

Political, Religious and Social Unrest in Yemen in the 18th And 19th Centuries during the Late Ottoman Dynasty

by Ahmad Atabik

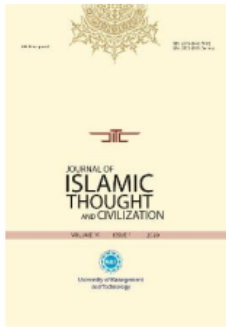
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Political, Religious and Social Unrest in Yemen in the 18th and 19th Centuries during the Late Ottoman Dynasty

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Abstract

Yemen is a country with a long history of world civilization, both before and after the emergence of Islam. For the pre-Islamic period, the Qur'ān has talked about various tribes living in Yemen, such as the 'Ad and the Saba' people. In the Islamic period, many Yemeni people played an important role in spreading Islam to various parts of the world. This article discusses the situation of Yemen in the 18th and 19th centuries, when massive turmoil occurred in the society. In terms of politics, Yemen was surrounded by a growing number of dynasties, such as the Ottoman dynasty of Turkey which belonged to the *Sunni* sect, the *Safavid* dynasty of Iran which belonged to the *Shi'a* sect, and the emergence of the Wahhabi movement in the Hejaz. At that time, Islamic states were being colonized by western countries, such as Egypt which was controlled by the French. Such conditions led to political turmoil in Yemen. In religious sense, there were various sects claiming truth one another in Yemen, among them were the *Zaydi Shia* and the *Ismaili Shia*. This caused hostilities among Muslim people at that time in Yemen. Keeping in view the social aspect, there was a social gap which led to feuding among the various social components in Yemen. The people of Sana'a city and its administration frequently went through unstable situations; moreover, wars among tribes for material purposes also occurred.

Keywords: Yemen, Ottoman dynasty, turmoil, 19th century, social situations

Introduction

In modern times, Yemen is a republic country in the Arabian Peninsula in the Southwest Asia, a part of the Middle East. Geographically, it is bordered by the Arabian Sea to the south, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea to the west, Oman to the east and Saudi Arabia to the north.¹ It has a number of important records on the history of world civilization, pre- and post-Islamic periods. Yemen, located in the southern Arabian Peninsula, has been inhabited by humans since ancient times post the flood of Prophet Noah. The oldest tribe in Yemen is the Qahtan known by the Arabic name of *Al-'aribah*,

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¹Muhammad Ali Al-Bahr, *Tarikh Al-Yaman al-Mu'ashir* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Madbuli, 1990), 24.

wholly living in Yemen and the south of the Peninsula. Qahtan is derived from the name of a man speaking in Syriac language. However, his son was able to speak Arabic.²

Yemen's ancient civilization in pre Islamic periods is even much talked about by the Qur'an and other religious texts. People of 'Ad is the name of a tribe much discussed in the Qur'an. The tribe is famous for its high architecture and with a tremendous power.³ The people of 'Ad come from the Qahtan. Based on the religious text narrations, they are Prophet Hūd's people who inhabited the Al-Ahqāf Sahara field of Yemen.⁴ It is located in the southern region of the Arabian Peninsula. After the passing of the 'Ad civilization, Yemen is also known as the Saba civilization. Even this name is much better known than that of the former.⁵ It is closely related to the fact that the latter name is reviewed somewhat significantly in the Qur'an Chapter *An-Naml* and *Saba*.

The Qur'an also speaks about the civilization of the *Ma'rib Dam* in Saba' (QC. Saba: 16).⁶ It is also famously called the *Iram Dam*. The dam was constructed around 1750 BC and 1700 BC. This means, since the 8th century of BC, people of Yemen had already gained knowledge of dam architecture. For this reason, the *Iram Dam* is crowned to be the oldest dam in the world. In the Encyclopedia of Islamic History, it is said that the architect of this dam was Luqman ibn 'Ad ibn 'Adia.⁷ It is written down in an inscription or old writing that this dam made the city of Yemen prosperous, around 510 BC, that is, when a king named Simah Ali Yanaq ruled in. In 542 AD, this dam collapsed, leading the icon of Yemen's ancient civilization to decay. Its surrounding gardens from which they used to take benefits hundreds of years ago suddenly became tremendously devastated. Consequently, the people of Saba' suffered a setback. Shortly thereafter, the history of Saba state came to an end.⁸

In Islamic periods, Yemen is a country which was once happened to be the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) territory in spreading Islam. The Yemen Islamization or the early entry of Islam to Yemen commenced in 630 AD. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) sent Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA) to Sana'a and its surrounding areas to spread Islamic teachings. At that time, Yemen was the most advanced region in the Arabian Peninsula. The *Bani Hamdan* was listed as the first Yemeni tribe to have received Islam. After that, Prophet Muhammad

²Jawwad Ali, *Al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Arab Qabla al-Islam*, vol. 1 (Bagdad: Jami'at Bagdad, 1993), 97.

³Al-Qur'an, Al-Shu'ara 26:123-130; Fakhruddin Al-Razi, *Tafsir Mafatih Al-Ghaib*, Vol. VII, (Cairo: Dar Al-Hadith, 2000), 243.

⁴Al-Ahqaf 46:21.

⁵Zaid bin Ali Annan, *Tarikh Al-Yaman al-Qadim* (Beirut: Al-Mathba'a al-Salafiya, 1989), 76.

⁶Shihabuddin Al-Alusi, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Azim Wa al-Sab' al-Masani* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1997), 349.

⁷Abdel Hakim Al-Ka'bi, *Al-Mawsuah al-Tarikh al-Islami*, Vol. 1 (Amman: Dar al-Usamah, 2009), 245.

⁸Tajuddin Abdel Baqi Al-Yamani, *Tarikh Al-Yaman* (Sana'a: Dar al-Kalimah, 1985), 312.

(SAW) commissioned a group of companions who were competent to live in Yemen, and appointed Mu'adz ibn Jabal their leader (Amīr).⁹

After the prophet's (SAW) period, the people of Yemen played a crucial role in spreading Islam in the world, including Indonesia. Yemen was the oldest center of civilization in the West Asia. Its contributions to the achievement of the Muslims' glorious civilization in medieval times were enormous. Many Yemeni people took a part in the arena of the chaliphate military. They participated in an expansive expedition of Islamic territories or known as *Futuhāt*. At that time, Yemen was the most developed region in the Arabian Peninsula. The Yemeni tribes played a significant role in the conquest of Islam in Egypt, Iraq, Persia and surrounding areas, East Rome, North Africa, and Andalusia.¹⁰

In the period of Umayyad dynasty, the Yemeni tribes living in Syria also contributed significantly to strengthen the rule of the Umayyad dynasty. Similarly, during the Abbasid dynasty, many Yemeni tribes had a role in the government.¹¹ At that time, Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Ziyad established the Ziyadid dynasty in Tihama Yemen in 818 although the dynasty normatively acknowledged the Abbasid Caliphate. However, since the 11th century, the country had a succession of powers from one ruler to another, starting from the Sulayhid dynasty (1047-1138), the Rasulid dynasty (1229-1454), Tahirid dynasty (1454-1517), to the Ottoman dynasty.¹²

Referring to the history of the Yemeni long-term civilization above, this study presents a more focused discussion on certain periodization in the history of Yemeni civilization. The writers selected political, religious and social unrest in the 18th and 19th centuries taking place in Yemen whilst a massive decline in the Ottoman dynasty was an object of study. Many studies on Yemen in the pre and early Islamic periods as well as on Yemen in modern times have been conducted. This study, which is a library research, refers to the main literature relating to the history and culture of Yemen in the 18th and 19th centuries.

1.1. The Islamic World Political Condition in the 18th and 19th Centuries

Seeing the Yemen's politics in the 18th and 19th centuries, Yemen's politics cannot be separated from the Islamic world politics at that time. In those centuries, the Islamic world, both in eastern and western hemispheres, was experiencing divisions and wars. The Eastern hemisphere was dominated by three Islamic dynasties, namely the Ottoman dynasty (Ottoman Empire) which took hold of *Sunni*, Safavid diynasty which adhered to *Shia*, and

⁹Ahmad Al-'Usairy, *Al-Tarīkh Al-Islami* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2014), 229.

¹⁰Emadiden Idris Al-Hamzi, *Tarīkh Al-Yaman Min Kitab Kanz al-Akhbar Fi Ma'rifat al-Sair Wa al-Akhbar* (Kuwait: Muassasah Sharra' al-Arabi, 1999), 198.

¹¹Hasan Al-Dhiqah, *Al-Dawlah al-Uthmaniyyah: Al-Thaqafa al-Mujtama Wa al-Sultah* (Beirut: Dar al-Muntakhab al-Arabi, 1997), 455.

¹²Annan, *Tarīkh Al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, 398.

Mughal dynasty in India that consisted of *Sunni* and *Shia*.¹³ At that time, the Islamic kingdoms were having a significant setback, inter-sects conflict came to a level which could ignite the occurrence of war between two dynasties, that is, the *Sunni* Ottoman and the *Shi'a* Safavid dynasty. At that time, Morocco's territory was hit by racial and tribal conflicts, so it was easy for Spanish and Portuguese soldiers to launch an invasion to some territories of the region.¹⁴

2. The Turkish Ottoman Empire (The Ottoman Dynasty)

Among the largest Islamic countries at that time was the Ottoman Empire (Ottoman Dynasty), embracing the *Sunni* sect. This government gained honor from the Muslims all around the world after Islam had spreaded to Europe, and reaching its peak in the 10th century of Hijri or 16th century of A.D. Not long afterwards, factors causing weaknesses – both internal and external– little by little annihilated the glory of the Ottoman Empire. Not until the 18th century, the Ottoman was in a very critical condition.¹⁵

During this period, small states massively separated themselves from the Ottoman Empire, making Ottoman power fall down and weaken before its enemies, that is, the enemies of Islam. When Ottoman Dynasty neared its torn and weak status, military and economic power emerged in the form of two different Russian and European groups. These groups aimed at splitting the Islamic States after successfully having paralyzed the Ottoman dynasty which was then nicknamed “The Sick.”¹⁶

In the 18th century, Turkish Ottoman was led by Sultan Mustafa III (1757-1774). In 1770 A.D, the Russian army defeated the Ottoman Royal fleet along the shores of the Asia Minor. However, this Russian army could then be defeated again by Sultan Mustafa III the following month. After his death, he was replaced by his brother Sultan 'Abd Al Hamid (1774-1789); a weak figure. Shortly after his coronation at Küçük Kaynarca, he proposed a treaty called treaty of *Kuchuk-Kainarji* with Catherine II of Russia. Among the contents of the Treaty were: 1) the Ottoman Empire had to turn over the fortresses in the Black Sea to Russia and allowed the Russian fleet sail through the strait connecting the Black Sea to the White Sea; 2) The Ottoman Empire acknowledged the independence of Crimea.¹⁷

Having had tremendous advancement led by the Sultan Sulaiman Al-Qanuni (w. 1566 A.D), little by little, the Ottoman Empire went through a setback even for more than two centuries. There were no signs of improving until the first half of the 19th century.

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¹³Abdelmutaal Al-Saedi, *Al-Mujaddidūn Fi al-Islam Min al-Qarn al-Awwal Ila al-Qarn al-Rabi' 'Asyar* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Adab, 1996), 416-18.

¹⁴Ali Muhammad Al-Salabi, *Al-Dawlah al-Uthmaniyah: 'Awamil al-Nuhudh Wa Asbāb al-Suqūt* (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzi' wa al-Nashr al-Islami, 2001), 533.

¹⁵Al-Dhiqah, *Al-Dawlah al-Uthmaniyah: Al-Thaqafa al-Mujtama Wa al-Sultah*, 211.

¹⁶Abdel Aziz Al-Shinawi, *Al-Dawlah al-Uthmaniyah: Dawlah Muftara 'Alaiha*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabah Englo Al-Misriya, 1980), 63.

¹⁷Ibid., 1:152-54.

Therefore, one by one, countries in Europe which used to be controlled by the Ottoman Dynasty declared independence. Not only were the countries in Europe gaining advancement which revolted against the power of the Ottoman Empire, but also some regions in the Middle East tried to rise and rebel, such as Egypt.¹⁸

3. The Pasha Dynasty of Egypt

In the 18th Century, Egypt was still ruled by the Mamluk 'Ali Bey dynasty. At that time, the dynasty gained its peak of Glory (1769). It was still the part of Turkish Ottoman territory. In 1770 A.D with a great and powerful army led by Abu al-Zahab, a commissioned officer and 'Ali Bey's son-in-law, entered Mecca and brought a victory. One victory after another victory was achieved by 'Abu al-Zahab. However, in 1773 A.D, he was betrayed and attacked by 'Ali Bey until he was killed while escaping. Finally the power of Mamlūk fell to the hands of Abu al-Zahab.¹⁹

In its development, Muhammad 'Ali Pasha had the ambition to form an empire, and he found that the opportunity approached him to carry out military duties that the sultan was unable to do. Pasha also gained control of the Hijaz in 1812-1819 AD. He then took over the city which became the base of the Wahabi movement in 1818 AD after making a siege on him for six months. After that the whole city of Nejed came under his authority and the Wahabi leader Abdullah bin Su'ud (d. 1818) was sent to Egypt as a prisoner and then taken to Astanah and sentenced to death there. After his victory over the Wahhabi group, Ali Pasya then departed for Yemen and succeeded in conquering the regions of 'Asir, Mikhlaf al-Sulaimani and Tihamah. After that, Egyptian forces occupied the area that stretched along the coast of Yemen to Hadidah, as well as several areas in Tihamah. Muhammad 'Ali Pasha then appointed the Egyptian commander Ibrahim Yakun Pasha (1790-1848 AD) as the guardian or ruler of Yemen, and Ibrahim Yakun Pasya also made the city of Hadidah as the center of his government.

In 1801, Napoleon's troops were defeated by the Egyptian army aided by the Turkish Ottoman military in Alexandria, so as in the same year Napoleon left Egypt. Napoleon's defeat by Egypt was inseparable from the role of an officer named Muhammad 'Ali. Therefore, in 1805, the Great Porte in Turkey appointed him the Pasha of Egypt.²⁰ He and his descendants became the rulers of Egypt until 1952. Al-Shawkani describes the end of the military and political existence of Muhammad Ali Pasha in Yemen; he states that Muhammad 'Ali Pasha returned the Yemeni territories to the hands of Imam Mansur 'Ali ibn 'Abbas provided that the Imam obeyed some provisions and gave some of the agricultural products to the Ottoman dynasty, that was after the Yemeni government had predicted the occupation of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha on their entire territories. Then, peace

¹⁸Al-Salabi, *Al-Dawlah al-Uthmaniyah: 'Awamil al-Nuhudh Wa Asbāb al-Suqūt*, 349.

¹⁹Philip K Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2002), 922-23.

²⁰Muhammed Fuad Shukri, *Al-Hamlah al-Faransiah Wa Khurūj al-Faransiyyin Min Masr* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, n.d.), 86.

was held between the two, Imam al-Mansur and Muhammad 'Ali Pasha through returning the entire territories of Yemen to the government of Yemen. These territories included Luhayya, Hadida, Zabid, Bait al-Faqih, Zaidiya (located in Tihamah).²¹

However, on the other hand, the Turkish Ottoman and the Muhammad 'Ali Pasha dynasty went through disputes leading to confrontation in the 19th century. One factor of which was that they violated the main principle in the Qur'an, namely the principle of *al-wala* or loyalty. At that time, the Ottoman Empire established a relationship with Britain in fighting the French forces. While Muhammad 'Ali Pasha established a relationship with France against the British forces. But in fact the French and British forces along with four other countries conspired against the two Islamic forces. This resulted in the decline of the power of the Ottoman Empire and Muhammad Ali Pasha which caused the powerlessness of Muslims in the face of a European State attack which at one time they helped one another while at other times they were competing with each other.

4. The Emergence of Wahhabi Thoughts in Hejaz

In the late 18th century, a reformist in theological field in Hejaz was born. He was Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, born in al-'Uyainah Najd village (1703 A.D). Al-Sa'idi in his work *al-Mujaddidun fi al-Islam* categorized 'Abd al-wahhab as one of the reformists (*Mujaddid*) in the 12th century of Hijri. This was inseparable from the reforms and the thoughts provoked by Abd al-Wahhab in order to restore the Muslims' position and understanding of *tauhid* (monotheism) or *aqidah* (creed) at that time. The movement of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's creed reform and his adherents was then well-known as Wahhabism.²²

The emergence of Wahhabism was one of the reactions to the cult stance in the form of seeking blessing from certain people and drawing closer to God through their grave pilgrimage. The Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab's movement focused on eradicating this attitude and reviving the Salafi sect of Ibn Taymiyyah. Seen from his creed reform movement, Abd al-Wahhab did not present any new thoughts of creed in its essences. They just practiced what Ibn Taymiyyah had taught before.²³

Al-Zirikli in his encyclopedic work called *al-A'lām* mentioned that this movement was the initial rise of modern Islam. The Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's populist propaganda (*da'wa*) was considered as the initial modern revival in the Islamic world. Many reformist figures in India, Egypt, Iraq, Shām and others were influenced by this movement, so that Jamaluddin al-Afghani appeared in Afghanistan, Muhammad 'Abduh in Egypt, Jamaluddin

²¹ Abdul Ghani Qasim Ghalib Al-Shiraji, *Al-Imām Al-Shawkani: Hayatuhu Wa Fikruhu* (Beirut: Muassasah ar-Risalah, 2000), 60.

²² Al-Saedi, *Al-Mujaddidūn Fi al-Islam Min al-Qarn al-Awwal Ila al-Qarn al-Rabi' 'Asyar*, 237.

²³ Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Salman, *Da'wah al-Shekh Muhammad Bin 'Abd al-Wahhab* (Cairo: Al-Matba'ah al-Salafiyah, 1981), 89.

al-Qasimi in Shām, Khairuddin al-Tunisi in Tunisia, Siddiq Hasan Khan in Bhopal and Ahmad 'Ali in Calcutta.²⁴

However, al-Sharaji slightly clarified al-Zirikli's view about the figures contributing to the rise of modern Islam. According to him, al-Zirikli forgot those in Yemen, one of whom was Imam al-Shawkani despite the fact that he had talked about the thoughts of al-Shawkani in the autobiography of al-Shawkani he wrote. Khairuddin al-Zirikli also forgot mentioning that Siddiq Hasan Khan, the ruler of the Bhopal region, was one of Imam al-Shawkani's students. It was because al-Syaukani's concept of *ijtihād* spread rapidly in India and Pakistan through his students, namely Shaykh 'Abd al-Haq ibn Fad al-Hind. Furthermore, the treatise flag of al-Syaukani's thoughts was carried by his student named Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan who happened to be the ruler of the Bhopal region in India.²⁵ He was so enthusiastic in spreading al-Shawkani books.

Al-Salman noted that the *da'wa* (proselytism of Islam) Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his adherents brought quickly spread and influenced Yemeni people. Several Yemeni scholars were enthusiastic about adhering to the Wahhabi methods of *da'wa*. On the other hand, many Yemeni scholars disagreed with the methods of *da'wa* carried out by the Wahhabi groups, resulting in debates and disputes between them. However, the disputes did not lead to physical collision. One of the Yemeni scholars who was influenced by the Wahhabi propaganda was Shaykh Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Sana'ani. He invited the people of Yemen to carry out the teachings of *Tauhīd* (monotheism) and *aqidah* (creed) correctly, as well as to set *tawassul* (mediation) aside in the grave of the pious people of Yemen at that time.²⁶

Al-Shawkani stated that the *da'wa* brought by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab began in Dar'iyya village in Nejd. It focused on the rectification of the *aqidah* (aqidah) issues after the mushrooming creeds (*aqidah*) contrary to the principles of monotheism (*tauhid*). It was widely spread in most of the Arabian Peninsula, including certain territories in Yemen. Al-Shawkani specifically spoke of the Wahhabi's efforts in spreading the *da'wa* (propaganda) in Yemen, that is, through sending several missionaries and also through correspondence between the Wahhabi adherents with the Yemeni leaders and al-Shawkani as well.²⁷

Post the emergence of the Wahhabi's *da'wa* and its influence widely expanded to Hejaz, the Ottoman dynasty considered it a separatist movement which threatened the Ottoman existence in Mecca in 1803 A.D. Not long afterwards, it reached the region of 'Asyir (an area located to the north of Yemen) which was also used as a headquarters to spread his teachings, several tribes in Yemen began to rebel against Imam al-Mansur and

²⁴Khair al-Din Al-Zirikli, *Al-A'lām Qamūs al-Tarajum*, Vol. 6 (Beirut: Dar Al-'Ilm li al-Malayin, 2002), 154.

²⁵Al-Shiraji, *Al-Imam Al-Shawkani: Hayatuhu Wa Fikruhu*, 377.

²⁶Al-Salman, *Da'wah al-Shekh Muhammad Bin 'Abd al-Wahhab*, 122.

²⁷Al-Shiraji, *Al-Imam Al-Shawkani: Hayatuhu Wa Fikruhu*, 378.

besieged the city of Sana'a. This caused the people to starve so that the Yemeni leader, al-Mutawakkil 'Alallah Ahmad, asked for a help from the Ottoman Emperor and the Egyptian leader, Muhammad Ali Pasha (1770-1849 A.D.).²⁸

4.1. Political Situation in Yemen in the 19th Century

Al-Shawkani replied to the letters from the rulers of Mecca and Medina sent to Imam al-Mansur 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas related to the French invasion in Egypt. Among the excerpts of the response letters written by al-Shawkani on the letters sent from the rulers of Medina and the Jeddah Port keepers will fight those who have fought Muslims, offer peace to those who are at peace with Muslims, always wait for opportunities, and anticipate the attacks of unbelievers. We have filled our port with several troops and we also had them ready to fight. Islam is the greatest bond and the believers are brothers.²⁹

Al-Shawkani's statement and the Yemeni people's reaction to the French aggression gave an impression that *aqidah* (creed) or ideology aspect acted as a driving force for the unity of the Yemeni people and their brothers, that is, the believers in facing the unbelievers. The bond that unites the Arabs is that of faith and Islam, instead of blood, ethnicity or territory. As can also be seen from the positive stance of the Yemeni people and their government ranks and reform leaders towards their Muslim brothers and sisters who were in Egypt against the enemies of Islam (the French).³⁰

On another occasion, Al-Shawkani poured his heart out that the invasion carried out by France was an ideological war between the Muslims and the Crusaders. In his book called *al-Badr At-Tali*,³¹ he said that it was a disaster that has never befallen Islam before. Indeed, Egypt has always been in the hands of Muslims since it was conquered in the period of Umar ibn Khattab up to now. In some history books, we have never found a description explaining that non-Muslim foreign countries have entered the city of Cairo. Foreign troops, who once made it to the Egyptian region during the period of al-Adīd and his minister named Shawur, and also those in the period of *Bani Ayyub*, had never entered the city of Cairo. The boundaries they managed to reach were only the city of Dimyat and others. Cairo was always protected from non-Muslim countries' reach. In fact, the Tatars succeeded in conquering the entire Islamic territories, but God did not allow them to rule over Egypt. They even had to return from the city of Egypt in a failure and defeated condition. Likewise, the Eastern Lenk's troops could not take control of Egypt. May God always help Islam and also the Muslims.³¹

On the other hand, when Al-Shawkani was still alive, Yemen had no absolute power since it was a part of the Ottoman Empire. Even then, Yemen's rules did not cover all

²⁸Al-Yamani, *Tarikh Al-Yaman*, 122.

²⁹Muhammad bin Ali bin Muhammad Al-Shawkani, *Al-Badr al-Tali*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2007), 206.

³⁰Al-Shiraji, *Al-Imam Al-Shawkani: Hayatuhu Wa Fikruhu*, 47.

³¹Al-Shawkani, *Al-Badr al-Tali*, 1:358.

regions. There were rebellions against the empires of Ashraf Abu 'Arisy and al-Mikhlaḥ as-Sulaimani.³² There were also independent empires founded, such as the Lahj Empire in the south, and the Ottoman Empire in the Zabid region. Yemen was also not free from the 'diseases' affecting its ruling powers. Lots of internal conflicts that occurred during the reign of the Zaydi, among of which were internal family conflicts in terms of power struggles, conflicts among tribes affecting from one side, and also their conflicts with the government on the other side, in addition to the prolonged conflicts between the government and the Ismailiyya Batiniyya-Qirmitiyyah movement centered in two regions, namely Harraz and Najran.³³

In legal matters, Yemen was hit by a legal crisis, both in terms of Islamic law and conventional law. The latter or government rules often changed; sometimes seemed fair and sometimes unjust to 'small' people; sometimes seemed powerful and sometimes weak. The morality of the ministers and officials as well as the behavior of the leaders had a great effect both positively and negatively on the style of government regulations. Many officials committed corruptions, meanwhile, in issuing *fatwas* (legal opinion on Islamic law), Scholars frequently deviated and took bribes from rich people.³⁴

Al-Shawkani lived during the reign of Zaidiyya al-Qasimiyya who was attributed to Imam al-Qasim ibn Muhammad whose *da'wa* appeared in al-Qarah region, one of the villages in al-Sharaf Province, south of the Sa'dah Province, in September 18, 1597 AD. At that time, the Imam al-Qasim's *da'wa* was a form of revolution over the Ottoman government. This revolution gained people's supports, because it revolted against the depravity of the Ottoman government and demanded stopping the tyranny over the Yemeni people. The struggles of the descendants of Imam al-Qasim against the Ottoman dynasty continued to those of Imam al-Muayyad Muhammad bin al-Qasim. There were several fierce wars between him and the Ottoman government, including *al-Safiyya* war which was won by the Yemeni forces. After that, the Turkish Ottoman left Yemen and surrendered all cities and territories to Yemen. Based on that, the second period of the Ottoman invasion ended.³⁵

Recorded in history, Turkish Ottoman launched three military attacks against Yemen. In the first attack, Turkey managed to gain control of Sana'a in 1547 A.D, after the Sharafuddin dynasty was lost in the *al-Safiyya* war. The war lasted for 21 years, during which, 80 times wars had taken place until civil war emerged in several areas of Sana'a, where Turkish troops were defeated in 1568 A.D. In the end, Imam al-Mutahhar succeeded in taking control of all territories in Yemen, including Ta'iz and 'Aden. Imam al-Mansur

³²Muhammad bin Ali bin Muhammad Al-Shawkani, *4-Sayl al-Jarrar al-Mutadaffiqū 'ala Hadaiq al-Azhar* (Beirut: Dar Ibnu al-Kathir, 2012), 43.

³³Al-Hamzi, *Tarīkh Al-Yaman Min Kitāb Kanz al-Akhbār Fi Ma'rifat al-Sair Wa al-Akhbār*, 120.

³⁴Ibid., 121.

³⁵Al-Yamani, *Tarīkh Al-Yaman*, 233.

al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, the founder of the al-Qasimiyya dynasty, succeeded in gathering tribes in Yemen and increasing number of attacks on Turkey, eventually succeeding in defeating Turkish troops in 1636 AD under the leadership of Imam al-Muayyad Muhammad bin al-Qashim.³⁶

Turkish troops were also expelled from Yemen for the second time. After the expulsion, Yemen had been living in independence for 220 years until 1849 AD when Turkish ships departed to al-Hadidah based on Sultan 'Abd al-Majid instruction, led by his representative in Jeddah, as well as the ruler of Mecca, al-Sharif Muhammad ibn 'Aun. Bloody wars between Yemen and Turkey continued, until Turkey finally succeeded in reaching Sana'a in 1872 A.D under the command of Ahmad Mukhtar Pasha (1837 - 1919 A.D), the commander of the Turkish troops occupying in Asir region. Despite, he failed in occupying the north and the war continued until the family of Ibn Hamiduddin eventually succeeded in driving the Turkish troops out of the country.³⁷

In the span of the 18th and 19th centuries, there was no war between the *Imām* (Yemeni leaders) and the Ottomans which lasted for about two centuries. At that time, Turkish troops were driven out for the second time (1636 A.D) after their second attack during the al-Qasimiyya period. This period was Yemen's independence from Turkey's occupation which lasted for 220 years. In this span of the centuries, Yemen was led by three *Imams* of the al-Qasimiyya dynasty.³⁸ Firstly, Imam Al-Mansur Ali gained position as the *Imam* in 1775 AD after the death of his father, namely al-Mahdi 'Abbas (1719-1175 AD). He ran his government until his death in 1712 AD. His leadership period lasted for 35 years. He was buried in Bustan al-Misk in Sana'a city. During *Imam* Al-Mansur's time, Al-Shawkani served as a judge at the age of 36 years (1794 AD).³⁹

Secondly, it was Imam al-Mutawakkil 'Alallah Ahmad who was the son of Imam al-Mansur Ali ibn Mahdi 'Abbas. He was born in 1759 AD. His reign began since his father's death in 1809 AD until the end of his life, in 1816 AD. His father died four years after the *coup d'état* attempt by his son. His inauguration was carried out in the night his father died in 1809 A.D. Thirdly, Imam Mahdi 'Abdullah ibn Imam Mutawakkil Ahmad (1773-1835 A.D.). He served as an *imām* or leader from 1816 to 1850 AD. He was the last *imām* in Al-Shawkani's period. He was inaugurated by Al-Shawkani after the dawn of Wednesday in 1816 A.D after the death of al-Mutawakkil Ahmad.⁴⁰

³⁶Al-Bahr, *Tarīkh Al-Yaman al-Mu'ashir*, 45.

³⁷Al-Yamani, *Tarīkh Al-Yaman*, 344.

³⁸Abdullah bin Mustafa Numsuk, *Manhaj Al-Shawkani Fi al-Aqidah* (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, 1999), 30–31. 4

³⁹Al-Shawkani, *Al-Sayl al-Jarrar al-Mutadaffiqu 'ala Hadaiq al-Azhar*, 45.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 46.

5. Religious Problems in Yemen in the 18th and 19th Centuries

In the 18th and 19th centuries in Yemen, various religious schools of thoughts (*madhhabs*) and sects came to appear. However, in carrying out religious life in the midst of such situation, Al-Shawkani had his own stance towards the various sects. He served as a critic of deviating commentaries, as well as a supporter of correct ones. The religious sects that grew in Yemen at that time were the Zaydi, the *Sunni* (al-Shafi'i and al-Ashari), the Sufism groups, and the Ismaili-Batiniyya sects. The followings are profiles of these sects:

5.1. The Zaydi

In the beginning, the Zaydi was a sect of jurisprudence and theology attributed to Imam Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (698-740 A.D). Starting from a sect, the Zaydi then developed into a state. The Zaydi state in Yemen was founded by Imam al-Hadi Yahya ibn Husain (762-910 AD) and continued until 1950 AD. He was born in Medina al-Munawwara in 859 AD, then went to Yemen in 893 AD. He found Yemen a suitable place to spread the knowledge of *Salaf al-Salih*. He returned to Hejaz after having successfully stolen the hearts of the Yemeni people and gained many adherents. After his return to Hejaz, the al-Qaramita group sought to establish their dynasty in Yemen and separated themselves from the Caliphate.⁴¹

The Yemeni people then went to meet Imam al-Hadi Yahya ibn Husayn and offered him a leadership to cast the Qaramita group away and resolve the disputes occurring among tribes. He was extraordinary courageous with extensive knowledge and many works he wrote up to forty. He was the founder of the al-Shurafa 'al-'Alawiyyin dynasty in Yemen. He also put the foundation of al-Hadawi jurisprudence. The Zaydi sect imposed fourteen requirements to be an *imam* or leader, which are: *mukallaf* (responsible) or *baligh* (adult), male, independent, *mujtahid* (expert), from the Alawi group, *Fatimi* (Fatima's heredity), fair, generous, pious healthy-minded, healthy senses, and physically healthy, not physically handicapped, genius, brave and chivalrous.⁴²

Abu Zahrah in his work entitled *Tarikh al-Mazahib al-Islamiyah* explained that the Zaydi sect was well-developed in Hejaz, Iraq and Yemen. Although the area occupied by this sect was far apart, and the *imam* used to keep communicating and doing correspondence. The Zaydi sect was different from other Shia sects. It was not a closed and exclusive sect, because the door of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) was so wide open that resulting in a number of *mujtahid* leaders who enriched the Zaydi sect with their works and recent points of view. In addition, the Zaydi sect also gave a freedom to its scholars to choose other Islamic sects. This was what made it continue to develop and be close to other Islamic sects.⁴³

⁴¹ Abu Zahrah, *Al-Imam Zaid* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1987), 19.

⁴² Ibid., 22.

⁴³ Abu Zahrah, *Tarikh Al-Mazāhib al-Islamiyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1995), 327.

Under the Zaydi reign, there were a sect fanaticism and scholars' and leaders' rigidity of thoughts. There was no quest for propositions by fanatics and blind adherents. The scholars at that time had a significant role in dealing with the phenomenon of fanaticism through their writings, teachings and *fatwas*. The *Imam* (leader) granted the methods proposed by Al-Shawkani, he made the actors behind the riots banned and put into jail far from the capital city.⁴⁴

5.2. The Mu'tazila

Mu'tazila was a religious group and did not immerse themselves in political affairs. This was the opposite of the Khawarij, Shia and Murjia groups, but laterb Mu'tazila engaged themselves in the world of politics, so they talked about the concept of *Imamate* or leadership and the requirements of becoming an *Imam*. Al-Mas'udi explained that according to Mu'tazila, *imam* is the people's choice, because God does not determine certain people to be, and that choice is entirely handed over to the people. Therefore, according to Mu'tazila and the Zaydi groups, the *imamate* or leadership may be in the hands of other than the Quraysh.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, related to the Mu'tazila's emergence in Yemen, Ibn 'Adi in his work *al-Kamil*, as quoted by al-Ghumari, explained that Mu'tazila appeared in Yemen in the first century of its (Mu'tazila's) appearance. A different opinion was expressed by Ibrahim bin al-Qasim, saying that 1149 AD was considered as the beginning of Mu'tazila's appearance in Yemen brought by al-Qadi Ja'far bin Ahmad 'Abdussalam (d. 1177 AD), who was a teacher for the Zaydi group and their *kalam* (scholastic theology) experts in Yemen.⁴⁶

Basically, the Mu'tazila and Zaydi have a very close relationship. This is known from the history of both. Imam Zayd once studied to Wasil ibn 'Ata'. Therefore, the two sects have many things in common, despite some differences. The common things between the two thoughts, Zaydi and Mu'tazila, are stated in the book entitled *Turas* by Imam al-Muayyad billah Yahya ibn Hamzah who left fourteen manuscripts on the science of *kalam* (scholastic theology) and several manuscripts specifically to give a rebuttal to Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111 AD) in his criticism over the Mu'tazila entitled '*Aqd al-La'ali fi al-Raddi' ala Abi Hamid al-Ghazali*'. While the difference between the two thoughts is stated in the book written by Imam Humaidan ibn Yahya ibn Humaidan whose lineage reaches out to Qasim al-Rassi and then to Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Annan, *Tarikh Al-Yaman al-Qadim*, 455.

⁴⁵Ali bin al-Husain Al-Mas'udi, *Muruj Al-Zahab Wa Ma'adin al-Jauhar* (Beirut: Al-Maktabah Al-'Asriyyah, 2005), 78.

⁴⁶Muhammad Hasan bin Ahmad Al-Ghumari, '*Al-Imam al-Shawkani Mufassiran*' (Makkah: *Risalah Dukturah--Jami'ah Ummu al-Qura Makkah*, 1980), 58.

⁴⁷Hasan Ibrahim Hasan, *Tarikh Al-Islam: Al-Siyasi, Wa al-Dini, Wa al-Thaqafi, Wa al-Ijtima'i* (Beirut: Dar al-Jail, 1996), 470.

Although there were two Zaydi sects, one that agreed to Mu'tazila and the other that disagreed, there was a mutually influential relationship among the scholars. Several adherents of Mu'tazila became those of Zaydi and vice versa, some adherents of Zaydi became those of Mu'tazila. There were some who combined the Zaydi and Mu'tazila, such as al-Mahdi Lidinillah Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Murtada who was a Zaydi adherent in matters of *imamate* and Mu'tazila adherent in matters of *ma'rifat* (mysticism), *tauhid* (monotheism), *'adl* (justice), *nubuwwat* (prophecy), *al-wa'd wa al-wa'id* (promises and threats), *al-manzilah baina al-manzilatain* (a place between two) and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (upholding good deeds and forbidding bad). In terms of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), he adhered to the Zaydi, while in terms of *usul fiqh* (branches of jurisprudence), he adhered to the Mu'tazila. While in matters of the life after death, he tended to be closer to the concept by *Ahl al-Sunnah* than to Zaydi.⁴⁸

5.3. The Sunni

Besides the Zaydi sect, the teachings of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah* grew rapidly in Yemen. In matters of creed, this sect tends to adhere to Imam al-Ash'ari's concept. This is different from the Zaydi sect which is dominant in the eastern and northern regions of Yemen. Ash'ari or Ash'ira are the adherents of Hasan Ali ibn Isma'il al-Ash'ari who is attributed to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (d. 936 AD). Al-Ash'ari is attributed to Ash'ar, a famous tribe in Yemen. Ash'ar is Nabat ibn 'Aud ibn Zayd ibn Yashjab ibn 'Arif ibn Zayd ibn Kahlan ibn Saba. He was named after Ash'ar because his mother gave birth to him with hair on his body.⁴⁹

Al-Ash'ari was one of the *salaf* scholars, but he took benefits of *kalam* science to strengthen his creed. At first, he studied to the Mu'tazila in terms of *kalam* science and learned from 'Ali al-Jubba'i, a Mu'tazila scholar at time. However, at one time, there was a debate between Abu Hasan al-Ashari and his teacher dealing with *al-Salah wa al-Aslah* issues, then the two were opposite each other. Among his adherents were al-Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, Imam al-Haramain Abu al-Ma'ali al-Juwaini, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Asfirayini (d. 1027 AD) and Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111 AD), despite their different stance on issues.⁵⁰

Many works have revealed the basic principles of the Ash'ari sect in theology. From the results of these written works review, it is known that his opinions adhered to wasati (middle) and i'tidal (moderate). The al-Ash'ari's moderate stance in Yemen also influenced a lot of Al-Shawkani's thoughts in the field of creed and *kalam* science. The growth of the al-Ash'ari sect in the field of creed in Yemen, as well as the fact that many scholars were affiliated with al-Ash'ari colored Al-Shawkani's thoughts of creed, since

⁴⁸Ibid., 471.

⁴⁹Abu al-Fath Muhammad Al-Shahrastani, *Milal Wa Nihal* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996), 432.

⁵⁰Abdel Qahir Al-Bagdadi, *Al-Farq Baina al-Firaq* (Cairo: Maktabah Ibnu Sina, 1989), 145.

reviewed from the history of his quest for sciences, Al-Shawkani learned a lot from the Sunni scholars although he grew up and thrived in the Zaydi Shia community.

5.4. The Batiniyya

Batiniyya sect is also called Ismailism. The name of this sect is attributed to Isma'il ibn Ja'far al-Siddiq. He was the sixth *imam* in the twelve *Imamiyya* (*isna 'ashriyya*) sect, while the seventh was Musa al-Kazim. However, the Ismailism stipulated that the seventh was his son, Ismail. According to them, the Isma'il's appointment was based on the stipulation of his father, Ja'far, but he died before his father did. Even though he had already died, they decided so. Therefore, the leadership kept going on post-his death. Isma'il's right to leadership was then derived to his son, Muhammad al-Maktum. From that moment on, a doctrine started to appear, claiming that *imams* were hidden or closed, because they determined that an *imam* could be hidden, yet should be obeyed⁵¹.

Ismailism is also known as the Batiniyya. This is due to their tendency to hide themselves and their teachings away from others. Another opinion stated that they are named after Batiniyya because they hide their disbelief and show off their Islam, and they stated that every *zahir* (exoteric) has *batin* (esoteric). In addition, they also said that the *Shari'a* (Islamic laws) have both exoteric (outer) and esoteric (inner) meanings. Common people only know what does appear, while their *imam* knows what lies within (inner). For this reason, they interpreted verses of the Quran with meanings which are very far from their proper ones.⁵²

In the 19th century, there was frequently a dispute between the Batiniyya and the Zaydi sects in Yemen, both in thoughts and physical contacts. Therefore, they grew into opponents for each other that could not be reconciled. The Batiniyya sect considerably asked for a help from the Ottoman dynasty to defeat the Zaydi group, but in the end the Batiniyya sect was shut down by the Ottoman dynasty. Al-Shawkani witnessed the conflict between the Zaydi leaders and the Isma'ili group (*al-Batiniyya-al-Qirmitiyya*); he even issued a fatwa in the form of verdict on *kafir* (the unbeliever) to fight against the Isma'ili group.⁵³

6. Social Inequality In Yemen in 19th Century

In the 19th century, chaotic political and religious situations caused a decadency in terms of social condition. There were several feuds between Islamic forces. Among which were the enmity between Turkey and the Yemen, that between Turkey and Egypt, that between Turkey and the Wahhabi group, that between the Wahhabis and Ashraf al-Mikhlaif al-Sulaimani, that between Ashraf al-Mikhlaif al-Sulaimani and the rulers of Sana'a city.

⁵¹Kamaluddin Nuruddin Marjuni, *Mauqif Al-Zaidiyah Wa Ahl al-Sunnah Min al-'Aqidah al-Isma'iliyah Wa Falsafatuha* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2009), 87.

⁵²Ibid., 88.

⁵³Zahrah, *Tarikh Al-Mazāhib al-Islamiyah*, 389.

Those obviously caused the Islamic society to fall off and their position to shrink before the eyes of the world.

On the local plain, there were a feud between fanatic and neutral groups of scholars and that between intellectuals and common people. The people of Sana'a and their governance mostly went through unstable situations, sometimes they even starved to death on account of the war among tribes that was fought for food. Material was the main factor causing wars among tribes. Whenever there was an opportunity to proclaim independence or the foreign troops rushed into Yemen, wars would flare up and the victims were always the people.

Being conservative was one of the characteristics of this century. This was revealed by al-Salman as describing social reality in the period of Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, who once was in Al-Shawkani's period when the Ottoman dynasty arrived in the 12th century of Hijr, the religious condition among Muslims got worse. This made the scholars more conservative, and their ignorance was triggered by the hatred of the incumbent rulers upon all forms of improvement.

The scholars played a role badly in the midst of the Yemeni people's ignorance on religion. They misled the people to misconception and behavior that contradicted to Islam, thus it made the people look down upon the scholars. Such a thing degraded the degree of the scholars before the eyes of the people.

7. Conclusion

In cross-history, Yemen is a country with ups and down in creating world civilization. It was once well-known as a prosperous country in the era of the Saba' empire and in the early Islamic period. Conversely, it fell down in the middle of modern era. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Yemen experienced a setback and turmoil in terms of political, religious and social scopes. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Muslim countries were also colonized by Westerners. Such conditions had a great impact on the political unrest in Yemen.

On religious side, there were various sects claiming truth themselves. The Zaydi Shi'a and the Sunni claimed the truth on their own. This led to hostility among the Muslims at that time in Yemen. Zaydi as a sect with the biggest adherents at that time gave rise to the fanaticism of the sect and the scholars' and imams' thoughts rigidity. The scholars at that time had a significant role in dealing with the phenomenon of fanaticism through their writings, teachings and *fatwas*. Even so, the Zaydi sect also put forth various famous scholars, such as al-Shawkani and al-Shan'ani.

In social aspect, there was a social gap which resulted in disputes among the components of society in Yemen. The people of Sana'a and their government frequently went through unstable situations, even starving to death due to wars among tribes. At the same time, there was a feud between fanatic and neutral scholars as well as that between scholars and common people. There was no harmonization among the components of Yemeni people at that time.

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