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Citation

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Abstract

This article reconstructs the history of a Zaydi sayyid clan, the Āl Shams al-Dīn, their rise to prominence prior to the Ottoman conquest of Yemen and their continued success in maintaining their status at the top of Yemeni socio-political hierarchies over four centuries. The article explains the reasons for the success of the family as resilient local rulers and argues that the ability of the lords of Kawkabān to build alliances with the Ottomans was a necessary step for them to keep their special status in the next state formed in Yemen—the Qasimid imamate. Their alliance with the Ottomans is placed in a broader context for comparison. Through the analysis of the position of the family in early modern Yemen continuities between three successive political regimes are demonstrated.

Keywords

1 Introduction

The Zaydi imamate in Yemen, a polity that was founded in the late tenth century, was based on the rule of the Ahl al-Bayt. *Sayyid*s, descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, claimed power as imams, as such descent was necessary

for political and religious leadership in the Zaydi community.[1] Only a sayyid who met additional requirements, including a high level of scholarly achievement, could become an imam.[2] In theory, the selection of each new imam was a meritocratic process supported by elite consensus. In practice, sayyid families competed against each other and each clan sought to stabilize dynastic rule in their lineage and accumulate more social prestige for themselves.

This article analyzes how one such sayyid family group, the descendants of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 965/1557), known as the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān, rose to power and remained at the center of Yemeni politics until the late nineteenth century without becoming imams themselves. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this family became the lords (aṣḥāb) of Kawkabān and successfully navigated transitions between three state formations in the region: the pre-Ottoman Zaydi imamate, the Ottoman provincial administration in Yemen between 945/1538 and 1045/1635, and the post-Ottoman Qasimid imamate (1007–1289/1598–1872).[3] The present article explains how they were able to do this and what their resilience can tell us about the continuity of institutional development in early modern Muslim polities.

Kawkabān was an ancient city to the northwest of Ṣanʿāʾ. Rising above the surrounding landscape, it is located on a difficult-to-access mountain peak. Due to its strategic location overlooking the plateau of Ṣanʿāʾ and its easily defendable position there had already been a fort there in the pre-Islamic period.[4]

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1   On the requirement to be a descendant of the Prophet and other requirements for a Zaydi leader see R. Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1912): 11–81; C. van Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960): 75–6; W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965): 141–5. The terms *sayyid* (pl. *sāda*), *sharīf* (pl. *ashrāf*) and others used by descendants of the Prophet in Yemen have a long history. For a discussion of the appropriation of these titles see J. Heiss, "Ein šayḫ ist ein šayḫ, aber was für ein Ding ist ein Sayyid?" In *Veränderung und Stabilität: Normen und Werte in islamischen Gesellschaften*, ed. J. Heiss (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005): 121–36. In this article, the descendants of the Prophet will be referred to as *sayyid*s as this was how contemporaneous sources called them.

2   The abandonment of the classical requirements for the imamate coincided with the ascent of the Qasimid dynasty in Yemen. B. Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 25–46.

3   The title *ṣāḥib* (pl. *aṣḥāb*, lit. 'lord, owner, master') was not exclusive to sayyids in Yemen: local rulers who were scholars or tribal shaykhs also used it. In this article, this term is translated as 'lord(s)' to denote the sovereign powers of these local potentates.

4   C. Smith, "Kawkabān: Some of Its History." *Arabian Studies*, no. VI (1982): 32–50; A. Grohmann, "Kawkabān." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
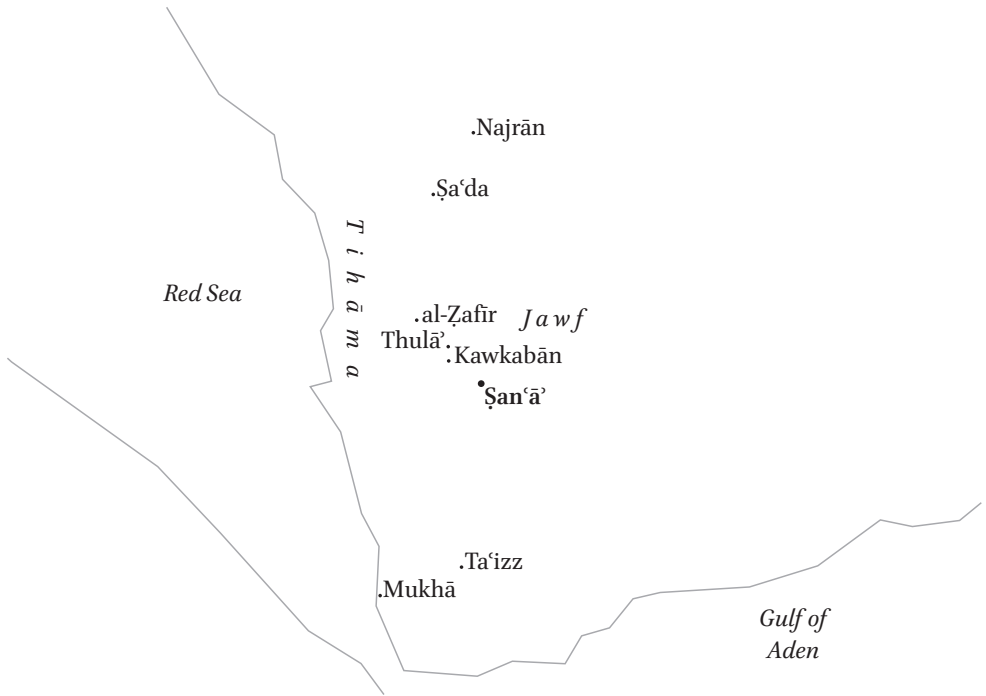
FIGURE 1   Yemen in the early modern period

From Kawkabān, the Āl Shams al-Dīn extended their territorial claims in two directions: towards the plateau and towards the western and northwestern mountainous region of Ḥajja that through its wadis connects the highlands to Tihāma, the lowlands facing the Red Sea.[5] In the early modern period Kawkabān and one of the wadis of Ḥajja, Lāʿa, became increasingly important as a region of coffee cultivation.[6] All this placed Kawkabān at the center of

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5 R.T.O. Wilson, "The Fortification of North-West Yemen (the Emergence of the Modern Administrative Centres)." *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 12 (1982): 96. R.T.O. Wilson, *Gazetteer of Historical North-West Yemen* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1989): 129. Ḥajja started attracting the attention of central powers in Yemen in the Rasulid period (626–858 / 1229–1454), when one of its markets (*sūq*) became a tax collection point for the government. É. Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande: État et commerce sous les sultans Rasūlides du Yémen (626–858/1229–1454)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010): 326, 377. In this period Ḥajja also seems to have become an important stop in the horse trade of Yemen. Wilson, *Gazetteer of Historical North-West Yemen*: 129.

6 The late nineteenth-century French traveler Deflers listed wādī Lāʿa and the mountains of Kawkabān among the principal regions of coffee cultivation in Yemen in his time. A. Deflers, *Voyage au Yemen: journal d'une excursion botanique faite en 1887 dans les montagnes de l'Arabie heureuse* (Paris: P. Klincksieck, 1889): 143.

Yemen's socio-economic and political life and contributed to the efflorescence of Kawkabān under Shams al-Dīn rule.

However, location alone does not explain the success of the lords of Kawkabān. The Āl Shams al-Dīn were one of several sayyid families that controlled strongholds in Yemen and had a say in local politics.[7] In the pages that follow I argue that the key reasons for the endurance of the family are to be found in their ability to navigate the changing political landscape of Yemen. To explain this, I connect the development of the Shams al-Dīn lordship to the special place of sayyids in Zaydi Yemeni society and the ability of this family to form lasting alliances with local tribal elites. I further argue that the Āl Shams al-Dīn, by making themselves indispensable to the Ottoman administration, successfully retained and expanded their privileges in Kawkabān. Due to the position that they gained in the Ottoman period, they were able to carry over their prestige into the next Zaydi imamate, led by the Qasimid dynasty.

2   The Origins of the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān

The power of the Āl Shams al-Dīn in Kawkabān was long in the making. Their ancestors, the powerful sayyid family Banū al-Wazīr, settled to the west of Ṣanʿaʾ in the Ḥajja region and established a strong presence in local centers of learning, *hijra*s.[8] A member of this family, the scholar-imam al-Mahdī

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7 Two other notable Zaydi sayyid clans who were key political players in the same period were the descendants of imam al-Hādī ʿAlī b. al-Muʾayyad (d. 833/1430), known as the Āl al-Muʾayyad of Ṣaʿda, an old Zaydi city in the northwest, and the descendants of imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217), known as the Āl al-Ḥamza of the Jawf, a region to the northeast of Ṣanʿāʾ. On the position of sayyids in Yemeni society and politics see P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989): 140–5; on how the position of sayyids altered in the twentieth century see M. Wachowski, *Sāda in Ṣanʿāʾ: Zur Fremd- und Eigenwahrnehmung der Prophetennachkommen in der Republik Jemen* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2004); G. vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition* (New York NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

8 The Banū al-Wazīr family got its name from Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal b. Ḥajjāj (d. 600/1203), a contender for the Zaydi imamate who set aside his ambitions to become minister, *wazīr*, of imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217). A.Ṣ. Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr wa-majmaʿ al-buḥūr fī tarājim rijāl al-zaydiyya*, ed. A.M.M. Ḥajar (Ṣaʿda: Markaz Ahl al-Bayt li-l-dirāsāt al-islāmiyya, 2004), vol. 4: 369; D. Wilmers, *Beyond Schools: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr's (d. 840/1436) Epistemology of Ambiguity* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2018): 17, n. 10. This sayyid family dominated the political sphere of Zaydi Yemen. A branch of the Banū al-Wazīr claimed the title of imams and established a dynasty in Ṣanʿāʾ that survived until the second half of the fifteenth century. This was one of the very few successful Zaydi dynastic projects in the pre-Ottoman period, and it is probably due to this that their qualifications as imams were debated in later sources. Y.ʿA. al-Ḥibshī, *Tatimmat al-ifāda fī tārīkh*
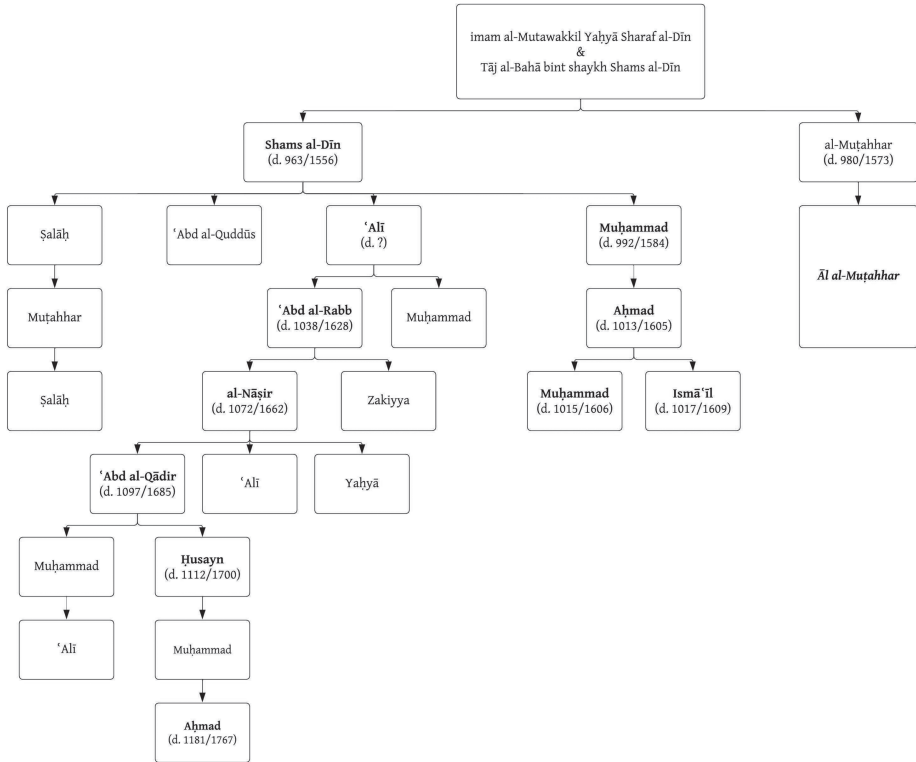
FIGURE 2   Genealogical tree of the Āl Shams al-Dīn, including personalia mentioned in this article. Death dates are included when such information is available. Marked in bold are the rulers of Kawkabān

Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437), made the hijra al-Ẓafīr his residence, attracting scholars there and establishing alliances with local elites.[9]

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al-a'imma al-sāda (MS Berlin, Glaser 37): ff. 67b–70a; Ḥ.Ḥ. al-ʿUlufī, Sīrat imām al-Mutawakil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn (MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF A.3.ar): f. 9a.

On the phenomenon of the Yemeni hijras, scholarly centers located in tribal territories, see W. Madelung, "The Origins of The Yemenite Hijra." In Arabicus Felix Luminosus Britannicus. Essays in Honour of A.F.L. Beeston on His Eightieth Birthday (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1991): 25–44; I.ʿA. al-Akwaʿ, Les Hiğra et les forteresses du savoir au Yémen, trans. B. Marino (Sanaa: Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, 2016): http://books.openedition.org/cefas/1031 (Accessed February 1, 2022).

9   R. Strothmann, G.R. Smith, and R.J. Blackburn, "Al-Mahdī Li-Dīn Allāh Aḥmad." In Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Wilmers, Beyond Schools: 44–54; M.M.Ḥ.Ḥ. Kamālī, al-Imām al-Mahdī Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Murtaḍā wa-athāruhu fī-l-fikr al-islāmī siyāsiyyan wa-ʿaqā'idiyyan (Ṣanaa: Dār al-ḥikmah al-yamāniyya, 1991). On the links of the Banū al-Wazīr to the hijra al-Ẓafīr see al-Akwaʿ, Hijar al-ʿilm wa-maʿāqiluhu fī-l-Yaman, vol. 3: 1312–37.

These preliminary developments laid the foundation for the rise of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, the grandson of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad and the father of Shams al-Dīn, the founder of the Kawkabān sayyid family.

Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was born in 877/1472. He spent his childhood and youth in al-Ẓafīr, the hijra of his grandfather, where he began his studies.[10] His family's prestige and connections allowed him to move to Ṣanʿāʾ to continue his education and to start a political career.[11] Subsequently Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn received the appointment of governor of Ḥajja in the administration of imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sirājī (d. 910/1505).[12] Once back in Ḥajja, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn married Tāj al-Bahāʾ bint shaykh Shams al-Dīn (d. 923/1517) from the banū Fakhr al-Dīn, a clan of local tribal shaykhs.[13] The connection to this family was of high political and symbolic value to the imam, as evidenced by the addition of his wife's family genealogy to his first official biography (*sīra*).[14] Having enriched his position through his alliance with the banū Fakhr al-Dīn, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn launched his claim for the imamate (*daʿwa*) in 912/1506. He was recognized as imam locally, but, between 913–23/1506–17, remained a minor political player overshadowed by the Āl al-Muʾayyad imams of Ṣaʿda and the Sunni Ṭāhirid rulers of Lower Yemen.[15]

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10 M.I. Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *al-Sulūk al-dhahabiyya fī khulāṣat al-sīra al-mutawakkiliyya*, ed. Z. al-Fuḍayl (Jeddah: Maṭbaʿat al-mafāhīm li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-taṣāmīm, 2012): 73–4, 80.

11 al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: ff. 10a–15b; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *al-Sulūk al-dhahabiyya*: 80–4.

12 al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: ff. 77a–77b.

13 Marriage between sayyids and tribeswomen was a common means of forming alliances. Marriages of *sayyida*s to tribesmen, however, was hindered by *kafāʾa* (equality in descent) rules. S. Weir, *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007): 63–4, 139–42. A recent article analyzing the development of sayyid-tribal intermarriage patterns in Yemen argues that these patterns took shape only in the thirteenth century. A. Gingrich, J. Heiss, and O. Kommer, "Between Diversity and Hegemony: Transformations of Kinship and Gender Relations in Upper Yemen, Seventh-to Thirteenth-Century CE." *History and Anthropology* 32 (2021): 188–210. https://doi.org/10. 1080/02757206.2021.1905242. Over the course of his life, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was married to two other women of tribal background. al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: ff. 71b–75a. The banū Fakhr al-Dīn had been building up a strong presence in Ḥajja since the thirteenth century. The eponymous founder of the clan, ʿAlī b. Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥajjāj, controlled Mabīn, the administrative center of Ḥajja, in the seventh / thirteenth century. al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: f. 72ab; A.F. Ibn Diʿtham, *al-Sīra al-sharīfa al-manṣūriyya: sīrat al-imām ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza (593–614 AH)*, ed. A.M. ʿAbd al-ʿĀṭī (Beirut: Dār al-fikr al-muʿāṣir, 1993), vol. 1: 190–1; vol. 2: 888.

14 al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: ff. 72a–73b.

15 M.ʿA.Y. al-Zuḥayf, *Maʾāthir al-abrār fī tafṣīl mujmalāt jawāhir al-akhbār wa yusammā al-lawāḥiq al-nadiyya bi-l-ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya (Sharḥ Bassāmat al-sayyid Ṣārim al-dīn*

The turning point for imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was the arrival of an expeditionary force of the Mamluk Sultanate. The Egyptian Mamluks first ousted the Ṭahirid rulers and then, in short time, found themselves without support due to the Ottoman conquest of Egypt.[16] The imam benefited from the resulting power vacuum and led a successful attack on Ṣanʿāʾ in 923/1517. In 924/1518, he captured Kawkabān.[17] Over a subsequent decade of military campaigns, he expanded his control over Yemen, reaching the cities of Ṣaʿda and Najrān in the north and Taʿizz in the south.[18] The resulting Sharaf al-Dīn imamate was one of the most powerful states built by a Zaydi imam in Yemen before the Ottoman conquest of 945/1538.[19]

In the decades before the Ottomans' arrival in Yemen, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn divided administrative control over his imamate between his sons. What started as a distribution of administrative responsibilities, was transformed, after a succession crisis, into the division of the imamate into inheritable domains. Control over Kawkabān was transferred to one of the imam's sons born to Tāj al-Bahāʾ, Shams al-Dīn, who became the founder of the lineage of Kawkabān rulers discussed in this present article.[20] After Shams al-Dīn

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al-Wazīr), ed. A.A. al-Wajīh and Kh.Q.M. al-Mutawakkil (Amman: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfiyya, 2002), vol. 3: 1276, 1334–7. For an overview of the rise and fall of the Ṭāhirids see Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*: 681–3. It seems that the position of the imam in the years 1506–17 was dire since his court historian and biographer al-ʿUlufī chose not to report on the events of that decade. al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: f. 108b. A similar silence is visible in the chronicle of ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, the great-grandson of the imam. ʿĪ. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. I.A. al-Maqḥafī (Sanaa: Markaz ʿAbbādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424/2003): 22–31.

16   Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 31–55; R.J. Blackburn, "The Era of Imâm Sharaf Al-Dîn Yahyâ and His Son al-Muṭahhar (10th/16th Century)," *Yemen Update. Bulletin of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies* 42 (2000): 4–8, 74; R.B. Serjeant, "The post-medieval and modern History of Ṣanʿāʾ and the Yemen, ca. 953–1382/1515–1962", in R.B. Serjeant and R. Lewcock, eds. *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City.* (London: The World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983): 68–9.

17   This conquest was probably facilitated by the governor of the town who was related to the banū Fakhr al-Dīn. Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *al-Sulūk al-dhahabiyya*: 346–7; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: ff. 72a–73b.

18   A.M. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa fī akhbār aʾimmat al-zaydiyya* (MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF D.545.ar): f. 31ab.

19   Blackburn, "The Era of Imâm Sharaf Al-Dîn Yahyâ and His Son al-Muṭahhar (10th/16th Century)": 4–8, 74.

20   During the succession crisis of 948/1541 another son of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and Tāj al-Bahāʾ, al-Muṭahhar, revolted against his father's choice of heir for the imamate. On these events, see al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 31; Blackburn, "The Era of Imâm Sharaf Al-Dîn Yahyâ and His Son al-Muṭahhar (10th/16th Century)": 4–8, 74. On the division of

died in 963/1556, his son Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn became the second lord of Kawkabān.[21] It is unclear whether imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, who was still alive at the time, authorized this transfer of power.[22] Nevertheless, the effective foundation of a local dynasty received no opposition in Yemen's Zaydi political elites. Thus, the social and political successes of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in the Ḥajja region, founded on a generation-long progression of settlement and networking, enabled the rise of the Āl Shams al-Dīn as local rulers in the Ottoman period.

3   The Lords of Kawkabān and the Ottoman Conquest

The period of Ottoman rule in Yemen (945–1045/1538–1635) made it necessary for the Sharaf al-Dīn family to adapt to new political conditions. They went through three stages of interaction with the new forces and eventually found a way to benefit from the new situation. An initial phase of collaboration (945–76/1538–68) was followed by a period of opposition and a revolt put down by the Ottomans in 976–77/1569–70. After this began the third stage of interaction, a new period of coexistence with the Ottomans that lasted until 1045/1635. During this last phase of Ottoman domination in Yemen, the family made themselves indispensable to the conqueror's regime as diplomatic intermediaries and providers of military support. As a result, they were able to strengthen their hereditary control over Kawkabān, an achievement that had direct implications for their political survival in the post-Ottoman period.

The link between the lords of Kawkabān and the Ottoman governors started to develop shortly after the arrival of the Ottomans to Yemen in 945/1538. Shams al-Dīn, struggling to subdue his rebellious brother al-Muṭahhar, joined forces with the first Ottoman governors of Yemen, who at the time controlled just Lower Yemen and were only beginning to expand northwards. Özdemir Pasha (governor 956–62/1549–54), who led the conquest of Ṣanʿāʾ in 953–54/1547, was one such early ally.[23] Even though no details of written agreements are preserved, Shams al-Dīn appears to have created a precedent for collaboration between his descendants and the Ottoman administration of

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the imamate after the succession crisis see Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 120–21; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 33a; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *al-Sulūk al-dhahabiyya*: 346–7.

21   Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *al-Sulūk al-dhahabiyya*: 354.

22   Sources claim that the death of Shams al-Dīn was concealed from imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 151; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *al-Sulūk al-dhahabiyya*: 354.

23   R.J. Blackburn, "The Ottoman Penetration of Yemen: An Annotated Translation of Özdemür Bey's *Fetḥnāme* for the Conquest of Ṣanʿāʾ in Rajab, 945 / August, 1547." *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 55–100.

Yemen. From Özdemir's time until the revolt of al-Muṭahhar in 976/1568 the Ottomans treated the Shams al-Dīn family as mediators in their negotiations with other Zaydi sayyid clans in Yemen.[24]

In exchange for his assistance to the Ottomans, Shams al-Dīn sought to make them recognize the legitimacy of his family's rule in Kawkabān. To this end, in 962/1555 he sent his son Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, the future lord of Kawkabān, to greet the recently appointed governor Muṣṭafā Nashshār Pasha.[25] The Ottomans were no strangers to hereditary rule by local potentates and used it to their own ends in topographically challenging frontier regions of their empire. Over the course of the sixteenth century they used this tool to bring into their orbit a variety of local political elites including the Kurdish tribal leaders in the provinces of eastern Anatolia and Iraq, the Druze Maʿns of Shuf and the Shiʿi Harfushes and Hamadas in Lebanon, as well as Hungarian frontier elites.[26] Shams al-Dīn, knowingly or not, benefited from this pattern for the purposes of securing special status and hereditary rule in Kawkabān for his family.

However, within a decade, this first period of cooperation between the Ottomans and the Zaydi elites disintegrated into hostility. This crisis started due to the inopportune economic policies of Maḥmūd Pasha (governor in 967–72/1560–65) as well as the division of Ottoman Yemen into two provinces in 972/1565, which led to conflict between the two governors, Riḍwān Pasha and Murād Pasha (governors in 972–974/1565–67).[27] The conflict within the

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24   For example, when in 962/1555 Muṣṭafā Nashshār Pasha arrived in Yemen, he immediately entrusted Shams al-Dīn with a role in peace negotiations with al-Muṭahhar. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 134, 143–4. The connection between the Ottomans and the Shams al-Dīn family was then referenced by his son Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn in his letter exchanges with the Ottomans sieging him in Kawkabān. M.A. al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569–71*, trans. C. Smith (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002): 162.

25   This was at the beginning of said pasha's second term (962–966/1555–56) in Yemen. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 150.

26   M.A. Bakhīt, *The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1982): 170–5; S. Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 36–40, 58–87; G. Ágoston, "A Flexible Empire: Authority and Its Limits on the Ottoman Frontiers." In *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities, and Political Changes*, ed. K.H. Karpat and R.W. Zens (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003): 18–23; M. Dehqan and V. Genç. "Kurdish Emirs in the 16th-Century Ruus Registers." *Der Islam* 96, no. 1 (2019): 87–120. https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2019-0003.

27   Kānī Çelebī, a later Ottoman official in Yemen, blames the disagreements between the pashas on this decision. M.M. Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir* (MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF E.391.ar): ff. 127ab; R.J. Blackburn, "The Collapse of Ottoman Authority in Yemen, 968/1560–976/1568." *Die Welt Des Islams* 19, no. 1/4 (1979): 137–8; R.J. Blackburn, "Maḥmūd Pasha." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012); J. Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions: Myth, Memory,*

Ottoman system was exacerbated by the fact that several Ottoman governors failed to build relationships of trust with possible allies among Yemeni elites. The final straw for the lords of Kawkabān was the decision of Riḍwān Pasha to revoke the tax benefits of ʿAlī b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, the brother of the by then deceased Shams al-Dīn. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, the second lord of Kawkabān, and al-Muṭahhar saw this decision as an infringement on the privileges that were negotiated with Özdemir Pasha.[28] Infighting between the Ottoman governors and a discontent shared by the Zaydi sayyids were key factors in the revolt against the Ottomans.

In response to this crisis, Koca Sinān Pasha led a military campaign to reconquer Yemen in 976/1569.[29] The governor, tasked with bringing the Zaydis of the northern highlands to submission, identified Shibām and its fort Kawkabān as key to the success of his campaign.[30] After a seven-month siege, Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn started negotiating for a place in the Ottoman system. The agreement that he reached with Koca Sinān Pasha in 977/1570 ushered the second period of Ottoman rule in Yemen and a more structured mode of cooperation between the local elites and the Ottoman administration.

Several things stand out in this agreement. First, the sayyid was required to provide hostages to the Ottomans who would reside in Ṣanʿāʾ as a guarantee of the loyalty of the family. The brother of Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, ʿAbd al-Quddūs, was one of the individuals who took this role.[31] The practice of taking hostages was common in Yemen long before the arrival of the Ottomans, and was often employed by political powers to ensure the loyalty of the tribes.[32] Cases when Zaydi sayyids became hostage were rare but not unheard of.[33]

    and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003): 83.

28   M.A. al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī fī-l-fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī: tārīkh al-Yaman fī al-qarn al-ʿāshir al-hijrī maʿa tawassuʿ fī akhbār ghazawāt al-jarākisa wa-l-ʿuthmāniyyīn li dhalik al-quṭr*, ed. A. al-Jāsir (Riyadh: Dār al-Yamāma li-l-baḥth wa-l-tarjama wa-l-nashr, 1967): 165–66; Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir*: ff. 127ab.

29   The history of this expedition is well-researched. See H. Yavuz, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923–1012/1517–1604)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. 1: cxxxi–clx; Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions*: 86.

30   C. Smith, "Kawkabān, the Key to Sinān Pasha's Campaign in the Yemen (March 1569– March 1571)." *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 32 (2002): 287–94.

31   Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir*: f. 129a; S. Baştürk, "Telhîsü'l-Berkü'l-Yemânî / Ahbârü'l-Yemânî (tahlil ve metin)" (PhD Dissertation, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2010): 397. Al-Nahrawālī is the only source I know that mentions two brothers, ʿAbd al-Quddūs and ʿAbdallāh. al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen*: 166.

32   E. Peskes, "Geiseln in der jemenitischen Geschichte." *Archiv orientální*, 81 (2013): 285–306. https://doi.org/10.47979/aror.j.81.2.285-306.

33   Peskes highlights a case of two children of a Zaydi noble, a son of imam, delivered as hostages to the Rasulid ruler of Lower Yemen in the thirteenth century. Peskes, "Geiseln

Secondly, the agreement stipulated that Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn should receive an official Ottoman title from Istanbul (*sancakbey*, or district administrator) and a salary.[34] Overall, the agreement between Muḥammad and Sinān Pasha affirmed the status of the family as Ottoman allies and placed the Zaydi sayyids under Ottoman control through the hostages.

The next four decades were marked by cooperation between the Āl Shams al-Dīn and the Ottoman governors, especially under Ḥasan Pasha (governor in 989–1013/1580–1604) and Sinān Pasha (1013–16/1604–7). Shortly after Ḥasan Pasha's arrival in Yemen, he confirmed the *sancakbey* status of Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn and his son Aḥmad b. Muḥammad.[35] Through his mediation in 991/1583 the head of the family received an exemption letter (*muʿāf-nāme*) from the sultan confirming the family's hereditary rule over Kawkabān.[36] From this period onwards, the title of lords (*aṣḥāb*) of Kawkabān was used in Ottoman financial registers.[37] The Āl Shams al-Dīn continued to receive salary payments, although in significantly smaller amounts than those stipulated by

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in der jemenitischen Geschichte": 293, n. 30. ʿAbd al-Quddūs disappeared from the narrative historical record after his relocation to Ṣanʿā. Ottoman financial documents indicate that he continued to reside there and received allowance as a *müteferriḳa*, member of a special military corps, between 983/1575 and 987/1579. TSMA D.770, f. 4b; TSMA D.161, f. 4b; TSMA D.311, f. 3b; TSMA D.661, f. 4b; TSMA D.666, f. 3b; TSMA D.670, f. 9b. Given that the same financial registers keep separate lists of expenses for the provision of hostages (*rahāʾin*) separately, it seems that ʿAbd al-Quddūs's status eventually became different from that of other prisoners. According to Metin Kunt's analysis, ʿAbd al-Quddūs falls into the sub-category of sons of officers who could become members of the *müteferriḳa*. M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983): 39. This shift in handling ʿAbd al-Quddūs might indicate that once the Ottomans no longer doubted the loyalty of the Āl Shams al-Dīn, they loosened control over them.

34   The amount that Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn was due to receive annually was 600,000 *ʿuthmānī*. On the agreement including the stipulation of a *sancakbey* appointment to Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn see Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir*: f. 129a; al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen:* 167. Al-Nahrawālī reports that Sinān Pasha wrote down the agreement on one of the blank sheets bearing the sultanic seal (*ṭughra*). al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen:* 165–7.

35   ʿĀ. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan fī akhbār siyar al-bāshā Ḥasan* (MS Leiden, Or. 477): f. 59; Mühimme Defteri (MD) 46, ##263, 266.

36   MD 49, #115. The document uses the terms *yurdluḳ* and *ocāḳluḳ* to denote the family's hereditary ownership of land. This was empire-wide practice. See O. Kılıç, "Ocaklık." In *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2007) https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ocaklik (accessed February 1, 2022); K. Saito, "16. ve 17. Yüzyıllar Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'nda Timarların Çeşitli Biçimleri: Farklı Uygulamalara Tek İsim Koymak." *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 51 (2018): 63–113.

37   The earliest example is from the 1002/1594 register, MAD D.3084, f. 36, in which the son of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn is described as the son of the lord (*ṣāḥib*) of Kawkabān.

the original treaty cited in al-Nahrawalī.[38] In documents of this period, this sayyid family is more visible than any other Zaydi sayyid clan in the region.[39] This documentary evidence confirms that they had close ties with the Ottoman administration.

4   The Place of the Lords of Kawkabān in the Ottoman System

From the conclusion of the 977/1570 treaty and until the Ottomans left Yemen in 1045/1635, the Āl Shams al-Dīn were central to Ottoman provincial rule in the northern highlands. Under Ḥasan Pasha and Sinān Pasha, the family had several functions: 1) they acted as intermediaries between Ottoman provincial officials and the Zaydi elites, including their relatives of the Āl al-Muṭahhar and the tribes; 2) they provided military support for Ottoman campaigns; 3) they were legitimizing elements of Ottoman policy against Zaydi uprisings. Overall, the Ottomans sought close military and diplomatic cooperation with the Āl Shams al-Dīn. Far from being one-sidedly exploited by the Ottomans, the Shams al-Dīns of Kawkabān used their relationship with the new dominant power to strengthen their local positions. The Āl Shams al-Dīn saw the Ottomans as a tool to achieve their own goals of dominating among the sayyid clans of Yemen. The alliance with the Āl Shams al-Dīn indicates the success of the Ottoman policy at integrating non-Ottoman political elites into their orbit and making them invested in the perpetuation of the Ottoman system.

4.1   *Intermediaries and Providers of Trustworthy Information*
The Āl Shams al-Dīn provided an invaluable service for the Ottoman governor in Yemen, creating trustworthy information channels for him in what was for him an unfamiliar region. The lord of Kawkabān, Muḥammad b. Shams

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38   The salary amounts stated in MAD D.3084, f. 36 (from 1002/1594), MAD D.7092, f. 27b (from 1004/1586), MAD D.1382, f. 21 (from 1005/1597), MAD D.2215, f. 24 (from 1008/1600) are about 20,000 akçe annually for Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, and for his son about 100,000 akçe annually.

39   The *mühimme defterleri*, records of Ottoman decrees, can be used as one measure of such visibility. I was able to find six mentions of members of Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān after the revolt of al-Muṭahhar, meaning that they were referred to in a positive key or addressed with orders (MD 46, ##263, 266; MD 47, #414; MD 49, #115; MD 53, #235; MD 62, #454). To compare, all other Yemeni Zaydi sayyids in the service of the Ottomans receive a total of just six mentions in the *mühimme* records, with four of those concerning members of the Āl Muṭahhar, the closest relatives (cousins) of the Āl Shams al-Dīn (MD 25, #1783; MD 39, #115; MD 52, ##849, 1030; MD 53, ##235, 442). For the Ottomans, Yemeni politics revolved around descendants of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.

al-Dīn, and Ḥasan Pasha regularly exchanged letters.[40] This contact between the sayyids and the Ottoman governor was constant and reciprocal. Another piece of evidence pointing to the importance of the informational function of the lords of the Kawkabān comes from Ottoman financial registers, which regularly mention payments to the *mankib* (spokesman) of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān. Based on the number of mentions, Aḥmad was one of the top correspondents of the Ottoman governor, rivalled only by Ottoman officials.[41] This placed the lords of Kawkabān at the center of the Ottoman informational network in Yemen.

The Āl Shams al-Dīn were also valuable to the Ottoman administration as negotiators. They started acting as intermediaries between the Ottomans and the local sayyids immediately after the 977/1570 agreement, viewing this as an opportunity to increase their own prestige. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn's first action in this capacity was the facilitation of peace talks between his uncle al-Muṭahhar and the Ottoman officials.[42] After the death of al-Muṭahhar in 980/1573, the Āl Shams al-Dīn became the main link between their cousins, known collectively as Āl al-Muṭahhar, and the Ottomans.[43] This mediation was initiated on behalf of both the Ottoman governor and the Āl al-Muṭahhar, when members of that family wanted concessions from the Ottomans.[44] Similarly, the lords of Kawkabān interceded on behalf of their tribal relatives in Ḥajja.[45] In both cases the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān benefited from the acts of intercession, proving themselves indispensable to both the local Zaydi elites and to the Ottomans.

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40   On some of these letter and gift exchanges see al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: ff. 47, 58, 59, 69, 98, 102, 106–7, 128, 137.

41   MAD D.7555, ff. 243–64. These folios contain the *defter-i inʿāmāt*, a register of people to whom reward payments (*inʿām*) were made for one-off services. M.S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı belgelerinin dili: diplomatik* (Istanbul: Kubbealtı Akademisi Kültür ve San'at Vakfı, 1993): 264–5. From this document it transpires that in 1008/1599–1600 the governor was in touch with the lord of Kawkabān twenty-three times, and with Sinān bey, the future governor of Yemen Sinān Pasha, twenty-five times.

42   al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen*: 168–70.

43   Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn facilitated contacts with the sons of his uncle al-Muṭahhar—ʿAlī Yaḥyā, Luṭfallāh, and Ghawth al-Dīn,—and Ḥasan Paşa, immediately after the arrival of the governor to Yemen. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: ff. 22, 44, 133.

44   When in 990/1582 ʿAbdallāh b. al-Muṭahhar and Ghawth al-Dīn b. al-Muṭahhar decided to join the Ottoman side, they first reached out to their cousin Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, the lord of Kawkabān, who interceded on their behalf. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: ff. 96, 102.

45   Muhammad b. Shams al-Dīn composed a petition on behalf of the shaykhs of al-Ẓafīr, his relatives through his grandmother Tāj al-Bahāʾ, to Ḥasan Pasha. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: f. 237.

The Ottomans increasingly relied on the intermediary functions of these Zaydi sayyids. When in 1006/1597 imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad, the founder of the Qasimid dynasty of Zaydi imams, rose against Ottoman rule, the lords of Kawkabān were called on by their Ottoman partners to negotiate with him. With the authorization of the Ottomans, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, the third lord of Kawkabān, extended an offer to the imam to join the Ottoman provincial administration.[46] These contacts indicate that the Āl Shams al-Dīn were, in the eyes of the Ottomans, reliable experts when it came to navigating Yemeni elite politics. Moreover, the acceptance of their intercession by the Zaydi elites confirms the leadership status of the Shams al-Dīn family within Zaydi society in the Ottoman period.

4.2 *Military Support*

A central condition of the agreements between the Ottomans and the lords of Kawkabān was the provision of military support. Unfortunately, no documentary record of the structure, size, and equipment of the army of the lords of Kawkabān survives. Evidence from narrative sources implies that it consisted of two types of military units—a standing army including slaves and a militia, comprised of tribal volunteers.[47] As Ottoman allies the lords of Kawkabān were expected, similarly to their peers across the Empire, to perform their military duty as commanders. However, there are no traces in the Ottoman documentary record of the military involvement of the Āl Shams al-Dīn between 976/1569 and the governorship of Ḥasan Pasha. The surviving meticulous military and financial registers compiled under the governor Kuyucu Murād Pasha

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46   al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 170b. The offer was rejected.

47   The origins of the tradition of slave-soldiers and officers in the army of the lords of Kawkabān can be traced back to the times of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, who coopted the Mamluk units that remained in Yemen. al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*: f. 124a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 116. In 952/1545 al-Muṭahhar deployed an army comprising Turks and slaves (*ʿabīd*). Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 116. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh does not specify the origin of the slaves, but it is most probable that they were from East Africa. Later, Qasimid sources clearly associate slaves with African origin, and Qasimid period officers were slaves as well. Serjeant, "The post-medieval and modern history of Ṣanʿāʾ and the Yemen, ca. 953–1382/1515–1962": 83–4, 87. On African slavery in pre-modern Yemen see M.M. Kloss, "Eunuchs at the Service of Yemen's Rasūlid Dynasty (626–858/1229–1454)." *Der Islam* 98, no. 1 (2021): 6–26. https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2021-0002. It is harder to find traces of the tribal component of the Kawkabān army. In 1006/1597, three hundred men affiliated with Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn surrendered to the supporters of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. The historian al-Sharafī describes them as being tribesmen from the two largest Yemeni tribal confederations, Ḥāshid and Bakīl. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 137b.

(983–8/1576–81) do not mention Kawkabān or its army.[48] This suggests that in this earlier period the lords of Kawkabān were not yet fully integrated into the Ottoman fiscal-military system or were considered unreliable allies.

During the governorships of Ḥasan Pasha and Sinān Pasha a shift happened because the Ottomans faced insurrections led by the Zaydi imams al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Muʾayyadī in 987–93/1579–85 and al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad in 1006/1597. In this period, the lords of Kawkabān regularly joined Ottoman campaigns with an army of their own. It was for this military support that they were rewarded with hereditary privileges (see above).[49] They also received annual (salyāne) payments that they could direct towards military expenses.[50]

4.3   Allies in Subduing Zaydi Resistance to the Ottomans

By 991/1583, when Ḥasan Pasha's petition to the sultan to provide his Kawkabānī allies with exemption status was granted, imam al-Nāṣīr Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Muʾayyadī in the al-Ahnūm region (located to the northwest of Ṣanʿāʾ and bordering the Ḥajja region) had been revolting against the Ottomans for several years.[51] The Ottoman administration in Yemen increasingly saw the sayyids of Kawkabān as a counterbalance to such claimants to the imamate. Given their sayyid status and lineage, the lords of Kawkabān could provide military support to the Ottomans without further alienating Zaydi elites. At the same time, the Āl Shams al-Dīn were interested in suppressing candidates for the imamate from unrelated sayyid families, as this allowed them to keep their social and political prestige.

The first campaign in which the Āl Shams al-Dīn demonstrated their value as allies continued from 989/1581 to 994/1586 and was directed against the

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48   For this article I checked the following financial registers compiled under Kuyucu Murād Pasha for information about Kawkabān: for the year 985/1578: TSMA D.666, TSMA D.792, TSMA D.793, TSMA D.729, TSMA D.161, TSMA D.661; for the year 986/1579: TSMA D.182, TSMA D.311, TSMA D.312, TSMA D.932, TSMA D.2136, TSMA D.4381, TSMA D.4804, TSMA D.7684; for the year 987/1580: TSMA D.670; for the year 988/1581: TSMA D.753. I was unable to find any mention of military units from Kawkabān in these registers. On Kuyucu Murad Pasha's biography and activities in Yemen see C. Orhonlu, "Murad Paşa, Kuyucu." In İslam Ansiklopedisi, vol. VIII (1979): 651–4; Yavuz, Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923–1012/1517–1604), vol. 1: clxiv–clxvi.

49   al-Duʿāmī, al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan: ff. 304–5; MD 49, #115.

50   MAD D.3084, f. 36 (from 1002/1594), MAD D.1382, f. 21 (from 1005/1597), MAD D.2215, f. 24 (from 1008/1600).

51   Imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud belonged to the Āl al-Muʾayyad sayyid family of Ṣaʿda. See his biography (sīra) A.Sh. al-Lawzī, Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir li-dīn allāh Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF B.35.ar): ff. 48a–119a.

above-mentioned imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan. In that campaign their central role was to deal with their paternal cousins, the Āl al-Muṭahhar, many of whom supported the imam. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn acted both militarily and diplomatically by assisting the siege of Thulāʾ, a fort not far from Kawkabān, controlled by the Āl Muṭahhar, and by facilitating negotiations.[52] The final agreement between the Āl Muṭahhar and the Ottomans was signed in the presence of Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn in Kawkabān, and Thulāʾ surrendered.[53] By dealing with the Āl Muṭahhar, the Ottomans and the Āl Shams al-Dīn weakened the imam, who was soon arrested and exiled to Istanbul.[54] This campaign demonstrated the effectiveness of the Shams al-Dīns of Kawkabān as diplomats and military allies. At the same time, they succeeded in dealing with the imam who threatened their control over Ḥajja and in establishing their place in the socio-political hierarchy above their relatives, the Āl al-Muṭahhar.

In 1006/1597 imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad began his uprising against the Ottomans. The role of the Āl Shams al-Dīn in this second campaign illustrates the progressive integration of the family into the Ottoman provincial system. The commander of the Ottoman forces in a speech addressed to his officers insisted that the lord of Kawkabān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, be nominated leader of the campaign.[55] Even though eventually an Ottoman officer led the war operation, the openly discussed suggestion that a Zaydi sayyid with special ties to the Ottomans lead a joint military campaign indicates a further rapprochement between the Ottomans and the Āl Shams al-Dīn. In addition to military assistance, the Āl Shams al-Dīn were entrusted with the custody of high-ranking prisoners, members of the imam's family. Among the prisoners held in Kawkabān between 1010/1601 and 1016/1608 were the wives of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and his eldest son, the future imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad (r. 1029–54/1620–44), as well as members of the imam's council.[56] The duty to oversee high-ranking prisoners speaks to the trust the Ottomans had for their Shams al-Dīn allies.

4.4 A Special Relationship?

The Āl Shams al-Dīn remained financially independent from the Ottoman administration for a major part of the Ottoman century in Yemen. There are no

52 The Banū Fakhr al-Dīn shaykhs of Ḥajja, the maternal uncles and brothers-in-law of the Āl Shams al-Dīn and Āl al-Muṭahhar, also assisted in the negotiations. al-Duʿāmī, al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan: ff. 279–80.

53 al-Duʿāmī, al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan: ff. 19, 107–8.

54 Ibn Luṭfallāh, Rawḥ al-rūḥ: 224–26; al-Lawzī, Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī: ff. 111b–112b.

55 al-Sharafī, al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa: f. 147b.

56 al-Sharafī, al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa: f. 167a.

records of taxes of any kind paid to the Ottoman governor from the Kawkabān region, and aside from lavish gifts that were reciprocally exchanged between the family and the Ottoman governors there is no record of tributary payments either.[57] Moreover, during the Ottoman period the mint controlled by the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān produced its own coinage in the name of Ottoman sultans.[58] We have also hypothesized earlier that the Āl Shams al-Dīn were bearing sole responsibility for the provision of their army. We may conclude that the family were allowed to pursue an independent 'domestic policy.'

While the lords of Kawkabān enjoyed a special status, they had no right to territorial expansion, acquisition of military technology or a 'foreign policy' of their own. First, the Ottomans considered that Ottoman military equipment provided to the family remained under Ottoman control. During the siege of Thulā', Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn requested permission to take a cannon (*madfaʿ*) from Kawkabān to the siege. The governor forbade him to do so.[59] Secondly, any decisions about the expansion of territory under Āl Shams al-Dīn control or peace agreements had to receive the approval of the Ottoman governors.[60]

Despite these limitations, the position of the Āl Shams al-Dīn was entirely unlike that of other Zaydi sayyid allies of the Ottomans in Yemen. While two other sayyid families—the Āl al-Muṭahhar, mentioned earlier, and sayyids from the Āl al-Ḥamza of the Jawf region to the northeast of Ṣanʿāʾ—enjoyed similar privileges in Ottoman Yemen, these sayyids were in fact treated quite differently than their Kawkabānī peers.[61] They would have to travel to Ṣanʿāʾ to receive their appointments, whereas in the Āl Shams al-Dīn case, an Ottoman delegation would travel to Kawkabān with the necessary documents.[62] Unlike

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57   Gift exchanges were integral to any encounter between the family and the Ottoman administration of Yemen. Al-Duʿāmī is an invaluable source of descriptions of this proto-col. See, for example, al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: ff. 59–60, 66, 186–7, 211, 228–9.

58   F. Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'al-Mawzaʿī al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl mam-lakat al-Yaman taḥt ẓill ʿadālat Āl ʿUṯmān* (Cairo: IFAO, 1999): 336.

59   al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: f. 195. Al-Duʿāmī does not provide an explanation for this decision, but one suspects that the governor was wary of the desire of the lords of Kawkabān to expand the territories under their control.

60   For instance, in 991/1583 when Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn was mediating a truce (*ṣulḥ*) between one of his Āl-al-Muṭahhar cousins and the Ottoman governor, he had to request permission to sign a separate agreement (*ittifāq*) with his relative. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: f. 107.

61   Their claims to hereditary rule in certain regions were recognized and they received the *sancakbey* title. The *sancak*-holder status of the Āl al-Ḥamza was confirmed under Ḥasan Pasha. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: ff. 56–7. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, the cousin of Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, received his *sancak* appoint-ment from Ḥasan Pasha the same year. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: f. 63.

62   al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: ff. 56–7, 63, 324.

the military forces of Kawkabān that were seen as the responsibility of the lord of Kawkabān, the military units of these allies were viewed as subject to Ottoman control.[63] These sayyids were rarely trusted with negotiation functions.[64] This indicates that the Ottoman provincial administration was attempting to exert greater control over these sayyid families, while granting the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān special privileges.

Over several decades of close cooperation with the Ottomans, the Āl Shams al-Dīn developed into a force to contend with in Yemen. The relations between the family and the Ottoman conquerors went from a wary alliance to close cooperation in the military and diplomatic spheres, in particular under Ḥasan Pasha and Sinān Pasha. Eventually, 'the Ottoman century' in Yemen brought official recognition of their family's hereditary right to rule Kawkabān. These developments strengthened the family's special status among Yemeni political elites and made it possible for them to maintain their control of Kawkabān after the rise of the Qasimid dynasty.

5   The Āl Shams al-Dīn and the Qasimids after 'the Ottoman Century'

After the death of Sinān Pasha in 1016/1607, Ottoman rule in the region started to disintegrate. Conflicts arose within Ottoman ranks, giving the Qasimid imamate opportunity to claim more territories.[65] The territorial expansion of the Qasimid state endangered the position of the Āl Shams al-Dīn.[66] Despite attempts to restore balance in the region, the retreat of Ottoman power in the face of the Qasimid imams could not be slowed down.[67] Hoping to profit from the booming coffee trade, the last Ottoman governors of Yemen

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63   For example, military units of the sayyids of Jawf in 969/1561 were appointed (*taʿyīn shodand*) to protect the pass Naqīl ʿUjayl and received payments for their service. TSMA D.314, f. 20b. Members of the Āl Muṭahhar appear as commanders of Ottoman and not of their own military units. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 147b.

64   While certain members of the Āl al-Ḥamza took on negotiation functions during the days of Sinān Pasha, but the Āl Muṭahhar were never trusted with this function. Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir*: f. 141a.

65   The first peace treaty with the imam was concluded in 1017/1608 by Jaʿfar Pasha (governor 1016–21/1607–12). In 1022/1613, after the unexpected death of the newly appointed Ibrāhīm Pasha, Jaʿfar Pasha clashed with some officer over control of local affairs. Y.H. Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī* (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ʿarabī, 1968), vol. 2: 796–7, 799; Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir*: f. 135a.

66   Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, vol. 2: 798.

67   To bring order to Yemen Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha (in office 1026–28/1617–19) promoted officials with local expertise, among them Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha, who, like his father, spent most of his adult life in Yemen, as his deputy. Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir*: f. 137a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*: 305.

abandoned attempts to bring order to Upper Yemen and chose to focus on Lower Yemen's port cities, especially Mukhā.[68] This shift in administrative goals deepened the rifts within the Ottoman administration of Yemen and resulted in the loss of experienced personnel, knowledgeable about the intricacies of Yemeni politics.[69] In response to uncertainty and seeing their communication channels to the Ottomans cut, the Āl Shams al-Dīn started renegotiating their position with the new regional power, the Qasimid imamate.

Even before the imminent success of the Qasimid uprising became clear to observers, it was common for ambitious sayyids to switch to the side of the imams to pressure the Ottomans for better deals.[70] Members of the Āl Shams al-Dīn were consistent in their support of the Ottoman regime, but in the last decade of Ottoman rule in Yemen, they joined the Qasimids.[71]

In the days of Ḥaydar Pasha (1034–37/1624–1629), the second Qasimid imam al-Muʿayyad Muḥammad intensified his attacks on territories under

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68 On Mukhā's place in the coffee trade see, for example, M. Tuchscherer, "Trade and Port Cities in the Red Sea—Gulf of Aden Region in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century." In *Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, 1890–1920*, ed. L.T. Fawaz and C.A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 28–45; N. Um, *The Merchant Houses of Mocha: Trade and Architecture in an Indian Ocean Port* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009): 17–23.

69 In 1033/1624, several high-ranking Ottoman officials, including Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha, started fighting over the control of the treasury. The newly appointed Ḥaydar Pasha took it to be an attempt to oust him and ordered Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha to be executed. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 249b; Kānī Çelebī, *Bughyat al-khāṭir*: f. 143a. According to the later Qasimid historian Ibn al-Qāsim, some knowledgeable people remarked that this would lead the Ottomans to lose control over Yemen. Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, vol. 2: 818–9. Another knowledgeable Ottoman official, who held the position of *defterdār* for nearly two decades, Muḥammad b. Muṣṭāfā Kānī Çelebi was also executed on Ḥaydar Pasha's orders. Baştürk, "Telhîsü'l-Berku'l-Yemânî / Ahbârü'l-Yemânî (tahlil ve metin)": 465–66. Kh. al-Ziriklī, *Aʿlām qāmūs tarājim li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-l-nisāʾ min al-ʿarab wa-l-mustaʿribīn wa-l-mustashriqīn*. (Beirut: Dār al-ʿilm li-l-malāyīn, 2002), vol. 7: 99–100; M.ʿA. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbariyya fī-l-mujaddidīn min abnāʾ al-khayr al-bariyya* (MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF D.451.ar): f. 14a.

70 The sons of al-Muṭahhar exchanged letters with the imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud, and claimed they sought an alliance with him. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan*: ff. 101, 166, 197, 198. The Ottomans also lost their trust in these Āl Muṭahhar sayyids. In 994/1586, when they captured the imam, the Ottomans arrested these sayyids and exiled them to Istanbul. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbariyya*: f. 145a. Unsurprisingly, the descendants of these sayyids were among the early supporters of the Qasimid uprising. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: ff. 138a, 170a, 172b.

71 One exception was Ṣalāḥ b. Muṭahhar b. Ṣalāḥ b. Shams al-Dīn, who wanted to become the lord of Kawkabān but was bypassed in succession by another member of the family. To improve his position, he reached out to both the imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and the Ottomans. His bid failed and he was killed during negotiations with the Ottomans. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*, f. 175a.

Āl Shams al-Dīn control. As the Ottoman governor did not have enough resources to support his allies, the Āl Shams al-Dīn opened negotiations. In 1036/1627, after two decades of resistance to Qasimid encroachment, the then lord of Kawkabān, ʿAbd al-Rabb b. ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn, surrendered to the Qasimid imam.[72] The family sought to keep their prestige and to negotiate an advantageous position in the Qasimid imamate. At the same time, the Qasimid imams saw that cooperation rather than confrontation would allow them to use the lords of Kawkabān to their own ends in the war against the Ottomans.

The new status of the lords of Kawkabān was negotiated through two channels. The first channel involved the son of ʿAbd al-Rabb, al-Nāṣir. He travelled to Shahāra with his army to meet with imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[73] A reception was organized in his honor, and the imam confirmed that the Āl Shams al-Dīn family would stay in control of Kawkabān.[74] The imam's attitude was undoubtedly pragmatic, but it may have also had a sentimental touch. ʿAbd al-Rabb and his son came from a branch of the Āl Shams al-Dīn that was not in charge of Kawkabān when al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad was prisoner there (1010–1016/1602–1607). In fact, ʿAbd al-Rabb released him from imprisonment.[75] The immediate result of this new alliance was that Āl Shams al-Dīn military units joined the Qasimid army.

The second negotiation route involved the two brothers of imam al-Muʾayyad, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. In a reciprocal gesture, they travelled to Kawkabān and Ḥasan married Zakiyya, the daughter of ʿAbd al-Rabb.[76] This dynastic marriage was equally valuable to both sides. For the Qasimid family, a less-known sayyid lineage, it granted association with the prestige of the Āl Shams al-Dīn. For the Āl Shams al-Dīn, on the other hand, it established a family connection to the rising dynasty and ensured the continuation of the family's special status in the new Zaydi state.

Despite these successful negotiations, the lords of Kawkabān lost some of their independence. The imam appointed his own judges to the town, a

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72 M.M. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra fī jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra*, ed. A.I.Q. al-Thawr (Sanaa: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfiyya, 2008), vol. 2: 528.

73 al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 273b.

74 Specifically, al-Sharafī mentions the revenues that they would still be able to control. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 273b.

75 The future imam al-Muʿayyad was imprisoned in Kawkabān during the rule of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn. His experiences were particularly unpleasant during the rule of Aḥmad's son Muḥammad. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 167b.

76 Al-Jurmūzī states that the marriage took place shortly after the surrender of Kawkabān, in 1036/1626. Both al-Sharafī and al-Jurmūzī report that Zakiyya stayed with her father in Kawkabān and did not travel with her husband, who was busy in military campaigns. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2: 579; A.S. Tritton, *The Rise of the Imams of Sanaa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925): 105; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 329b.

practice of which there are no traces in the Ottoman period.[77] Moreover, the Āl Shams al-Dīn sayyids now had to travel to the court of the imam to receive their investiture or to request adjustments to their prerogatives, whereas in the Ottoman period such requests were handled through letter exchanges.[78] In addition, the Qasimid imams gained the right to audit the expenditures of the lords of Kawkabān.[79] All these developments indicate that central control over the Āl Shams al-Dīn intensified during the Qasimid period.

But not all change was for the worse. The Āl Shams al-Dīn continued to operate the mint of Kawkabān.[80] Furthermore, despite the need to travel to the Qasimid court for confirmations, transfer of power within the family was sanctioned by the Qasimid imams.[81] Finally, the Āl Shams al-Dīn gained additional income through appointments in the Qasimid imamate. Under imam al-Mu'ayyad Muḥammad, al-Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb gained the right to collect revenue in Taʿizz. The Qasimid historian Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī presents this arrangement as a continuation of Ottoman practice, claiming that the privilege of appointing a governor, *wālī*, and collecting the revenue (*maḥṣūl*) in Taʿizz had always been in the hands of the lords of Kawkabān starting with Shams al-Dīn himself.[82] There is in fact no evidence that the Āl Shams al-Dīn held tax farms in Taʿizz in the Ottoman period. Nevertheless, this statement affirms that Qasimid elites shared a vision of institutional continuity between the Ottoman administration and the imamate, a necessary move to keep their allies loyal.

In 1092/1681, making use of a dynastic crisis within the Qasimid family, a member of the Āl Shams al-Dīn, Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Qādir proclaimed his own,

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77 al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*: f. 273b; Tritton, *The Rise of the Imams of Sanaa*: 92; ʿA.ʿA. al-Wazīr, *Tārīkh ṭabaq al-ḥalwā wa ṣaḥāf al-mann wa-l-salwā*, ed. M.A. Jāzim (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1985): 357.

78 al-Wazīr, *Tārīkh ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*: 153, 205.

79 When in 1082/1672 the people of Kawkabān complained to the third imam of the Qasimid dynasty, al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl (1054–87/1644–76), that ʿAbd al-Qādir delayed their payments, the imam sent an auditor, Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Akwaʿ, to examine the registers (*dafātir*) of the local administration. Y.H. Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zaman fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, ed. A.A.A. al-Amīr (Sanaa: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfiyya, 2008), vol. 2: 782–3; al-Wazīr, *Tārīkh ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*: 280.

80 T. Klarić, "Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)" (PhD Dissertation, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2007): 166.

81 The third Qasimid imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl confirmed the son of al-Nāṣir, ʿAbd al-Qādir in this position in 1072/1662. Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vol. 1: 124; vol. 2: 620.

82 al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 3: 1077; Klarić, "Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)": 99; T. Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and the Politics of Difference* (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 33, 49.

albeit short-lived, imamate from Kawkabān.[83] In retaliation, the next Qasimid imam, al-Mahdī Muḥammad Ṣāḥib al-Mawāhib (d. 1130/1718), installed a new governor of tribal origins in the area, giving him the power to appoint judges and collect taxes.[84] Half a century later, in 1161/1748, Ḥusayn's grandson, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, once again challenged the Qasimids to the imamate. Even though he did not become an imam, he renegotiated the position of his family and received major concessions from the Qasimids.[85] The resulting arrangement was noted by the Danish traveler Carsten Niebuhr, who wrote about the lords of Kawkabān as commanders of a principality "with sovereign authority over a considerable territory".[86] This attests that the gains of the Ottoman period were transferred into the Qasimid period, and the Āl Shams al-Dīn remained local Zaydi potentates with significant prestige. Even though they accepted Qasimid rule, they were ready to push against it when doing so served their interests, relying on their sayyid status and long history of local rule.

As a result of this political accommodation, the Āl Shams al-Dīn continued to accumulate social and political power. Their court flourished, attracting scholars and artists. In the Qasimid period, the family's vision of its historical roots was enshrined in a new biography of their ancestor, imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, composed by a resident of Kawkabān and a descendant of the imam, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Mufaḍḍal (d. 1085/1674).[87] Another native of Kawkabān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaymī (d. 1151/1738), dedicated a major part of his biographical dictionary of Yemeni poets to the Āl Shams al-Dīn and their poetic works.[88] Members of the family patronized the production of manuscripts and collected a notable library.[89] The alliance with the Qasimids thus proved beneficial to the family.

83 Klarić, "Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)": 208; 'A.Ḥ. al-Bahkalī, *Imams, notables et bédouins du Yémen au XVIIIᵉ siècle: Quintessence de l'or du règne de chérif Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. Chronique de 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan al-Bahkalī*. Ed. and trans. M. Tuchscherer. (Cairo: IFAO, 1992): 25.

84 S.M. Sālim, *Wathā'iq yamaniyya: Dirāsa wathā'iqiyya tārīkhiyya. Nashr wa ta'līq* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-fanniyya, 1985): 73.

85 Tuchscherer, *Imams, notables et bédouins*: 25–6, 111: M.'A. al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭāli' bi-maḥāsin man ba'd al-qarn al-sābi'* (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-islāmī, n.d.), vol. 1: 104–5.

86 C. Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia, and Other Countries in the East*, trans. Robert Heron (Edinburgh: R. Morrison and Son, 1792), vol. 2: 49.

87 Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *al-Sulūk al-dhahabiyya*.

88 A.M. al-Kawkabānī, *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar*, ed. A.M. al-Ḥibshī (Abu Dhabi: al-Majma' al-thaqāfī, 2002).

89 Some examples of manuscripts produced under the patronage of the Āl Shams al-Dīn in this period are MSS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF B.45.ar (f. 280b: dated 1035/1626,

The Qasimid accommodation of the Āl Shams al-Dīn points to a continuation of Ottoman practice at an institutional level. The tools used by the Qasimid rulers to coopt the lords of Kawkabān would have been familiar to Ottoman administrators: tax farms, shared military responsibilities, minting prerogatives, and confirmation of dynastic transfer of power. Qasimid rulers did not try to dismantle the power of the Āl Shams al-Dīn. Instead, relying on solutions to ensure the integration of Yemeni elites that were developed by the Ottomans, they sought to make the lords of Kawkabān allies of their own political project. The accommodation practices developed by the Ottomans for the Āl Shams al-Dīn were thus beneficial for both the Qasimid imamate and the lords of Kawkabān.

In 1873 the last members of the Āl Shams al-Dīn were evicted by the Ottomans from Kawkabān and their centuries-long local rule came to an end. The change in their circumstances was indicative of profound political transformations in Yemen, as the 1871–73 Ottoman campaign overturned the political order that existed in the Yemeni highlands since the sixteenth century.[90] The Āl Shams al-Dīn weathered this storm and the crises that followed. Descendants of the family continue to reside in Yemen.

6   Conclusion

The Āl Shams al-Dīn rose to prominence relying on the *longue durée* political achievements of their ancestors, their strong links to regional tribal elites, and the special status given to them as descendants of the Prophet in Zaydi Yemen. Building on this accumulated heritage, they negotiated a special position in the Ottoman administration of Yemen. In this, they were helped by the fact that the Ottomans needed supporters to aid their expansion in the region. At the same time, the Āl Shams al-Dīn needed the Ottomans to authorize their dynastic transfer of power in the Kawkabān region and to eliminate other

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produced under the patronage (*bi-rasm*) of al-Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb); NF E.376.ar (f. 1a: produced under the patronage of Yaḥyā b. al-Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb b. ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn for the treasury (*khizāna*); f. 40a: dated 1083/1672). Some manuscripts that were located in the Āl Shams al-Dīn library in Kawkabān include MSS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF E.123.ar (was in the ownership (*mulk*) of Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Qādir b. al-Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb, f. 6a), MF X 76sup (ff. 23a, 54a: readership statements of ʿAlī b. al-Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb b. ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn); MS Österreichische Nationalbibliotheek, Glaser 84 (f. 1a contains an ownership statement of ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir b. al-Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb b. ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn).

90   Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and the Politics of Difference*: 47–51.

sayyids from the political arena. As long as the alliance was mutually benefi-
cial, the Āl Shams al-Dīn remained loyal to the Ottomans.

However, when Ottoman control over Yemen started to weaken and a new
regional power, the Qasimid imamate, stepped onto the scene, the Āl Shams
al-Dīn sought a new accommodation. They were aided by the fact that the
Qasimid imams, like their Ottoman predecessors, needed the support of
the Āl Shams al-Dīn, whom they could not easily remove from the political
sphere due to their fame as descendants of the last pre-Ottoman imam and
upholders of some form of Zaydi autonomy during the period of Ottoman rule.
As a result, the Āl Shams al-Dīn family assumed its place in the upper echelons
of the Qasimid elite, maintaining most of their Ottoman privileges. The ups
and downs of the Āl Shams al-Dīn as Ottoman and subsequently Qasimid allies
demonstrate the lasting influence of Ottoman administrative practice on the
state in early modern Yemen.

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