THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HĀDAWĪ DOCTRINE, 
THE NEO-RATIONALISTS OF THE ZAYDĪ SCHOOL 
SINCE 1948, AND THE CURRENT ROLE OF ‘ILM AL-
KALĀM (OR SCHOLASTICISM) IN YEMENI COURTS—
PART I

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INTRODUCTION

Ancient Yemen, also known as natural and greater Yemen, embraced what is known today as the Yemen Arab Republic and the People’s Democratic Republic and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen. Yemen today normally refers to the Yemen Arab Republic and it is this Yemen that will be analysed in this exposition.

The first state to secede from the Muslim Empire, the ‘Abbasid Caliphate, in the ancient Yemeni region, was that of Banū Ziyād in 205 AH (821 AD) during the reign of the Caliph al-Mā’ūn. The Governor, Muhammad ibn Ziyād, declared his independence of Baghdad and assumed sovereignty. He reunited the old Himyarite state from his base in the famous town of Zabid until 225 AH, i.e., 20 years later, when Banū Ya’fur wrested from his control the ancient city of Ṣan‘ā’, Sam city (i.e. the city founded by Shem, son of Noah). But the major part of the Yemeni region remained under Banū Ziyād until 402 AH (1012 AD).

The concept of Imamate, however, began with the Fatimid Du‘āt (religio-political missionaries) of the Fatimi rulers of Egypt. The ‘Abbasids viewed themselves as the Princes of the Faithful and accorded the title of ‘Amil (Governor) to their provincial representative to Yemen. The ‘Abbasids were Hashemites (from Ahl al-Bayt or House of the Prophet) and as they believed that the Caliphate should be kept for the descendants of the House of the Prophet they have not actually replaced the concept of Caliphate by that of Imamate. It was the Fatimi Caliphs who propagated through their Du‘āt the concept of Imamāte, whereas the Banū Ziyāds accorded themselves the title of Sultāns only.

Thus although the title of Imām dates back to ‘Ali’s reign (35–40 AH—656–661 AD), before the Umayyads, the institution of Imamāte in Yemen dates back to the ninth Gregorian century.

To understand how the Hādawī doctrine evolved, it is necessary to trace the main historic events of the third Hijrī century. An ambitious leader appeared in the area known as Yāfi‘ (now in South Yemen bordering Yemen). His full name is ‘Ali bin al-Faḍl al-Jadānī al-Khanfārī al-Jaishānī, but he is better known as ‘Ali ibn al-Faḍl al-Qurmuṭi (the Carmathian).

‘Ali ibn al-Faḍl pretended to be an esoteric Ismā‘īlī whilst visiting the shrines of Kufa in Iraq. He managed to persuade ‘Ubayd Allāh bin Maimūn al-Qaddāh to assign to him jointly with Ṣanṣūr Ḥasan Zādhān ibn Ḥawshab the responsibility for spread-

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ing Fāṭimi teaching and influence in the Yemeni region. The two were entrusted with
the mission in 277 AH (881 AD). They arrived through Ghutayfiqah (now a fishing
village), the port of Zabīd at that time. The true colours of ibn al-Fadl were soon to be
shown. He was a committed Carmathian. The Carmathians believed in sexual promis-
cuity as a way of life, and that moral laxity is the true cure for freedom from neurosis
and for achieving happiness. They term it *Ulfa* (which may be translated as close inti-
macy). Ibn al-Fadl's philosophy is summed up in his poem delivered from the pulpit
of the Janad Mosque:

You no longer have to pray or fast
the new Prophet pardoned even murderers of prophets
you may marry the mothers of your wives and even boys
do not exert yourself by performing the pilgrimage
marry even your father;
as for wine, it is sky-sent.

Ibn al-Fadl is reported to have committed the following atrocities: 1
(1) Slaughtered 4,000 virgins in Zabīd who distracted his warriors;
(2) Forced Ṣan‘a’ maidens to swim naked in the Grand Mosque;
(3) Promoted homosexuality in Zabīd, Lahj, Abyan and Harāz;
(4) Betrayed Ibn Ḥawshab (al-Najjār) who was the senior envoy and held his son
as ransom;
(5) Betrayed the Fāṭimis who renounced him publically in 913 AD despite his
military success;
(6) Slaughtered pilgrims.

It is against such background that the Zaydi Imamate appeared as a saviour and sal-
vation to devout Muslims. The origins of the Ḥadawi doctrine as applied in the
Yemeni commercial courts today date back to rare events which are extremely import-
ant to a proper understanding of doctrinal conflict.

Towards the end of the ninth century AD the Yemeni region was a battle ground
for rivalries between Bani Ya’fur (the Yufirids) and Banū Ziyād and for vicious attacks
by the Carmathians.

The Yufirids appointed an outside mediator to settle their own disputes, a Ḥashe-
mite and a descendant of Zayd, the great-grandson of Imām ‘Ali. The mediator was
al-Ḥādī.

al-Ḥādī

Yahyā bin al-Husain bin al-Qāsim bin Ibrāhim bin Ima’m bin Ibrahim bin al-Ḥasan bin
al-Ḥasan bin ‘Ali bin Abi Ṭālib nicknamed *al-Ḥādī ilā al-Ḥaqq* (the Guide to the Right) was
born in Medina in 245 AH.

In 280 AH/893 AD he went to Najrān and Ṣa‘da (the capital of the Yemenite
Levant-Sham al-Yaman) but was rejected by Ṣan‘a’ for preaching strict adherence to
the tenets of Islam, including the payment of Zakāt (tithes and alms). He returned to
the Hejaz after a short abortive attempt at mediation and preaching.

1 Refer to R Bidwell’s *Two Yemens* (1983, Longman) on Ibn al-Fadl, e.g., p. 8, and ‘Umar al-Ja’di’s
*iṭbaṣr qaṣray al-Yaman* (an old manuscript published in Beirūt in 1952), esp. pp. 75 & 76.