥabīb in Ḥaḍramawt, our Lords¹⁰⁵, Allah preserve them, commanded that such grain (*hubūb*) belonging to the afore-said Ḥabīb as was found in his house, consisting of money, grain, horses, the three flocks

⁹³ Sense uncertain.

⁹⁴ Famous Mashāyikh family of Wādī Daw'an.

⁹⁵ Mashāyikh family of Jōl 'Abd al-Māni'.

⁹⁶ Lower 'Awlaqī country.

⁹⁷ A ruined mediaeval town I visited in 1954.

⁹⁸ Presumably al-Jarmūzī means the son of al-Ḥabīb Sālim, but I can find no reference to him in Sayyid genealogies.

⁹⁹ Al-Madārah is a Mayāsir village between Mūdiyah and al-Shāfi'iyyah.

¹⁰⁰ In 'Awdhalī territory, the famous pass up the Kawr.

¹⁰¹ 'The troops of righteousness/right/justice/truth'!

¹⁰² See fn. 26.

¹⁰³ Marfad is in the Qabīlat al-Ḥaḍramī territory.

¹⁰⁴ I.e. the '*ushūr*'.

¹⁰⁵ The Zaydī leaders.

(*al-an'am al-thalāth*¹⁰⁶) and the coffee plantations (*ṣawāfī bunn*¹⁰⁷) should be seized'.

The Dhū Nākhib people had declined to come in to the Zaydī leaders because of the steepness of their mountains which were garrisoned by brave Yāfi'ī tribes but after the safe-conduct (*amān*) accorded Shaykh 'Abdullāh b. Harharah they also petitioned for *amān*. Al-Ṣafiyy sent them to the Imām. They, knowing that repentance would be accepted (*al-tawbah maqbūlah*), made a show of repentance. The Imām presented their chiefs with clothing, money, weapons and horses to those of them who were accustomed to [ride] them.

Governors were appointed over Yāfi', Raṣṣās and Dathīnah and Zaydī troops moved to al-Khalaqah, rebuilding the fort there which commands the *sūq*. News arrived of the submission of the Sultan of Ḥaḍramawt. The Mashāyikh of Yāfi', Ibn Harharah and those of the Mashāyikh who had come in were informed by the Imām of their *wājibāt*, i.e. the taxes they must pay – he wrote them a pact and took an oath from them.

The situation was still unsettled with under 100 Zaydī soldiers remaining in Yāfi', and when the harvest (*al-thamarah*) was ready and assessors were sent out Ibn al-'Afif prevented them from making their rounds. The Zaydī governor who had married locally had engaged about 400 Yāfi'ī troops and they agreed to follow him against Ibn 'Afif who went to Jabal al-Naffāj between al-Mawsaṭah and Banī Qāsiṭ (sic). All Yāfi' then rose except al-Muflahī, but the Sultan al-Raṣṣās dissociated himself (*aḡhara l-barā'ah*) from the rising. Zaydī forces went to al-Khalaqah, Marfad and al-Mawsaṭah. The Yāfi'ī allies of the Zaydīs used to 'show obedience by day and raid the (Zaydī) soldiers to their places at night', like the Yemenis did with Nasser's forces in the sixties! The Zaydīs however moved from al-Khalaqah to Masjid al-Nūr in al-Mawsaṭah and mounted an attack on the 'Afifis and Nākhibīs on al-Naffāj who were defeated with the loss of 300 tribesmen.

After some days the shaykh Ma'ūḍah and his son asked for *amān*. Some Zaydī troops meanwhile had found in a pass 'a woman with slave-girls (*jawārin*) of hers with instruments (*ālāt*) so they took her and those with her and she was the wife of Ibn 'Afif'. Perhaps the 'instruments' were arms. The Zaydī general ordered her to be taken with trusty persons to Radā' fort, making her a hostage (*rahīnah*). The news of her capture was brought to Ibn 'Afif who was much grieved as he thought she had escaped. Perhaps this is the lady called Nūr bint 'Afif (p. 90) who was said to have fought the Zaydīs. The Zaydī general ordered all the weapons of bilād b. 'Afif to be collected, guns (*banādiq*), clubs, (leather) shields (*daraq*), or no *amān* would be given. Musical instruments and drums (*ṭāsāt*) were confiscated also. After this there seems to have been general submission to the Zaydīs, all this in year 1066/1655–56. The Imām ordered the musical instruments to be broken, but he appears to have tried to win over Ibn 'Afif, Ibn Harharah, and al-Nākhibī to whom he assigned maintenance while detaining them with him, and to whom he made gifts.

¹⁰⁶ I.e. *al-ibl wa-l-baqar wa-l-ghanam*, camels, cattle, sheep and goats, upon which *zakāt* has to be paid.

¹⁰⁷ I translate *ṣawāfī* as plural of *ṣāfiyah*, a category of landholding, but *bunn ṣāfī* is the pure coffee-berry.

The Zaydīs lose Yāfi‘

About a quarter century later Yāfi‘ expelled the Imām’s governor and repulsed expeditions sent against them so that the Zaydīs were compelled to retire on Radā‘. Again in 1101/1689–90, a Zaydī expedition reached al-‘Urr but was defeated. After defeating the Zaydīs in Yāfi‘ in 1120/1708–09, ‘Umar b. Šāliḥ Harharah and the Mashriq tribes even ravaged the town of Ibb. While in 1144/1731–32 in the time of Sultan Sayf b. Qaḥṭān b. Ma‘ūdah al-‘Afif the Yāfi‘is drove the Zaydīs out of Lahej and Aden. The Zaydī empire was now well on the way to disintegration and the Yemen on the return to tribal anarchy.

The Āl al-Shayḫ Bū Bakr b. Sālim, Manṣabs of ‘Īnāt

Though the informants marshalled by al-Jarmūzī are hostile to the Āl Bū Bakr b. Sālim house, taking a cynical view of the way in which it exercises its functions, they do present a fair and authentic picture. The Āl Bū Bakr b. Sālim is probably the largest Ḥaḍramī Sayyid house and in the era of migration it had many branches settling in Indonesia, East Africa and elsewhere. I have found no actual account of how its founder Bū Bakr established his ascendancy but this was probably gained through strength of personality, political acumen and playing to the full on his ‘spiritual power’¹⁰⁸ inherited from the Prophet. The family, says the editor of *Shams al-zaḥīrah*¹⁰⁹, ‘has a *dāllah*¹¹⁰ over the arms-bearing tribes like Yāfi‘, Kindah, the Manāhīl and Mahrah. Because of the prestige/influence (*wajāhah*) that their *manṣabs* have, they employ it to reconcile contending parties and to extinguish the fire of dissension (*fiṭnah*) when it intensifies. They had hands in appeasing dissensions and arranging truces between people in an age when anarchy prevailed’.

Al-Shillī (ob. 1093/1682) assigns a lengthy biography to Bū Bakr b. Sālim (919–992/1513–4–1584) known as Šāḥib ‘Īnāt. He was born in Tarīm where he studied with its ulema, subsequently moving to ‘Īnāt¹¹¹. Both *al-ḥāḍir wa-l-bād*, the settled and bedouin, profited through him and his virtues (*manāqib*). His place (*janāb*) became a refuge for any person in danger (*khā‘if*) and after his death whosoever came to seek protection at his tomb (*istajāra bi-qabri-hi*) became protected (*maḥrūs*). All his property deriving from his estates and what was brought to him (*manqūl*) and animals was ‘in the name of’ (i.e. spent upon) the needy the *du‘afā’ wa-ḍīfān* (unarmed classes¹¹² and guests). The revenues in kind from Yāfi‘ would come under the heading of *manqūl*. Al-Shillī lists his writings on the usual religious

¹⁰⁸ *Al-sultat al-rūḥiyyah*. I imagine the term is of comparatively recent usage in Ḥaḍramawt.

¹⁰⁹ Muḥammad Ḍiyā’ Shihāb ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Mashhūr *Shams al-zaḥīrah*, Jeddah, 1404/1984, I, p. 276. There is an earlier lithographed edition.

¹¹⁰ Lane’s rendering of *dāllah* perfectly describes the manners of a great Manṣab – a placid, grave manner of deportment with pleasingness of mien, a kind of boldness towards a person in whose estimation one holds a high place. Bū Bakr b. Sālim used to cajole the rude bedouin (*ajlāf*) and they did not upset him (*lā yuz‘iju-hu*).

¹¹¹ Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, *al-Mashra‘ al-rawiyy*, Cairo, 1319 H., II, p. 26. The Āl Kathīr Sultans laid out (*ikhtatta*) ‘Īnāt al-Qadīmah in 629/1232, but the area in which he built his house became known as al-Jadīdah.

¹¹² *Da‘īf* in Ḥaḍramawt – workers in clay, builders, potters, field workers, but probably here of more general application.

topics including *taṣawwuf* but avers that he used to hold aloof from the manifesting of miracles (*izhār al-karāmāt*) and supernatural phenomena (*khawāriq al-‘ādāt*) though al-Jarmūzī quotes al-Ahdal to the contrary with regard at least to the Āl Bū Bakr b. Sālim in general. Nevertheless, like other holy men, he revealed (*kāshafa*) to a group of his companions what was in their hearts. The following story recalls the cynical remarks of the Zaydī al-Asadī supra.

Certain merchants sailing from India to bandar Mokha were delayed by an adverse wind, it being the end of the monsoon (*mawsim*). One of the ship’s company saw in a dream Bū Bakr b. Sālim who instructed him to make votive gifts and to be of good cheer. This he promised to do and a favourable wind took them to Mokha. This man arriving in ‘Īnāt, had this tale recounted to him by Bū Bakr before he could open his mouth, with the demand: ‘*Hāt al-nidhr*, Hand over the gift!’ ‘Not until you tell me what it is’, said the man, and Bū Bakr told him in exact detail.

It was Abū Bakr’s son, al-Ḥusayn (ob. 1044/1634–35), who was visited by al-Asadī in 1041/1630–31. Al-Shillī¹¹³ declared him to be unequivocally ‘the imām of his time’, widely famed, following the *sunnah*, perfectly exercising his office (*manṣab*¹¹⁴), entertaining the *fuqarā’* and *masākīn*¹¹⁵, strangers and orphans. The tribesmen (*‘urbān*) used to come to him from all quarters of the land. He disliked tyrants (*jabābirah*) – by these he probably means haughty tribal chiefs – and would only look at them askance. ‘When the Imām of the Zaydiyyah wrote to the people of al-Diyār al-Ḥaḍramiyyah summoning them to enter into obedience to him, and everyone to whom a letter came from him gave a (positive) reply’ except al-Ḥabīb al-Ḥusayn, ‘he neither replied to him (assenting) nor did he sent him a letter’. It is to be inferred from the text, though unvoiced by it, that the Ḥaḍramīs considered the Zaydī Imām to be one of the Jabābirah!

When al-Ḥusayn died it was agreed by consensus that his son Aḥmad had the best claim to the office of *manṣab*. He, like his group (*jamā‘ah*) followed Bedouin ways¹¹⁶, their bodies were bedouin and their hair bedouin (*abdānu-hum wa-shu‘ūru-hum bādiyah*). In 1948 the branch of the Āl al-Shaykh Bū Bakr lower down the Wādī Ḥaḍramawt at Khōn were still bedouin in their dress and arms-bearing though not the Manṣab house at ‘Īnāt which seems to have abandoned bedouin ways and conformed to Sayyid dress¹¹⁷ Aḥmad died in 1061/1651.

The Sālim who figures in the narrative of al-Jarmūzī would be Sālim b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn. He is not included by al-Shillī in *al-Mashra‘* but he is recorded in *Shams al-zahīrah*¹¹⁸ with the title Sālim al-Muhājir, the latter epithet to be interpreted as the emigrant seeking protection. He died in al-Ghayzah/Ghayḍah in 1087/1676–77. Sālim may have been *manṣab* after his father’s death, but it rather looks as if he was obliged to take refuge from the Zaydīs in the coastal Mishqāṣ district east of al-Shihr.

The link between the ‘Īnāt Sayyids and Yāfi‘ still persisted till our own

¹¹³ *Op. cit.* II, p. 92. Al-Ḥusayn was opposed to tobacco and had a proclamation prohibiting the use of it made in the *sūq*.

¹¹⁴ The title ‘Manṣab’ seems to derive from the office.

¹¹⁵ The *fuqarā’* in Ḥaḍramawt may mean Sufis and *masākīn* petty traders, but perhaps here the terms are used in the general sense of ‘poor’.

¹¹⁶ *Al-Mashra‘*, II, p. 53; *Shams al-zahīrah*, I, p. 301.

¹¹⁷ See my *Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, London 1957.

¹¹⁸ *Shams al-zahīrah*, II, p. 302.

time and a notice in the *Tārīkh al-shu‘arā’ al-Ḥaḍramiyyīn*¹¹⁹ mentions that a noted Ṣūfī scholar ‘Alī b. Sālim, eleventh in the line of descent from Shaykh Bū Bakr b. Sālim, travelled probably round about 1850 to Jabal Yāfi‘ ‘for worldly purposes, trading (*fī sabīl al-ḥayāt al-dunya-wiyyah, mutājjir-an*) among a multitude of traders, but his spirit was not at ease with this wordly life and he quickly withdrew to Ḥaḍramawt’.

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¹¹⁹ ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Saqqāf, Cairo ca. 1359 H., IV, p. 72.