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Radicalization of Zaydi Reform Attempts

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MLA Citation
Shuja al Deen, Maysaa. *Radicalization of Zaydi Reform Attempts*. 2016. American University in Cairo, Master's thesis. *AUC Knowledge Fountain*.
https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/607

The American University in Cairo

Radicalization of Zaydi Refrom Attempts

A Thesis Study Submitted by:

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Department of Arab and Islamic
Civilizations

Summer2016

In partial fulfillment of the degree of
Masters of Arts

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Abstract

This thesis is studying the development of the Zaydi doctrine in order to understand the reasons of emerging the Zaydi radical group, the Houthis. The studies about Zaydism are few, since it is a doctrine that only exists in Yemen, so it is considered a doctrine of a minor group. The studies about the contemporary Zaydism are much fewer, which leads to misunderstand the Houthi phenomenon.

Zaydism has a long history in Yemen and the Zaydi Imamate controlled Yemen or the northern parts of Yemen for hundreds years. Therefore, the overthrow of the Imamate in 1962 and the establishment of t republican system were the biggest challenges that Zaydism has ever faced, since the Zaydi Imamate political theory is the main theme of the Zaydi doctrine.

This thesis will demonstrate the main features of Zaydism; its main theological aspects and Social dimensions to study the contemporary Zaydism since the nineteenth century, when it shifted from a revolutionary doctrine of rebelled tribes to a state's doctrine. Then, it will deal with the last period of the Imamate during the twentieth century and its collapse in 1962. The establishment of the republican system resulted profound outcomes on the Zaydi doctrine. After almost three decades of the republican revolution, the Zaydi revival groups emerged and established the Zaydi political parties and the Zaydi clubs to teach the Zaydi youth the Zaydi doctrine; all of these changes will be examinedin the thesis. These different phases that Zaydism passed through led to emerge the Houthi group. The reasons of emerging the Houthis group and the shift from a Zaydi revivalist movement to a radical one will be also discussed in this thesis.

Contents

Radicalization of Zaydi Reform

Introduction

Zaydism is a Shiite sect based on the Mu'tazilite philosophical school of thought. Its name is derived from the name of its founder Imam Zayd b. 'Alib. Husayn b. Alīb. Abī Tālib, the second grandson of Imam Ali b. Abī Tālib, and one of the followers generation [1].

Imam Zayd's eldest brother was Muhammadal-Bāķir, the fifth Imam of the twelve Imams in the Twelver Shiite School. The father of Imam Zayd Zayn b. 'Alī b. Husayn b.'Alī Abī Tālib, and his brother Muhammadal-Bāqir were Zayd's initial teachers at al-Medina, where he grew up. Then, he travelled to al-Basra, where he met Wasil b. Ata' and was influenced by his Mu'tazilite ideas [2].

As the Mu'tazilite is a rational School and heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. Consequently, Zayd's Mu'tazilite ideas caused a dispute between him and his eldest half-brother Muhammadal-Baqir, since al-Baqir considered it inappropriate as the Mu'tazilite criticized their grandfather 'Alī Ibn. Abī Tālib as well as other companions [3].

Between Sunni and Shiite doctrines

Zaydism has a set of distinguished unique characteristics as it occupies a midway position between the Sunni and Shiite doctrines. Consequently, it is considered more inclined,

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[1] Madelung, W. (2016). *Zaydiyya*. Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved May 05, 2016, from http//referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/zaydiyya-COM_1385?s.num=0

[2] AbU Zahrah, Muhammad. (1959). *Al-Imam Zayd*. Cairo. Dar al Fikr al 'Arabi. p. 233

[3] Abu Zahrah, *al-Imam Zayd*. p. P233

doctrine wise, towards the Shiite sects rather than the Sunni. However, some jurists/researchers consider it among the Sunni sects; therefore it considered to be the fifth Sunni School[4].

Zaydism's midway affiliation originates from its tolerant attitude towards the Prophet's companions. Zaydism lenient approach is highly manifested in the Imam Zayd's refusal to condemn Abu Bakr and Umar, which his fellows demanded as a condition for supporting him in war[5]. In general, Zaydi doctrine favors Imam Ali over all the other companions, but without nullifying the caliphate of the prior companions. However, this stance is not unanimous which ultimately leads to a division among Zaydis; jārūdiyya line of thought in the Zaydi School presents the harshest stance towards the companions. On the other hand, Ṣāliḥiyya or Batriyya, believe Abu Bakr and Omar were the righteous caliphs with a more lenient stance[6].

The Zaydi Imamate

Zaydism's prominent attribute is the Imamate political theory which is mainly derived from Mu'tazilite principles. To be specific, the principles of justice and commanding good and forbidding evil justify the armed uprising against the unjust ruler[7]. Such belief contradicts the Sunni doctrines that the general rule is the ruler's obedience in order to avoid chaos, unless the ruler shows an action or a word that indicates blasphemy[8]. However, Twelvers believe in the

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[4]Messick, B. M. (1993). *The calligraphic state: Textual domination and history in a Muslim society*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 39

[5] Madelung, Zaydiyya.

[6]Al-Shahrastānī, Abi 'l-Fatḥ Mauhmmed.(2009). *Al-Milal- wa'l-Niḥal-*. Beirut. Dar al- Kutb al- 'Almiyya..Vol 1. pp157-161

[7]Madelung, W. Zaydiyya.

[8] Gimaret.D.(2016). *Ta'a*.Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved 5May , 2016, from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/taa-SIM_7235?s.num=0

7

occultation of al Mahdi, and practice the hiding of beliefs until the re-appearance of the Twelfth Imam, which is called the Taḳiyya concept[9].

Zaydism's twelve conditions that need to be met should be present in order to legitimize the call for the Imamate, such as; the Fatimid lineage, the attribute of courage, as well as possessing the characteristics of the independent reasoning scholar, a Mujtahid. If any one of the Prophet's family Ahl al Bayat possesses these qualifications, he can be a self- proclaimed Imam and would seek jurists' approval to legitimize his rebellion. However, it is imperative to justify this rebellion by explaining why the people, who fight with him, should rebel and how the current Imam is unjust. Consequently, the claimant Imam should nominate himself as an alternative and promises the people new accomplishments if he is to become an Imam. Unlike other Shiite sects, Zaydis do not believe in infallibility and they reject the idea of divine knowledge[10].

The Distinction between Zaydism and the Twelve

The Twelve Imamate theory is based on the infallibility of the Imam, occultation and practicing Taḳiyya which differs completely from the Zaydi Imamate, which is based on the rebellion against the unjust ruler or Imam. In addition to this significant difference in the Imamate theory, there are two main distinct differences between them.

First the role of jurisprudence, Twelver jurisprudence enjoys independence from the political authority in contrast with Zaydi jurisprudence that is affiliated to the political authority

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[9]Strothmann, R. Djebli, Moktar. (2016).*Taḳiyya*. Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved 5May , 2016, from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/takiyya-SIM_7341?s.num=0
[10] Zayd, Ali Muhammad. (1981).*Mu'atazilit al- Yaman, Dawlat al- Imam al- Hadi wa fikuruh*. Beirut.Dar al- 'Awdah. Beirut. P269.

like the Sunni Schools. The difference originated from the financial resources of each one, which is *al-Khums*.

According to the Sunni jurisprudence schools, *al-Khums* is one fifth of the spoils of war, that is the Prophet and his family's share and it continued to be applied after his death for those from the society who are in need. This is the general stance of Sunnism; however, there are many definitions and benefiting categories of *al-Khums* for the different Sunni Schools and scholars.

For the Twelver, *al-Khums* means a fifth of everything from which the people gain. In the absence of Imam, *al-Khums* goes to the scholars that provide the Twelver jurisprudence with wealth to guarantee its independence from the state.

Zaydism has a different definition of *al-Khums* and its distribution methods. *Al-Khums* is the fifth of war booty, treasure, and the ongoing revenues after campaigns such as the Kharaj and the Jizya. *Al-Khums* is to be transferred to the Imam who would distribute it. *Al-Khums* has two main categories, first Allah's share that is to be dedicated to the general benefit expenditure, such as mosques and roads. Second the Prophet's share is spent by the Prophet's descendants on condition they have recognized the Zaydi Imam. Accordingly, Zaydi scholars such as Sunnis do not have a share of this Khums to provide them an independent financial resource like the Twelve scholars[11].

The final significant distinction is concerned with the nature, existence, and spread of each. Twelve is a Shiite school that existed in various areas, not only Iran. This doctrine spread in Iran after the Safavid state adopted it as an official doctrine that coincided with, redefinition

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[11]Zysow, A. and Gleave, R. *Khums*. (2012). Khums. Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved 06 August 2016 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1417

and revival of the Persian national identity[12]. Consequently, Twelve doctrine became part of the Iranian national identity. Zaydism, on the other hand, spread gradually in Yemen, mainly in the northern part of Yemen, where the Hamdan tribes live, so Zaydism is a regional tribal identity not national.

Zaydism between Revolution and State

Imam Zayd was the first member of the Prophet's family to break the state of silence and political apathy that were adopted by the Prophet's family after the Karbala massacre, when he rebelled against the Umayyad Caliph Hisham b. Abd al Malik. Zayd's uprising failed and ended with his martyrdom, which revived the memory of Karbala[13]. However, after Zayd's martyrdom, his ideas triggered various rebellion attempts against the Umayyad and Abbasside caliphs.

These revolutions were compatible with the Zaydi main principle; in addition they took place at a critical historical moment, as it marked the end of the Umayyad caliphate era, which witnessed many revolutions due to the political and social unrest. Furthermore, Zaydis continued to revolt against the Abbasids in the beginning of their caliphate because they broke their promise to the Allawids (Ali b. Abī Tālib's descendants), as the Abbasids monopolized political power and did not share it with their partners in the revolution against the Umayyads.

Although these revolutions against the central state of the caliphates failed, some of them succeeded in some marginal remote areas in established states. The first Zaydi state was in Morocco Idrisid, which established Fas city and lasted almost two centuries from 172–375 AH/

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[12]Al-Labad, Mustafa.(2006) .Ḥadʾāq al Aḥzan. Cairo. Daral Shorouk. p1**42**
[13]Madelung, W. (2016).Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn.Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved 5May, 2016, from
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/zayd-b-ali-b-al-husayn-SIM_8137?s.num=2

789–985 A.D.[14] Another Zaydi state was established in al-Yamama in the middle of the Arabian Peninsula, and lasted for almost two centuries from 253AH/ 867A.D. and it was called Banu Ukhaidir[15].

In addition, a Zaydi state emerged in western Iran in Ṭabaristān and al-Daylam, which started in 250AH /864 A.D. by Abū Muhammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAli, who was famous in the name al-Nāṣir al-Kabīr al-Uṭrūsh; his state lasted for almost 90 years. After that, the dynasty of Buwayhids dominated this area of western Iran then extended its presence to Baghdad, where they controlled the Abbasside Caliphate for almost one century from 333 AH/ 944 A.D. After the vanishing of their influence in Baghdad, they continued to exist in the west of Iran until 516AH/1122 A.D., when their presence started to diminish in this area[16].

Most of these states emerged in similar environments, such as Morocco, al-Yamama and western Iran since all were considered to be remote areas with tribal societies. The only exception was the Buwayhids in Baghdad, who ruled in the name of Abbasid caliphs.

Although Zaydism requires Prophet's family descent in an Imam, it refused the hereditary system in the sense of moving power from father to son routinely. A proclaimed Imam should introduce himself as a qualified Imam in order to be approved. However, almost all the Zaydi states were almost hereditary, which passed the power from father to son naturally; these dynasties did not last for long as in Yemen. Another important point linked to Zaydism is that it faded once the state collapsed, which is a proof that the Zaydi political theory could not exist

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[14] Eustache, D. (2012). *Idrīsids.*Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved 5May, 2016, from
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/idrisids-SIM_3495?s.num=7
[15] Smith, G. (2012). *Al-Yamāma.*Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved 5May, 2016, from
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-yamama-SIM_7976?s.num=0
[16] Eustache, D. Idrīsids.

11

without a state. Also, it can be noticed easily that Zaydism is difficult to apply as a state ideology; it was best used as a revolution's ideology.

Zaydi state in Yemen

The Zaydi doctrine has existed in Yemen for one millennium and is mainly concentrated to the north of Sana'a, which is called Upper Yemen. Conversely, south of Sana'a is called Lower Yemen and features a Sunni majority; this regional division existed prior to Islam and was completely different from the recent political division of North and South Yemen. Unlike Lower Yemen, Upper Yemen has scarce resources. Therefore, the principle of rebellion against the unjust ruler in the Zaydi school of thought perfectly suits the fighting nature of these poor northern tribes[17].

In addition, Yemen during Islam's early days was considered to be an ideal region for rebellious groups due to its remoteness, the mountainous nature of geography; and the socio-political unrest. Therefore, Yemen was the pioneer state that became independent from the caliphate during the era of the Abbasside caliph al-Ma'mun in 815A.D.[18]

Yemen's instability and its early disjointing from the caliphate were among the consequences of Shiite escalation in Yemen that coincided with the escalation of the Qahtani uprising. Qahtani are the descendants of the southern Arabs as opposed to the northern Arabs Adnani that Quraysh tribes belonged to the Adnani tribes. Although the Yemenis had a deep feeling of pride due to their origins as a great independent civilized nation, this did not prevent them from converting to Islam during the Prophet's time. Yet, the Apostasy wars were important

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[17]Haykel, B. (2003). *Revival and reform in Islam: The legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkañī*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. p. 13

[18]Al-Baradouni, Abd Allah.(1983). *Al-Yaman Al- Jamhūri*. Damscus: Dar Al-Kitab al-'Arabi. pp. 17–37

manifestations of the independent streak among Yemeni tribes, who refused to pay Zakat to the next successor, Abu Bakr[19].

Yemen was an initial player in the early conflicts that occurred after the Prophet's death. Firstly, Helpers, Ansar, the people of Medina who had Yemeni origins, opposed passing the Prophets' power to his tribe in the famous gathering of Saḳīfat Banī Sāʿida. Helpers argued that succession would be carried out by holding a consultation among Muslims to select the most suitable person regardless of his ancestry. Secondly, Yemenis were the most enthusiastic group to fight with Ali b. Abī Ṭalib because both parties were excluded early and felt a common sense of injustice. Thirdly, Yemenis participated intensively in the Muslim conquests without taking any prominent positions, which were monopolized by the Quraysh. Hence, Yemen was the perfect place to host the various rebellious groups who were furious about the centrality of the Islamic state[20].

Consequently, Imam Abi 'l-Ḥusayn Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanal Hassan b. Ali b. Abī Ṭalib, who was nicknamed al-Hādī ilā 'l-Ḥaḳḳ, selected Yemen as a suitable region to carry out his uprising to become an Imam, after his failed attempt to rule Taberstan. Imam al-Hadi accepted the Yemeni tribes' invitation to moderate between the fighting tribes, and established the first Zaydi state in Yemen from 283 AH/896 AD to 298 AH/911 AD.[21]

During this era, Yemen witnessed chaos due to the many self-proclaimed leaders fighting on its land. Imam al-Hadi emerged as one of these fighting powers and extended his dominance

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[19]Al- Baradouni. *Al- Yaman al- Jamhuri*. pp. 17–37
[20] Al- Baradouni. *Al- Yaman al- Jamhuri*. pp. 17–37
[21]Zayd.*Muʿatazilit al-Yaman*. p.271

from Sa'da in the north to Aden in the south, but for only a short period. Imam al-Hadi, indeed, spent all his time in Yemen fighting his enemies and died in 298 AH/911 AD in Sa'da after losing all the territories that he had previously taken[22]. In spite of this short troubled period, Imam al-Hadi left a profound influence on Yemeni history, because the Zaydi state ruled Yemen or parts of Yemen intermittently for a millennium.

In addition, Imam al-Hadi's ideas became the main reference for Zaydis in Yemen, where they were called Hadwys, which is a Zaydi stream different from the streams that are mentioned in *al-milal wa'l-niḥal* a book by al Shahrastani[23].

The Zaydi transformation from a revolutionary movement to a state was attributed to a shift within the political power from Lower Yemen to Upper Yemen. This shift had taken place since the seventeenth century, particularly in 1634 AD when the Zaydi state succeeded for the first time in controlling Yemen for almost a century. This change took place for several reasons: Firstly, the withdrawal of the Uttomans from Yemen in 1634 AD allowed the rise of Zaydi power because the Zaydis had been the main Yemeni resisting power against them[24]. Secondly, global trade shifted after the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, so the southern Yemeni ports lost their importance[25]. Thirdly, the Yemeni monopolization of coffee, which provided profitable revenues to the state, and the coffee was farmed and exported from the north[26].

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[22]Zayd.Muʿatazilit al-Yaman. p.271

[23]Al-Shahrastānī, Abi 'l-Fatḥ Mauhmmed.*al-milal wa 'l-niḥal.* Beirut. Dar al- Kutab al-ʿailmyya.Vol 1. pp157-161

[24] Salim, Sayyid Mustafa.1969. *Al- FataḥAl- ʿUthmani al- Awwal- li'l- Yaman*. Maʿhad Al- Baḥūth waʼl- Dirasat al-ʿArabi. pp. 338–395

[25]Salim.*Al- FataḥAl- ʿUthmani al- Awwal*. p. 55

[26] Al- Khaṭabi, Arwa. July 2007.*Tijarat al- Bun al- Arabi fi al- Qarn al- Sadis ʿAshr.*(Unpublished doctoral-dissertation). Sana'a. Sana'a University. Sana'a, Yemen. Ch5

This shift remained significant in Yemen until recent times, because even after the Zaydi state lost some of its southern territories in south Yemen in 1732 AD[27]. It remained an influential power and preserved its control in Upper Yemen and vast parts of Lower Yemen until the overthrow of the Imamate by the establishment of the 1962 republic. Thus, this shift occurred for geopolitical reasons, which influenced another geopolitical division in Yemen, because it moved the power from the Shafi'i majority area to the Zaydi region.

These transformations have reflected on the Zaydi thought and its Imamate theory. It is very clear that the Zaydi doctrine becomes more inclined towards Mu'tazilite doctrine, when it is outside the power to mobilize its supporters. However, it turned out to be more compatible with the Sunni doctrine, when it succeeded to power, because Sunnis reject the idea of rebellion which destabilizes authority. Thus, the Zaydi doctrine can be manipulated according to the circumstances and interacts with the Yemeni environment heavily as it exists only in Yemen; consequently this unique characteristic is heavily reflected in Zaydi thought.

Contemporary Zaydism

Zaydism in Yemen has an extended history since the arrival of Imam al-Hadi. For almost four centuries, it was the doctrine of a political power that controlled Upper Yemen and a vast area of Shafi'i people in Lower Yemen, who accounted for half or more of the population during the different Zaydi periods. Nowadays, Zaydi doctrine is still influential in the Yemeni political life.

The last Zaydi state that ruled parts of Yemen (1918-1962) did not develop or renew its theories or ideas to be more adjustable/ compatible with the modern times, or even attempted to modernize its guise. Isolation policy was the main feature of this last Zaydi state, so Yemen

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[27]Dresch, Paul. *A History of Modern Yemen.* 2000. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.P 23

entered the middle of the twentieth century as a country living in the mediaeval period and suffering from hard social and economic conditions. For example, the people died in epidemics, such as chickenpox and malaria, because the health services were very primitive[28]. Education was religious based and modern schools did not exist. In addition to that, means of transportation were primitive, for example as donkeys and nothing of modernity which was evident in Yemen during that time[29].

After the political transition to the republican system, the Zaydi doctrine was claimed to be irrelevant to the new era since the political system which was based on the Zaydi Imamate theory collapsed. This posed as an unprecedented challenge to Zaydism and caused several outcomes that will be discussed throughout this study.

Zaydism from Revival to Radicals

After the 1962 revolution, Zaydism was accompanied with the Imamate; this led to marginalizing the Zaydi doctrine, by the confiscation of the Zaydi books. This situation changed after Yemen's unification in 1990, when the government loosened its restriction and allowed the establishment of multiple political parties.

Accordingly, this launched a new era for the Zaydi doctrine which had enjoyed a revival movement since the 1990s. Zaydis started to establish their parties, most prominently Hizb al-Haqq . Moreover, Believing Youth clubs were established to teach Zaydi youth their doctrine. This changed dramatically when the Sa'da war erupted in 2004 and continued for six years,

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[28]Dresch.*A History of Modern Yemen.*p. 23
[29]Al Baradouni. *Al-Yaman Al-Jamhūry*. p. 346

which caused the emergence of the Houthi group, therefore, the revival movement shifted to radicalization.

This shift took place for many reasons and posed several questions about Zaydi doctrine and its developments to understand its current challenges.

Thesis Chapters

Although the Zaydi doctrine played a vital role, for example, influencing the caliphate center in Baghdad for almost one century during the Buwayhid era[30], studies of this doctrine remain scarce even from the historical perspective.

The scarcity of studies of Zaydism is a result of the demolition of the Zaydi doctrine after the collapse of the Zaydi state. However, Zaydism exists solely in Yemen until now. Almost one third of Yemen's 25 million population is Zaydi[31]. Although these represent a major part of the Yemeni people, the Zaydi doctrine has traditionally been overlooked by scholars. This is because Yemen is considered an insignificant state within the Islamic world.

In spite of this, studying Zaydi doctrine is crucial because it illuminates an unknown aspect of the Islamic heritage; it reflects the multi dimensionality of Islamic thought, particularly in the far-flung areas. Studying the Zaydi sect is not an easy task; it has multiple perspectives and views, ranging from those who view the Zaydi sect as a fanatic Shiite sect to those who view the Zaydi sect as the most lenient Shiite sect, which may perplex a researcher. Therefore, a researcher should be aware of these multiple dimensions to avoid drawing general conclusions

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[30]Cohen, CI. (2012). Buwayhids or Būyids.Brill. Retrieved 5 May, 2016, from
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/buwayhids-or-buyids-SIM_1569?s.num=0

[31] Stephen W. Day (2012). *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union.* Cambridge University Press. p. 31

about Zaydism, and consider it as a sign of richness not only as a source of complications when it comes to this unique sect.

Zaydism has developed and evolved through many phases; initially it was a revolutionary doctrine, then it changed to be a Sunni look-alike doctrine and became the doctrine of the state. Contemporarily, the Zaydi state became outdated and was ousted and replaced by the republican system which had challenged the Zaydi doctrine and raised many significant questions that will be discussed in this thesis.

Any doctrine or ideology starts very simply and its ideas are general or incomplete. Throughout time, this doctrine or ideology develops. During the development processes, the ideas of these schools of thoughts will be more complicated and varied, from extremist to moderate. This is typical of what happened to the Zaydi doctrine and will be investigate in the first chapter of this thesis by studying the beginning of this doctrine, how it divides, its Mu'tazilite aspect, and the circumstances of the existence of the Zaydi sect in Yemen. The chapter will discuss these issues in order to present the necessary background to study the reforming attempts of the Zaydi.

A major development took place in Zaydism when al-Shawkani took the position of the grand judge. Zaydism shifted towards Sunnism since the Zaydi state controlled Yemen after the sixteenth century. Al-Shawkani presents the peak of this Sunni tendency within Zaydism, so this thesis will concentrate on al-Shawkani in the second chapter. This chapter will explore the main ideas of al-Shawkani and his influential political role.

The current thesis examines the contemporary radical Zaydi groups so it has to analysis the Zaydi doctrine situation and its development during the contemporary era that faced various challenges. The third chapter will tackle the period that witnessed radical events, which are the

18

opposition to the last Zaydi Imamate state, the fall of the Imamate and persecution of those who espoused Zaydi doctrine, and then the revival of the Zaydi movement.

The Fourth chapter will study the shift of the revivalist movement to radicalism; this shift from the situation of revivalist to radicalization is important to identify and illustrate. Houthis group's characteristics categorized it among the radical group which will be explained in details in the fourth chapter.

Thus, this thesis will study the Zaydi doctrine's development, which influenced contemporary Zaydism in order to explore the reasons for the emergence of Zaydi radical groups such as the Houthis.

Literature

Studies on Yemen are scarce in general. The relationship between Yemeni history and the Zaydi doctrine is very consistent, so studies have dealt with the Zaydi School from a historical perspective as well as from a theological perspective and its influence on Yemen's cultural and political environments. Additionally, the Zaydi doctrine has its primary sources and literature that demonstrate the ideas of each group and time, such as the treaties of Imams, such as al-Qasim and al-Hadi, the literature of Zaydi parties, the Believing Youth curriculum and the speeches of Husaynal- Houthi, the founder of al- Houthi group.

There are few English references on Zaydism. Until the 1970s, northern Yemen was difficult for foreigners to enter. Nonetheless, these few sources cover several insightful historical and anthropological subjects with the formation of the Zaydi sect as an essential part of Yemen.

The Houthi group is a recent movement in Yemen; therefore, there is a lack of English literature that explores this group. The only English book is the multi authored book (Barak Salmoni, Bryce Loidolt, and Madeleine Wells),*Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen* from

the Rand Institute, a think tank center based in the US that provides studies to policy makers[32]. It is an indispensable source for any reader or researcher interested in Yemen's current situation as it explains the Houthi phenomenon from different aspects. In this regard, the book is comprehensive, and therefore is highly important. . It covers the Houthi movement from its beginning, including important background, such as information about Sa'da where the movement originated; the economy, society, and geographical features. Additionally, the book explores the links between tribalism and regionalism, and the Houthi emergence.It also presents Houthi ideology from its founder's speeches, Husaynal- Houthi and the government's propaganda during the Sa'da war (2004-2010). This book is very beneficial in its information about Sa'da, Houthi family, and the structure of the group during the war. Hence, its importance does not only stem from the scarcity of references on this issue but also from being a very informative book. However, this book's date of publication, in 2010, means that it does not cover the dramatically accelerated events since 2011.

Bernard Haykel's book *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad Al-Shawkani*[33] is another instructive book about the Zaydi scholar, al-Shawkani. The book explores al-Shawkani's legacy, as it deals with Shawkani's ideas in historical and social contexts. The book further analyzes the tension between Sunni inclination scholars versus Hadawi. In addition, it illuminates the history of Yemen at a crucial time that witnessed many political challenges, such as the popular riots, conflict among the elite, and the complex relations between judges and Imams. Although this book was published in 2003, which is recent, it did not present thorough

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[32]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. (2010). *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen: The Houthi Phenomenon.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND

[33]Haykel.*Revival and reform in Islam*.

information about the influence of al-Shawkani at the present time, because he remains a highly regarded Islamic scholar in Yemen.

It is also essential to read a book about the social conditions of Yemen to comprehend the strong interrelated relationship between the Imamate and tribes in Yemen, which necessitates reading an anthropological study. The most significant work in this field is Paul Dresch's book, *Tribes Government and History in Yemen,* which is an intelligent book about Yemen's tribes[34]. This book tackles the issue of regionalism in Yemen in detail, and clarifies the consequences of this on the society and politics. It also explains the tribal conflicts that are caused due to land scarcity. Dresch demonstrates the different aspects of this subject such as economic change, tribal customs, tribes' interaction with state and politics, and its relations with the Imamate. It is important to read this book to understand the Zaydi doctrine and the Imamate in Yemen. Nonetheless, the book does not include the recent major anthropological changes since it was published in 1983.

Arabic studies about Yemen are also few; they are problematic because most of them are chronological listings on Yemen's history or manuscripts that cannot be obtained since the war erupted in 2014. However, there are a few contemporary books; some are biased because it is difficult to write neutrally on the Zaydi doctrine as it remains a debatable political issue. Some of these books are those of Hamid Al-din and al Batwul.

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[34]Dresch, P. (1989*)*. Tribes, government, and history in Yemen. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
[34] Al- Batūl, Abd al- Fataḥ.(2007). *Khiōṭ al- Ẓalam: 'Aṣr al- Imama al- Zaydiyya* .Sanaa. Markz Nashwan al- Himari

Al- Batwul, Abd al- Fataḥ.(2007). *Khiuwṭ al- Ẓalam: ʿAṣr al- Imama al- Zaydiyya* خيوط). (الظلام:عصر الإمامة الزيدية. It is a historical book about the history of the Imamate in Yemen[35]. It was issued in 2007 after Saʿda war eruption in 2004 in order to counter the new Houthi phenomenon. The title of the book reveals its content that is dedicated to disparaging the Zaydi Imamate in Yemen, which it is assumed the darkness fibers. After the republican revolution, it was common to refer to the Imamate in Yemen as 'the dark period,' so this book is a continuation of the trend. It is crucial to read one of these books to be aware of the republic system's account that deeply influenced a large part of Yemeni society because it was the official history in the schools' curricula and the media.

On the other hand, there are historical or theological books about Zaydism and the Imamate that are written by pro Imamate scholars or Hashemite family members, which provide the opposite historical narration. The most illustrative example was the book (تاريخ الإمام الشهيد يحيى *Tarikh al- Imam al- Shahid Yahya Hamid al- Din.* حميد الدين)[36]. It was written by the second grandson of Imam Yahya Hamidal- Din (ruled Yemen from 1918–1948), Ahmad b. Muhammad Hamid al-Din. The book's date is very recent, as it was published last year in 2015; this type of book has been increasing recently coincident with the Houthis rising. These books repeat the same theme which is that Yemen was more stable and secure during the Imamate and the problem of solitude is related to the historical period and the geographical position not to the Imamate type of rule. This book tries to prove its argument by emphasizing the current

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[36]Hamid al- Din, Ahmad. (2015). *Tarikh al- Imam al- Shahid Yahya Hamid al- Din*. Cairo. Dar al- Maʿarif

deteriorating situation to conclude that the Imamate was more suitable system for Yemenis, and it stresses that Hashemites have their divine message which is defamed by their enemies. It is important to read this type of book; at least one of them, as an example of the current point of view of the pro-Imamate particularly as they have returned to the political scene strongly in recent years. It also shows how the Imamate issue is still a vital issue in Yemen and the debate remains heated about its history and theory.

Other important sources on Zaydism in Yemen are worth reading, for example *al-Zaydiyya*[37](الزيدية). The book by Ahmad Subaḥy was published in 1984. It deals with the Zaydi school of thought from its beginning to recent time. This book starts with Imam Zayd's life and his ideas, and then it presents the different Imamate theories in light of the attempts of establishing the Zaydi states in many Islamic lands until it reached to Yemen. The author divides the Zaydi doctrine into two streams, one is lenient to the Shi'ite and Mu'tazilite, and another is more similar to the Sunni School of thoughts; then it ended with a brief mention of the current Zaydi crisis. This book is important in the sense of demonstrating the ideas of the prominent Zaydi scholars. Nevertheless, the book's method was descriptive not critical and the author did not connect the emergence of the different ideas with their historical context. However, it is a very informative book for the researcher in this field.

Zayd's books about the Mu'tazilite and Zaydism are very significant. His book deals with Muṭarrifiyyadisaster*Tayarat Muatazilite al- Yaman fi al- Qarn al- Sadis al- Hijri* تيارات معتزلة) (اليمن في القرن السادس الهجري. Al Muṭarrifiyya is a Mu'tazilite Zaydi group, which emerged in the

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[37]Subḥi, Ahmad. 1984. *Al- Zaydiyya*. Cairo. Al- Zahra'a li'l I'lam al-' Arabi

thirteenth century and was eradicated by Imam al Hamza[38]. Zayd studied the few manuscripts that were found for this group to transmit their real ideas. This book clarified that the real reasons lying behind that conflict between a Muṭarrifiyya and Imam Hamza and its relation with the historical conditions of that period. Zayd verifies each piece of information and his book is the only profound study about this interesting group, since eradicating the Muṭarrifiyya group led to the decline of the Mu'tazilite aspect in the Zaydi.

The last part of this is Zaydi literature. To know the main features of the Zaydi doctrine, it is important to read the treatises of Imam al-Qasim al-Rassi and Imam al-Hadi because their ideas formed the main part of the Zaydi doctrine in Yemen and their treatises are considered the main references of the Zaydi School of thoughts in Yemen. Then, al-Shawkani's books are indispensable due to the great influence of the Shawkani School in Yemen to the present since this school is a parallel school to the Imam al- Hadi School. Therefore, there was enmity and competition between the two schools. The contemporary opponent of al-Shawkani, al-Samawi scholar is also important to read him in order to know the claims and arguments of each part, so they can comprehend the origins of the current arguments and challenges that are facing the Zaydi doctrine.

The contemporary Zaydi doctrine is the main issue of this thesis, so it is necessary to read their literature. The literature of the Zaydi opposition against the Imam to demand reforms, then the literature of Hizb al Haqq, since it was the first political body of the Zaydis and it included the main Zaydi religious scholars. The documents and the program of Hizb al Haqq gained its

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[38]*Zayd, Ali Muhammad. (1997). Tayarat Mu'atazilit al- Yaman fi al- Qarn al- Sadis al- Hijri. Sana'a, Yemen: Al-Ma'hd al- Faransi li'l- Dirasat al- Yemenia*

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importance as they were the first announcing the Zaydi vision after the collapse of the Imamate and they demonstrate the Zaydi attempts to cope with the new situation. The curriculum of the Believing Youth is highly important for knowing the perspective of the Zaydi revival groups. Finally, al- Houthis speeches and their manifesto are essential to know the overarching ideas of these groups that categorize them within the radical movements.

According to the aforementioned books, it is obvious that the academic circles and research fields still need further studies about the Zaydi doctrine; especially after recent developments. The recent war in Yemen is linked directly to the Zaydi group the "Houthis", and the scarcity of information is resulting in ambiguous ideas and understanding about the Houthi group.

Chapter One

The Zaydi Crises

There are several theological and social complications that have accompanied the Zaydi sect since it has come into existence. These issues are strongly linked with their historical context and interrelated with the political and social conditions, which emerge as problematic issues during political conflicts and transitional periods. First, the Zaydi tendency to waver between Sunni and Shiite principles caused many divisions within the doctrine and loosened its methodological approach, all of which underwent change according to the historical and political conditions. Second, the Zaydi principle of rebellion against unjust rulers is compatible with the tribal areas. In fact, this overarching principle only fits tribal societies such as those in eastern Iran, the central Arabian Peninsula, and the north of Yemen, where the Zaydi state was established. In Yemen, Zaydism is limited to the northern tribal area. This regional division comes along with another division based on bloodlines since Zaydis believe that only Hashemites enjoy 'Imamate' rights, as the Imam, according to Zaydism, is given both religious and political authority. These Zaydi features gave rise to political and social outcomes, which need to be discussed in order to address the contemporary issues of the Zaydi doctrine.

Authenticity Issues

The main theological debate concerning Zaydism traditionally focuses on the authenticity of its primary reference, *Al-Majmu'* (المجموع), a collection of Hadith and Fiqh works, supposedly attributed to the founder of the sect, Imam Zayd. Nevertheless, many scholars from other sects question the authenticity of this book. Accordingly, these scholars, particularly Salafis, claim that

the Zaydi sect never existed, since Imam Zayd did not establish a new Islamic school or leave any written work to prove the authenticity of the ideas attributed to him[39]. Therefore, many Salafis in Yemen do not acknowledge the Zaydis, instead labeling them *Hadawis*; the latter refers to the followers of Imam Al-Hadi, the first to bring the Zaydi doctrine to Yemen.

Imam Zayd was born in 75AH/694–5 A.D. and died in 122AH/ 740A.D.This means that he was living during the early period of Islam prior to the phase of record keeping, which began by the end of the second century[40]. Therefore, Imam Zayd's students wrote after his death what they claimed were his teachings and sayings. Recording the lessons of a teacher after his death was the custom during this period, before the period of recording by the authors or with their approval during their lives.

The most important book attributed to Imam Zayd was *Al-Majmou'*(المجموع), which is a collection of Hadith and Fiqh works. Many historians and scholars doubt the authenticity of this book for many reasons. First, Imam Zayd had many students, but only Abū Khālid al-Wāsiṭī transcribed his work, unlike other imams, such as Imam al Maliki whose main reference *Al-Muwatta'*(الموطأ), which was written by many students[41]. Second, the only narrator of *Al-Majmou'* was accused of being a liar according to al-Dhahabi[42], and al-'Asqalani[43]. The counterargument to these claims is that the son of Imam Zayd, Issa, was not suspicious about this

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[39]Al-Wadi'i, M. B. (June 2,2012). *Madhhab al- Zaydiyya Mabni 'ala al- Hayam*. Retrieved 3April, 2016, from https://www.facebook.com/notes/469567923053239

[40]Madelung, W .*Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn*.(n.d.). Retrieved 3April, 2016, from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/zayd-b-ali-b-al-husayn-SIM_8137?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=zayd b. Ali

[41]Abu Zahra. *Al-Imam Zayd*. p233

[42]Al Dhahbi, Shams al- Din.(1948). *Al- Kashif*. Cairo. Dār al-Qiblah lil-Thaqāfa al-Islāmīyya. p328.

[43] Al- 'Asqalani, al- Hafez. (1997).*Taḥrir Taqrib al- Madhahib*. Beirut. Mūʾssasat al- Rissāla.Vol 3.p 91.

book, and the later Zaydi Scholars accepted it, while it is natural that the followers of other schools raised such doubts[44].

Third, there are contradictions ascribed to the texts and sayings of Imam Zayd, *Risala fi Ithibat al-Waṣiya* (رسالة في اثبات الوصية), *Al-Majmou'*, and its interpretation *Al-Rawḍ al-Naḍir* (الروض النضير). The argument suggests that the copy of *Risala fi Ethbat al Waṣya* in the Great Mosque in Sana'a dated to 1077AH, which is a very long time after Imam Zayd's death (d.122 AH). The people who adopted this idea stressed that the manuscript presents the ideas of the eleventh century not the ideas of Imam Zayd's period. For instance, the ideas of Imam al-Qasim b. Muhammad were circulated during the 11th century[45]. His doctrine was very compatible to the Twelver ideas, such as the belief that the Imamate of Ali was proved by the explicit texts and the prophet's testament. The manuscript discovered in the Great Mosque presented the legitimacy of Ali b. Abi Talib as a successor to the prophet by the same Twelver proofs of Quran and Hadith, which are the same ideas as those of Imam al-Qasim[46]. On the other hand, the idea of legitimizing Ali b. Abi Talib by the text contradicts what is mentioned in many historical books. Imam Zayd accepted the caliphate of Abu Bakr and Umar, and to him is attributed the saying in *Al-Rawaḍ al- Naḍyr* that the Imam could be from the Quraysh tribe, not only the Hashemites, after holding an election among Muslims[47].

It is also noted that the Zaydi imams and scholars occasionally refer to Imam Zayd. This could justify what every school of thought starts with, simple ideas accumulating throughout the relative time period, and it is not necessary that the founder was the main contributor to its ideology.

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[44] Abu Zahrah. *Al -Imam Zayd*. p235.

[45] Ghulais, Ashwaq. (1997). *Tajdid Fikr al-Imama al- Zaydiyya bi'l- Yaman*. Cairo. Maktabt Madbouli.p41

[46] Zayd, b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn. T*athbiyt al-Waṣiyya*. Retrieved 11April, 2016 from http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/rasael_al_emam_zaid_5_tathbeet_al_waseyah/themain_aqeedah
[47] Ghulais. *Tajdid Fikr al-Imama*. p41

Most of the intellectuals who suspect the authenticity of Imam Zaid's writings aim to disprove the right of the Prophet's family to the Imamate. Thus, the most debatable issue about Imam Zayd is his belief in the Imamate and the importance of it remaining in the Prophet's line, however, many of the Yemeni Zaydi scholars believe that it was attributed to Imam Zayd by the later Zaydi Imams; rather than being stated by Imam Zayd himself. These arguments are an attempt to raise the right of the Zaydis to the Imamate, even though they are not direct descendants of the Prophet. Conversely, many Zaydi scholars emphasize the distinguishing status of the Prophet's family[48]. Nevertheless, there are some principles that are unanimously attributed to Imam Zayd, such as the rebellion against the unjust ruler, because no one can deny that Imam Zayd rebelled against the Umayyad Caliph Hisham b. Abd al Malik.

Divisions within Zaydism

Al-Shahrastānī's famous reference to the different Islamic doctrines al-Milal wa'l-niḥal divided Zaydism into three schools. The first school established was Jārūdiyya, and it was the one most influenced by the Twelver doctrine because its founder Abu Jārūd Ziyād b. al-Mundhir was student of Imam Muhammad Al Baqir, the brother and teacher of Imam Zayd[49]. Nonetheless, Abu al- Jārūd left Imam Al Baqir to participate in all Imam Zayd's battles in spite of his blindness. Abu al-Jārūd tried to compromise between what he learned from Al-Baqir and Zayd's ideas, such as the idea of the hidden text which mentioned implicitly that Ali b. Abi Talib should be the successor of the Prophet. Accordingly, Imam Ali was not mentioned in this text explicitly, but was identified nevertheless. Therefore, the Muslims were innocently mistaken and

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[48] Al Hamdani, Abi Abdallah Humaid. (n.d.). Retrieved 11April, 2016, from
http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/mahasen_alazhar/themain.htm
[49] Al-Shahrastānī. *Al-milal wa 'l-niḥal.* P. 157

cannot be accounted as sinners because they did not recognize Ali's characteristics. This idea is compatible with the Twelver ideas in the sense that Ali's designation was approved by the text. On the other hand, Abu al Jārūd formulated the idea of ambiguity in the text in order to give an excuse to the companions and avoid accusing them of being sinners or infidels, which disagreed with the Twelvers. Also, the Jārūdiyya School highlighted the necessity of the Fatimid lineage condition for the Imam. In addition, when Jārūdiyya first emerged, its stance was harsh towards the companions but afterwards became more tolerant[50].

The next school in Zaydism was al Sālihiyya; its founder al Hassan b. Saleh b. Hayy al Hamthani was the son- in- law to Issa b. Imam Zayd. This school believed the Imamate of the less superior through the existence of the most superior, which explained why Ali b. Abi Talib accepted the caliphate of Abu Bakr and Omar, although Imam Ali is the most superior. Nonetheless, according to al Sālihiyya, the case of Abu Bakr and Omar was the exception not the rule, as the Imamate should be restricted to the Prophet's family according to the hidden text[51]. Al Sālihiyya's stance towards the companions was much more moderate. Also, they legitimized the rebellion of two Imams on the condition of being in two Islamic areas far away from each other to justify the revolution of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother Ibrahim.

The third Zaydi School established was al Sulaymāniyya, which referred to Soliman b. Jarir, a follower of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiḳ. Then, he adopted al Sālihiyya ideas, which disagreed with the condition of the Fatimid lineage. Al Sulaymāniyya School did not consider the Fatimid ancestry

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[50]Al-Shahrastānī.*Al-milal wa 'l-niḥal.* P. 157
[51]Al-Shahrastānī.*Al-milal wa 'l-niḥal.* P. 157

as a condition of the Imamate, affecting its position towards the companions. This makes it the most lenient Zaydi School towards the companions[52].

The aforementioned are the classic divisions of Zaydism according to al-Shahrastānī's book Al-milal wa'l-niḥal. In fact, these groups established the first layers of the Zaydi Imamate theory in spite of their disagreements regarding the companions.

Imam al-Hadi School

In Yemen, most of the Zaydis are Hadawis, which means they follow Imam al-Hadi's ideas and methods. Imam al-Hadi was the first to bring Zaydism to Yemen in 280AH– 893AD. Abi 'l-Husayn Yaḥyā b. al-Husayn b. al-Kāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Hasanī, and famous with the name al- Ḥādī Ila 'l-Ḥaḳḳ, was born in al Medina in 245AH–859AD, and died in Sa'da in Yemen in 298AH/911AD.[53]

Imam al-Hadi was influenced by the ideas of his grandfather, Imam al-Qasimal-Rassi, who was the most influential person in formulating the Zaydi Imamate theory. Imam al-Hadi left many books and letters such as *al-Rad 'ala al-Mujbara*(الرد على المجبرة)and *Usul al- Din* (اصول الدين), whereas a few books and letters are attributed to Imam al-Qasim, like, *Al-Kamil al-Munir fi Ethibat Wiṣayat Amir al-Mu'minin*(الكامل المنير في اثبات ولاية أمير المؤمنين) , *Al-Rad 'ala al-Mulaḥid* (الرد على الملحد)[54].Imam Al-Qasim raised the significance of the Imamate by considering the status of the Imams not less than the prophets. According to his saying "I will clarify to you the importance and highness of the Imamate; God considered Ibrahim –peace upon him – as an intimate friend before being a prophet. Then, God raised him to the status of prophet due to the

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[52]Al-Shahrastānī.*Al-milal wa 'l-niḥal*.p161

[53]Madelung, W. (2012). Al-Ḥādī Ila 'l-Ḥaḳḳ. Retrieved 11 April, 2016, from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-hadi-ila-l-hakk-SIM_8582

[54](n.d).Maktabat al 'Aqida. Retrieved 12 April, 2016 from http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/kotob_aqeedah.htm

greatness of the intimacy and before becoming a messenger. Being a messenger is higher in status than being a prophet. When God completed the privileges of intimacy, prophet hood and as a messenger for Ibrahim, Allah said "Our Lord! make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (will); and show us our place for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful" (Quran 2:128, Yusuf Ali translation).Consequently, Ibrahim knew that there is nothing higher than the Imamate, as the Imam "leads and guides the people, although Imams do not receive a divine revelation. "This was attributed to Imam al-Qasim. Therefore, establishing the Imamate is a duty similar to the prayer and fasting of Ramadhan, and it is a divine matter that God grants to the people.

Imam Al-Qasim adopted the belief of the obvious text stating that Imam Ali b. Abi Talib is the successor of the Prophet. Accordingly, this did not provide any excuse for the companions. Also, he stressed the right of the Prophet's family in the Imamate[55]. About rebellion, Imam al-Qasim took different positions; initially, he rejected the idea of sitting at home and Takiyya, instead of Jihad similar to the prophets and called for rebelling against the unjust ruler[1]. Then, as a result of the Abbasid's oppressive policy against the Prophet's family, he changed his opinion and called for emigration from the unjust people's land to avoid interaction with them[1].

Hence, Imam al-Hadi grew up in a very Shiite environment in his family's house in Medina, and was influenced by Medina schools that concentrated on Hadiths. He adopted the same ideas as his grandfather on the obvious text and the prophecy status of the Imamate. However, he did not rely on the transmitted texts to prove the right of Ali b. Abi Talib in the caliphate as Imam al-Qasim did, but added to them logical proofs.

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[55]Al Rassi, Al Qassim. (2000) .*Al-Rad 'ala al-Rafiḍa*.Cairo. Dar al Afaq al Arabiyya. Retrieved 11 April,2016 from http://ia802607.us.archive.org/14/items/itsnmmfeitsnmmfe/rdra.pdf

The methodology of Imam al-Hadi in argumentation depends on the rational interpretation of the Quran to establish what is forbidden and what is allowed. Although it seems that Imam al-Hadi did not read the Mu'tazilite works translated from Greek, his arguments relied on the Arab Mu'tazilite methods which are simple logic and a comprehensive knowledge of Arabic to interpret the Quranic verses[56]. Imam al-Hadi believed that "the logic and reason" of human minds are impossible to contradict the Quran, because both the Quran and reason are created to assess human actions and beliefs on the Day of Judgment. In other words, God considers the Quran and the human mind as the bases of arguing in favor of man on the Day of Judgment. Therefore, the Quran never opposes rational reasoning[57]. Also, Imam al-Hadi accepted Hadith if it did not contradict the Quran, which becomes the rule that the Zaydis follow for now[58]. Accordingly, he adopted the Mu'tazilite five principles without modification until he came to Yemen, where he changed one of these principles, the Intermediate position, to the principle of "the Right of the Prophet's Family in the Imamate"[59].

Al-Hadi's Imamate theory is the most important development of the Zaydi Imamate theory. According to Imam al-Hadi, the Imamate is at the same rank as prophecy, as it is the core of the religion, and the right of the Prophets' Family has become a necessary condition for the Imamate[60]. In this regard, Imam al-Hadi became very firm and stressing, in his book *Usul al-Din,* he stated that "The Muslim *Umma* (community) accepted unanimously that the Prophet said that 'Al-Hassan and al-Husayn are the masters of the heaven's youth and their father is better than them'". The Prophet also said that "They, al Hassan and al Husayn, are the Imams whether

[56]Al Rassi, Al Qassim..*Al-Rad 'ala al-Rafiḍa.*
[57]Ghulais.*Tajdid Fikr al-Imama.*p68
[58]Zayd.*Tayarat Mu'atazilit al- Yaman.* p. 203
[59] Al Rassi, Yahia al Huayn.(n.d).*Kitab al Diyana.* Al-Zaydiyya.Retrieved 12April, 2016 from http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/ketab_aldeyanah/themain.htm
[60] Zaid, A. M. (1981). *Mu'atazilit al- Yaman, Dawlat al Imam al-Hadi wa fikruh.* Beirut. Dar al-'wada.P. 218

they sit or rise". In addition, the *Umma* agreed unanimously that the Prophet said that "I will leave to you the two weights, the book of God and my family. If you preserve them, you will not lose ever". Therefore, it was not acceptable to abandon the book of God and it is not acceptable to leave the Prophet's family because the book leads to the Prophet's family and the Prophet's family leads to the book of God, so each one of them relies on each other[61]. Additionally, whenever the right Imam would come, the people should pledge allegiance and fight with him even if it requires migrating to the just Imam's land. If any one does not recognize his Imam status and dies, he will be considered an apostate of pre-Islam *jahili*. Then, if the claimant to the Imamate succeeds and becomes Imam, the people should obey him. Thus, Imam al-Hadi emphasized the principle of obedience after his arrival in Yemen, as the Yemeni tribes rebelled against him[62]. In handling this issue, Imam al-Hadi renounced his logical discourse and adopted divine proof, which is God's support of the Imam, as is evident through his victories in all his battles.

Thus, Imam al-Hadi's ideas are more extremist and different from Imam Zayd in terms of Hadi's stance on the Prophet's line's right due to the oppression that the Prophet's family was exposed to during the life of Imam al-Hadi. This development towards extremism was because Imam al-Hadi grew up in an extremist Shiite environment, while the idea of the victimization of the Prophet's family and the Shiite doctrines became more solid.

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[61]Al Rassi, Yahia al Husayn.(n.d). *Usul al- Din*. Al- Zaydiyya. Retrieved 12April, 2016 from http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/osoul_aldeen/1.htm#89
[62] Al Rassi, Yahia al Husayn.(n.d). *Ma'rifat Allah*. Al- Zaydiyya. Retrieved 12April, 2016 from http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/marefatallah/themain.htm

Mu'tazilite and Zaydism

Zaydism holds the five Mu'tazilite principles with focus on two principles, justice and commanding good and forbidding evil. Those principles are linked directly to the Imamate theory because the principle of rebellion is justified according to the principle of commanding good and forbidding evil. However, Zaydis believe in armed actions contrary to the Mu'tazilite, who adopted unarmed means. Justice is another important principle in the Imamate theory since rebellion is restrictedly allowed against the unjust Imam[63]. Thus, Zaydism presents the practical side of Mu'tazilites and does not focus on a few theoretical issues such as the Oneness subject.

The third Mu'tazilite principle, the intermediate position, was changed by Imam al-Hadi, who replaced it by the principle of "the right of the Prophet's family in Imamate".[64] This change occurred due to the priorities and concerns of the Imamate theory. Accordingly, Zaydis changed this principle to suit the Imamate theory.

Yemen was not an intellectual and scientific center during the first two centuries of *hijrah* because of its instability and remoteness from the known enlightenment centers, such as Medina and Basra. However, Yemen was influenced by the Medina School due to the geographical neighborhood; particularly as Imam Malik, one of the Medina School's founders, is originally from Yemen. Therefore, he kept his ties with his original country. Also, the Hanafi School had a limited influence in Yemen in the people who came from Iraq.

This was the situation until the Ismāʿīliyys arrived in Yemen with their Arab philosophical influence in 266AH, as well as the Qarmatis with their ideas of the social justice in 277AH, and finally the coming of Imam al-Hadi with his Mu'taizilite's Kalam science in

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[63]Al Rassi. *Usul al- Din*.
[64]Zayd.*Muʿataziliteal-Yaman*.p271

286AH[65]. The intellectual glory of the Muslims in the medieval period was during the fourth century, while Yemen reached its peak during the sixth century. The most significant Yemen group of the sixth century was the Muṭarrifiyya group. Muṭarrifiyya is a Zaydi Mu'tazilite group, which flourished due to the development of the *hijrah* system[66].

The *hijrah* system was based upon the concept of emigration *hijrah* according to the doctrine of Imam Al-Qasim, which called for immigration from the unjust people's land. This system was established in Yemen by accompanying it with tribal customs, as the Yemeni tribes considered the urban area and the markets as *hijrah* areas, which means, according to the old Yemeni language, the protected lands. Hence, the *hijrah* system is a result of the combination of Imam al-Qasims's doctrine and the Yemeni tribal customs and it provided safe areas and scientific centers[67]. Accordingly, the Muṭarrifiyya established many *hijras* in order to create the ideal society and protect themselves because they adopted the most philosophical and argumentative Mu'tazilite ideas, such as the ideas of al-Jāḥiẓ, Muammar, and al Nazim.

The Muṭarrifiyya represented the glorious moment of the Mu'tazilite in Yemen, and the eradication of the Muṭarrifiyya led to a decline of the Mu'tazilite aspect of the Zaydi doctrine. This group was very active in preaching Zaydism and was very critical in the characteristics of the concept of the Imamate, which caused many conflicts between them and many Imams or the claimants of the Imamate. The Muṭarrifiyya did not accept any claimant to the Imamate unless he succeeded in answering their philosophical questions and counter-arguments.

The main argumentative issue of the Muṭarrifiyya that stirred the conflict between them and many Imams was their definition of honor, as the Muṭarrifiyya did not deny the honor of the

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[65]Al Rassi, Yahia al Husayn.(n.d). *Al- Manzila bayn al- Manzilatin*. Al Zaydiyya. Retrieved 12April, 2016 from http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/almanzelah_bayna_almanzelatayn/themain.htm

[66] Al Rassi. *Usul al- Din*

[67]Zayd. *Tayarat Mu'atizilit al-Yaman* .p 269

Prophet's family, but they believed that honor was not taken for granted. Accordingly, the Muṭarrifiyya definition of honor relied on human deeds and knowledge such as piety. This definition of honor challenged the idea of the unconditional superiority of the Prophet's family, the main principle of the Zaydi Imamate theory. Also, the criticism of the concept of honor destroyed the social hierarchy that Zaydism built, which is based on the bloodline of the people. To counter Muṭarrifiyya ideas, their enemies, the Judge Djaʿfar Abd al Salam and Imam Abdullah b. Hamza, brought the books of the Mu'tazilite school, al-Djubbā'ī, from Basra[68].

Then, the conflict with the Muṭarrifiyya took another direction when Imam Abdullah b. Hamza felt alarmed due to the Mutarrifyya's growing influence during his battles against the Ayyubids. Consequently, Imam Hamza claimed that they were infidels because they denied the privileged status of the Prophet's family in order to justify killing them, destroying their villages, and burning their books[69].

This incident with the Muṭarrifiyya ended one of the most flourishing Mu'tazilite schools in Yemen to be replaced by the al-Jubbā'ī School, and the role of the Mu'tazilite in Yemen was limited only to transmitting other works without creating new ideas as the Muṭarrifiyya did. Also, this shows that the relationship between the Zaydi Imamate in Yemen and the Mu'tazilite theological school was restricted by how Mu'tazilite ideas would serve the Imamate theory.

Zaydi Methodology

It took a long time for the Zaydi doctrine to find a concise and authoritative text *Kitab al-Azhar* (كتاب الأزهار). Its author Ahmad b. Yahya al-Murtada (d. 1432 A.D.) was an ousted Imam.

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[68]Zayd.*Mu'atazilit al- Yaman.* p. 69
[69]Zayd.*Mu'atazilit al- Yaman.* pp 156–198

More than thirty commentaries and interpretations have been written on this book, and the most noted commentary *Sharḥ al-Azhar* by Abd Allah b. Miftah (d.1472)[70]. Therefore, it took hundreds of years for this book to emerge and became the main authoritative book in Zaydism, which indicates the difficulties of forming an authoritative text in the light of the constant conflicts between Imams. Accordingly, the importance of this book is a result of the need for an authoritative text, as Zaydism started to shift from being a revolutionary movement to being a state.

Through time, some principal rules came to regulate the Zaydi scholars work. The Zaydis consider the Quran and Sunna as sacred texts that could not be contradicted or refuted, so they rejected any Hadith that may disagree with the Quran[71].

Zaydis do not refute the companions' opinions; they believe that the consensus of the companions is a proof, but the sayings of only one companion is just an opinion that could be disregarded except Ali b. Abi Talib, whose opinion is obligating[72]. Then, the consensus concept was taken with a unique addition of the Zaydis, which considered the Prophet's family's consensus as obligatory.

Also, they regard *qiyas* the analogy *istihsan*, the approbation, *al-maṣlaḥa al-mursala* the ongoing interest, *tilasm* the concomitance, and the rational proof. Finally, Ijtihad is always open according to Zaydism[73].

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[70]Messick.*The calligraphic state: Textual domination and history in a Muslim* society. p 39

[71]Zayd.*Tayarat Muatazilite al -Yaman.* pp 217–220

[72]Zayd.*Mu'atazilit al-Yaman.* p 281

[73]Ḍaybani, Muhammad.(n.d).*Naẓarat fi Malamiḥ al- Madhhab al- Zaydi.* Al- Zaydiyya. Retrieved 14 April, 2016 from http://www.azzaidiah.com/kotob/all_sections/nazarat/themain.htm

Zaydis believe that each scholar must be a Mujtahid which means that he can issue a religious ruling *fatwa* by deduction through using reason and sacred sources the Quran and Hadith. There are certain levels among Mujtahids; first the independent Mujtahid, then the affiliated Mujtahid, after that the conducting Mujtahid; finally the probable Mujtahid. Accordingly, Zaydism divides Ijtihad into two; first the absolute and complete Ijtihad, which means that Mujtahid can conduct even primary rulings and this status, cannot be attained by the Prophet's family scholars particularly Imam Zayd and Al-Hadi. Second, the partial Ijtihad, which means that Mujtahid can only deduce *fatwas* regarding the secondary subjects and could be specialized in one subject, such as the commercial legislation, and this aspect is open for everyone all the time[74].

All in all, Zaydism believes that the Imam does not only occupy a political position but also a religious one, so the same conditions of the Imam are applicable to the Mujtahid, however, the non-Hashemite can be Mujtahid but not an absolute religious authority. Zaydism allows its scholars to take any ruling from any school in the secondary subjects, but the primary subjects are different.

Every doctrine has its primary concepts that were set by the founder; and are not restricted on anything except the Quran, and those according to Zaydism, their references are those Imams who appeared in the second and third century of *hijrah*, such as Imam Zayd and al-Hadi[75]. Thus, Zaydism holds that the Prophet's family consensus is the only absolute religious reference. Others can achieve the status of Ijtihad only in the secondary issues, which is different from the rest of the Islamic doctrines, particularly Sunni, which consider the final reference is its primary source that is written by the founder, such as the *Al -Rissalah* book by al Shafi'i.

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[74]Abu Zahrah. *Al-Imam Zayd*. pp. 463–469

[75] Abu Zahrah. *Al-Imam Zayd*. pp 463–469

Rebellion Dilemma

Justifying rebellion against the unjust ruler caused chaos, since many proclaimed Imams emerged at the same time and fought each other. Also, it occasionally destabilized the rule of many Imams, as they were ousted by others claiming that the person in charge was not a just Imam and the Muslims should rebel against him. The conflicts always took place when the Imam died as it is banned that the Imam appointed the successor, so the operation after the death of any Imam was unsystematic and troublesome[76].

Accordingly, many Imams rose by claiming that the situation of the people is worsening and justice is missing, so choosing him would be the only solution. Those self-proclaimed Imams took the approval of some scholars and gained the loyalty of some tribes, and then started to fight each other, as the standards of approbation between them are not clear in the Zaydi doctrine. Most of the time, the previous Imam prepared his son to inherit through guaranteeing the loyalty of the state men and state soldiers. Therefore, the transition of power proceeded peacefully. However, this did not work many times; many conflicts occurred before one of those proclaimed Imams succeeded in defeating his enemies and wining the Imamate[77].

Imam al-Hadi's theory of the Imamate tried to solve this problem by formulating the rule that the success of the Imam in defeating his enemies and enforcing his authority means that God blessed him, so it is a divine matter that obliges obedience from the people, unless the Imam had committed an obvious sin[1]. Imam al-Hadi proved his opinion by the Quranic verse, "And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers."(Quran

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[76]Messick. *The calligraphic state*.p 38.
[77]Dresch.*Tribes, government, and history in Yemen*.p 161.

2:124.Yususf Ali translation). It means that the Imamate is the covenant of God that was obtained by the people who are accepted and supported by God. The Imam is chosen by God; therefore, it is not allowed to rebel against him. Hence, this theory was an attempt to close the door of rebellion during the Imam's life but did not solve the problem of the succession.

In addition, to emphasize the duty of obedience, Imam al-Hadi and the Zaydi scholars, particularly the most prominentousted Imam Ahmad al-Murtada, stressed the concept of *bughat*. The *bughat* concept refers to the Muslims who caused chaos and disorder among other Muslims *fitna*[78]. According to Zaydism, the *bughat* who tried to show that this Imam is unjust, fought the Imam or called people to disobey him or barred him from enforcing the law, and had a place of protection as city or castle. Anyone who did these things must be fought by the Imam and Muslims, as Jihad against *bughat* is a duty and better than Jihad against infidels. Consequently, it is allowed to cooperate with infidels against *bughat*, because these people can have more influence over other Muslims, they could cause a bigger threat to Islam and Muslims[79].

In fact, the concept of *bughat* contradicts some aspects of commanding good and forbidding evil according to Zaydism; it is the dilemma of balancing the justification of rebellion against other non-Zaydi rulers and the necessity of stabilizing the Zaydi Imamate when it became the power. Hence, those concepts used ambiguity by Zaydis according to the political conditions.

Divided Yemen

Zaydism had existed mainly in tribal areas such as Eastern Iran and the middle of the Arabian Peninsula, now it only exists in the north of Yemen; this is attributed to the Zaydi Imamate theory that requires a certain type of society to suit its principles such as rebellion.

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[78](n.d).Baghi.(n.d.).*Al Maani.* Retrieved April 14, 2016, from http://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/البغي/
[79]Ghulais.*Tajdid Fikr al-Imama.*p 83.

There are several social issues that need to be considered to study the Zaydi Imamate and clarify its history in Yemen.

Yemen is a mountainous country, located in the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula. There is an enormous literature that described the natural borders of Yemen which exceeds the modern Yemeni state to some parts of Saudi Arabia and Oman. However, this does not mean that Yemen was always one political unit; many times it has been divided among many states because it is very difficult for a central authority to control a vast mountainous area[80].

Also, Yemeni culture is tribal; farming tribes are not nomadic in general. The divisions between tribes are territorial, it is not only about lineage, and some tribes are political confederations. The sectarian division between Zaydis and Shafi's as well is a territorial and political alliance, since Zaydism only exists in the north of Yemen. In addition, Yemeni tribes are the descendants of Qahtan, whereas the northern Arabs are the descendants of Adnan. The ancestor of Yemeni tribes is Saba'a, which divides into the tribes of Khawlan, Azd, Madhhij, and Hamdan. Hamdan tribes live in the north of Yemen and consist of the two competitor tribes Hashid and Bakil, which are called the two wings of Zaydism. Northern Yemen is called Upper Yemen, located north of the Sumarah Mountain in the middle of Yemen and this is mostly known as the north of Sana'a; it is the land of the Hamdan and Khawlan tribes particularly. Southern Yemen is Lower Yemen, where the Madhhij tribes live. This division existed prior to Islam, it reflects the Yemeni tribal-territorial division, and it was a result of the conflicts between Hamdan tribes and Madhhij, as Hamdan lands have scarce resources unlike Madhhij's fertile lands[81].

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[80]Dresch. *Tribes, government, and history in Yemen*. p1
[81]Dresch. *Tribes, government, and history in Yemen*. pp 22–29

Thus, Zaydi doctrine stands as opposite to Shafi'i as tribesmen (Zaydis) to farmers (Shafi'is), as well as Upper Yemen (the Zaydi part) is opposite to Lower Yemen (the Shafi'i part)[82]. Therefore, these multilayer divisions are represented in Yemen and caused several complications which are important to comprehend in order to study the Zaydi Imamate in Yemen.

Zaydism and Tribes

As briefly mentioned about the complexities of Yemeni society, Upper Yemen is Zaydi, and is a tribal area except for some urban parts, such as Sana'a and Dhamar. Accordingly, the people who live in Upper Yemen are considered Zaydis even if they were originally from Shafi'i land and, vice versa, the Zaydi who moves to Lower Yemen becomes a Shafi'i, so it is a territorial identity rather than a doctrinal one[1]. The doctrinal differences between Zaydi and Shafi'i are not very marked, except on the Zaydi theory of Imamate. Therefore, it is a difference over political power and hegemony.

This doctrinal difference reflects social and geographical differences. For more clarification, rainfall per annum in the west of Yemen is 600–800 millimeters and this rate of rainfall increases in the Middle Mountains to reach 110 millimeters per year. The rainfall per annum in the north and east of Yemen, where Zaydism is widespread, drops to 300–250 millimeters. Yemen is an agricultural country and depends on the rain, as it does not have rivers, so these numbers are very significant; they show the fertility of the land of each region, and the Zaydi region is not rainy so its land is not fertile. Therefore, these numbers clarify the type of people's activities and their means of production[83].

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[82]Dresch. *Tribes, government, and history in Yemen*. p13
[83]Dresch. *Tribes, government, and history in Yemen*. pp 1−22

The shift of Imamate history occurred in the seventeenth century particularly, when it altered from a revolutionary movement to a state that spread its domination on all the areas within the natural borders of Yemen.

In 1636, Zaydis succeeded for the first time in holding all of Yemen after the Turks were driven out of the country, as the Zaydis were the prominent fighting power against the Turks[84]. Other factors played roles in producing this shift, which were the change of global trade routes after discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and the domination of the Portuguese over the Indian Ocean, so the southern ports' importance retreated and the Tahirid State in Lower Yemen collapsed.

The most important factor was the coffee trade, as coffee was planted in the western mountains and transported from the northwestern ports; its huge revenues helped Imams in preserving their domination and buying the loyalty of the tribes. When Yemen started to lose its coffee monopoly, and because of the Imams' continuous competition and fighting, the Zaydi state lost its southern territories, but not the most fertile lands in the west and the middle[85]. Imams imposed double taxes on the land of Lower Yemen to gain the wealth that enabled them to keep the tribes' loyalty. Besides, most of these tribes possessed lands in Lower Yemen, so most of its landlords were from Upper Yemen tribes. Hence, this situation created the stereotype that Upper Yemen's people see Lower Yemen's people as peasants. On the contrary, the people of Lower Yemen think that those who come from Upper Yemen are just brutal fighters[86].

The relationship between the tribes and Imams are complicated and fickle, so the tribes' image changes from warriors for God to evil fighters according to their loyalty to the Imams. On

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[84]Salim. *Al- Fatah Al- 'Uthmani al- Awwal- li'l- Yaman*. p. 395

[85]Haykel.*Revival and reform in Islam*.Press .p. 16

[86]Dresch.*Tribes, government, and history in Yemen*. pp198-224

the other side, the Imams' image swings from heroes to corrupt and unjust Imams due to the tribe's interests. Imams had taken their distinguished position through their job as mediators between the fighting tribes because the tribes respected them for their ancestry and knowledge of Islamic Law (Sharia), which was compatible with tribal customs except for a few cases. All in all, Zaydi principles helped the fighting nature of these tribes to gain wealth from the wars' booty due to their infertile land, and without tribes, the Zaydi states were not established. Hence, it is a mutual need between tribes and Imams which explains why this relationship is continuous in spite of the disagreements between the two parts[87].

Social Hierarchy

According to Zaydism, the highest political and religious ranks are reserved for the Prophet's family, who are called Hashemites. Muslims consider the tribal line of Benu Hashem (the descendants of Hashem) to be the highest branch of the Quraysh tribes because the Prophet's family line derived from it. Formerly, the Sunni doctrines required the Qurayshi lineage for the caliphate.

In the Shiite doctrines, only the grandsons of the Prophet can be Imams, which is the Shiite equivalent of the caliphate, and not the Quraysh. For the Twelvers and Isma'ili's, this right is limited only to the descendants of the Prophet's grandson al-Husayn. However, Zaydism accepts the descendants of the both Prophet's grandsons, al-Hassan and al-Husayn. In Yemen, "Hashemite" is synonymous with "the Prophet's family" and most of the Hashemites in Yemen are descended from al Hassan and not al Husayn; however the Zaydi doctrine accepted them both[88].Twelvers believe that all twelve Imams are infallible, but Zaydis do not believe in the infallibility of Imams. However, Zaydis, like Sufis, believe that certain people from the

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[87]Dresch.*Tribes, government, and history in Yemen*. pp. 158–196
[88]Bruck, G. V. (2005). *Islam, memory, and morality in Yemen: Ruling families in transition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p98

Prophet's family might be a blessing *baraka*. For Zaydis, this blessing means God supports the Imam in defeating the Imam's enemies[89].

Hence, the Quraysh enjoyed an aristocratic status due to its lineage, and the Prophet's family possessed a holy rank for being the closest people to the Prophet and their long history of suffering. Nevertheless, Yemen was a safe haven for the Prophet's family who were oppressed in many areas, such as Iraq and Medina. Therefore, the Prophet's family had both political and religious roles in Yemen because the positions of the Imamate and the grand Mujtahid were limited to them.

Over the course of time, the Imamate in Yemen had built a social hierarchy system that was based on the superiority of the prophet's family who were called the masters, *Sada*, and the women were the honored, *Sharifa*. This system was established to serve the interests of the Imamate system. Thus, the following high ranks were reserved for the judges, *Qadis*, who provided the legitimacy to the proclaimed Imams and the tribes' Sheikhs who mobilized the people to fight alongside the Imams. Ordinary people, such as the tribesmen, tradesmen and farmers are ranked below them. Finally, the lowest levels in this hierarchy were left to the artisan, butchers, barbers and lastly Jews[90].

Most of the medieval period societies had a social hierarchy based on the lineage and the profession that did not allow for the levels to inter-marry. In Yemen, this system caused tension due to the old rivalry between the northern Arabs, benu Adnan, and the southern Arabs, benu Qahtan. The origin of the Quraysh traces back to benu Adnan while Yemenis are descendants of Qahtan. This difference of origin created tension in Yemen because the highest ranks and the top political position, the Imamate, are limited only to the Hashemites, who are Adnanis. This is

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[89] Abu Ghanim, Fadhl.(1985).*Al- Buniya al- Qabaliya fi'l-Yaman*. Damascus. Maṭbʿat al- Kitab al- ʿArabi. pp 112–120
[90]Bruck. Islam, memory, and morality in Yemen. p 52

especially the case in Yemen because Yemenis are highly proud of their ancestry and their unique civilization in the south of the Arabian Peninsula[91].

The rivalry did not occur between the tribes and the Imams; instead it infiltrated between the Imams and judges or scholars. The judges felt rivalry towards the Hashemites, although both were inherited ranks. However, a judge's rank was obtained by knowledge and Imams only required the Prophet's lineage. Both of them, Imams and judges did the same jobs, which were teaching the people and mediating disputes within the society. Imamate position and the highest rank of Ijtihad were only limited to Hashemites which stirred the anger of judges, who thought that they were not less than Imams to be excluded from these positions[92].

The first famous opposition figure against the Hashemite privileging was Abi Muhammadal-Hassan al-Hamdani, who was born in Sana'a in 280AH/893AD. He was famous in his name *The Tongue of South Arabia(لسان اليمن)* as he was a famous historian in the pre-Islamic history of Yemen as well as a poet, antiquarian, genealogist and geographer. His most famous book, *Al-Iklil (الإكليل)*, was in ten parts; only four were founded, which were described by the author as a work to talk about the characteristics of the Qahtani ancestry. Al-Hamdani was accused by his enemies of blasphemy against the Prophet. His books were eliminated by Imams who imprisoned him for his political opposition. Al-Hamdani died in prison in 334AD/945AH. Al-Hamdani was not a single case but a pioneer leader of the Qahtani phenomenon in Yemen[93].

Another opposition emerged, which was al Muṭarrifiyya group, as has been mentioned, that called for a new definition of honor that did not depend only on the origin but also on human

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[91]Abu Ghanim. *Al- Buniya al- Qabaliya fi'l-Yaman* pp. 189–150
[92]Löfgren, O. *al-Hamdānī*. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Retrieved 17 April 2016 from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-hamdani-SIM_2666?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=hamdani
[93]Madelung, W.(2012). *Muṭarrifiyya*. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Retrieved 17 April 2016 from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/mutarrifiyya-SIM_5652

deeds. However, al Muṭarrifiyya did not conflict explicitly with the condition of lineage in the Zaydi Imamate theory. Nonetheless, they were accused of heresy and were oppressed by Imam Hamza[94].

Coincidentally, another prominent character appeared, Nashwān b. Said Al-Himyarī Al-Yamanī, who was, like his predecessor al-Hamdani, a poet, historian, and philologist. His most prominent work was his dictionary, *Shams al-ʿulūm*, in which he used his knowledge of pre-Islamic Yemeni history to find the origin of Arabic words. He praised the Himyrite kings and period; Himyrite is the name of the last prosperous Yemeni kingdom before Islam. Nashwan was a great Zaydi scholar but clearly rejected the condition of the Prophet's family in the Imamate theory. He died in 573A.H./ 1178A.D., which means that more than two centuries passed between him and his exemplar al-Hamdani; Nashwan was influenced by al-Hamdani and also transmitted his works[95].

The time difference between them shows that during the age of al-Hamdani, Zaydism was the doctrine of few people, while during Nashwan's age, Zaydism became a doctrine of the northern tribes. Also, Nashwan was the son of a judges' family which indicates the beginning of the establishment of a social hierarchy[96]. This tension between these two levels, Imams and Qadis, had remained until the collapse of the Imamate in 1962. This is noticeable in al-Shawkani's reform attempt during the 19th century, since judges were always enthusiastic about the Qahtani discourse against the privileged status of the Prophet's family. In addition, judges

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[94]Lichtenstädter, Ilse. (2012). *Nashwān b. Saʿīd*. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. Retrieved 17 April 2016 from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/nashwan-b-said-SIM_5815
[95]Zaid. *Tayarat Muʿatazilit al- Yaman*. p. 86
[96]Nasr, S.H. (2012). *Ithnā ʿAshariyya*.Encyclopaedia of Islam, (2012). Retrieved 19 April 2016 from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ithna-ashariyya-COM_0397

sometimes stressed the justice principle in Islam, since they believed that the superiority of the Hashemites in the society contradicted justice.

This imposes the question, why the judges particularly were against the condition of the Prophet's family? This is attributed to the fact that the judges were aristocrats but their level was acquired by study as ordinary people, unlike to the Hashemites who acquired their aristocracy by only inheritance. Therefore, the judges believed that they had more knowledge than the proclaimed Imams, who fought each other in front of them to determine who was the most qualified to be Imam. Therefore, judges thought none of the proclaimed Imams deserved the position except that they were from the Prophet's family. This aroused the feeling of unfairness among judges.

Conclusion

The political nature of Zaydism is not just an important aspect but also the reason for the emergence of this doctrine, since Imam Zayd's fame was attributed to his revolution rather than his ideas. Therefore, the practical side in Zaydism precedes and dominates the theological one, so the only aim of the theoretical aspect is to provide an excuse for the Imams' actions. This led to many consequences, initially, the Zaydi doctrine has few primary references and it took six centuries to compile a book entitled the *Azhar Book* as an authoritative Zaydi source. Before this book, there were some unreliable sources by Imam Zayd, al-Qasim, and al-Hadi besides the known letters of Imam al-Qasim and al-Hadi. Even the Mu'tazilite aspect marginalized after the Muṭarrifiyya incident in the sixth century of *hijrah* or the thirteenth century according to the Roman calendar was clear evidence how the Zaydi Imams are firm in facing any critical thinking which might shake their authority.

The Zaydi Imamate theory at the beginning focused on the principle of justice and how to apply it by adopting the idea of commanding good and forbidding evil. With time and the increase in power of the Zaydi Imamate, justice became a minor principle with the escalation of the significance of Prophet's family and the necessity of obedience towards them. The Prophet's family's distinguished status had become a central idea in Zaydism to maintain its spiritual aspect in order to legitimize its continuous fighting. Consequently, many Imams arose to fight for power and were not qualified except they had the lineage condition, which caused tension with certain social classes.

Chapter Two

The Early Zaydi Reform Attempt

At the end of the seventeenth century, the Zaydi state lost the wealth it had derived from the profitable coffee trade, leaving it unable to pay the tribes in order to guarantee their loyalty. There were several rebellions and these ultimately led to a change in the states' perception of the Zaydis religious authority. The rise of Al-Shawkani School presents the clearest example of this change as he was the most prominent scholar of that era.

Muhammad b. Ali b. Muhammad al-Shawkani (1173–1255 A.H./1760–1839 A.D.), a religious scholar and the chief judge for three decades, was born in hijrah Shawkan, which is a village near Sana'a. He was born into a family of Zaydi judges. Al-Shawkani is currently the most significant religious scholar in Yemen and the most well-known Yemeni scholar throughout the Islamic world. He is considered to have been a modernizer of Islamic thought and the famous scholar Rashīd Riḍā regarded him as the *mudjaddid* (regenerator) of the twelfth century.[97]

The Sunni Influence on Zaydism

Zaydism was originally associated with the Mu'tazilite School. Accordingly, there were many cases of Mu'tazilite scholars, who became Zaydis such as al-Hakim al-Jishmy (494–413/1022–1100), or Zaydi scholars who were influenced heavily by the Mu'tazilite ideas

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[97] Jansen, J,J,G. (2012). *Al-Shawkani*.Encyclopaedia of Islam. Retrieved 4 June 2016 from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-shawkani-SIM_6875

such as Yahya b. al-Hamza and the significant Zaydi scholar Ahmad b. Yahya al-Murtada (764–840/1362–1436), who was the author of the main Zaydi reference book *Al Azhar (الأزهار)*[98]. Imam al Murtada is the most well-known of the Zaydi- Mu'tazilite line, which is called the Hadawi School. This term would be important to identify a certain Zaydi line versus the Sunni associated Zaydi line. The latter would be a solid phenomenon in the Zaydi doctrine from the ninth century or the fifteenth century, according to the Roman calendar.

The first Zaydi scholar influenced by the Sunni traditions was Muhammadb. Ibrahim al-Wazir (840–775/1373–1436). He was a contemporary of the most prominent Zaydi scholar Imam al-Murtada. Al- Wazir travelled to Mecca, where he studied and was influenced by the Sunna School. He said in his book *Ithar al- Haqq 'ala al- Khalq* (ايثار الحق على الخلق)that the scholar should renew the religion and not just follow what came before or be restricted to one school of thought. He attributed his shift towards Sunni ideas to his irritation with the ongoing Mu'tazilite arguments. This motivated him to follow the Quran and Sunna[99]. Al-Shawkani considered the book *Al-Rawḍ al-Basim fi al-Thab 'an Sunnat abi al-Qasim* (الروض الباسم في الذب عن سنة أبي القاسم) as unprecedented in Yemen because it presented an open attitude towards the Sunna[100].

Another turning point took place when Saleh b. Mahdi al Muqbali appeared in (1047–1108/1637–1696). He traveled to Mecca more than once and died there. His books, particularly *Al-Manar(المنار)* refuted the ideas of al Mu'tazilite and Sufi doctrine and it collected Hadiths. The age of al-Muqbali was the first time that Zaydis succeeded in taking over Yemen

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[98]Subhi, Ahamad. *Al- Zaydiyya*. pp 340-394

[99]Al Wazir, Muhammadb. Ibrahim. (n.d). *Ithar al-Haq 'ala al- Khalq.*Al-Maktaba al-Shamilah. Retrieved 5 June, 2016 from http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-5937#page-13

[100]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p. 91

and the Zaydi Imamate ruled a vast Shafi'i area. Shortly after his death, two significant Zaydi scholars appeared in this regard, first al-Hassan Jalal (1014–1048/ 1605–1673), who did not travel outside Yemen and he earned his education from Sa'da and then Sana'a. Al-Hassan wrote a famous commentary on *Al-Azhar* that refuted many of its ideas; Al-Hassan's book was named *Ḍaw'al-nahar* (ضوء النهار)[101]. Ssecond, Muhammad b. Ismail b. al-Amir al-Sanani (1099–1182/1687– 1768), was also a Zaydi scholar from Sana'a and traveled to al Hijaz four times.

During his time, the Sunni stream within Zaydism became stronger. Therefore, conflicts started between the Sunni-Zaydi line and the traditional Hadawi-Zaydi line; the latter was supported by Imams at the beginning and then it was overturned. Consequently, b. al-Amir was not on good terms with the Imams and refused the position of judge or minister. He was later imprisoned by Imam al-Mahdi on the grounds of his disputes with the Hadawi scholars. B. al Amir, like his predecessors of this stream stressed the importance of Ijtihad, called for openness to different doctrines without being restricted to only one school of thought, emphasized the Hadith science and refuted the Mu'tazilite and Sufi ideas. B. al-Amir was a contemporary of Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab (DaʿwaWahhabiyya) in Najd. B. al-Amir exchanged letters with him and praised his ideas that called for the purification of Islam from the heresy. However, his opinion changed after he knew about Abd al-Wahhab's bloody conflicts with the Muslims[102].

This tendency of Sunnism within Zaydism had been strengthened for many reasons. Firstly, the intensive contact with the Shafi'i areas after the Zaydi Imamate expansion and

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[101]Al- Samawi, Muhammadb. Salih. Muhammad ibn Salih. (1996). *Al-Gaṭmṭam al- Zakhkhar al- Mutahhir li riyaḍ al- Azhar min Āthar al- Sayl al- Jarrar*, Muhammad Izzan (Ed). Amman: Maṭabʿ Shirkat al- Mawarid al- Sinaʿiyya al- Urduniyya. p 51

[102]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*.pp. 127–130

controlled all Yemen in 1634, along with the travel of Zaydi scholars to Hijaz, which exposed the Zaydi scholars to Sunni ideas more than ever. Secondly, the political need to adopt opinions that encouraged the obedience of the ruler and discouraged rebellion as a result of the transformation of the Zaydi Imamate from a revolutionary group to a state; this will be clarified later in the chapter.

The Compromise Attempt between Sunnism and Zaydism

Al-Shawkani was brought up in a traditional Zaydi environment. Unlike his peers, he did not travel to seek knowledge outside Yemen, but this did not mean that al Shawakni was not influenced by the Sunni School and he became the most well-known figure in this regard. The Zaydi School that was most compatible with Sunnism already existed and had flourished before al-Shawkani's time. Accordingly, al-Shawkani's transformation from being a traditional Zaydi scholar to one who was closer to Sunnism was not unusual, since many Zaydi scholars tended to be more associated with the Sunni School during the late period of Zaydism in Yemen.

a. **Ijtihad:**The ideas presented by al-Shawkani were not new to the Zaydi School but a continuation of the trend of former Zaydi scholars. However, al-Shawkani presented the most significant attempt to compromise between Sunnism and Zaydism. For this aim, al-Shawkani elaborated the concept of Ijtihad in order to serve the idea of compromising by freeing himself and the people from the limits of doctrines. The idea of *Ijtihad* and the concept of "no doctrine" are very connected to each other according to al-Shawkani. Both principles are dominant in al-Shawkani's doctrine; he believed that Ijtihad would help in reducing the clashes between different doctrines and unify all Muslims. Therefore, the aim of Ijtihad, according to al-Shawkani, is not renewing the religion. In his book *Al- Qawl al-Mufid fi*

Adallat al-Ijtihad wa'l-Taqlid (القول المفيد في أدلة الاجتهاد والتقليد), he explained: "The claims that

the door of Ijtihad is closed once the doctrines were established and the death of their

founders is heresy *bid'a*[103]. He also accused those who call on others to only follow the

established doctrines of trying to replace the religion with their doctrines; he affirmed that

religion was based only on the Quran and Sunna[104]. Al-Shawkani stressed that even those

who are considered ignorant should not follow the scholars' sayings without proof *hujah*,

specifically, Quranic verses, Hadiths, consensus of the companions, or analogy[105].

(ارشاد الفحول في تحقيق الحق في In his book *Irshad al-FuhulilaTaḥqiq al-Haqq fi 'ilm al-Usul*

علم الاصول),al-Shawkani emphasized that there is a Mujtahid in every time and country[106]. Hence,

al-Shawkani aimed from his call to Ijtihad to liberate the people from sectarianism, as his age

witnessed deep sectarian tension. In addition, he intended to liberate himself from the constraints

of the doctrines so that he could operate with an independent religious reference. Because of this,

this some Zaydi scholars accused him of attempting to establish his own new school particularly

after he published his book *Al-Mukhatṣar(المختصر)*, in which he tried to sUmmarize his legal

opinions, supported by several-Hadiths and which was contrary to *Al-Azhar* style[107].

The clash between al-Shawkani and Zaydism in this aspect is apparent, since al-

Shawkani rejected the Zaydi idea that every Mujtahid is right *Kul Mujtahid Mussaib*, according

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[103]Al-Shawkani, Muhammad.(2010). *Al-Qawl al-Mufid fi Adallat al- Ijtihad wa'l- Taqlid*. Kuwait: Dar al Qalm. P
63. Retrieved 5 June, 2016 from http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-6359#page-47
[104]Al-Shawkani.*Al-Qawl al-Mufid.*
[105]Al-Shawkani.*Al-Qawl al-Mufid.*
[48] Al-Shawkani, Muhammad. (2010). *Irshad al-Fuhul ilaTaḥqiq al- Haqqmin 'ilm al- Usul* (1st ed., p. 211).
Damascus:Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi. Retrieved 5 June, 2016 from http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-11437#page-792
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[107] Al- Samawi. *AlGatmtam al Zakhkhar*. p 75

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to the Hadith that the Mujtahid will be rewarded once if he is mistaken and twice if he is right[108]. Al-Shawkani said this idea aimed to motivate the common people to follow any scholar's saying without proof[109]. Another point of conflict pertained to the fact that Al-Shawkani did not regard the early Zaydi Imam[110] as an authority in the matters of Ijtihad[111].

Hence, al-Shawkani's emphasis on Ijtihad was in support of the no doctrine approach and designed to liberate himself from the Zaydi methodology of Ijtihad by adopting his methodology which was clarified in his book *Nayl al-Awṭar*(نيل الأوطار). His book *Al-Badr al-Ṭaliʿ bi Maḥisn al Qarn al Sab*ʿ (البدر الطالع بمحاسن بعد القرن السابع) is an attempt to prove that practicing Ijtihad had continued even after establishment of the doctrines, but all of the scholars who were mentioned in his book were, in fact, al-Shawkani's methodology and his biography of Mujtahids are more comparable to Sunnism than to Zaydism. Nonetheless, al-Shawkani has his own unique methods and approaches, explained in his book *Nayl al-Awatar*, which cannot situate him in a particular doctrine.

b. **Companions**: Regarding the issue of the companions, which is the most continuous issue between Shiites and Sunnis, al-Shawkani's stance is sophisticated. In this respect, Al-Shawkani's attempt to compromise between the Shiite and Sunni schools is very apparent. His definition of the companions was not as broad as Hanbali; he did not believe that all of them were Mujtahids or just, although he thought that they constituted the best generation. This position differs from the Hanbali School, which holds that the companion is anyone

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[108] Al- Samawi. *AlGatmtam al Zakhkhar*. p 88
[109] Al-Shawkani.*Al-Qawl al-Mufid*.p 87.
[110] Al-Shawkani.*Irshad al-Fuhul*.(1st ed., p. 211).
[111] Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p. 97

who converted to Islam and met the prophet, even once, and all of them are Mujtahid[112].

Also, al-Shawkani believed that justice is generally associated with them except for those

whose actions disagreed explicitly with the religion[113].

This is slightly different from the Zaydi stance towards the companions, even among the

most lenient, who adopted the position of *tardiya*. For the most moderate Zaydi scholars, the

definition of the companions is those who accompanied the prophet and learned from him, which

is similar to al-Shawkani's opinion[114]. About justice, most of the tolerant Zaydi scholars believed

that being a companion of the prophet did not necessarily mean that a person has a sense of

justice or is a just person. This opinion was held even by scholars from the Sunni line in

Zaydism, such as al Muqbali who said "Some people consider the companions to be infallible,

which is extremism that is similar to the extremism of gulat Shiite"[115]. Although Zaydism is

considered the Shiite sect most lenient towards the companions, it still criticizes the companions

on some issues. For example, the companions barred the prophet, when he was sick, from

writing his testament or the famous dispute between Abu Bakr and Fatima about Faddak land; in

these cases, Zaydis adopted the Shiite accounts.

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[112]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p. 145

[113]Al- Shawkani, Muhammad. (2009). *Irashad al- Ghabi ila Madhhab Ahal al-Bayt Fi Saḥab al- Nabi* .p50.Al-Maktaba al- Waqfeya.al- Riyadh: Dar al- Manar. Retrieved 5 June, 2016 from
http://ia600503.us.archive.org/30/items/waq4366/4366.pdf

[114]Azzan, Muhammad. (2015). *Al- Saḥaba 'ind al- Zaydiyya*. Sana'a. Markz al- Dirasat wa'l -Bahuth. P 63.Retrieved 5June, 2016 from
http://file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D9%80%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A9%20
%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%AF%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A9%20(1).pdf

[115]Azzan.*Al- Saḥaba 'ind al- Zaydiyya* .P72.

These issues are very crucial in verifying al-Shawkani doctrine, and the issue of legateship of Ali b. Abī Tālib constitutes the best example due to its vitality on the Imamate theory. Al-Shawkani wrote a whole treatise about this issue, called, *Al-'Iqad al-Thamin fi Ithbat Wisayat Amir al Mu'minin*. In this book, al-Shawkani tried a compromise between the Sunni and Shiite accounts. For instance, al-Shawkani provides a rationale for Aisha's position when she said that the Prophet did not leave any testament. Rather than contradicting Aisha's narrative, he said that her ignorance of the prophet's testament did not mean that the prophet did not leave one. Al-Shawkani depended on Shiite Hadiths to prove that Ali is the legatee of the prophet[116]. This stance was explained by the Salafis and Heykel, the author of the book *Revival and Reform in Islam,* that al-Shawkani in his early life was more influenced by the Zaydi environment[117]. However, nothing from al-Shawkani's later works contradicted this opinion, as he did not address this issue at any later point. This is considered by Heykel to be al-Shawkani's adoption of the Hanbali stance known as refraining from taking any position *imsak*[118]. This explanation is not strong enough to be convincing, as it depends on speculation without proof. Also, it is difficult to claim that al-Shawkani had this opinion due to influence, because he was aware of both Sunni and Shiite positions and tried to compromise between them.

Another example of the compromise appeared in al-Shawkani's book, *Irshad al-Ghabi ela Madhhab Ahal al-Bayat fi Saḥb al Nabi* (ارشاد الغبي لمذهب أهل البيت في صحب النبي),which aimed to defend the companions by presenting proofs from the doctrine of the Prophet's family, which

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[116] Al-Shawkani, Muhammad.(1999). *Al- 'Aqd al- Thamin fi Ithbat Wiṣayat Amyr al- Mu'minin*. P34. Sana'a: Markz al- Ghadir li'l- Dirasat al- Islamiyya. Retrieved 5 June, 2016 from https://app.box.com/s/en55xkhswmlyh6ntl24c

[117] Al-Haydari, Suliman.*Hal Ywafiq al-Shawkani al- Zaydiyya fi Wiṣayat al-Khilafa li'l 'Ali ibn abi Talib?* .Ṣayd al-Fawa'id. Retrieved 12 August, 2016 from http://www.saaid.net/Warathah/Al-kharashy/mm/38.htm

[118] Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. pp. 140–164

meant implicitly the Zaydi Imams and Scholars from the descendants of the Prophet. In this book, al-Shawkani tried to prove that the cursing of the companions is firmly forbidden according to the doctrine of the Prophet's family by referring to the sayings and stances of thirteen chief scholars from the prophet's family. Al-Shawkani clarified the objective of his book by saying "It was proved the consensus of the Prophet's family scholars on forbidding blasphemy or defamation of one of the companions, unless there was a companion who specifically announced their disagreement with the religion. This stance should not be understood as the infallibility of the companions, but rather, as the consensus of the public on them"[119]. Al-Shawkani relied on Hadiths or statements by Zaydi Imams to support his opinion, which means that he made every effort not to contradict Zaydism.

Zaydism and Companions

Al-Shawkani's stance towards certain issues such as cursing the companions of the Prophet in his book *Irshad al-Ghabi* caused riots in Sana'a in (1210–1216/17691773). These riots were significant, as they indicated the extent of the disagreement between al-Shawkani and the Hadawi line scholars[120].

To clarify the background of this incident, it is important to explain the position of the traditional Zaydis towards the Prophet's companions. According to *Al Saḥabah ʿnd al-Zaydiyya* (الصحابة عند الزيدية)by the contemporary reformer, Zaydi scholar Muhammad Azzan, Zaydis have been divided into two main positions *tardiya* or *tawaqquf. Tardiya* means those who follow the name of the companion by saying *Radhi Allah ʿalih* (رضي الله عليه) to ask them for forgiveness, and this practice was supposedly adopted by Imam Zaid and his brother Ja'far al Sadiq.

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[119]Al-Shawkani. *Irashad al- Ghabi*. P24
[120]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*.p167.

Tawaqquf means those who condemn or criticize the actions of certain companions such as Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman but without cursing or insulting them, and this stance was adopted by Imam al-Qasim and al-Hadi; the latter remains the main authoritative Imam for Zaydis in Yemen[121]. Many Zaydis are proud to refer to the famous argument between Imam Zayd and a group of people who came to support him in his last battle. However, they refused to fight alongside Imam Zayd unless he agreed to curse the companions. Imam Zayd rejected this condition which was one of the reasons that he lost the battle[122]. This incident is always mentioned by moderate Zaydi scholars to prove that Zaydism is not opposed to the companions.

The division within Zaydism according to the stance toward the companions remains until now, and Jārūdiyya are closer to the stance of Twelve Shiites. Nonetheless, Azzan stressed that Jārūdiyya is not part of Zaydism in spite of their influence on Zaydism in Yemen[123]. According to al Al-Shahrastānī in al-milal wa'l-niḥal, Jārūdiyyais one of the Zaydi streams, which has heavily influenced other Zaydi divisions that followed[124]. Therefore, the dispute over the stance towards the companions emerged a long time after the inception of Zaydism and remains unresolved. However, the general public attitude has since been settled on the two famous stances *tardiya* and *tawqquf*, even though Azzan has tried to deny the existence of the extremist stance towards the companions by Zaydis[125]. If it is indeed settled, as Azzan claims, he would not have needed to write the book defending Zaydism in terms of its stance towards the

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[121]Azzan.*Al-Saḥaba 'ind al-Zaydiya*.p78

[122]Abu Zahrah. *Al-Imam Zayd*.P62.

[123]Azzan.*Al-Saḥaba 'ind al-Zaydiyya*. P120

[124]Al-Shahrastānī. *Al-milal wa 'l-niḥal*. p. 159
[125]Azzan.*Al-Saḥaba 'ind al-Zaydiyya*. P121

companions, which proved that it remains a debatable issue until now. All in all, practicing *tardiya* or *tawaqquf* suits a country with a Sunni majority like Yemen. Nonetheless, the harsh stance towards the companions remains an ongoing issue among some Zaydi scholars, with the extent of agitation depending on the political conditions.

The Zaydi stance towards the companions appeared significantly as a major problem due to the political circumstances, which explained the riots that followed al-Shawkani's book. Since what he tried to prove in *Irshad al Ghabi (ارشاد الغبي)*was not strange or unprecedented for Zaydis. Many prominent Zaydi scholars had the same opinion about the companions. This poses the question: why did this book spark such controversy in 1210AH/1796AD in Sana'a, targeting mainly the houses of families who were descendants of Umayyads, such as al Ulufi family, and were also government officers?

In his book *Al Badr al Ṭaĺ(البدر الطالع)*, Al-Shawkani expressed his surprise at the reaction of what he called *al rafida*[126]. Heykel in his book about al-Shawkani Revival and Reform in Islam confirms that this incident was a reaction to al-Shawkani's teachings about the companions. Then, more drastic and larger scale riots occurred in Sana'a in 1216/1802, when the Zaydi scholar Sayyid Yahya b. Muhammad al- Houthi introduced his lessons on *Tafrij Al-Kurwb (تفريج الكروب)*by Ishaq al Mutawakkil in the Great Mosque in Sana'a. In these lessons, al- Houthi started to curse the companions. When some students informed al-Shawkani that al- Houthi had cursed the companions, he replied that al- Houthi had strayed from what was contained in the book. However, when Imam al Mansour Ali knew about al- Houthi's lessons, he ordered the minister of endowments to prevent him from giving lessons in the Great Mosque. When Al-

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[126]Al-Shawkani, Muhammad. (2010). *Al- Badr al-Ṭali' bi Maḥasin al- Qarn al- Sab'*. Beirut: Dar al- Máŕif. pp 233-234. Retrieved 5 June, 2015 from http://shamela.ws/index.php/book/6671

Houthi's students went to the Great Mosque and discovered that the lessons of their teacher had been banned, they started to shout and caused riots in the city. They threw stones on the houses of the ministers regardless of whether they were Hashimites or not, but they focused their anger on the minister Hassan b. Uthman due to his having been descended from the Umayyads; the people assembled there and cursed Mu'awiya. The riots did not stop until the Imam ordered his son to move with his troops to save the minister b. Uthman.

However, the historian Lutf Allah Jahaf the author of the chronicle (درر نحور العين في سيرة الإمام المنصور واعلان دولته الميامين) *Durar Nuḥur al-ḥur al-'in fi Sirat al- Imam al- Mansour* provides an account of this story with the same details but different reasons. He claimed that the riot was prompted by the competition between the crier of the mosque and a teacher named Ali al Amir, who had gained the admiration of many students with his good speeches about Imam Ali b. abi Talib and his treatises[127]. Although the incident's sectarian nature is apparent, the real reason for it remains unconfirmed.

Al-Shawkani talked about these riots as incidents that were triggered by *rafida* against him. What is most apparent in the different historical sources is that these incidents targeted the houses of ministers in general and in particular the ministers of Umayyad descent. Therefore, these riots did not target al-Shawkani directly as would have been the case if al-Shawkani's teachings were the only reason. These riots could not be separated from the whole political scene, which was gloomy at the time. Al-Shawkani accused *Rafidi* minister for being behind these events. This clarified the political aspect of the incidents, suggesting that they were related

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[127]Jahaf, Lutf Allah. (2004).*Durar Nuḥur al-ḥur al-'in fi Sirat al- Imam al- Mansur.*Sana'a. Eṣdarat Wizarat al-Siyaḥa wa al-Thaqafa.. p773.

to competition between the ministers. This reason does not negate the existence of the sectarian nature of the tension and was in fact derived from the declining influence of Hadawi scholars in favor of al-Shawkani and his school. Consequently, these incidents took the issue of the companions and the cursing of Mu'awiya as a pretext that justified their actions and covered the real political reasons behind it. This argument is further verified in the light of al-Shawkani's opponents' arguments.

Hadawi Opposition

The serious opposition against al-Shawkani came from Zaydi-Hadawi scholars, such as Hassan al-Houthi and Ismail al Nu'mi, and the most crucial was Muhammad b. Salih al Samawi, who wrote the book al *Ghatmatam al-Zakhkhar al- Mutahhir min Rijs al- Sayl al-Jarrar* (الغطمطم الزخار المطهر من رجس السيل الجرار). This book is a refutation of al-Shawkani's book *al-Sayl al Jarrar al-Mutadafiq ala Hadaeq al-Azhar* (السيل الجرار المتدفق على حدائق الأزهار), which is also a refutation of the primary Zaydi reference *Al-Azahar*[128].

In his book, Al-Samawi did not practice the tradition of praying of the companions of the prophet. Also, he attacked al-Shawkani's personal behavior. For example, al-Shawkani used to be absent from the Friday prayer claiming that he would lose his prestige if he attended[129].

The most critical remarks from al Samawi were about al-Shawkani's methodology, and he repeatedly pointed out that al-Shawkani was not a Mujtahid but a Muqalid. This was illustrated by the difference between al Hassan al Jalal and al-Shawkani. Al Samawi said that al-Jalal also refuted *Al-Azhar* in his book *Ḍaw'a al-Nahar al-Mushriq 'ala Safahat al-Azhar* (ضوء النهار المشرق على صفحات الأزهار). Nonetheless, al Samawi pointed out the huge difference between

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[128]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam.* p. 180
[129]Al -Samawi. *Al-Gatmtam al -Zakhkhar*. p46.

al Jalal's deep and genuine ideas that were highly beneficial, and al-Shawkani's unoriginal ideas, which he had borrowed from other scholars, particularly al-Jalal, but without attribution. Al-Samawi accused both refutations, al-Jalal and al-Shawkani, of attempts to destroy the Prophet's Family Doctrine, Zaydism, but he stressed that he preferred al Jalal because he was more honest and knowledgeable than al-Shawkani[130].

Also, according to al-Samawi, al-Shawkani selected Hadiths not by authenticity but according to whether they matched his ideas. The most striking accusation against al-Shawkani was that he accepted the judiciary position under unjust rulers in order to have the power he needed to spread his doctrine.

In the introduction to al-Samawi's Al-Gaṭmṭam al- Zakhkhar al- Mutahhir li riyaḍ al-Azhar min Āthar al- Sayl al- Jarrar, the editor and the contemporary Zaydi scholar Muhammad Azzan clarified the stance of al Samawi and the Hadawi Zaydi scholars regarding al-Shawkani and his political role particularly in his legitimating of inheritance of power in contradiction to the Zaydi Imamate theory. He writes: "Al-Shawkani was a contemporary of three Imams that ruled by inheritance only. Their rule continued for one hundred and sixteen years, and Shawkani shared their power for the last third of this period to justify and encourage them to transmit power by inheritance"[131]. Azzan further states that "These three Imams ruled Yemen in the name of Zaydism, although Zaydis did not recognize them and were not satisfied with their deeds. Zaydis considered the legitimate Imam from 1221/1247–1806/1831 to be Imam al-Mutawakil 'ala Allah Ismail b. Ahmad al-Kibsi al-Mughalis, the most prominent opponent of Imam al-

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[130]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al -Zakhkhar*.p. 53.
[131]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al -Zakhkhar*. p56

Mutawakil Ahmad b. Ali. Then, Zaydis considered the legitimate person to be Imam Ahmad b. Ali al-Siraji, who led the revolution against Al-Mahdi Abd Allah"[132].

Azzan heavily criticized al-Shawkani for accepting the position of chief judge during the reigns of those unjust rulers. He declares "Al-Shawkani's predecessors, the regenerators in Yemen, such as al-Wazir, al-Muqbali, Jalal and b. al-Amir. In fact, they had famous and known stances towards the rulers of their age, since they did not act as hypocrites or accept to take the position of judge, like al-Shawkani[133]". From *al-Gatmatam's* introduction we can come to two main conclusions. First, al-Shawkani is accused of being a hypocritical scholar. Second, the real Zaydis, according to Azzan, did not recognize the Imams that al-Shawkani collaborated and worked with. This last point clarified the distinction between the legitimate Imam and the ruling Imam and created a problem of legitimacy that was solved by scholars like al-Shawkani by legitimating the inheritance in moving the power.

Al-Samawi's importance is derived from the fact that he authored the most critical refutation of al-Shawkani, also because he suffered greatly as a result of his opposition to the Imam. Al-Samawi criticized Imam al Mahdi harshly for the incident of Mocha, where some foreigners *ifranj* tried to rape a *sharifa*, a women descendant of the Prophet. The women screamed for help and a *faqih* who was passing by, fought them and stabbed one of them. The Imam held *al faqih* in prison for his actions, which were considered by al-Samawi an honorable deed. Al-Samawi accused Imam al Mahdi for slurring the religion in favor of the infidels. This opinion stirred Imam al Mahdi, who ordered al-Samawi's arrest and paraded him through Sana'a streets with drums attached to his back and whipped him. Then, the Imam sent him to a prison in

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[132]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al -Zakhkhar*. p32
[133]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al -Zakhkhar*. p61

Kamran Island, and some anonymous scholars issued a *fatwa* for his execution. On 10 Muharram 1241AH/ 25th August 1825AD, al-Samawi was beheaded and his body was crucified on the day of Ashura'a, which added the dimension of martyrdom to his story. Al-Samawi has since become a symbol of the Imam's injustice and the Zaydi-Hadawi resistance against al-Shawkani School[134].

Sheykh al Islam and al-Qasimi State

The influence of al-Shawkani's political role is undeniably significant. He was not an ordinary chief judge; this is manifest in his title "Shaykh al Islam". He was the first Yemeni scholar to be given this title, which is an honored title for certain religious scholars. This title emerged in Khorasan during the fourth century, and was used regularly during the Uttoman Empire to describe the religious authority, the Mufti of the capital[135]. Clearly, Yemen borrowed this title from the Uttomans during their presence in Yemen which ended in 1634AD. The title was only granted to al-Shawkani during his tenure as chief judge (1209–1250AH/1794–1834AD)[136] in recognition of his distinguished status as a person and not only for his position. Later, it was used more regularly in deference to those who held that position.

Al-Shawkani's prestigious status stemmed from the combination of his religious knowledge and political power, which was gained over four decades of working as the chief judge and occasionally as minister. Al-Shawkani worked close to the political authority during

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[134]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al -Zakhkhar.* p36.
[135] Kramer, J.H; Bulliet, R; Repp,R,C.(2012). *Shaykh al Islam*.Encyclopaedia of Islam. Retrieved 5 June 2016 from http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/shaykh-al-islam-COM_1052
[136]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p. 71

the reign of three Imams (1209–1250AH/1794–1834AD), Imam al-Mansour b. al-Abbas, al-Mutawakel ala Allah Ahmad, and al- Mahdi Abd Allah[137].

Unlike scholars from the Sunni- Zaydi stream that preceded him, al-Shawkani took key political positions during a very critical period in Yemen's history, specifically the middle period of the Qasimi state that started after the Uttoman withdrawal in 1634AD. This marked the beginning of deterioration in the power of the Imams in Yemen, and an increase in the power of judges. This change occurred for several reasons. First, the loss of coffee revenues diminished the Imams' ability to buy the loyalty of the northern tribes, so Imams faced many tribal rebellions attempts. Therefore, they needed a religious authority that would justify their constant battles against the tribes. For example, al-Shawkani accompanied the Imams in their battles against the tribes which were described by him as *bughah*[138]. Second, famine and drought in the northern and eastern areas in Yemen led to a tribal invasion from the north and the west in an attempt to dominate the fertile lands in Lower Yemen, and the middle and western areas[139]. This caused widespread chaos and, later, failed rebellions against the Imamate, the most prominent being the uprising of Sa'ad al- Faqih in 1840, in middle Yemen (Ibb city)[140]. Third, the continuous intervention from external powers such as Uttomans, Egyptians and Wahhabis presented a threat to the Imamate's power particularly along the coast, which was another source of income. In addition, these external powers tried to use the Shafi'i people against the Imamate, which increased the importance of the Judges as religious authorities[141]. Fourth and most

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[137] Al- Samawi. *Al-Gatmtam al-Zakhkhar*. p 56

[138]Ghulais, Ashwaq. (2007). *Fikr al- Shawkani al- Siyasi*. Sana'a: Markz Al- 'Abadi li'l- Dirasat wa'l- Nashr. p259.

[139]Dresch.*Tribes Government and History in Yemen*. pp204-212

[140]Al- Amri, Husayn. (1984). *Tarikh al- Yaman al- Ḥadith*. Damascus. Dar al- Fikr al- Muáṣir. p294

[141]Al-Amri. *Tarikh al- Yaman al- Ḥadith*.pp 34-164

important, the fierce conflicts between the Hashemite families over the power increased the importance of the judges. According to the Zaydi Imamate, judges were not qualified for the Imamate except their lineage, therefore, they were not considered viable competitors for the position of Imam, so Imams trusted them more than others[142]. This situation also enabled the judges to play the role of mediators between the Hashemite competitors. In addition, the vitality of the judges escalated to legitimize converting the Imamate to the hereditary system. For instance, all the Imams of al-Shawkani's judicial reign came to power by inheritance[143]. Accordingly, the importance of al-Shawkani's position stemmed from these political conditions besides his religious knowledge and distinctive abilities.

Many historians claimed that al-Shawkani was just "*Faqih al-Sultan*", a religious authority affiliated to the ruling power, because he justified the brutality of Imams against their opponents, and he legitimized the hereditary way of reaching power regardless of the qualification of the ruler. Also, he did not oppose, unlike his predecessors such as al-Muqabli, the doubling of taxes in lower Yemen on the basis of the fact that the land there was fertile[144]. These criticisms of al-Shawkani may be warranted, but nonetheless, it would be very misleading to consider al-Shawkani as an ordinary *Faqih al-Sultan*. Nonetheless, the significance and influence of Shawkani and the development of his school was derived from his political authority, in addition to his extraordinary religious knowledge. Hence, al-Shawkani became a phenomenon because of his intellect, the completion of the development of the Sunni line within

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[142]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p70

[143]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al-Zakhkhar*. p56
[144]Dresch.*Tribes Government and History in Yemen*. p. 200

Zaydism, and the political conditions that brought about the transformation of the Imamate from a charismatic qualified leader to a dynasty[145].

Al-Shawkani and Wahhabism

Al-Shawkani was a contemporary of the first Saudi state (1744–1818AD) and then the second Saudi state (1818–1819AD)[146]. Al-Shawkani was accused by many Zaydi scholars of being a Wahabbi, and therefore of opposing the Prophet's Family Doctrine (*Madhahab Ahl al Utra*), which is another name used to refer to Zaydism[147]. For example, al-Samawi said that al-Shawkani called Muslims to abandon their doctrines to follow him as a sole religious reference, just as Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab had done[148]. The Saudi expansion into Yemen was the biggest threat that faced the Qasimi state, and al-Shawkani played a key role in this issue.

When the Saudis started to expand towards Yemen and became close to Sana'a in 1808AD,[149]al-Shawkani advised the Imam to conduct some reforms, such as reforming the taxation policy to prevent the Wahhabis from expansion, but he failed in his cosmetic reform of the Imamate[150]. This situation illuminated the al-Shawkani political belief in reforming the political authority.

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[145]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. pp. 25–47
[146]William L. Ochsenwald, Harry St. John Bridger Philby, Joshua Teitelbaum. *Saudi Arabia*. (N.D). Britannica. Retrieved 5 June, 2016 from http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/525348/Saudi-Arabia/45229/B.-Saud-and-the-third-Saudi-state

[147]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al-Zakhkhar*.p 80.
[148]Al-Samawi.*Al-Gatmtam al-Zakhkha*. p78.
[149]Jahaf.*Durar Nuḥur al-ḥur al-ïn*. p. 1021.
[150]ahaf.*Durar Nuḥur al-ḥur al-ïn*. p. 1021.

In a proactive procedure, the Imam destroyed some tombs and the cult of saints to show his good will toward the Saudis and prevented them from using these tombs as a pretext to attack his lands[151]. This was considered by many historians to be proof of the compatibility between Wahhabism and al-Shawkani doctrines.

Al-Shawkani's doctrine towards Wahhabism could be studied from two aspects. First, his direct opinion about Wahhabism is very similar to that of his predecessor, b. al-Amir. Al-Shawkani praised Wahhabism as a revivalist group which aimed to call the people to follow the Quran and Sunna. Then, he changed his mind and compiled a long poem that criticized the Wahhabi's brutal actions[152].

The second aspect could be understood by studying the opinions of al-Shawkani regarding some distinctive issues in order to know to what extent al-Shawkani ideas are compatible with Wahhabism. This could be identified from some issues, such as al-Shawkani's stance on the visiting of graves and the cult of saints. Regarding the visitation of graves and the cult of saints, al-Shawkani shared the same opinion of the Wahhabists who viewed this practice as a type of polytheism "*Shirk*", and he used the same arguments and similar language. However, al-Shawkani was more lenient as he did not forbid the visiting of graves completely, and did not consider them polytheist or apostate or call to fight them; he considered them to be practical infidels not theological infidels[153].

Definitely, the Wahabbi-Saudi expansion was important because it escalated the sectarian tension, and many of the Zaydis accused al-Shawkani of being Wahhabi, like al-Samawi because this meant he was not only Sunni non-Zaydi but also Wahhabi and an enemy of the Zaydis.

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[151] Al Amri. *Tarikh al-Yaman al Ḥadith.* p177.
[152] Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p. 129
[153] Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*.p. 133.

Nonetheless, al-Shawakni tried to keep his distance from Wahhabism and declared his opposition which suited his position as a scholar trying to compromise between Sunnism and Shiism.

Shawkani Influence

Al-Shawkani is the most celebrated scholar in the Yemeni Republic. His body was reburied in an official ceremony in al Filahi Mosque in Old Sana'a city. It had been destroyed, along with the graves of others (including scholars) when the Officer's club was built. Only Shawkani's grave was relocated[154]. Also, a main street and the biggest public hall in Sana'a are named after al-Shawkani[155].

Al-Shawkani's students played influential political roles during the Imamate, such as Ahmad Al-Kibsi, Yahya Muhammad al-Eryani, and Husayan al-Amri. The Hadawi- Zaydi scholars remained unfavored by the following Imams because they could not guarantee their loyalty. The Free Yemeni Movement played many critical roles in opposing the Imamate in the 1948 coup and the 1962 revolution; many of its key members were al-Shawkani's students, such as Mahmmoud al-Zubayri, Muhammad Ahmad al-Noman and Abd al Rahman al-Eryani[156].

The first Mufti of the Yemeni republic Ahmad Zabara was an al-Shawkani student. Zabara issued a general license Ijaza to petition religious scholars; his Ijaza included the traditional Zaydi references such as *Al-Azhar*, Shawkani's book *Fatah al-Qadir* and the Sunni Hadith collections. The following grand Mufti Muhammad al-Amrani issued thousands of

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[154]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p1

[155]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p190

[156]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. pp. 217—223

Fatwas according to Shawkani doctrine, broadcast through the radio program "Fatwa" which ran for three decades. Again, during the rule of the President Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani, the minister of Justice Qadi Muhammad al-Amrani promulgated a set of sixty rules, fifty of which corresponded clearly to al-Shawkani opinions[157].

Several Yemeni books dedicated to al-Shawkani, such as Ashwaq Ghulais, *Fikr al-Shawkanial Siyasi*(فكر الشوكاني السياسي), which talked about Shawkani as a reformer who believed that society should be reformed from within without the need to adopt radical change in power. Ghulais argued that his political reform theory influenced the Brotherhood party in Yemen "Islah party"[158]. A similar approach can be found in a book by Abd al-Ghani al-Sharagy about al-Shawkani, *Al Imam al-Shawkani: Ḥayatuh wa Fikruh*(الإمام الشوكاني:حياته وفكره), which was about his reformist thought and methods[159].

The early books about al-Shawkani that were published after the republican revolution in 1962, portrayed Shawkani as an opponent to the Imamate, such as the book by the republic's minister of education QasimAhmad Ghalib, whose book *Min A'lam al Yaman: Shaykh al-Islam al Mujtahid Muhammadb. Ali al-Shawkani* (من اعلام اليمن: شيخ الإسلام المجتهد محمد علي الشوكاني) praised al-Shawkani's treaties and stressed his Qahtani origins[160]. Mahmmoud al- Zubayri, one of the most important and influential republican revolutionary figures, and al Qadi Muhammad al Akw' valued al-Shawkani's experience as an attempt to unify Yemenis against the Imamate and its sectarian policy[161]. Hence, al-Shawkani is always remembered and dealt with as a reformist or

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[157]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. pp. 223−225
[158]Ghulais.*Fikr al-Shawkani al-Siyasi*.

[159]Al- Sharagy, Abd al-Ghani. (1988).*Al- Imam al- Shawkani: Ḥayatuh wa Fikruh*. Beirut. Mu'ssasat al-Risala. Sana'a. Maktabt al- Jil al- Jadid.pp. 279−340
[160]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. p. 209
[161]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*.p 121

revolutionist, a moderate scholar and regenerator. He became a national hero in the Yemeni Republic and this image is opposed only by Hadawis, who is considered to be a Salafi Sunni; he claimed that al-Shawkani tried to diminish the Zaydi doctrine from inside, particularly in his book *Al-Sayl al-Jarar*[162].

Conclusion

Al-Shawkani is the most notable Yemeni scholar in the Islamic world and left a great heritage that is studied in different parts of the world. Al-Shawkani remains influential in Yemen even after his death through his students whether in political or religious circles. Al-Shawkani was a turning point in the history of Zaydism in Yemen; even his enemies cannot disregard him.

He presented a continuation of the Sunni School in Zaydism that started with Ibrahim al Wazir and escalated to reach its height of influence with al-Shawkani. Therefore, he is not a manifestation of the renewal of Zaydism but an indication of its continuous crisis, in particular after the Zaydism became a state.

Regarding politics, before the 1962 revolution, his importance emerged from the political need of the Sunni Stream in Zaydism because they are more loyal to the political authority and did not encourage the rebellion. After the revolution, his legacy came from the need for a doctrine that was a compromise between Shafi'i and Zaydi doctrines. In both cases, al-Shawkani presents a threat for the Hadawi- Zaydi as they believe that he tried to diminish Zaydism to be replaced by his own doctrine.

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[162]Hijazi, Abd al- Hamid. (2013). *Qira'at fi Kitab al- Imam al- Shahid: al- Imamah wa Khaṭaruha 'ala Waḥidat al-Yaman*. Retrieved 5 June, 2016 from http://nashwannews.com/news.php?action=view&id=26221

Chapter Three

The Late Reform Attempts

During the twentieth century, significant events took place that posed unprecedented theological questions, the reign of Imam Yahya and his attempt to transform the Imamate into a kingdom. Then, the republican revolution toppled the Imamate in 1962 and was followed by seven years of civil war. The transformation to the republican system was not sudden, and it was preceded by many attempts to reform the Imamate system, but clearly these attempts failed and did not prevent the break-out of the revolution.

The transformation of the Imamate into a republic was the greatest challenge that ever faced Zaydism, since the Imamate is the core of this doctrine. In addition, the republican era defamed the Imamate's history and that of the Hashemites; rulers also suspected every Zaydi activity a tryout for reviving the Imamate. The republic system in north Yemen associated with the Salafi ideology prevailing for many reasons, which also increased the challenges that Zaydism faced

Definitely, these changes have produced different outcomes. In Sa'da, the heartland of Zaydism, the mainstream of the Zaydis maintained traditional ideas without serious changes. In Sana'a, a new revival group emerged and tried to adopt new ideas that compromise with the current political system.

After 1990, North and South Yemen unified and allowed the multiplying of political parties and the state loosened its restrictions on different activities[163]. Therefore, the Zaydis started political and religious activities freely, which launched a new era in the Zaydi movement.

Shift towards Kingdom

As a result of the prevalence of chaos and disorder in North Yemen in the nineteenth century[164], the Uttomans re-occupied Yemen in 1872 and withdrew completely after their defeat in World War I in 1918. Uttomans faced fierce resistance from the Zaydis in the north which led to the singing of *Da'an* agreement with Imam Yahya in 1911 that recognized his authority over the Zaydi areas, which enabled the Imam to inherit the Uttoman areas in Yemen easily[165].

The Imamate's adoption of al-Shawkani School during the nineteenth century did not stop the constant fighting and rebellion against the Imams. Although, Imam Yahya took power on the grounds of reviving the Hadawi School to resist the Uttomans, he started to change the nature of the Imamate system into that of a kingdom. Under his agreement with other states, Yemen was introduced as the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, and he became a king with a crown prince. It was the first time for a Zaydi Imam to appoint a crown prince and call on the people to pledge their allegiance[166]. Previous Imams enabled their sons to inherit, so the power and the loyalty of influential persons were granted before the death of the father, but it there was never a ceremony to set the crown on the heir's head as Imam Yahya arranged.

[163]Paul. *A History of Modern Yemen*. pp 183-186
[164]Salim.*Takwin al-Yaman al Ḥadith*. p. 32
[165]Salim.*Takwin al-Yaman al Ḥadith*. p. 61
[166]Al- Jawy, Umar. AL- Maqaliḥ, Abd al- Aziz. Al- 'ansi, Ali. Mafrad, Winar. Jelwfiskana, Elyna. Damaj, Ahmad. (1993). *Thawrat 1948: Al- Milad wa' l-Masira wa'l- Mua'thirat*. Sana'a. Markz al- Dirasat wa'l -Buhwth. p. 227

Crowning publicly and officially in 1939 stirred the anger of many Zaydi scholars and that of the Hashemites who though that they were more qualified to take power. This procedure faced resistance, since it remained illegal, even though Imam Yahya took the allegiance of significant scholars and Hashemite families[167].

This procedure could be considered an attempt to modernize the Imamate system to be more suited to the times and solve the rebellion dilemma. In fact, the Imam aimed from this step to monopolize power in his family, because he did not try to modernize the country in other ways. The Imam adopted the isolation policy that left Yemen in the mediaeval centuries impoverished and backward even in comparison with its neighbouring countries[168]. This policy besides the Imam's sectarian policy towards the Shafi'i deepened the split between Zaydis and Shafi'i that increased in Yemen; the discriminatory policy was not only against the Shafi'is but extended to include the Zaydis. The Hashemites enjoyed their privileged status while the rest of the Yemeni people suffered from harsh living conditions, except for some classes such as judges or tribal Shaykhs.

Taken altogether, the opposition against the Imam grew from within the political elite due to inheritance or from intellectuals and society figures. In 1934, following the defeat in front of the Saudis[169], the opposition formed but at the beginning, it was an opposition within the Imamate system then it developed to aim at the republican system.

The Sacred National Charter

It is crucial to understand the cultural background of the Yemeni opposition who came

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[167]Al- Jawi, Umar, etc.*Thawrat 1948: Al- Milad wa'l-Masira wa'l- Mua'thirat.* p. 273

[168]al- Rihani, Ameen. (1967).*Muluk al- Arab.* Beirut. Dar Ameen al- Rihani. p. 81

[169]Al- Jawi, Umar, etc.*Thawrat 1948: Al- Milad wả l-Masira wảl- Muw'thrat.* p. 273

from a religious educational background, which was dominated by a Hadawi-Zaydi curriculum. During the 1930s, books that were associated with al-Shawkani and its school began to be circulated, along with non-Yemeni contemporary publications by authors such as Taha Husayn, Abbas al Aqqad, Abd al Rahman al Kawakabi, and Jourji Zaidan[170]. This exposure to modern culture changed the opposition rhetoric which shifted gradually from being heavily religious to becoming more modern and less archaic. This shift is apparent in the difference between the first document published by Hay't al Niḍal(هيئة النضال)opposition organization, and the later publications.

The first document published by Hay't al Niḍal was entitled the 'First Program: the Program of Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil Committee'[171](even though it was actually the last). It began with a prayer on the prophet and his family, typical of the medieval writing style, and then called for the application of "Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil" which they considered to be the greatest principle in Islam. The first opposition's appeal, in fact, focused on what was actually the main Zaydi principle, which is very significant, because it revealed how deeply they were influenced by their religious education. However, in contrast to the Zaydi traditions, this appeal was directed to the people, not to the ruler. It urged the scholars to serve and revive the religion to secure the country from what they referred to as the "machinations of missionaries." In the text, they stated: "luckily, a great Imam is on the throne of our country. He is considered to be among the primary members of the guided Imams' sons, and none of the Muslims land is free from the infidels' machinations except our country". This quotation demonstrates the great respect there was for the Imams, as it talked about the current Imam in a glorious tone.

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[170]Al Bardouni.*Al-Yaman Al-Jamhūri*.p 348
[171]Al- Jawi, Umar, etc.*Thawrat 1948: Al- Milad wả l-Masira wảl- Muw'thrat..* p 524

Also, it shows that they sought reform and deeply feared colonization. Then, they clarified their aim by saying: "The youth of Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil aim to prepare a new generation who are inspired by the right spirit of Islam because others have dismissed the Quran, the prophet's Sunnah and the *sira* of the guided Imams". Their plan in raising this generation included the requirement that they learn Arabic very well in order to know their religion, enhance their moral values and foster Brotherhood among them. They called upon the youth to learn and make contact with the outside world in disregard of state policy and requested that state officials in the Education Ministry send youth to study in Islamic countries. The declaration also emphasized the principle of unity between the Muslims using very idealistic rhetoric. This program also called upon the youth to concern themselves with education rather than politics –leaving politics to be the responsibility of the Imam only.

The only implicit criticism of the Imam was articulated in reference to the absence of strong relations between Yemen and other Muslim states: "It is painful that Yemen has commercial covenants with other western states yet there are no brotherly covenants between us and other Muslim nations". This document, issued in 1941, was characterized by its mild reformist language and traditional writing style.

A huge difference was apparent seven years later when the opposition announced its Sacred National Charter. Also, the writer of the First Program document was Mahmmoud al Zubayri, who was influenced by the Brotherhood, since they most suited his own religious background. In this document, the position presented by al Zubayri was reformist but he later changed to become a radical revolutionary after experiences in prison and exile due to his participation in the 1948 coup. This change is apparent in his book *The Imamate and its danger*

to Yemen's unity[172].

The Sacred National Charter expressed the program of the people who planned the 1948 coup and it was circulated before the 1948 events[173]. It started with firm political language: "When Yemen's situation becomes decadent on the levels of life and religion because of the despotism and selfishness that characterized Imam Yahya Hameed al- Dine. Consequently, the primary function of the Imamate has become defunct". The Charter claimed that they, as representatives of the Yemini people, had carried out their duty to save the country and called for a meeting between representatives of the Yemeni people in order to make some decisions.

The first and most important decision was to pledge allegiance to an unnamed Imam who should be a knowledgeable scholar. According to this allegiance, this Imam would derive his legitimacy from the religion, election and constitution similar to any advanced *Umma* and without violating the religion. This allegiance was to be based on seven conditions. These conditions gave the Imam absolute power as a supervisor on the *shoura* and Ministry councils and the States' treasury so long as he adhered to the Quran and Sunna.

The Charter called for the application of the Quran, Sunnah and the constitution. The inclusion of the constitution was a new concept for Yemenis. The *Shoura* council was to select members for a committee that would write the constitution. The *Shoura* council was nominated as a member in the Charter, since they believed that Yemen was not prepared for elections at this moment.

In this Charter, traditional Zaydi concepts such as justice and Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil – which had been previously used to justify rebellion against the Imam – were absent. Instead, the Charter stressed a new concept to the Yemenis, the constitution, as inspired

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[172]Al Baradouni. *Al-YamanAl-Jamhūry*. p 238

[173]Al- Jawi, Umar, etc.*Thawrat 1948: Al- Milad wả l-Masira wảl- Muw'thrat.*. p547

by other Muslim Arab countries such as Iraq and Egypt. This indicated the extent to which external factors had become more of an influence and the extent to which Yemenis had started to abandon their traditional rhetoric.

This development, however, did not have a positive outcome, because the people did not understand the meaning of the constitution, so they believed the Imam's propaganda that associated the constitution with evil. The Charter document was more practical than the First Program and it aimed to change the head of the system, not the people. It maintained the idea of the Imamate but with some modifications so that it resembled Egypt and Iraq.

Also, it stressed the importance of exchanging embassies with other states and of connecting with the Arab League in order to break Yemen's isolation. However, this Charter had some fatal mistakes as it replaced the Imam by another person who would also enjoy absolute power without accountability. Although only seven years separate the Program of Commanding Good and Forbidding evil from the Sacred National Charter, many changes, some of them radical, are apparent, particularly in terms of the demands, the vision, and the kind of language used.

Post Revolution

The Yemeni Imams had been always worried about establishing a regular army that might rebel against them, so they had relied on mobilizing the tribes when they needed to. However, the external wars against the Saudis and the British led Imam Yahya to establish and develop an army. In 1962, inspired by the 1952 Egyptian revolution, the Yemeni army besieged the palace of the new Imam Al Badr, only one week after the death of his father Imam Ahmad. The fall of the Imamate was declared and replaced by a republic. The Imam escaped and civil war erupted. This war, which soon became a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, lasted

for seven years. The war ended with a national reconciliation and the continuation of the republican system, launching a new era in Yemen[174].

The Imamate period was portrayed as a dark era and terms such as *Kahnut* and *Taghut* were used intensively to describe the Imamate and the Imam. Some Yemeni figures, such as al Hassan al-Hamdany Na<u>sh</u>wān Al-Himyarī, al-Shawkani, and ibn al-Amir became symbols of the Yemeni resistance against the millennium of the Imamate. Every year, the Yemeni culture minister reprinted and published a book named *Ibn al- Amir wa ʿaṣruhu*(ابن الأمير وعصره)that was written about ibn al-Amir and written by the first minister of education in Yemen following the 1962 revolution, Qasim Ghalib Ahmad[175]. In the introduction to the book, the authors stated that they considered ibn al Amir to be a model revolutionary reformist – one among a chain of reformists that started with al-Muqabli, al-Wazir, al-Himari, and al-Shawkani. All of these names, except al- Himari, represented the Sunni- Zaydi stream. "No one can know the misery that Yemenis suffered during the reign of the ruling families unless they learn about atrocities committed by the Imamate, such as , for example, 'the slaughterer' of al Imam al-Qasim b. Muhammad"[176].This quotation is an illustrative example of how revolutionary rhetoric defamed the Imams and their history.

The authors demonstrated the significance of ibn al Amir because he was not eager to rule a kingdom or exercise a great deal of influence, even though he was from the Prophet's lineage. The authors suggest that ibn al Amir was a kind of scarecrow for the Imams both when he was alive and after he died. They prove this by quoting the father of Imam Yahya Hammed

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[174]Paul.*A History of Modern Yemen*. pp. 89–119
[175]Paul.*A History of Modern Yemen*. pp. 140–145
[176]Ahamad, Qasim Ghaliba. (2004). *Ibn al- Amir wa ʿaṣruhu*. Sana'a. The Publications of the Culture and Tourism Ministry. p. 14

al-Din who said that "Muhammad b. Ismail al-Amir is not from us, the Prophet's family"[177].
Reference to the lineage of ibn al Amir was significant. The first page of the first chapter
explained that the authors would not concentrate on the claim of lineage to the Prophet's family.
This was because they considered it to be a dubious claim. Given that Imam al-Hadi, the founder
of Zaydism in Yemen had been referred to by several historians as an impersonator, who feigned
piety, in order to deceive the people and take power for himself and his lineage for an entire
millennium[178].

Attacking the Hashemites as people who claimed the Prophet's lineage was not odd and
in this context *Ibn al- Amir wa ʿaṣruhu*, was clearly part of the official propaganda. The
Hashemite's were labeled as ruling families who took privileges for themselves and deprived the
common people of dignity and a prosperous life.

However, the second republican president was the judge Abd al-Rahman al-Eryani, in
spite of the fact that the judges had also been considered part of the elite during the Imamate.
This referred to the fact that the social and political positions of the judges and their families
were not affected after the revolution, even though they were part of the ruling party during the
Imamate. This makes sense in light of the Qahtani vs. Adnani rhetoric which stated that Yemenis
are Qahtani and that Hashemites are Adnani, since the judges were originally from Qahtan and
the closest alternatives to Hashemites except that they lacked the required lineage[179]. As such,
Hashemite and judicial families were the most qualified for the government jobs following the
revolution, because they were more educated. Nonetheless, the judges did not have any difficulty

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[177]Ahmad. *Ibn al- Amir wa ʿaṣruhu*. p. 17
[178]Ahmad.*Ibn al- Amir wa ʿaṣruhu*.p. 21
[179]Brauck.*Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen*. p. 200

in finding job opportunities, in contrast to the Hashemites, who were excluded from some jobs on the basis of their origin.

This unspoken policy by the government added to the escalating feelings of victimhood among the Hashemites, who were exposed to acts of revenge after the revolution because of to their lineage. For example some men were killed because they were suspected of being sympathetic to the Imamate, while some families had their property confiscated, although such procedures started to decline once the judge Abd al-Rahman al-Eryani became president in 1967[180]. It was also common among the people to refer to the Hashemites as not genuine Yemenis, and it was said that they should return to their original home in Hijaz, unlike the Jews who were originally from Yemen but who had been exposed to a racist policy against them[181]. In some contexts, the Hashemites were referred to as "the Jews of the Middle East", because they are both traitors and conspirators just like the Banu Qaynuqa who betrayed the Prophet[182].

Salafi Ideology

During the sixteens and seventeens decades, the republican system tried to adopt a non-doctrinal identity for the religion ignoring the doctrinal difference among Yemenis, and the most suitable school for this purpose was al-Shawkani School. The second President, the Judge al Eryani, the first Mufti of the republic Muhammad Zabara, and the next Mufti and the prominent religious scholar Muhammad al-Amrani were followers of al-Shawkani School[183].

This non-doctrinal policy was a reaction to the division between the Zaydis and Shafi'is that was created and deepened during the Imamate, especially the last Imamate state

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[180]Brauck.*Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen*. p200
[181]Brauck.*Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen*.p201
[182]Brauck.*Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen*. p200
[183]Heykel.*Revival and Reform in Islam*. pp 217–223

(1918–1962)[184], so it is an attempt to build a modern national identity based on non- religious dimensions. However, the association between Zaydism and Imamate, and the non-doctrinal policy means banning special Zaydi celebrations like Ghadir Khum, which could be considered an attempt to target Zaydism. Since the middle seventies, this policy became more Sunni.

Following the republican revolution in the north of Yemen and the Liberty and the independence of the south of Yemen in 1967, each part of Yemen adopted a different ideology with the south becoming communist and the north semi-capitalist. The influence of Saudi Arabia on the north was immense and the northern state became a block that was designed to deter the expansion of communism. The ideology most suited to counter that of communism was religion.

 All the north Yemen presidents after the revolution were Zaydis, since the military and political elite were predominantly Zaydi. In spite of this fact, the political regime in the north tended to support the Wahhabi–Salafi ideology. Wahhabism did not pose any threat to the regime, because it calls for obedience. Also, it did not differ from the Yemeni regime that based its legitimacy on opposing the Zaydi Imamate, since Zaydism is always associated with the Imamate. The decisive reason was the heavy Saudi influence that manifested through it political and financial support to the northern Yemeni state. Wahhabi ideas and Salafi schools had spread in northern Yemen through Saudi funding and the Yemeni immigrants to Saudi Arabia, who have reached millions inside Saudi Arabia and were influenced in its religious culture.

Salafi ideology stresses principles of oneness, equality between Muslims, and obedience to the ruler. Salafis believe that no Zaydi doctrine had been existed and that Zaydis in Yemen believe in the Hadawi School. The Salafis explained their stance by claiming that there is no

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[184]Dresch.*A History of Modern Yemen*. p 47

evidence that Imam Zayd left a doctrine or even ideas that might establish a doctrine. They also consider visiting graves such as the practise of visiting the grave of Imam al-Hadi in Sa'da, to be heretic behaviour.

The educational system in Northern Yemen was dominated by Salafis and members of the Brotherhood. These Scientific Institutes had been established in 1975 by the northern Yemeni government as a parallel education system to the official one. Nonetheless, the graduates of these institutes were not allowed to study in any department in the state universities except the Education department. These institutes were a great option especially for poor students who were given modest financial aid to encourage them to study in these institutes.

The institutes were funded by the Saudis, supervised by Sheikh Abdul Majeed al-Zindani; the Botherhood and Salafis dominated the staff. They taught the same official education curriculum but also required that students take intensive courses in religious studies that were based on Salafi interpretation and methodology. This educational system produced the teachers and the officers of the educational ministry and it ultimately led to the Salafi and Brotherhood dominance in the whole educational system in Yemen.

Sa'da, the heartland of Zaydism, witnessed extensive dynamic Salafi activity. The most prominent example was Dar al-Hadith in Damaj, which is a village southeast of Sa'da and attracted thousands of students from everywhere in and outside Yemen. Shaykh Muqbal al-Wad'i established this school in 1979 after he returned from Saudi Arabia, following the occupation of the Great Mosque in Mecca by Juhayman al-Otaybi. Shaykh al-Wad'i is from Sa'da and was a Zaydi scholar, but according to his account, he left Sa'da because the scholarly circles discriminated against him due to his non-Hashemite lineage. Therefore, he travelled to

Saudi Arabia where he studied the Hanbali doctrine. He called Zaydis *Ahal al-Bid'a*, the people of non-doctrinal innovation, and advised them to return to Ahl al- Sunna the right path[185]. He had tens of thousands of followers, who listened to his lectures and studied his writing that called explicitly to destroy Zaydi shrines and tombs, which finally happened in the mid-1990s in the areas around Sa'da.

Clashing with Zaydism

Establishment of the republican system and the toppling of the Imamate was the biggest challenge that Zaydism faced, given that the main theme of the Zaydi doctrine is the Imamate. The association between Zaydism and the Imamate distressed the republic which considered any Zaydi doctrinal activity was potentially a call to return to the Imamate.

During the civil war in the sixties, most Zaydi scholars were considered supporters of the Imamate, and most probably they were. On the basis of this, some of them were killed, imprisoned, or dispersed. In an interview with the Zaydi scholar Muhammad Azzan, it was mentioned that the oppressive policy against Zaydism was causing problems in some areas. For instance, the Zaydis were prevented from practicing any religious acts, such as the Zaydi call to prayer or celebrating Ghadir Khum. For instance, in the 1980s, Zaydi books were banned and the National security imprisoned any librarians who sold them.

Some Zaydi scholars remained committed to preserving the Zaydi heritage; the most prominent of these were Majd al-Din al-Mu'yydi and his student Badr al-Din al-Houthi. They taught tens of students Zaydism in their mosques, and those students such as Muhammad Azzan

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[185]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. p 90

and Abd al-Karim Jadban became the most active members of the Zaydi revivalist movement that started during the 1990s.

Hence, Zaydis took two courses of action: the first to renew its thought in order to adapt to the new republican era, the second, to continue to hold its traditional thought and resist the new system. Both directions emerged but ultimately, for many reasons that will be discussed in the next chapter, the second option or the radical one has prevailed.

Hizb al Haq

Zaydi religious circles tried to adjust to the new era by developing their theory of *hisba*. *Hisba* is a general Islamic concept meaning that the application of commanding good and forbidding evil is a duty of every Muslim. The Imamate for Zaydis is related to the concept of commanding good and forbidding evil, while *hisba* duty did not require the condition of being Hashemite, so the republic system is a kind of *hisba* according to Zaydi Imamate theory[186]. This is one of the compromising ideas that was adopted by most Zaydis scholars after the republican revolution.

In 1990, North and South Yemen were unified and allowed to establish political parties. The Islah party, which is a Brotherhood, Salafi and tribal alliance, was launched in order to counter the socialist party. The tribal alliance in the Islah party includes mainly Zaydi tribes; the first chief of the Islah party was the Sheikh of the Hashid tribe, one of the main Zaydi tribes, Abd Allah b. Husayn al-Ahmar. This is very significant because it shows the doctrinal change in the Zaydi areas[187]. To counter communism, the Yemeni government opened its doors to receive

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[186]Cahen, Cl., Talbi, M., Mantran, R., Lambton, A.K.S. and Bazmee Ansari, A.S. (2012).*Ḥisba*.Encyclopedia of Islam. Retrieved 02 August 2016 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0293
[187]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. p93

thousands of Yemeni and non-Yemeni people known as the "Mujahdeen Afghan" who were returning from Afghanistan, during the beginning of the 1990s.

In 1994, the civil war erupted between the socialist party in the south and an alliance between northern army, military southern fictions, and the Sunni Islamists (Brotherhood–Salafi–Mujahdeen Afghan). After the defeat of the socialist party in the 1994 war, President Ali Abdullah Saleh started gradually to abandon these Islamist functions. For instance, the scientific institutes were closed in April 2001[188].

On the other side, Hizb al-Haqq q (حزب الحق) was established in 1990 as a party that presented the Zaydis. It included Majd al-Din al-Mu'yyidi, the senior Zaydi *marja'*, and his student Badr al-Din al-Houthi, and in the third rank the Zaydi *marja'* were Hasan Zayd, Saleh Falita, and Muhammad al-Mansour. Rhetorically, Hizb al-Haqq believed that its mission was to counter Wahhabism in Yemen. In his initial statement "Wahhabism is a child of imperialism…we are seeing imperialism in our country in its Islamic guise. Saudi Arabia is pouring lots and lots of money into Yemen to promote its own version of Wahhabi Islam.. So we need to counter these efforts"[189].

The objectives of the party were signed by many Zaydi scholars, al-Mu'yyidi, al-Houthi, al-Mansuor in addition to some Sunni scholars, such as Umar b. Hafiz. From the signatories, it can be concluded that al-Haqq tried to present itself as a Zaydi religious party but was not restricted to Zaydis alone. The objectives were divided into general, political, economic, social

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[44](n.d). *Al- Ma'ahid al- 'Ilmiya bi'l- Yaman wa Musalsal al- Elgha'a* (2004, January 28).Al-Moslim. Retrieved 14 July, 2016 from http://al-moslim.net/node/85325

[189]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. p. 95

and cultural. The general division is very significant because it demonstrates the main Zaydi principles. The initial objectives reflected the priorities of the party. Firstly, it called to apply Sharia, secondly to revive the principle of commanding good and forbidding evil, thirdly, enforce justice, fourthly, unify the Muslims, fifth, awaken Muslim minds to refrain from being apostate Muslims.

Their political objectives included a number of points; the first point stated that retaining the republican system is conditioned by applying shoura and the freedom of opinion in the context of Islam. It also required that the leader in the republican system (it did not mention the word president), should be the best among the people, that is, the strongest and the most knowledgeable, which are the same conditions as for the Imam. It also rejected misleading the people by what is considered to be flimsy democracy, because Allah says in his book: "Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular Prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;" (Quran 42:38, Yusuf Ali Translation). Therefore, God conditioned praying with shoura, and this verse clarified that prayer is the pillar of the religion; shoura is the pillar of rule as well[190].

Although the political objectives recognized the republican system implicitly, the grand Zaydi scholars from Sa'da, al-Mu'yyidi and al-Houthi rejected signing another important statement which recognized clearly the republican system and considered the Imamate to be an outdated institution. It could be explained that this refusal was an obvious renunciation of the Imamate unlike the objectives which stated a conditional recognition of the republican system, without saying openly that they abandoned the idea of the Imamate. Following this statement and

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[190](n.d).*Ahdaf Al Ḥizb*. (2012, March 21). Retrieved 13 July, 2016, from http://alhakk.net/2012-03-15-20-50-49/2012-03-15-20-54-18/221-2012-03-21-20-57-38.html

due to the poor performance of the party in the first parliamentary election in Yemen in 1993, when it did not win more than two seats, many Zaydi scholars including al-Mu'yyidi and al-Houthi distanced themselves from the party[191]. However, al-Mu'yydi did not leave the party until his death in 2007 unlike Badr al-Din al-Houthi, who resigned from the party with a group of the Zaydi youth in 1996, because he believed that the party had become an obstacle in the way of the Believing Youth forum that he established[192].

Al Wazir Family

Another Zaydi party was founded in 1990, Hizb Etiḥad al Qiwa al Sha'biya (حزب اتحاد القوى الشعبية), which was more liberal than al Haqq and much less popular. This party did not present any important religious Zaydi figure, but its members were from the Hashemite families that participated in the 1948 coup, particularly al Wazir family, who presented the most open Zaydi movement.

This movement was not active politically as it was intellectually. It issued a very powerful and independent newspaper *al Shoura* (الشورى) ; it opposed the Yemeni authority and presented the views of the different political parties.

Al Wazir family's movement can be comprehended deeply by reviewing the most prominent of the Zaydi magazines, which was *al Massar* (المسار). It was published by Markz al Turath wa al Bahwth (مركز التراث والبحوث), and its editor in chief was Zayd b. Ali Al Wazir and the editorial board included Muhammad Zabarah, Abdu al-Sharif, Bernard Heykel, and Gabriel Vaum Brauck.

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[191]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B. & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen.* p. 95

[192](n.d). *Nasha't Tanẓim al Shabab al Muw'min.* (n.d). Retrieved 13 July, 2016 from http://www.dorar.net/enc/firq/1936

This magazine was concerned with historical issues that were related to the Imamate, such as publishing the introduction of a book about the news of the Imams inTaberstan[193], or publishing some historical studies, like the conflict between the Imamate and the Uttomans[194]. It also mentioned the Zaydi studies of certain characters such as the Zaydi Mua'tizlite Mahmmoud al- Mallaḥmy[195], or b. al Amir and the doctrine of Oneness[196]. Hence, *Al Massar* magazine was very open to the different schools and division within Zaydism.

Al-Massar tried to publish some renewal *Fiqh* studies, such as Muhammad Azzan's study entitled *Tanṣif Diyat al Mar'a bayn al Naṣ wa'l Ijtihad*(تنصيف دية المرأة بين النص والاجتهاد)[197]. Azzan tried to refute the common religious legislation that the *diya* of a woman is considered half of the man by using the Zaydi methodology that discounted the Hadiths because they were not consensus Hadiths, and they contradicted the Quran that stressed the equality of human beings regardless of gender.

Al-Wazir, the editor in chief, occasionally writes in the magazines. His writings revolve, mostly on the 1949 coup or the recent political news from an open religious perspective that adopts modern ideas such as democracy. Al-Massar used to celebrate the memory of the 1948 coup; the introduction of this issue was entitled *Fi Dhikra Awl Thawra Islamiyya Qaiydat Ṣalaḥiyyat al- Khalifa* (في ذكرى أول ثورة إسلامية قيدت صلاحيات الخليفة). The author of this introduction is the editor in chief Zayd al-Wazir, who stated that this revolution was an unprecedented

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[193]Madelong, W. (2007).*Muqadmat Akhbar al- A'aiymaa fi Taberstan wa Jilan*.Al- Massar, 22(1), pp 18-37.

[194]Al- Faḍyl, Z. A. (2010). *Al- Sera' al-'Uthmani al- Imami bi'l- Yaman*. Al- Massar,11(2). pp 72-99.

[195]Ansari, H. (2010). *Mahmmoud al- Mallaḥami: al- Mu'atizlit fi'l-Yaman*. Al- Massar,11(2), pp 48-58.

[196]Murad, B. M. (2007). *Ibn al- Wazir al- Yamani wa'l Mawqaf al- Naqdy min 'lm al- Tawḥid* .Al- Massar, 8(1). pp 38-87.

[197]Azzan, Muhammad.*Tanṣif Diyat al-Mar'a bayn al- Naṣ wa'l- Ijtihad*. (2010). Al Massar,11(2). pp 7-19

revolution in Islamic history and no such revolution has ever taken place[198]. Then, Al-Wazir wrote a detailed article about the 1948 coup entitled Al- Mithaq al- Muqadas wa al- Bū'd al- Gha'ib (الميثاق المقدس والبعد الغائب)[199]. He amplified the importance of the 1948AD coup to the extent that he compared it with Magna Carta, the great charter of liberties that was issued in England in 1215AD, and considered the Holy Charter is even more advanced than Magna Carta, because the Holy Charter restricted the authority of the ruler by the Shoura Council. It also launched a new era in the Islamic fiqh that was stagnant and gave the Caliph absolute authority. Al-Wazir's account was highly exaggerated because the Holy Charter did not restrict the authority of the Imam to this extent, since the Imam, according to the Charter, kept an absolute authority on the State's treasury and he was the supervisor of the Shoura Council and the ministry council. Even the members of Shoura council were appointed with only a vague promise of election[200].

Al-Wazir mentioned interesting criticism on the Imamate in Yemen. He pointed to the condition of lineage as a fatal mistake that closed the door in the face of qualified, non-Hashemite Zaydis and did not allow them to compete which led to the republican revolution that abolished the Imamate. He said that the Hashemite condition alike the Quraysh condition restricted the leadership of Muslims in limited circles. He also believed that the Imamate in Yemen became a call to constant fighting in a poor society searching for economic resources, in the name of the Imamate, and led to an unholy marriage between the tribes and the Imamate. He

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[198]Al- Wazir, *Zaid*. (2005) *Fi Dhikra Awl Thawra Islamiyya Qaiydat Ṣalaḥiyyat al- Khalifa.*al- Massar, (6)1&2.pp 5-10

[199]Al- Wazir, Zaid. (2005). *Al- Mithaq al- Muqadas wa al- Bū'd al- Gha'ib*. al- Massar.(6)1&2. pp11-28

[200]Al- Jawi, Umar, etc..*Thawrat 1948: Al- Milad wa' l-Masira wa'l- Mua'thirat.pp. 548, 551*

attributed this to the absence of a supreme religious referenceto resolve the conflicts between Imams and determined for the best qualified rather than using weapons to enforce power[201].

Both parties, al-Haqq and Hizb Etiḥad al-Qiwa al-Sha'biya, were very weak politically. Al-Haqq was the first form that presented the Zaydi scholars and its initial literature is very important in understanding the stance of these scholars. Al-Haqq party attracted thousands of Zaydis in the beginning, which indicated the need for such a political frame presenting Zaydis, but Al-Haqq failed to become the Zaydi political representative. Al Etihad party was a less genuine Zaydi party but its importance was derived from its intellectual activities. It also presented a minor group in the revivalist Zaydi movement that contained the 1948 coup's elite and was characterized by its openness to others.

Further Publications

The Zaydi revivalist movement had many manifestations; one of them was the spread of the Zaydi publications. Many Zaydi books from the Hadawi movement were reprinted and republished, such as the book of al-Samawi *al-Ghatmatam al- Zakhkhar al- Mutahhir min Rijs al- Sayl al Jarrar* (الغطمطم الزخار من رجس السيل الجرار). Also, the various Hadawi–Zaydi publications have been reprinted and republished.

In addition to that, the historical books that presented the pro-Imamate historical account about the Imamate have become widespread. For instance, a book about Imam Yahya Hameed al- Din was republished in 1997;it was written in 1947. The author of this book is Abd al Karim b. Ahmad Mutahar and that book was entitled *Sirat al-Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din* (سيرة الإمام يحيى حميد الدين), and subtitled *Kitab al-Ḥikma min Sirat Imam al-Umma*(كتاب الحكمة من سيرة إمام الأمة)

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[201]Al Wazir, *Al- Mithaq al- Muqadas wa al- Bū'd al- Gha'ib.* pp. 11-28

was subtitled *Al-Imam Yahya wa Bina'a al-Dawla al-Yamaniyya al-Ḥaditha* الإمام يحيى وبناء الدولة اليمنية الحديثة). It was a book of two parts that recounted the achievements of Imam Yahya[202].

Imam Yahya's era was written about intensively by both the defenders and attackers of the Imamate; it is very symbolic, since it is relatively recent and its outcomes are significant. An interesting book was written by the grandson of the Imam Yahya, Ahmad b. MuhammadHameed al- Din. The book's title *Tarikhal- Imam al-Shahid Yahya Hamid al-Din: Ba'd Khamsin Aman min al-Taḍlil wa'l-Tazwir* (تاريخ الإمام الشهيد يحيى حميد الدين:بعد خمسين عاماً من التضليل والتزوير العلمي)[203], it is very clear from the title that the book's main theme is defending the Imam's period, which is defamed by 'the military authority' according to the author.

It is very difficult to defend all the aspects and issues that related to Imam Yahya's era, such as the hostage system. Imam Yahya and his son Ahmad forced the tribes and their Shaykhs to send their children or close relatives to be held as hostages. The Imam arrested them as guarantees of loyalty in order to ensure the obedience of the tribes. The author claimed that this system prevented the tribes from rebellion and causing chaos, so that security and peace prevailed in Yemen. Also, the author explained that judging this system required the consideration of the condition and ethics of that time not the current ethics. During that time, the US applied the racist system and Japan applied Geisha, accordingly this system was valid for its time. Besides, it was a known system in different areas previously. Definitely, this claim opposes most historians, such as Sayid Mustafa Salem, who considers this system one of the proofs that the Imam was living in another time and belonged to the mediaeval period[204]. Hameed al- Din's arguments are very convincing and do not lack references and proofs at some points but he may

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[202]Mutahar, Abdul Karim. (1997). *Sirat al-Imam Yahya Hamid al- Din*. Amman. Dar al Basha'ir
[203]Hamid al- Din, Ahamad. *Tarikh al-Imam al-Shahid Yahya Hamid al- Din*. pp. 284–294

[204]Salim.Takwin al-Yaman al-Ḥadith.pp.490–495

exaggerate, when he said that the tribes were happy to send their sons as hostages, because those hostages enjoyed a prosper life and special care. This contradicts most historical accounts and the hostages' stories. For example, Al-Rihani said that he was shocked when he saw the misery of these hostages[205].

Another type of writing has spread since the nineties, the writings about Zaydism that refuted the different accusations against Zaydism. For example, *Al-Zaydiyya* by Abdullah Hamid al-Din published in 2004[206]. In the first chapter of the book, the author claimed that the purpose of this book was to introduce Zaydi theory as one of the origins of modern Muslim thought because it produced many of the state men who applied the justice in spite of some negative points.

The most recognizable Zaydi literature was the concern of attacking and criticizing al-Shawkani. It could be explained that al-Shawkani had become the doctrine of the republican state and he was represented as a renewal of doctrine, since Hadawi–Zaydis believed that al-Shawkani was just *muqalid* who believed in Hadiths and rejected Ijtihad.

The Believing Youth

The Zaydi revivalist movement took many forms; the establishment of the political party 'Hizb al-Haqq', the preservation of Zaydi manuscripts, attendance of classes in the homes of Zaydi scholars and mosques, celebration of Ghadir Khum day, the circulation of books and

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[205] Al Rihani. *Muluk al-Arab*. pp. 140–150
[206] Hamid al- Din, Abdullah. (2004). *Al-Zaydiyya*. Sana'a. Markz al Ra'id. p. 17

cassettes including refutations of Wahhabi ideas, as marked by the spread of Badr al-Din Houthi's text which countered Wahhabi anti Zaydi ideas[207].

Some members of the post-republic Zaydi generation studied in the Scientific Institute in Sa'da, which was the only institute in the Yemeni republic that did not teach the Salafi curriculum but the Zaydi one. In addition, many students attended the study circles of the Zaydi Shaykhs, among them Muhammad Azzan and Muhammadal-Houthi.

The most significant revivalist move that took place was the establishment of schools that taught the Zaydi doctrine in order to counter the Salafi dominated Scientific Institutes. These schools were built through personal initiatives with the financial support of wealthy Zaydi's who funded the construction of this type of school in Sa'da, Jawaf, and Sana'a.

In Sa'da, a school for training Zaydis to be teachers and preachers was established; it was named after the nineteenth century scholar Muhammadbin Saleh al-Samawi[208]. Choosing the name of al-Samawi is very significant in this context not only because he was only a martyr but also because he was a symbol of the Zaydi–Hadawi stream as opposed to al-Shawkani School, since al-Samawi was a contemporary opponent of al-Sahawkani.

In 1990, the Believing Youth forums started to be established in Hamazat, a well-known *hijrah* north of Sa'da, where wealthy Hashemites lived. The Believing Youth was a summer camp for the youth where they studied the Zaydi religious curriculum, practised sports, trained to give speeches and celebrated religious events.

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[207]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B. & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen.* p. 97
[208]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B. & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen.* p. 97

The Hamazat camp grew rapidly; it started with eight students and by the fifth summer, the number of students increased to 1800[209]. It became a famous attraction centre for the Zaydis in the area, as it was considered a matter of prestige for the tribal children to attend these camps. In 1991, the camp expanded outside Sa'da to Amran, Hajja, Mahwit, Dhamar and Sana'a governate as well some Shafi'i majority areas such as Ibb and Taiz. In the middle of the 1990s, the number of students reached between 10,000 and 15,000[210]. These camps received some financial support from wealthy Zaydis, and the Yemeni government started to fund these Institutes after 1997. This support came after a meeting between some Zaydi scholars and the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh who aimed to counter the powers exercised by the Salafi and the Brotherhood in those areas (Azzan, Mauhmmed, personal communication, July, 14, 2016).

These camps taught the students seven subjects divided into three levels. The first subject concentrated on the interpretation of the Quran, the second on the *Sira* and history, the third *Usul al-Fiqh*, the fourth *Usul al-Din* (oneness), the fifth ethics, the sixth *al-Fiqh*, and the seventh grammar.

The curriculum adopted a very simple pedagogy; books barely exceeded 100 pages since the camp lasted only seventy days. Even though Zaydi scholars rejected this type of education and were reluctant to approve these small books as part of the Zaydi educational curriculum, the programme was authorised by Badr al-Din al-Houthi.

Although the Believing Youth curriculum did not cover the science of Hadith independently, it did incorporate Hadiths (even those from Sunni collections) into the study of

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[209](n.d).(1995). *Ahdaf Muntada al-Shabab al-Mu'min*.(computer software). Sa'da: Yemen.
[210]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B. & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. p. 99

fiqh and Ethics. History was divided into *Sira* in the first level while the second and third levels concentrated on the history of Imams, which Azzan described as a mythic history full of exaggerations[211].

For instance, the text book assigned for *Usul al-Din* (oneness) in the first level contained the rational proof of God's existence and manifestations that were supported by some Quranic verses. It also included the principle of justice as a matter related to oneness with the last chapters of the book concerned with prophecy and the caliphate. The chapter about the Caliphate emphasized the necessity of having leadership among Muslims and stated that this leader was required to have the same eight qualities required of the Zaydi Imam[212]. The book provided an account of the companions of the Prophet who agreed on the necessity of appointing the Caliph, but disagreed over who that Caliph should be; while Imam Ali was the most qualified, a different Caliph was appointed. The book suggests that the subject of this conflict between the companions is best avoided because it is a debatable issue that has divided Muslims[213].

On the second level of the same subject, the issue of the Quran's creation was mentioned in a couple of lines by saying that this issue was debatable and did not merit any further concern or study, since both groups believed and agreed on the authenticity of the Quran[214]. While typical points of controversy were avoided, the subject of *Usul al-Din* is especially significant for a doctrine that adopted the Mu'tazilite methodology and which had a different approach than the Salafi one. For more clarification, the YB curriculum relied on rational causes and was

[211]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B. & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen.p99*

[212]Al- Razihi, Ahamad Muhammad. (1996). *'Aqidat al- Muslim*.2ND Edition (computer software). Sa'da: Yemen.pp. 58–59

[213]Al-Rahzihi.*'Aqidat al- Muslim*.p. 56

[214]Al-Razihi, Ahmad Muhammad.(1997).*Durwus fi'l- 'Aqiyda*. (computer software). Sad'a:Yemen. p. 14

characterized by the frequent connections it made between the idea of oneness and justice. Although, the Imamate principle is part of the Zaydi doctrine and a principle concept, it was explained in these books only slightly and implicitly.

The text book assigned for the second level of the Quran interpretation course was compiled by Badr al-Din al-Houthi. It demonstrated a pure Zaydi interpretation, since he referred to Imam al-Hadi constantly, and sometimes to Imam Zayd with only occasional Sunni references. For example, he referred to the Sunni books in the context of the interpretation of the al-Insan Sura in order to prove that the Prophet's family is the intended people, making reference to the verse "As to the Righteous, they shall drink of a Cup (of Wine) mixed with Kafur," (Quran76:5, Yusuf Ali translation). That he used Sunni references to emphasise the status of the Prophet's family is a distinguishing factor even among Sunnis.

The Believing Youth made a number of significant contributions; first, it comprised the biggest gathering of Zaydis to study the doctrine and revive its ideas and principles. Second, it was the first time that massive number of Zaydi youth interacted with the Zaydi scholars who are *marja'as* and belonged to the pre-republic revolution. Third, it created the sense of a doctrinal identity and a feeling of loyalty to the Zaydi group. Fourth, it was the first time for the Zaydi doctrine to be presented in a modern simple style that suited modern education and culture. Hence, these summer camps were a major shift in the Zaydi revivalist movement and its division and then its closeness led to another major shift towards strengthening the radical Zaydi group.

Believing Youth Division

In 1997, a dispute took place between the founders of the Believing Youth over the Imamate issue. The scholar al-Mu'yyidi thought that the issue of the Imamate should be the

focus, while MuhammadAzzan along with a group of youths rejected this idea because they believed that the Imamate was not a vital issue particularly after the Imamate system was abolished. This dispute escalated and reached the former President Saleh who met the division of Azzan and accepted their request for financial support, so the Believing Youth started to receive a government monthly aid. (Azzan, Muhammad. Personal communication.July14, 2016).

Another serious dispute occurred when Husayn al- Houthi returned from Sudan in 2000 and called for a change in the curriculum, requesting that the *usul al- din* (oneness) text book should be removed. In addition, he tried to add some political slogans which were borrowed from the Iranian revolution, like 'Death to America, Death to Israel, Allah is Great'. This dispute accelerated in 2001which led to dividing the Believing Youth in 2002 into two camps, one led by Azzan and another by Husayn[215].

The Believing Youth closed completely in 2004 when the war erupted, and its main founder Muhammad Azzan was imprisoned for nine and half months. When he was released, the split between the reformist stream lead by Azzan and the radical one that was influenced by Husayn al- Houthi deepened. The Yemeni government encouraged this split and granted Azzan the position of broadcasting manager of radio Sa'da in 2007 during the Sa'da war[216].

Conclusion

The twentieth century had witnessed many events that lead to the establishment of a different era. At the beginning, Imam Yahya ruled with his traditional background and was

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[215]Azzan, Mauhmmed. (2010, April 10).Interview by Ahamad al Shalfi. Liqaa al Youm (Television broadcast). Doha, al Jazeera Satellite Channel.
[216]Salmoni, B. A. Loidolt, B. & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. p 108

100

www.manaraa.com

opposed by the same rhetoric. Then, the opposition developed against him and the changed its rhetoric. Therefore, the 1948 coup charter presented a turning point.

Then, the republican system launched a new era that was characterized by hostility toward Zaydism as a doctrine and against the Hashemites as a race. This policy was carried out by a state dominated by a Zaydi politician and military officers. Therefore, it targeted Zaydism because of its association with the Imamate not as a social component. This direction strengthened due to the alliance between the political elite with the Wahhabi- Salafi rising.

Finally, the Zaydi reaction appeared when the state changed its policy and opened the door to political and religious activities, so they were not afraid to publish their ideas. This reaction took two directions, one presented by Hizb al-Haqq, the traditional Zaydi movement with some attempts at renewal that were resisted by the grand scholars. Another direction represented byHizb Etiḥad al-Qiwa al-Sha'biya, which was more open and tolerant. Neither of these directions did not lead to any important political outcomes and failed in representing the Zaydis, but they revealed important views on contemporary Zaydism. The Believing Youth was the most significant move in the Zaydi revival movement; YB attracted thousands of Zaydi youth and taught them the Zaydi doctrine in a modern simple way was which had significant outcomes.

Chapter 4

The Emergence of Houthis

The nineties was the decade of reviving Zaydism following its decline since the republican revolution in 1962. This revivalist movement reached its peak during the establishment of the Believing Youth which flourished and became a Zaydi phenomenon.

The Zaydi revivalist movement transformed itself into a radical armed group the 'Houthis'. The shift towards radicalization started with some speeches by the charismatic leader Husayn al- Houthi. Speeches of Husayn were political with a religious inclination, which led to a military confrontation between Husayn al- Houthi's followers and government forces. The eruption of the Sa'da war was a turning point that resulted in some devastating outcomes, mainly favouring the radical group and vanquishing the moderate voices.

Sa'da War

Sa'da is considered to be the heartland of Zaydism since Imam al-Hadi, who brought Zaydism to Yemen, settled in Sa'da in 893 A.D.[217] Since that day, Sa'da has been the land of the Zaydi Imam's uprisings. During the civil wars in the 1960s, Sa'da was under the control of the Imamate's forces until 1969 when they withdrew after the complete defeat of the Imamate. Then, Sa'da was isolated then the rest of Yemen; the first state official, the governorate arrived in Sa'da in 1980. In 1979, the rocky road connecting Sa'da to Sana'a was paved and decreased the

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[217](n.d).*Jami' al- Imam al- Hadi ila'l- Haq*. Al Zaydiyya.Retrieved 30 July, 2016 from

http://zaidiah.com/?q=node/16

period of the journey from ten hours to four. Sa'da is adjacent to the Saudi border, and its economy is linked with the cross-border trade in addition to its agricultural products[218].

The Sa'da War erupted in June 2004 and continued until February 2010; it was an intermittent war divided into six phases[219]. The Yemeni government recounted that the Believing Youth and Houthi supporters started to store weapons and form a rebellious group. When Ali Abdullah Saleh visited Sa'da mosque in 2003, he noticed their slogan which drew his attention to their presence and activities. The government tried to engage them in dialogue but they refused. Then the government imposed a blockade on Husayn and his supporters because they refused to surrender to authorities, and the Yemeni attorney general warned the locals not to associate with Husayn, but he faced an armed resistance which compelled him to order the arrest of Husayn al-Houthi that action triggered the war in June 2004[220].

The Houthi's narrative is completely different. The government begun to arrest the students who repeated the Houthi slogan until President Ali Saleh visited Sa'da mosque and requested the release of those students from the governor of Sa'da, which gave to the Houthis the impression that they are free from boundaries and could resume their activities[221]. After that the American ambassador visited the weapons market, Souq al-Talah, and the sight of the weapons angered him[222]. The price of the weapons increased dramatically in a conspiracy to demilitarize the Yemeni people using as a pretext, the war on terrorism. This plot between the Yemeni, Saudi,

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[218]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. pp. 81–86

[219] Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen.*. p. 144

[220] Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. p. 132

[221]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. P. 132

[222] Al- Houthi, Husayn. *Al-Shi'ar Silaḥ wa Mawqif*. Retrieved 28July,2016 from http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=10409

and US government aimed to withdraw the most possible weapons from the Yemeni market by buying them, so the weapons disappeared from the market. This coincided with an escalation of American intervention in the internal affairs of the Yemeni State, such as the request to change the education curriculum. After several meetings between President Ali Saleh and US officials, and under US pressure, President Saleh decided to launch the war[223].

The more neutral narrative that the Houthi slogan embraced was that, President Saleh, who was the US partner in the war against terrorism, tried to convince the Americans that fighting the Houthis was part of fulfilling his commitment to the global war against terrorism. Then, President Saleh sought, in the war, an opportunity to get rid of his old ally the military leader Ali Muhsin, who opposed his inheritance plans for his son Ahmad. Therefore, he fuelled the war to be maintained but on a limited scale[224].

Hence, the government account emphasized the Houthis as an outlaw group who tried to rebel against the state. It is very typical rhetoric for the official government which could be partly true, due to the readiness of the Houthis in their first fight against the state forces.

On the other hand, Houthis thought that Husayn and his slogans threatened the US interests in Yemen. This account exaggerated the Houthis importance considering it a very powerful group, which could not be true, since they were very minor group in a remote area that did not influence American interests in Yemen. In addition to that, no evidence of America's involvement proved this account, even the visit of the US ambassador to Suq al-Talh weapon

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[223] Al Darwani, Sabri. (2013).*Saʿda al-Ḥarb al-Aula*.(n.d). p 55–61

[224]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen.* p 264

market was ordinary, as many diplomats in Yemen used to visit this interesting market and was a visit among a series of visits by the ambassador to many tribal and remote areas in Yemen.

Al- Houthi Family

The founder of the Houthi group is Husayn al- Houthi (b. 1968 and d. 2004); he was the oldest son of one of the most significant Zaydi scholars Badr al- Din al- Houthi.

The ancestral home of al- Houthi family was Dahyan, a Hijra far north Sa'da, but Husayn's father Badr al- Din moved and settled in Maran, south west Sa'da. Badr al- Din undertook his initial studies with his father the scholar Amir al- Din al- Houthi (d. 1974) and his uncle Husayn al- Houthi (d. 1968). Then, Badr became a student of Majd al- Din al Mu'ayyidi and Ahmad b. Zayd b. Ali, who emerged as the most qualified leading scholar following the Imamate era[225]. Badr al- Din passed away in 2010 after the end of the Sa'da war. He lost four sons in this war, including Husayn[226].

Unlike his brothers Amir al- Din and Muḥammad, Husayn was not involved in the Believing Youth's activities and was more concerned with politics. He ran in the first Yemeni parliamentary election as a candidate for al Haqq party, and won one of the two seats that al Haqq party took in this parliament. He was a parliament member from 1993 to 1997. Then, his brother Yahya ran in the next election in 1997 as a candidate for the ruling party, the General Popular Congress party, after the mass resignation from al Haqq party that took place in 1996 and was led by their father Badr al- Din. In the meantime, Husayn travelled to Sudan to study the Quran and took his Master's degree in 1999.

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[225]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*.Rand. pp 102–105
[226]Al Batūl. *Khiūṭ al Ẓalam*. p 397

The Houthi family was subjected to violence and harassment from the government, which used criminal gangs to attack them with automatic rifles and fired rockets on their houses; these incidents increased after the 1993 election due to their active participation in politics. As a result, Badr al- Din al- Houthi travelled outside Yemen, to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and then Iran. Meanwhile, his son travelled to Sudan and visited Iran[227].

When Husayn returned to Yemen in 2000, he tried to administer the Believing Youth forums, which resulted in dividing the Believing Youth between him and Azzan. He started delivering speeches in mosques which attracted the people. His speeches mainly concentrated on political issues and were delivered in simple language that the common people could understand easily.

Husayn was killed by the government during the first round of the war; his death was declared by the government in September 2004, but they hid his body until 5th June, 2013, when he was reburied in Marran district in Sa'da in a celebrity mass funeral ceremony[228]. He was buried in a luxury shrine that was hit by a Saudi airstrike on 8th May, 2015. His martyrdom and the hidden body made him a myth and a holy heroic model.

During the third phase of the Sa'da War (November 2005–early 2006), the young brother of Husayn, Abd al-Malik al- Houthi became the leader of the Houthi group. Abd al-Malik is likely two decades younger than his brother Husayn. He was one of the youngest sons among Badr al- Din's family. He was the son of Badr al- Din's fourth and last wife[229]. The father's decision to appoint Abd al-Malik leader instead of one of his older brothers posed many questions, particularly why not Muḥammad or Yahya who were better known and more

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[227]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. pp. 102–105
[228](n.d). (2013). Retrieved 2 August, 2016 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9ljF6UTZLM
[229] Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*.p 102

experienced. According to the available information, Abd al-Malik was alongside his father during the war and his mother took care of his father when he was sick. In the meantime, his brother Muḥammad was in prison and Yahya was in exile in Germany. Abd al-Malik was at the beginning of his twenties when he became the leader of this group. He was not involved in YB or any public activities; he only studied the religious sciences from his father and had experience of leading military groups since the first phase of the war[230].

Houthi Ideas

The Houthi movement emerged when Husayn al- Houthi started his speeches from 2000 to 2004, which was a critical period that stormed the region, first on 11 September, 2001 and its significant outcomes, then, the Iraq invasion in April 2003, which changed the region radically and caused deep anger among Muslims, and triggered regional sectarian tension. In the meantime, Israeli forces withdrew from the south of Lebanon in May 2000 which extended the influence of Hezbollah. Husayn addressed the anger of the people through his speeches which were relevant to these events. Hence, Husayn's speeches are one of the sources that revealed the ideas of the Houthi group and understood them adequately.

The Houthi manifesto is another crucial source of Houthi ideas. The manifesto is the intellectual and cultural document that the Houthis published in 2012 after the end of the Sa'da war in 2010. Then, the Houthi participated in the 2011 uprising, which was their first presence in the capital Sana'a. Since 2011, the Houthi started to introduce themselves as a political group seeking political participation and power sharing. Nonetheless, the manifesto presents the Houthi as a religious group in contrast to the Houthi media, which portrays Houthi as a resistance

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[230]Al-'Umqi, 'Umar. Limatha lam Ta'wul Qiayadat Tanẓim al-Houthi ila Muhammadal-Houthi?. (11 April,2010). Al Masdar. Retrieved 28July, 2016 from http://almasdaronline.com/article/7073

groupagainst US policy and injustice. Therefore, it is highly important to study the manifesto and know most messages that are send by their media in order to know the different dimensions of the Houthi group.

A. Shiite Resistance Group

The conflict with the US and Israel is a religious and eternal conflict according to Husayn al- Houthi's speeches. He emphasised that a constant conspiracy is plotted against Muslims, in particular Shiites, so the Houthis used to attribute every event to this conspiracy. In this regard, there are several key issues, which are firstly, the hate speech against Jews and Christian, in particular, Jews. For instance, in Ghader Khum's speech[231], Husayn described Jews as brothers of monkeys and pigs. Secondly, the constant stress on the fact that Shiites are the only enemy against the US and Israel, so the model of resistance is always Shiite, like Hezbollah and Iran.

In the first issue, Husayn al- Houthi, in the speech of al Quds[232], stated that the conflict between Muslims on one side and Christians and Jews on the other side is eternal. Our defeat is psychological because Muslims are following the west. For instance, our women are taking off the veil to be like western women. In addition, the Jews succeeded in manipulating Muslims by adopting the wrong doctrines. Husayn always exaggerated the role of Jews as conspirators against Muslims. For example, Jews monopolized and controlled everything such as the economy and media, so this weakened Muslims who are not ready for fighting Israel

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[231]Al- Houthi, Husayn. (n.d).*Hadith al Wilaya*. Aflak Muhammad. Retrieved 27July, 2016 from http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=8147

[232] Al- Houthi, Husayn.(n.d). *Yaōm al- Quds al- 'Alami..* Aflak Muhammad.Retrieved 28July, 2016 from http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=6926

108

becausethey relied completely on others; they import everything, food, clothes, medicines, etc, so the solution is boycotting US goods.

Another speech explained the slogan of the Houthis "God is Great, Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, and Victory to Islam"[233].Husayn believed that cursing the Jews is stated in the Quran. The death to America is not an insult; it is just a declaration of our enmity to them. The idea of this slogan is that it harmed the U.S ambassador in Yemen and Wahhabis.

He referred to the new form of colonization that invaded the region, which came under the pretext of the war on terrorism. Al- Houthi denied the existence of terrorists; those terrorists are only agencies' invention to be an excuse for the intervention in our countries and hitting the real Jihadi groups such as, the members of Hamas and Fatah.

In this lecture, Husayn seemed inconvenienced and exaggerated the importance of this hostile slogan. For instance, he said that he cursed the Jews according to the Quran, but no such Quranic verse curses the Jews as a group of people, but in only specific cases, such as 'Cursed were those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed'. (5:78). This revealed Husayn's selective arbitrary way of dealing with the Holy Text.

After the eruption of the war, this idea became more obsessive, since the Houthis portrayed the Yemeni government as agents for the US and this is a proxy war obeying US orders[234]. This is their official story of the war which is always stressed in their media and by

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[233]Al- Houthi. *Al-Shiʿar Silaḥ wa Mawqif*.

[234]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*.p. 141

their leaders. Badr al- Din Al- Houthi in a newspaper conversation defined the Sada'a War as a war between the Houthis and the US, because America hates the Shiites[235]. This story ignores the fact that it is a war between the Houthis and the government in order to draw the self-image of the resistance group against the US. Also, the answer of Badr al- Din clarified the belief that the role of resistance cannot be taken by a non-Shiite group or leader.

According to the Houthi rhetoric, only Shiites are the real resistant group. Husayn denied the conflict between the US and al Qaeda, when he stated that they also made for us fake resistance models, such as Usama b. Laden, Saddam Husayn, and Jamal Abdul Nasser in order to divert the attention of Muslims from al Khomeini and Hezbollah[236].

Husayn al- Houthi always referred to al Khomeini as a great man, who was feared by the US and Israel. For instance, Husayn followed al Khomeini in celebrating the Universal Quds Day each last Friday in Ramadhan. He started the speech to mark this day by clarifying that al Khomeini is well known for his strong opposition to the enemies of Muslims[237].

On the same occasion, the Universal Quds Day, Husayn emphasised the Zaydis in particular. He concluded his speech by stressing the Zaydi role. "The Zaydis are being domesticated to be like Sunnis. Those Sunnis are confronting Israelis by stones while they are having tanks". Then, he continued "The Zaydis believe that they are following the right sect, so their awareness should be raised to the highest level to be the most qualified people to confront the Jews".

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[235] Al Batūl. *Khiūt al-Ẓalam*.pp. 333–398
[236] Al- Houthi, Husayn.*Yaūm al- Quds al- 'Alami*.

[237]Al- Houthi, Husayn.*Yaūm al- Quds al- 'Alami*.

The self-image of the resistance group or God's deputy appears in the names of the Houthi media outlets. They named themselves 'Ansar al Haqq' then 'Ansar Allah'. Houthi's vocabulary is always inspired by conflicts and steadfastness and challenge[238].

Undoubtedly, this self-image contradicts the reality. For example, the Houthis claimed that they threatened US interests in Yemen, while al Qaeda in Yemen is just a lie invented by the US to be a pretext to justify their intervention in Yemen. This is highly unbelievable because al Qaeda in Yemen is involved in serious violent actions against America in Yemen, for example, bombing the USS Cole in Aden port in 2000[239]. It is impossible that the US will target its interests in Yemen to justify the intervention, while it felt a real threat from slogans in remote areas in Yemen from unknown groups during that time. This contradiction between the self-image and the reality is the main characteristic of the Houthis; they also tended to exaggerate their importance and thought that they were situated in the centre of the world's affairs. This may stem from the fact that the Houthis emerged from an isolated area in Yemen and their contact with the world was recent and obsessed by the idea of conflict.

B. Jihad and Martyrdom

Husayn al- Houthi always stressed the importance of Jihad against the unjust and the US and Israel while emphasising that Allah, in the Quran, orders Muslims directly to Jihad by

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[239](n.d). *USS Cole Bombing Fast Facts*.CNN. Retrieved 28 July, 2016 from
http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/18/world/meast/uss-cole-bombing-fast-facts/

fighting not by money or pen[240]. In this regard, Houthis always associated themselves with Hezbollah and other models of resistance groups[241].

Calling for jihad requires praising martyrdom, so Houthis named their fighters 'Mujahidin' and exalted the status of their martyrs by publishing their images and decorating their graves. Also, they repeat phrases such as 'those who love life, would live humiliated' and other phrases and slogans that established the cult of martyrdom[242].

C. Wilayat

Wilayat is a very significant idea because it is the religious reference to the Imamate, which is the core of any Shiite doctrine. In Zaydism, according to Imam al-Hadi, the Imamate is on the same importance as prophecy. Definitely, for political leader like Husayn al- Houthi, this idea will become more decisive.

In Husayn's speech on the occasion of Ghadir Khum, which was always celebrated by Zaydis in Yemen until the 1962 revolution, clarified the importance of this idea which is considered by him a culture of *Wilayat*[243]. Husayn started this speech by criticizing the Ministry of Endowment, emphasizing that the minister is a Zaydi, however, the minister circulated a statement in the Zaydi provinces to call them to obey the ruler. He considered this to be ignorance of the Quranic verses. "And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not

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[240]Al- Houthi, Husayn.(N.D). Surah al Imran.Aflak Muhammad.http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=5140. Retrieved July28, 2016 from http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=6926
[241]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen. p 222
[242]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen.pp 225–228
[243]Al- Houthi. Hadith al-Wilaya.

withinthe reach of evil-doers" Quran 2:124, Yusuf Ali translation). Accordingly, it is a part of the deliberately processes to make this *Umma* ignorant in order to prepare the Muslims to accept the role of victims. Therefore, they will consent to an unjust ignorant ruler or even a Jewish ruler.

He then clarified the significance of the *wilayat* that those who rule the *Umma* should instruct it with *al wilayat* Hadith, and Quranic verses that are concerned with the issue of *wilayat*. We are the Shiites and still have this awareness so far. Now, the U.S and the west tried to spread the culture of democracy among Muslims, which adopts the citizenship concept. This concept does not differentiate between Muslim and non-Muslim. In Husayn's words 'Democracy cannot protect us from enforcing a Jewish ruler over us. "Only the culture of Ghadir Khum. I repeat the culture of Ghadir Khum. In addition, the comprehension of the Shiite and the comprehension of the Prophet's family of the meaning of the guardianship *wilayat* that wasinspired from the Quran and *al wilayat* Hadith".

In this speech, it can be concluded that Husayn revealed his belief that the matter of the Imamate and ruling Muslims had been determined forever, one thousand and four hundred years ago when the Prophet designated Ali as his guardian. Also, he was clear in explaining that democracy is a complete contradictory theory to what he called the culture of Hadith *al Wilayat*. He did not forget to stress that only Shiites still preserve this religious culture, unlike the Sunnis.

D. Unity and leader

Husayn always stressed the necessity of Muslim unity which is conditioned by the existence of the leader. Accordingly, he presented himself as the potential leader of the *Umma* without neglecting the reference to some models such as al Khomeini and Hassan Nasrallah[244].

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[244]Al- Houthi.*Yaōm al- Quds al- 'Alami*.

Worth mentioning, is that he did not refer to any Zaydi model in spite of the fact that Zaydi history had several revolutionary models. For example, Imam al Mutawkil Ismail (1006 A.H./1598 A.D.– 1039 A.H./1632 A.D.) is considered a hero from the Zaydi perspective[245]. Instead, he referred to contemporary Hashemite Shiite models.

This could be explained by the fact that Husayn neglected the Zaydi models for several possible reasons: first, any Zaydi-Yemeni model will be from a certain Hashemite family. Accordingly, Husayn avoided them due to the historical competition that dominated the relationship among Hashemite families in Yemen, in particular that the Houthi family was not one of the historical Hashemite ruling families, such as al Mutawakil, al Wazir, Sharaf al- Din, and Hamid al- Dine. Second, the awareness of Husayn was relevant to the contemporary events without historical knowledge, since he never talked about the history of the Zaydi state in Yemen.

Houthis considered Husayn al- Houthi and their later leader Abdul Malik as the Quranic March leaders, who embodied the Quran's values, so opposing them is opposing the Quran[246]. This absolute authority and holy status of the leader is unprecedented in Zaydism, which allows rebellion against the unjust ruler.

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[245]Batūl.*Khiōṭ al-Ẓalam*.p197

[246]Al- Gharasi, Ahamad.*Mashrō' al-Shahid al- Qa'iyd fi Khutab Qa'iyd al- Masira al- Quraniyy*.(2014, May27). Retrieved 31 July, 2016, from http://www.thelinkyemen.net/?q=article/3521

In addition when the Houthis declared their cultural and intellectual manifesto in 2012[247], their manifesto started with the Quranic verse 'And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided.' (Quran 3:103, Yusuf Ali translation). Choosing this verse alone in the beginning indicates the vitality of the idea of unity for them. In addition, Husayn al- Houthi in his speech about this verse stressed that the unity of Ummah as an important condition for jihad in the west[248].

However, this idea seems unrealistic because Husayn always attacked Sunnis. In the same speech in which he called to unify Muslims to fight the west, he said that the Muslims cannot be united while Sunnis hate Shiites and considered them *rawafadh*.

On another occasion of Ghadir Khum[249], he did not concentrate on the western (Christian- Jewish) threat against Muslims, but focused on the differences between Sunnis and Shiites. He referred to the Sunnis as 'those who alleged their support to Sunna', but they ignored the important Hadiths, such as Hadith Ghadir Khum and only concentrated on weak and invalid Hadiths.

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[247](n.d). *Al- Wathiqa al-Thaqafiayya wa 'l- Fikriyya* .Retrieved 30 July,2016 from
https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/24926962/zaidi.pdf

[248] Al- Houthi. *Surah al Imran.*

[249] Al- Houthi, Husayn. (n.d). *Amr al-Willaya.*Aflak Muhammad.Retrieved 27 July, 2016 from
http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=8942

Husayn talked to Sunnis saying 'What prevents you from admitting the prophet's Hadith in Ghadir Khum? Is it because what he said in GhadirKhum is opposing what you believed of Abu Bakr and Umar? Therefore, you have to understand that your belief in Abu Bakr and Umar is disagreeing with the Prophet's sayings'. Then, Husayn said 'This is one of the proofs that your doctrine is null'. He continued that Sunnis, unlike Shiites, did not feel embrace from any Quranic verse because their doctrine agreed with the Quran and the Prophet.

The speeches in the memories of Karbala' and the martyrdom of Ali b. Abi Talib clarified that Husayn al- Houthi adopted a very hostile attitude towards the companions[250][251]. He placed the burden of responsibility for the Karbala' massacre and the martyrdom of Ali b. Abi Talib on the companions, especially Abu Bakr, Umar and 'Uthman, because he believed that those companions empowered Mu'wiyyah and Yazid. He referred to them as liars, depraved and power obsessed who diverteed the Muslim *Umma* from its natural straight path. He emphasized Umar's responsibility because he was the first who appointed Mu'awiyyah in the Levant. Therefore, Umar is the one responsible for each disaster happened to the *Umma* until Jude Day. He ended the speech of Karbala' by cursing Yazid, Mu'awiyyah and anyone who takes their path. This position differs from the general position of Zaydis towards the companions, *tawqquf or tardiyya,* in sense of accusing the companions clearly but without cursing. This is completely opposite to the position of Believing Youth's curriculum.

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[250] Al- Houthi, Husayn.(n.d).*Durus min Waḥy 'Ashura'a*. Aflak Muhammad.Retrieved 28 July, 2016 from http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=7198

[251]Al- Houthi, Husayn. (n.d).*Dhekra Istishhad al- Imam Ali*. Retrieved 28 July, 2016 from http://www.aflakMuhammad.net/?p=8789

E. Prophet's family

Zaydism gave the Prophet's family a distinguished status, so Houthis stressed this concept particularly when the Hashemites lost their power and prestige after the 1962 revolution. Besides, many Hashemites were executed for their lineage during the civil war in the sixties or were excluded from particular jobs. Hence, the idea of the Prophet's family exaltation revived with the Houthis to a great extent.

In al Quds Universal Day's speech[252], Husayn started the speech by praising al Khomeini as one of the Prophet's descendants who launched the celebration of this day. Then he emphasized that Muslims did not learn from *sira*, such as the Khaybar battle when the Muslims did not defeat the Jews until Ali b. Abu Talib led them. This means that only one of the Prophet's family can lead Muslims to victory; not any one of Prophet's family like the king of Jordan or Morocco but only those who are also loyal to Ali b. Abu Talib and guided by him, such as al Khomeini who defeated the Arab, like Hezbollah which confounded Israel.

This concept became central in the manifesto**[253]**, since it referred to the Prophet's family in the first part of *Usul al- Din* as a religious reference. It clarified that the guidance path means preserving the two weights, God's book and the lightest weight is the Prophet's family, who are the guides of the *Umma*, the intimate friends of the Quran, and God's proofs. Then, on the second point, it stated that teaching God's religion is a duty and any criticism of the scholars does not mean the Prophet's family scholars and their supporters. This criticism is only against those who do not call for fighting against unjust people and do not call for commanding good

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[252]Al- Houthi.*Yaūm al- Quds al- 'Alami*.

[253] (n.d).*Al- Wathiqa al-Thaqafiayya wa 'l- Fikriyya*.

and forbidding evil, which are duties enforced by the Quran, and those who denied these principles, are the ignorant and the Prophet's family opponents.

After that, the third category assigned only for this concept under the name of the divine selection, it is included that God selected the Prophet's family from his worshipers in order to be the guides of the *Umma*. God prepared a leader from the Prophet's family for every time to lead and carry out the responsibility of this *Umma*. The manifesto again stressed the religious reference to the Prophet's family in the fourth category which is *Usul al Fiqh*; it clarified that they rejected any Usul al Fiqh disagreements with the Quran or presented an alternative for the Prophet's family.

According to the Zaydi doctrine, considering the Prophet's family as religious legislation requires the consent of the Prophet's family[254]. However, it is unprecedented to consider the Prophet's family as an absolute religious reference regardless of the condition of consensus and neglecting other references, according to this manifesto. This change aims to provide absolute authority to one leader, deriving his power and legitimacy from his lineage, without the need for consensus.

F. Quran

Husayn always stressed that the Muslims turned the Quran as a book of worship, ethics, and stories neglecting the status of the Prophet and his greatness[255]. Al- Houthi group in general concentrates on the Quran as their sole reference and named their political activities, which are almost war, 'the Quranic March.'

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[254]Abu Zahrah. *Al-Imam Zayd*. pp463-469
[255] Al- Houthi.*Yaōm al- Quds al- 'Alami*.

Reference to the Quran without following any school of interpretation or book freed Husayn al- Houthi from any theological restrictions, so he could manipulate the Quranic verses easily according to his own interpretation, which suited his ambitions and ideas.

Abandoning the authoritative religious sources means that Husayn assigned himself absolute authority that prevented others from arguing or disagreeing with him. Husayn always stressed that the Muslims turned the Quran into a book of worships, ethics, and stories neglecting the status of the Prophet and his greatness.

G. Ijtihad

Husayn's speeches focused on the religion connecting to political matters. The Houthi manifesto clarified their theological perspective; part of this perspective was typical Hadawi such as their opinion of the Prophet's Sunna, and another part like Ijtihad and the status of the Prophet's family revealed a rigid stance.

About the Sunna, the manifesto stated that our stance from the Sunna is the same as Imam al-Hadi's stance, which considers only the Hadiths that agreed with the Quran, not dominating or opposing the Quran. It stated that the Hadiths that are linked with the guides of the Prophet's family or the consensus Hadiths are also accepted.

The fourth category of manifesto was about Ijtihad which stressed that they accepted Ijtihad only in cases that did not cause disagreement and disputes among Muslims, and they rejected any ijtihad that differed from the Prophet's family path. Finally, the sixth category dealt with *ilm al Kalam*; the manifesto asserted that their criticism of *ilm al Kalam* did not mean *Usul al- Din* or the doctrine of the Prophet's family, but this criticism was directed to the

arguments of the Philosophers and the Mu'tazilites methodology that disagreed with the Prophet's family.

Thus, the manifestos demonstrated that the Houthis have only two religious references, the Quran and the Prophet's family, neglecting all the Zaydi Heritage and closing the door of renewal or Ijtihad.

H. Houthis and the Republican System

During the Sa'da war, the Yemeni government accused the Houthis as a group that aim to revive the Imamate and topple the republican system[256]. After the republican revolution, the idea of the Imamate did not vanish; it had been preserved and held by a group of Zaydis in Yemen. For example, Majd al- Din al Mu'yyidi and Badr al- Din al- Houthi refused to sign a statement that denounced the Imamate clearly. This group of pro-Imamates considers the 1962 revolution a military coup[257]. Moreover, their belief in the Prophet's family right to rule Yemen was fuelled by a feeling of victimhood due to the policy of persecution towards them after the revolution. This is also very clear in the history of the Believing Youth which glorified the Imams. (Azzan Muḥammad. Personal communication. 2 August, 2016).

In fact, although the speeches of Husayn al- Houthi stressed the leading role of the Prophet's family according to the Quran and the Sunna, he did not focus on reviving the

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[256]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yeme*n. pp169–171
[257]Azzan, Muhammad. (2012).*Al- 'Ilaqat al- Yamania al- Irania*. (computersoftwar). Doha: Qatar

Imamate. Nevertheless, the claim that the Houthis are attempting to restore the Imamate could be considered, since the Houthis always avoid raising the flag of the Yemeni republic[258].

This issue posed the question, how to compromise between Badr al- Din and his sons, Husayn and Yahya, involvement in the political system during the republican period and their deep belief in the Imamate. According to Badr al- Din's dialogue during the second war of Sa'da[259], he did not hide his belief in the Imamate, but denied that his son tried to proclaim himself as an Imam. He justified the contradiction between his belief in the Imamate and being a member of a political party during the republican period by saying that the Imamate necessitates a leader from the Prophet's family; they are the best of the Muslims if they follow the Quran, but if the Imam does not exist, the alternative is the *ihtisab* system which requires any just believer. Badr al- Din was firm and clear in the exaltation of the Prophet's family and rejected all the Hadith that referred to human equality. He also said that he does not know what democracy is and all that he knows is justice.

Hence, the idea of the Imamate was present but not clearly, so the Houthis may accept the republican system but preserves the idea of the exaltation of the Prophet's family.

Houthis in depth

These ideas cannot formulate a concrete theory whether political or religious, in contrast with the *Wilayat al Faqih* theory. It can be concluded that these ideas and sources, explain the nature and overarching ideas of this group.

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[258]Azzan, Muhammad. *Al- 'Ilaqat al- Yamania al- Irania.*
[259]Al Batūl. *Khiōṭ al Ẓalam*.pp333–398

a- **Mobilization**: Husayn delivered passionate speeches that harmonised with the political events, which caused anger among the people, and he presented the solutions to these challenges by stimulating their enthusiasm. His solution is inapplicable because he supposed that only a Hashemite Shiite leader could lead and unify Muslims in spite of his harsh stance against the Sunnis. Also, his vision on the occupation of Palestine supposed Israel to be a problem of the consistent evil nature of the Jewish people, so he believed that the wars and conflicts are the sole and eternal destiny of Muslims.

b- **Clash with Sunnis**: Husayn's image of Muslims as one *Umma* against the west has never taken place without referring to the disagreement with the Sunna. His opinion of the companions did not adhere to the stance of *tawqquf* or *tardiyya*, on the contrary, he clashed with them and declared a very aggressive attitude toward them.

c- **Leadership and the Quran:** Those are two associated concepts that are the practical correspondence of the concepts of purity and unity which are the overarching ideas for the radical religious groups[260], such as Houthis. Total reliance on the Quranic texts is a kind of purity, in the sense that the holy text is the reference of their actions and ideas which means that they are the holy group that maintains the pure religion. Purification has always had a religious connotation to refer to sinlessness and holiness. Also, this idea serves the absolute authority of the leader, because it frees the leader from any theological restrictions, so he can manipulate the Quranic verses easily according to the interpretation that suits his ambitions and ideas. Abandoning the religious authoritative sources means that Husayn assigned himself absolute authority that prevented others from arguing or disagreeing with him.

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[260]Al Azmeh, Aziz. (Autumen,1991).*Islamist Revivalism and Western Ideologies*. History Workshop , No. 32. pp. 44-53. Retrieved July 21, 2016 from http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289100.

d- **Monopolization of the Zaydi doctrine:** The Houthi's manifesto started by saying 'On this day, Friday 17/ 3/1433A.H., those responsible for drafting the agreement among the Zaydis in general, including the mujahideen who are in the foreground of that declared by Mr. Abd al Malik al- Houthi, and the Zaydi scholars, the Zaydi scholar Mr. Abdulrahman Hassan Shaem, and Mr. Husayn b. Yahya al- Houthi.' This means that the Houthi assigned itself to be the sole religious reference and political representative of all the Zaydis in Yemen, although this committee was not selected by the Zaydis. Also, it included only three persons, none of them is a prominent religious figure or represents a different Zaydi political group.

e- **Shiite identity:** Houthis think that they are part of the Shiite resistance group and they centralize the problem of Israel and the US, although Yemen does not have frontiers with or is even close to Israel. This explains the fact that the Houthis consider themselves a Shiite group closer to other Shiite groups rather than other Yemeni groups. Sectarian identity is very decisive in the Houthi's self-image and affects their priorities and images about the outside world.

f- **Houthi ideas and Wilayat al Faqih:** This sectarian inclination and the apparent influence of the Iranian revolution rhetoric confirmed the doubts and claims that the Houthis are just an Iranian affiliated group. This Iranian influence is apparent in the slogan of the Houthis and the models of resistance that are adopted by them, so this influence needs to be verified on the level of ideas.

The Wilayat al Faqih theory provides the absolute authority of the prophet and infallible Imam to the jurist/consultant. This theory is justified on the grounds of commanding good and forbidding evil and the grounds of justice. Given that invoking the principle of

123

commanding good and forbidding evil is necessary and required the leadership and guidance of a just ruler who acquired the knowledge and characteristics that qualified him to apply this principle. This theory can be assumed to be a Zaydi inspiration, since it adopts the principles of commanding good and forbidding evil and justice, the requirements of knowledge and the necessary characteristics to apply them[261]. According to Muḥammad Azzan (Azzan,Muḥammad. Personal communication. 2August, 2016), Imam al Khomeini was influenced by Zaydism, and he used Imam Zaid's revolution as proof that justified the revolution.

Several Twelve scholars rejected the idea of *Wilayat al Faqih* because al Khomeini relied on weak traditions and Hadiths to prove his theory, and they considered this theory a radical departure from the Twelve doctrine. However, it also suggested that *Wilayat al Faqih* is a natural development of the Twelve doctrine since it became the official doctrine of the Safavid state in Iran during the sixteenth century[262]. This development started from giving the jurists the right of deputy of the infallible Imam such as taking the fifth right of the infallible Imam, and proclaiming the Friday prayer[263].

On the other hand, the Houthi perspective of a holy and absolute leadership is unprecedented in the Zaydi doctrine. Since Zaydism does not consider the Imam as infallible as the Twelve, accordingly, it allows rebellion against him. *Houthis* considered their leaders Husayn then Abd al Malik to be a Quran ally who led their Quranic march, so they embodied the

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[261]Mavani, H. (2013). *Religious authority and political thought in Twelver Shi'ism: From Ali to post-Khomeini.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. pp. 180–184

[262]Al Labad. *Ḥada'āq al-Aḥzan.*pp136-140

[263]Al Labad. *Ḥada'āq al- Aḥzan.*pp. 91–96

principles of the Quran[264]. Therefore, opposing them is opposition to the Quran; this idea is completely irrelevant to the Zaydi doctrine, and could be influence from infallibility in the Twelve doctrine.

In addition, Wilayat al Faqih theory influence's appeared when the *Houthis* took over Sana'a but their leader stayed in Sa'da holding the absolute power, and becoming an authority above the state institutions. It is very similar to the jurist/consultant in Iran after the Iranian revolution, according to Wilayat al Faqih theory with the difference that al Khomeini lived in Tehran after the revolution. This is another practice that contradicts the Zaydi Imamate, because the Zaydi Imam practiced his political authority as a political head of state, not as a religious authority that dominated the political one.

Whether the Wilayat al Faqih was influenced by the Zaydi political theory or the Houthis were influenced by the Wilayat al Faqih, or the influence was mutual, the theories have some common features. First, both aimed to monopolize power in an authority without accountability, because this authority gained its legitimacy from God. Second, they did not both rely on strong authentic textual proofs. However, Wilayat al Faqih differs from al Khomeini in that it is a religious reference, so he used his religious knowledge to justify his theory contrary to Husayn who did not formulate a clear theory and could not authenticate its ideas with the religion[265]. Third, they overemphasize the political dimension to dominate every aspect of the doctrine, which leads to synonymising the political authority with the religion. Both of them put the concept of Wilayat above other religious practices, such as praying or fasting[266]. In this regard, it

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[264]Al- Gharasi, Ahamad. *Mashrowá al- Shahid al- Qa'id fi Khutab Qa'id al- Masira al- Quraniyya.*

[265]Mavani.*Religious authority and political thought in Twelver Shi'ism.* p. 181

[266]Mavani.*Religious authority and political thought in Twelver Shi'ism.* pp. 182–183

is important to clarify that the Wilayat al Faqih is a comprehensible and coherent theory while al-Houthis' doctrine is not more than some ideas that cannot formulate a theory.

Zaydi Scholars Statement on the Sa'da War

The Yemeni government media tried to mobilize the Yemeni people against the Houthis by designating them as non-Zaydi and Iranian affiliated groups, in addition to portraying them as a rebellious group against the state in order to restore the Imamate. The Yemeni government account of the external world differed, as it talked about this war as part of its war against terrorism[267].

In this regard, the Yemeni government succeeded in issuing a statement that was signed by prominent Zaydi scholars such as, Muḥammad al Mansour, Ahmad al Shami, Hamoud al Mu'yyid, Salah Felita, Hassan Zaid and others.

This statement started, 'to all Zaydis and other Muslims. The text book of Husayn al-Houthi revealed that he warned his supporters against reading the books of *Utrah* Imams, in particular, and the *Umma* scholars in general, especially the books of *Usul al- Din* and *Usul al Fiqh*'[268]. This statement introduced some quotations from Husayn's speeches that proved their argument. They concluded their statement by saying 'According to the aforementioned, the Zaydi scholars, who signed this statement, are warning against the delusion of who was mentioned – meaning Husayn al- Houthi and his followers. In addition, we warned about being deceived by his sayings and actions, which did not have any connections to the Prophet's family

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[267]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. pp 169-171

[268]Al Batūl.*Khiūṭ al Ẓalam*. pp373- 376

and the Zaydi doctrine'. Worth mentioning is that the scholars who signed this statement did not oppose Houthis and kept silent when the Houthi approached Sana'a in 2014.

This statement sheds light on significant issues, although it could be easily attributed to financial dependence on the government, or the fear of the opposing the government, as Badr al-Din al- Houthi referred to in one of his dialogues during the beginning of the war. However, the statement revealed a vital issue which is the attempt of Husayn al- Houthi to abandon the entire Zaydi legacy and rely completely on the text according to personal interpretation without rules. Worth mentioning is that this was the last Zaydi refutation of the Houthis.

Houthis as a Radical Group

It is important to study the Houthis group in context with the religious radical group required to define the words radical and revival before discussing the processes and reasons for the Zaydi groups' shift from being a revivalist group to being a radical armed group.

According to Al-Azmeh (1991), the Islamic revivalist movement started with Afghani and Abdou and radicalized with al Moudoudi and Qutb. It could be assumed similar development that took place with Zaydism that started as revivalist movement with Hizba al Haqq. Hizb Etiḥad al Qiwa al Sha'biya and YB, then it turned into a radical group like the Houthis. Therefore, what is the difference between the revivalist and the radical?

The Oxford Dictionary says the word 'revive' has multiple meanings with similar connotations; restore to life or consciousness, become strong or healthy, restore interest, or improve the position or condition of something. It is very easy to apply this definition to the different Zaydi activities and groups that have emerged since the 1990s, particularly as the word 'revive' is always associated with religious groups. Given that these different groups aimed to

revive and restore attention to a spiritless doctrine. Before this revivalist movement, Zaydism became an antique doctrine which mentioned only associating with the Imamate without knowledge of its practice and thought. Many Zaydi tribes have become Sunni and the new generation of Zaydis influence by the official curriculum became unaware of their Zaydi doctrine and practice their religion according to the Sunni School. Therefore, considering these groups as revivalist is applicable.

The situation is different in defining the word 'radical', and its political connation makes this word more ambiguous. Linguistically, the word has different meanings associated with the words roots, fundamental. For example, in the Oxford Dictionary there is a definition 'relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something', or 'Relating to the root of something'. Another Oxford definition suggests that radical means 'the unusual ideas,' 'Characterized by departure from tradition; innovative or progressive'. Another definition of Oxford associated the word radical with the word extreme 'supporting an extreme or progressive section of a political party'. Fundamental and extreme, both words associated with the word radical's meaning and have links with its political meaning in this paper. Fundamental means core, base, and central, and means politically far from moderate, according to Oxford.

Politically, the radical term is very important because it is associated with problematic words, such as terrorism and extremism, and connected with violence in general. Most political definitions revolved on violence. For instance, Maskaliūnaitė (2015) defines radicalization 'as a processes by which a person adopts belief system which justifies the use of violence to effect

social changes and comes to actively support, as well as employ, violence for political

purposes'[269].

Hence, it can be differentiated between radicalization and revival in two main features.

First, radicalization is an action which is almost violent and revival is a movement related only to

ideas. Second, revival concerns ideas with the aim of renewing or making them alive or famous,

and these ideas are not rigid, most probably, because they aim for restoration or activation of the

ideas; not to make a change by force. Radicalization aims to adopt, in most cases also by force,

these adopted ideas are mostly rigid and intolerant that cannot compromise and so lead to

confrontation. In this sense, it can be considered the Houthis are a radical group, not revivalist,

who enforce intolerant and rigid ideas.

Radicalization Causes

The Sa'da war was the main and direct reason for transforming the contemporary Zaydi

movement from a revivalist movement to a radical one. Although the connecting between the

Sa'da war and radicalization is relatively true, it did not explain the whole processes of this

transformation, because they were potential reasons that led to this radicalization.

A. Totalitarian policy

Definitely, the policy of intolerance, persecution towards the Zaydis when they practiced

their doctrine or circulated their publications strengthened the extremist part as a reaction. In

addition to the high rate of poverty and illiteracy in Yemen, due to the corruption and the

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[269]Maskaliūnaitė, A. (2015). *Exploring the Theories of Radicalization.International Studies.* Interdisciplinary
Political and Cultural Journal, 17(1), 9-26.pp11-15

authoritarian policy of the government that had increased rapidly in the last decade of Ali Abdullah Saleh's rule, and created feelings of frustration and anger among the Yemeni people[270].

During the Sa'da war, the Yemeni government committed severe violations of human rights, such as random detention, hitting the civilian areas, besieging Sa'da city and banning the entry even of aid[271]. This created feelings of victimhood and fuelled the feeling of anger which escalated the violent tendency. Thus, the totalitarian policy of the state and its abuse of power during the Sa'da war strengthened the radical group that fitted more to facing this policy and marginalized the moderate groups.

B. Zaydi Modern Crisis

Zaydism faced a great challenge after the republican revolution, because it overthrew an Imamate that had ruled Yemen for hundreds of years. Given that the Imamate is the core principle of Zaydism. This challenge became more difficult due to the state policy towards Zaydism, such as oppression the Zaydi scholars.

Modernity challenged Zaydism like other Islamic Schools. The modern state with its set of principles and thoughts addressed new and unprecedented questions. There were attempts to compromise the Islamic principles with modern ones, such as the *shoura*, as equivalent to democracy, or that rebellion could be replaced by elections and freedom of speech according to the Zaydi scholar and politician Abdul Karim Jadban[272].

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[270]Eckvah, Colleen. *5 Facts about Poverty in Yemen*. Retrieved 10 August, 201 from http://borgenproject.org/5-facts-poverty-yemen/

[271]Salmoni, B. A., Loidolt, B., & Wells, M. *Regime and periphery in Northern Yemen*. pp. 249–252

[272]King, James. (2012). *Zaydī revival in a hostile republic: Competing identities, loyalties and visions of state in Republican Yeme*. Arabica .59.404-445.p

The biggest issue hindering these attempts was the Prophet's family's position, as the Hashemite scholars, in particular those who live in Sa'da, persist their rejection stance of abandoning this privilege for many reasons. The most significant is the continuation of dominating the tribal social order in Yemen, which preserved the traditional social hierarchy that was based on the lineage. In particular that the changes of this tribal system took place slowly in some areas around Sana'a in addition to the transformation of the cities' societies, such as Sana'a city and some big cities where this traditional order started to dissolve

C. Identity tension

From the identity perspective, it is worth mentioning that the Yemeni state tried to establish a national identity, but this national identity remained fragile. The fragility is attributed to many reasons, the history of the political division, the tribal nature of the society, the constant political conflicts and wars, and the weak state institutions.

The Zaydis felt that they were oppressed and marginalized for their doctrinal identity, even with the dominance of the Zaydis in the political and military elite in Yemen after the republican revolution. This means that Zaydism became a tribal and regional identity not a doctrinal one. Accordingly, this created the fear of obliteration Zaydism as a doctrine to be a geographical identity with Salafi ideology.

The Zaydi regional and tribal identity associated with al-Shawkani as a Zaydi scholar who compromised with the Sunni. On the other side, all the revival and radical Zaydi groups emphasised that al-Shawkani could not be considered a Zaydis scholar and pointed to him as an

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131

enemy of the Zaydis[273]. It also appeared from the speeches of Husayn al- Houthi, such as his repetitive reference to the Zaydis who lost their faith and became Sunni-like. In this regard, Ismail al Wazir's personal account is a very illustrative example of this hidden crisis even among the Zaydi Hashemites. He lives in Sana'a and works in a prestigious position as professor of law and Sharia' in Sana'a University. He said 'What interests us is our thought remaining with our children. I don't accept my son returning from school with non-Zaydī thought and telling me: "Father, they taught me such and such, and you told me the opposite at home". Whoever rules, rules. I must take my thought with me, my children and family. This problem keeps me awake at night'[274]. This perfectly explained the consequences of the official adoption of Salafi thought in the educational system.

This crisis is deepened with the Houthis as an isolated group, since Sa'da was an isolated city in Yemen, so the Houthis lacked contact with the world. For more clarification, the overwhelming Houthi references to their slogan as it threatened the White House, even though it came from an unknown area like Sa'da. This shows their limited knowledge of the outside world which becomes the other and the enemy.

Also, the alienation policy that was adopted by the state during the war strengthened the feeling of uniqueness of Sa'da's people and deepened the feeling of isolation. The uniqueness of Zaydism could be another factor, the Zaydi School only exists in Yemen, so it lacks connections with other areas belonging to the same doctrine. Geographically, the closest to the Zaydis School was the Sunni school, which dominated the rest of Yemen. Therefore, the Houthis tried to distinguish themselves from Sunnis by stressing the doctrinal identity. To emphasize this

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[273]King, James. *Zaydī revival in a hostile republic.* pp. 408–412
[274]King, James. *Zaydī revival in a hostile republic.* p. 414

doctrinal identity the Houthi always stresses that only Zaydis defended Yemen from external powers, such as Ottomans, Wahhabis, and the US.

D. Regional- Sectarian Tension

Regional intervention based on religion triggered the sectarian tension in the region. Saudi Arabia started its influence by financing the different Salafi groups that denied the existence of Zaydism calling them Hadawis. Then, after the Iranian revolution, the religious authority took power and supported the different Shiite groups. In particular, the traditions of Imam D̲ja̲ʿfar al- Ṣādik̲ stated that the Imam will re-appear after emergence of the most guided flag from Yemen[275]. Therefore, Iran started its interest and intervention in Yemen by mobilizing the Zaydis, which fuelled the sectarian conflict.

Husayn al- Houthi and his father Badr al- Din visited Iran in the middle of the 1990s; most of the YB leaders also visited Iran at some time in the 1980s or 1990s. Muḥammad Azzan said that the Iranian embassy was active in attracting the youth in some Yemeni cities, such as Sa'da, al Jawf, and Ma'rib which concerned the government, therefore, the government launched a campaign of arresting and imprisoning in 1987. Azzan (2013) added that the Iranian embassy

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[275](n.d).*Al- Yamani al- Mawʿūd min Ansar al- Mahdi 'alih al-Salam*.Retrieved 10 August, 2016 from
http://rafed.net/moamal/%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AB-
%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%B9/129-
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133

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used to send invitation to visit Iran during their celebrations of the revolution's anniversary, "I responded to one of them and visited Iran in 1986 along with group of youth and we returned with a great admiration for their schools, since we did not have similar ones"[276].

Iran tried to entice the youth to its doctrine by providing scholarship to study religious science in Qum and part of these pupils who converted from Zaydism to Twelve; most of those who changed their doctrine to Twelver, settled in Iran. Some of them returned to Yemen, and they are receiving financial support from Iran to establish clubs and Husayniat[277].

When the government allowed establishment of political parties; three Zaydi parties announced. The most significant is Hizb al Haqq, which did not hide its intellectual and political relationship with Iran. Hizb Etiḥad al Qiwa al Sha'biya did not establish any ties with Iran. Lastly, Hizb al A'ml al Islami did not practice any political activities but was mainly intellectual, and it had strong relationship with Iran; some members of this party studied in Qum and became Twelve. Those who converted to the Twelve, form a political group named 'The Justice Future' that participated in the 2011 revolution[278].

Iranians anticipated the experience of YB but they did not try to make any connections with them, for two reasons, first to avoid spoiling their relationship with Hizb al-Haqq which was more conservative and worried about the youths' activities. Second, the liberal attitude of YB towards Sunnis, therefore, one of the Qum scholars called them the 'Wahhabis of Shiites'[279].

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[276]Azzan, Muhammad.*Al-'Ilaqat al- Yamania al- Irania*.

[277]Azzan, Muhammad.*Al- 'Iaqat al- Yamania al- Irania*..
[278] Azzan, Muhammad.*Al- 'Iaqat al- Yamania al- Irania*.
[279] Azzan, Muhammad.*Al- 'Iaqat al- Yamania al- Irania*.

The political influence of the Iranian revolution is very apparent in the Houthis' rhetoric, which is exaggerated by the government to the extent of portraying the Houthis as an Iranian group who departed Zaydism and became Twelvers. Several proofs were found that confirmed that the Houthis received financial and military support from Iran, mainly military training, in addition to the Iranian media sympathy, but this does not mean that the Houthis became Twelvers. Moreover, the Houthis denied any alliance with Iran until they took over Sana'a[280], when an Iranian Parliamentary member stated that Sana'a is the fourth Arab capital that has become under the Iranian influence[281].

In sum, the relationship and influence between Iran and Houthis on the grounds of the Shiite connection; Iran is the superior party in this relationship, therefore, it is the part that affects not that is affected. This alliance does not mean that the Houthi phenomenon can be categorized outside the Zaydi doctrine and it is a local production rather than an Iranian influence.

Conclusion

The Sa'da war was a turning point in the Zaydi movement that changed its nature from moderate revivalist to radical. The war erupted on the grounds of Husayn al- Houthi's speeches that took place in a critical period regionally and locally, and Husayn succeeded in addressing the anger and frustration of the people in his speeches.

The Houthis group has several ideas that do not establish a theory and concentrate on mainly political and doctrinal issues. These ideas revealed the radical nature of this group as a

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[280]Bayoumy, Yare.Ghobari, Muhammad. *Iranian support seen crucial for Yemen's Houthis*. (2014, December 15). Retrieved 31 July, 2016, from http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-Houthis-iran-insight-idUSKBN0JT17A20141215

[281]Xenakis, John. *Iran brags that Sana'a is the fourth Arab capital they control*. Retrieved 31 July, 2016, from **http://nationalyemen.com/2014/09/27/iran-brags-that-sanaa-is-the-fourth-arab-capital-they-control/**

political group using religion in reaching its aims. Many factors radicalized the Zaydi movement, which varied into political, social, and intellectual and led to establishment of the Houthi group.

The conclusion

Zaydism's uniqueness does not stem from its existence in only one region, northern Yemen, but also from its features that combine the Mu'tazilite ideas and Sunni tradition. It merges between the Shiite's Ali b. Abu Talib favouritism and is close to the Sunni assumption about the companions, and between the Shiite beliefs of the Prophet's family distinguishing status with Sunni Jurisprudence. This situates this doctrine as an independent unique case among the Islamic schools.

The Zaydi methodology in the *Fiqh* is not unique as it borrowed many concepts from the different schools and it is open to every Islamic school. However, it has two distinctive features; first, it accepts the Sunni Hadith collections with its famous rule that any Hadith is accepted if it does not contradict the Quran or oppose any Quranic concept. Second, the consensus of the prophet's family is a source of legislation according to Zaydism, which gives it the name of Madhahab Ahl al Utrah. The Mu'tazilite rational thought and the openness to the Sunni schools provided wide-ranging ground for this doctrine that enabled it to be varied and renewed, so it saved the doctrine from stagnation.

The Zaydi theory of the Imamate is still the core of this doctrine. It is totally unique and completely independent from other doctrines. It is based on two Mu'taziltie principles, justice and commanding good and forbidding evil. Accordingly, rebellion against the unjust was justified. This revolutionary theory led to spreading this doctrine in certain societies which were characterized by their tribal nature. When the Zaydi Imams took power, the Zaydi Imamate

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theory became inapplicable. Hence, the association between Zaydism and the Imamate changed the perception of this doctrine according to the political need.

Zaydism in Yemen established the longest state that ruled parts of Yemen intermittently for one millennium since the third century of Hijrah, the tenth century according to the Roman calendar. During this long period, Zaydism spread only in the northern part of Yemen, where Hamdan tribes live, which is a geographical-tribal division that preceded Islam in Yemen. Therefore, Zaydism became a regional identity in this area. It is highly important for this point to be comprehended in any study of Zaydism in Yemen. As, it added to the Zaydi doctrine different political and social dimensions in Yemen, it caused several outcomes on the Zaydi doctrine theologically and on its state politically.

The Mu'tazilite doctrine has remained an interesting part of Zaydism and the Zaydi Imam was required to be capable of arguing the theological issues of Mu'tazilites, so the Zaydi Scholars could approve him as an Imam. This Mu'tazilite part had weakened since the sixth century of Hijrah, the eleventh century according to the Roman calendar, when Mutarrifyya Mu'tazilite group was eradicated by Imam Hamza due to a disagreement about the definition of honour. This did not eliminate the Mu'tazilite influence on Zaydism. For instance, the Zaydi ruler in dealing with Hadiths by verifying their authenticity by the Quran, not only the narrators' chain, remains applicable until now, which is a more rational way of dealing with Hadiths.

The Zaydi Imamate had a tribal and doctrinal existence in the north of Yemen since the first Zaydi state in 283 AH/896 AD; the Imamate did not exceed this area except during the rule of Imam al-Hadi for a short time. Since 1634, the Zaydi Imamate extended to the rest of Yemen and controlled all Yemen for almost one century benefiting from the coffee trade revenues. This

138

turning point caused many theological consequences as the concept of rebellion became a constant reason for disorder in the Zaydi Imamate. Therefore, some Zaydi scholars started to adopt Sunni ideas that do not encourage rebellion and the Zaydi Imam became more like a Sunni Caliph or Sultan. In this regard, al-Shawkani during the nineteenth century presents the most influential school that tried to combine the Sunni and Shiite teachings in order to solve the revolutionary nature of the Zaydi Imamate theory.

During the twentieth century, the Zaydi Imamate adopted an isolationist policy and did not respond to all the reform calls, which led to the overthrow of the Imamate and was replaced by the republican system. The fall of the Imamate posed great challenges to the Zaydi doctrine, since the Imamate is the core of Zaydism. Especially as the Yemeni governments tightened their grip on Zaydi scholars and marginalized Hashemites because it doubted their loyalty to the republic and the political alliance with the Salafis and Brotherhoods.

When the government loosened its restrictions and allowed the proliferation of parties after the unification in 1990, Zaydis took the advantage to resume their appearance, so they established political parties and Believing Youth summer camps. Intellectually, the discussion and publications about Zaydism flourished, which demonstrated the different attitudes and opinions about the current situation of Zaydism, so two main directions emerged. First, a direction was looking to adjust Zaydism with the new situation. Second, a direction that was looking to revive the Imamate; it is mostly concentrated in Sa'da.

The emergence of a character like Husayn al- Houthi in 2000 changed the way of the Zaydi movement during a very disordered time on the global and local levels. Husayn al- Houthi was an ambitious person who is trying to monopolize the people with the claim of fighting

America, inspiring by Hezbollah and the Iranian revolution models. Soon, the confrontation between Husayn al- Houthi and the government took place in 2004, and Husayn was killed in the first round of the war in September 2004. This did not stop the war which continued intermittently for almost six years, and this long war strengthened the Houthis that have become a significant military power in Yemen and have also tried to be a political group since 2011.

The ideas of the Houthis revealed the absence of any political vision and the weakness of the religious aspect, so it cannot be categorized as a religious revival group or a political group. The main theme of the group is mobilizing the people on the grounds of the existence of an enemy and the pride of the doctrinal identity. Also, the group bases itself on the notion of the leader as a holy person holding absolute authority.

The influence of the Iranian revolution's rhetoric on the Houthis is very apparent and significant. Although the Houthis group is still Zaydi doctrinally, the inspiration the Iranian *wilayat al faqih* theory is significant. This appears on the leader's status, which enables him to enjoy absolute power without accountability. This is more similar to the *willayat al faqih* theory which is a result of the Twelve doctrine's principles, such as the infallibility of the Imam.

It may attribute the growing of the Houthis' to the constant wars that make them a powerful military group. Being an organized and powerful military group in disordered time has increased the role that Houthis can play. The 2011 uprising against the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh led to weakness in the state's institution, which were already weak and ineffective; this has escalated the political and social tension. In addition, the political parties in Yemen became very feeble and the whole political transition processes was administrated by external powers. The weakness of the state, the absence of political parties and the ever

presenceof the external players created a political vacuum that gave the Houthis enough space to expand by force[282].

The Houthis have been empowered notably after the Saudi-led military coalition[283]. It is a very similar case to Hezbollah which became an important political power in Lebanon due to its war against Israel. Both of them are building their legitimacy on the basis of resisting an external military power not on internal achievement. Also, both of them deepened the division among society and escalated polarization inside the country[284]. Thus, the external assaulti and the polarizing of society in a weak state are the perfect conditions for militias of this type.

Houthis' power relied on external factors, absence of the state, a political vacuum and external military intervention. It does not have any inner power except for weapons; its ideas are disconnected to each other and to the tradional Zaydi heritage.

In addition, the Houthis aim to revive the Imamate or establish a similar political system that keeps the distinguished status of the prophet's family. This idea is inapplicable due to the change of the people's culture in Yemen, which is not only religious as it was, and the collapse of the social hierarchy system. Consequently, the inapplicable aim is fuelling their fighting nature.

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[282]Al Madhaji, Maged.*How Yemen's post-2011 transitional phase ended in war*. Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies.Rerieved 18 August, 2016 from http://sanaacenter.org/publications/item/39-how-yemen%E2%80%99s-post-2011-transitional-phase-ended-in-war.html

[283]Al Makhzoomi,Khairuldeen. 11 December, 2015.*The Failure of Saudi Intervention in Yemen*.Middle East eye. Retrieved 18 August from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/khairuldeen-al-makhzoomi/the-failure-of-saudi-intervention-in-yemen_b_8469744.html

284(n.d). 3 November, 2014."*Popular Committees" feed Yemen polarization.*IRIN. Retrieved 18 August from http://www.irinnews.org/news/2014/11/03/popular-committees-feed-yemen-polarization

The Houthis group persists in the monopolization of representatives of the Zaydis in Yemen to legitimize their political activities, so they face fiercely any Zaydi opposition, such as banning the Zaydi Imams from delivering Friday sermons because they are not loyal to them[285].

Hence, Houthis have become another factor that hinders reforming Zaydism to adjust to the republican system. Zaydism is a flexible doctrine due to its varied methods and the acceptance of the Ijtihad as it always relies on the relational agreement and does not have the tendency to follow the texts only. Therefore, it has many potential abilities to adopt new ideas that suit the current time.

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[285]Al Aley, Hamdan. (2 October, 2015). Al- Houthis Yamnȧwun Khutab al Jumȧh. Al Araby al Jadeed. Retrieved 18 August, 2015 from https://www.alaraby.co.uk/society/2015/10/2/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AF