
INFORMATION
WHICH MAY BE USEFUL
TO THE
Officer, Newly Arrived
at Aden.

With the Author
Compliments

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25 1/2 22

INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE USEFUL
TO THE OFFICER, NEWLY ARRIVED AT **ADEN**.

Aden and the immediate interior comes under two headings,
(a). **British Aden.** (b) **Aden Protectorate.**

(a). **British Aden**, at present is administered as a part of British India and is under the control of the Governor of Bombay in council.

(It is, however, under consideration as to whether Aden should pass under the control of the Colonial Office and thus become a British Colony).

British Aden, generally alluded to as the **Aden Settlement** is administered by a Political Resident who is also the General Officer Commanding the Aden Brigade. To assist him he has four officers of the Bombay Political Department. It comprises the following divisions,

(1) The Peninsular (or Fortress of Aden) and Isthmus; with an area of 21 square miles.

(2) **Sheikh Othman** and the district round including the villages of **Hiswah** and **Imad** with an area of 39 square miles.

(3) **Little Aden** peninsular (practically uninhabited except for the small fishing village of Barecka) with an area of 15 square miles, and,

(4) The **Island of Perim**.

(1) **Aden** after being in various hands was definitely captured by the British from the Sultan of the **Abdali** in January 1839. Since that date up to 1846 four unsuccessful attempts were made by the **Abdali** to recapture the Fortress. The next attempt was made when, on July 6th 1915 the Turkish forces had reached as far as the Salt Works at Khor Maksar (6 miles), and their Headquarters, occupied **Sheikh Othman**. They remained there until July 21st, 1915, when reinforcements for the Aden Garrison having arrived the Turks were driven back and their Headquarters returned to **Lahej**, while they held an outpost line about 6 miles north of Sheikh Othman; until the armistice with Turkey,

(2) **Sheikh Othman** - In 1882 owing to the increasing population of Aden Town, a further small tract of territory was acquired by purchase from the Sultan of **Lahej** (The **Abdali** Sultan) extending

roughly on a radius of 10 miles from Aden Town and includes **Sheikh Othman** and the villages of **Hiswah** and **Imad**.

- (3) The peninsular of Little Aden was purchased from the Sultan of the **Aqrabi** in 1868.
- (4) **Perim** was occupied by the British in 1799 subsequently abandoned, and re-occupied in 1857 on the opening of the overland route.

There is no natural water supply and little vegetation. For many years it was regarded as a place of little value & with a small detachment of Indian troops as its only inhabitants, it has now become a place of considerable importance from its position as a Coaling Station.

(b) **The Aden Protectorate.** The Resident exercises political influence over this very extensive tract of Country, the boundary of which is a line, fixed by the Anglo-Turkish Commission, Jan. 1902 to Dec. 1904, beginning in the west at **Ras Turba**--a point at the extreme south westerly corner of **Arabia**--opposite Perim Island--inland past **Talilah**--north of **Dhala**, a little south of **Qa'tabah** to the **Bana** river and produced by a line (not fixed by actual survey) north-east to **Beihaan-El-Jezaby** and it is lost in the Great Southern desert, from which it emerges in a not very clearly defined line--midway between **Yeshbum** and **Habban** to **Sheikh Abder-Rahman**--on the south coast. Within this frontier the most important section is the western--comprising the territories of the Amir of **Dhala**. The **Haushabi** and a portion of the **Subeihi**. Through these districts pass the main trade routes from the **Yemen** the only routes which could be utilized by a force advancing into British Territory.

There are three main lines of communication :

- (1) Through the **Dhala** Valley
- (2) Through the **Tiban** Valley
- (3) Past **Mafalis** and down **Wadi Ma'din**

The tribal confederations lying within this boundary are :—

The Subeihi	Amiri and Radfan
Abdali	Alawi
Fadhli	Aulaki
{ Haushabi }	Yafai
{ Dhambara }	Aqrabi & other smaller tribes.

The tribes in the protectorate have a higher percentage of non-combatants and are more settled than those tribes be-

yond our boundaries; mostly living in the towns and villages. Many of these tribes occupy very considerable territory but their limits and extent are vague.

In the majority of the confederations the rulers authority over most of his subjects is slight.

The Sultan of the **Abdali** exercises perhaps a more absolute authority over his tribe than most.

Of the **Fadhli** several of the sub-tribes are quite independent.

The **Aulaqui** have several rulers; with many of the outlying tribes quite beyond the control of their nominal rulers, whilst the **Subeihi** are a law unto themselves!

The word "administration" therefore can hardly be applied to so mixed a collection of peoples.

The tribes are all well supplied with rifles and ammunition with many modern rifles amongst them often supplied by us to enable them to defend themselves from transborder aggression.

The tribes within our frontier are described in the following order:—

(Littoral) - **Subeihi, Abdali, Fadhli and Aqrabi.**

(The Interior) - **Haushabi, Dhambari, Amiri, A'awi.**

(1) **Subeihi**--Occupy an extensive tract in the Southwest. It is scarcely populated and consist mainly of sandy wastes with occasional wells and little cultivation. They have no Sultan or Head Sheikh. The clans have little cohesion and blood feuds between them are common. Those clans bordering on the Abdali can sometimes be influenced by the **Abdali Sultan** through whom also all dealings with the Subeihi tribes are conducted. They are reported to be able to muster a large force of fighting men (5,000) expert raiders, but unsteady in battle. They are treacherous and untrustworthy. They lost no time in joining the Turks in 1915 on their advance against Aden and helped in the attack on **Lahej** in July 1915.

(2) **Abdali**-This tribe numbering about 14,500 souls occupy the country immediately around and behind Aden going about 35 miles inland, to the territory of the **Haushabi** - with the **Subeihi** on the west and the **Fadhli** on the east.

The chief of the tribe is the Sultan of **Lahej**, whose country is more settled and cultivated than any other in the protectorate. He is supposed to be able to

muster 2,000 men of no real fighting value, with Two guns (10 pounders) supplied by us, by whom also his gunners are trained. They remained loyal to the British Government throughout the troublesome times of 1914-1918. When the Turks advanced against Aden and took **Lahej**, the Abdali Sultan took refuge in Aden until the Armistice.

(3) The **Fadhli**. - A large tribe of warlike and independent nature occupy the country from the east of the **Abdali** to the sea coast on the south. They are said to have a high proportion of fighting men (5,000) all probably well armed. There is constant friction between them and the **Yafa** the tribe beyond our borders to their immediate north, the **Yafa** cutting the **Fadhli** water supply by periodically diverting the Bana river and the **Fadhli** retaliating by levying imposts on **Yafa** caravans passing through their country on the way to the coast. The Turks in 1915 attempted to bribe the Sultan to side with them. He was received with honour by them when sent for to Lahej, but has always remained pro-British. His son went over to the Turks, but his grandson remained pro-British and we now deal with the latter. The Sultan himself kept a foot in each camp, but has been accepted now by Aden and was presented to the Duke of Connaught when he visited Aden in March 1921 and to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales in November of the same year. He is very old

(4) **Aqrabi** - a small and peacefully disposed tribe under the influence of the **Abdali** Sultan, occupying a small tract of land on the coast north of Little Aden. Their Sultan lives at **Bir - Ahmed** just west of Sheikh Othman. They are of no fighting value, as they can but raise about 250 armed men. These however sided with the Turks in 1915 under pressure, it is said, brought to bear on them by the **Subeihi** on their northern boundary.

(5) **Haushabi**. - The territory of this tribe extends from the Anglo-Turkish boundary in the north to the **Abdali** country. They have done a good deal of fighting in recent years with their neighbours on the north, outside our protectorate, but could not be described as a warlike tribe. They put up no resistance at all to the Turks in 1915. They number about 6,000 of whom about 1,800 are said to be fighting men. They control the **Tiban** valley and consequently the waters of the Lahej oasis and have in former years diverted the stream

when at enmity with the **Abdali**. They are however now on friendly terms. The Haushabi Sultan is nominally subordinate to the Abdali. Any aggression directed from the **Yemen** and the **Tiban** Valley on **Lahej** must come through their country. The nominal ruler is the Sultan whose capital is **Musemir**, and who claims suzerainty over the **Dhambari**. The Haushabi joined the Turks in 1915 and accompanied them on their attack on Aden.

The **Dhambari** is a small hill tribe on the east of the **Haushabi** who keep themselves to themselves, - admit the controlling interest of the Haushabi Sultan when it suits them and for the rest confine themselves to raiding anyone near, that has the least prospect of loot; and caravans in particular.

(6) **The Amiri** - occupy the country between the **Tiban** and **Bana** rivers north east of the **Haushabi**, up to the **Yemen**. It is very mountainous and rugged. It is ruled by the Emir who also claims suzerainty over the **Qutebi** to the south east. The **Qutebi** think otherwise. They are the largest of the Radfan tribes and are good fighters. An estimate of their fighting strength gives the figure at 1,000. The capital is **Dhala** - from which town the Emir was summoned by the Turks in 1915. He was deprived by them of his Emirship for a time; but later on leaving his son as hostage they reinstated him. He has since been ejected by the Zeidis who have made his brother nominal Amir.

(7) **The Alawi** - a small tribe of no consequence, occupying the country between the **Amiri** on the north and the **Haushabi** on the south. In January 1916 they and their particular enemies, the **Qutebi**, submitted to the Turks. The total population is estimated as 1,500, and the area of their country as 40 square miles.

BEYOND OUR BORDER.

The Yemen. In 1902 - 04, when the Turkish - British boundary (in part one) was delimited, the vilayet or province of Yemen - nominally under the Ottoman Government - might have been described as bounded on the north by a line which placed Loheia and Khamir within the border, on the west by the Red Sea, the south by the Aden protectorate, and on the east by roughly longitude 45 degrees east.

It is one of the most involved countries at the present moment - Religion - Tribal feeling - Politics, both European and oriental - are all acting against each other in causing the utmost state of confusion.

We must first turn to Religion to see how this all comes about.

The Mohomedan religion is divided into two great sects - The "Shiah", what might almost be called the Dissenters of the Mohomedan Religion, and the "Sunni" or orthodox Mohomedan religion.

The whole of the west and south coasts, or plains regions, are populated by "Sunni" tribes, the centre or Highland regions by "Shiahs", or rather by a still further division called "Zedis" - after "Zedi", a great grandson of Ali! Ali was the Son-in-law of Mohomed - and was the fourth Caliph.

Between these two sects no love is lost. Since the 10th century the Imam or Spiritual and Religious ruler of the Yemen (a Zedist) had supreme power and claimed not only Yemen proper, but also Aden & the whole of South Arabia, until challenged by the arrival of the Turks ("Sunni") in the 16th century; - who, however, only gained a partial hold of the Yemen leaving the Highlands in the hands of the Imam. The present Imam claims descent from Fatima daughter of Mahomed.

In 1819, a force from Egypt occupied the coast towns and prepared the way for a direct Turkish rule. This force however withdrew in 1840, leaving the Imam absolute. Again in 1849, a Turkish force appeared, took the coast towns and advanced in the Highlands. This force entered but was unable to occupy Sana the capital of the Yemen and the seat of the Imams. In 1872 however after a succession of incompetent Imams had been misruling the country, the notables of the Yemen invited the Turks into their capital. But although nominally rulers; the country except for the coast remained practically independent.

In 1891 the Zedis, never long quiet, under alien rule, impatient of taxation and disgusted at seeing the trade of their country passing into Aden, gave continual trouble to the Turks and a great rising took place. It was finally suppressed but at a great cost and Sana was reoccupied.

In 1904 another great rising took place and Sana (occupied by the Turks) capitulated through famine. All the inland posts followed suit and the Imam's troops possessed themselves of 70 guns and a considerable quantity of small arms and ammunition. A Turkish relief column was raised on the coast who again fought a very costly way to Sana, but the Imam refused to surrender the captured booty and as he was allowed to have his way, a patched up peace was made and Sana again occupied by the Turks.

In 1911 Sanaa was again besieged by the revolting Zedis, but was this time relieved in time by a Turkish column under Izzat Pasha who seeing that the military difficulties of the place demanded some sort of a Policy of Peace with the Imam eventually obtained his way with the Ottoman Government and on September 22nd, 1913 a Firman was publically read in Sana proclaiming an Entente with the Imam "For the sake of peace amongst the Moslems".

Under this Firman the Imam had "the Religious and social control in all the Zedi districts" (that is all the Highlands of the Yemen) from the Asir border to the Aden hinterland - "that civil and criminal law should be based on the old Islamic code and that this code should be administered by Nominees of the Imam" who drew a substantial annual subsidy for himself. The Zedi districts were to pay no tithe and all aggressions of the past by the Zedi against the Ottoman rule were forgiven. The tribesman under the Imam were to pay no taxes but gave military service when called upon, the Turks retaining a military hold upon all the coast and western highland towns and seaports and nominally garrisoning the entire Yemen.

Thus we come to the fateful year of 1915 when the Turks advanced through south Arabia against Aden. The Imam although strongly against an attack on the British through the Yemen stood by his Entente with the Turk and although approached by the British Government on more than one occasion refused to turn from his Treaty obligation to the Turk.

We must now turn to a new & potential factor in the complex state of affairs at present pertaining to our immediate vicinity. This is "The Idrissi". In the northwest of the Yemen between that country and Asir proper, was a tract of land

known by its capital Abu Arish. This had always been absolutely independent, acknowledging no suzerainty either to the Turk or to the Imam of Yemen. Between the years 1830-1840 a certain Holy Preacher one Seyad Ahmed el-Idrissi who had been the teacher of the original Senussi of Egypt (a sub sect of the Sunni) - a native of Fez - acquired land at Sabia in the Abu Arish country, settled there and acquired great favour with the reigning Sheikh and finally died in 1837 in the odour of Great Sanctity. During one of the many risings against Ottoman rule by the Zedis, the Abu Arish chiefs had participated and gone completely under, but the then Idrissi, who by intermarriage and by influence with the Senussi seems to have supplanted the Abu Irish family to such an extent, that, finally in 1914, the present Idrissi not only ruled the Abu Arish country but also held suzerainty over two powerful tribes of North Yemen and all the coast tribes almost down to Loheia!

In the 1911 rising by the Imam of Yemen against the Turks, (although the Idrissi was an usurper and trespasser in the Imam's territory and antagonistic as regards religion); they combined together for the occasion. The Treaty which the Imam finally entered into with the Turks in 1913 (without consulting the Idrissi) renewed the enmity and widened the breach between them. The Idrissi regarded the Imam as having deserted him as he, himself, never gave in to the Turks. The Imam in view of more recent events - considered that the Idrissi wished to supplant himself as ruler of the whole of the Yemen!

During the Great War of 1914 - 1918 the Idrissi remained whole heartedly British, whilst the Imam as has been shown, although never pro-Turkish, remained true to his Treaty obligations with them.

THE SITUATION AT THE PRESENT DAY.

The Imam, Spiritual and Temporal ruler of all the Yemen since the 10th century, claiming even the tribes of the Aden Protectorate as under his suzerainty, intensely dislikes the Idrissi as an interloper and an upstart.

The Imam true to his Treaty with the Turks, remained Pro-Turk during the Great War. The Idrissi always anti-Turk, anti-religionist to the Zedi is entirely ambitious and cordially detests the Imam.

The British have treaties with the Idrissi and from economic reasons desire a Treaty of Peace with the Imam and who has made overtures for a Treaty of Peace.

The Imam claims, now the Turk is ousted, all South Arabia as under his suzerainty.

The Idrissi occupies and administers the northern Tehama and all the coast line as far south as Hodeida.

In 1921 the Imam not being satisfied that within his area there should be any tribes who; (being Sunni) refused to acknowledge him as supreme head, started a campaign to conquer and subdue them. He chose as his initial effort the Amiri, a tribe inside our Protectorate. He attacked and occupied Dhala the capital, in November 1919, but was repulsed by the Radfan (who are nominally subject to the Amir of Dhala) in March 1921. The British refrained from helping the Amiri in the defence of their country except by supplying arms and ammunition and the occupation of Nobat Dakim in the Abdali country by a small garrison in case of further aggression by the Zedis.

The Imam's troops still occupy Dhala and have confined themselves to defeating and subduing all the tribes just beyond our border, proceeding westward as they go. They have now, September 1921, captured by treachery the fort of El Kala', and the stronghold of the Makhtari tribe and are now concentrating against the Koteibi a weak and un-warlike tribe immediately north of our own Haushabi - These it is expected will surrender without a fight.

It is not expected that the Imam will further invade the Protectorate.

His action in being continually on our border in great force is considered by him as more of an asset to him in getting the Treaty Terms he requires rather than a menace to ourselves.

His Captains are continually threatening the Abdali Sultan by an alleged invasion of the Lahej Oasis to counteract which

we have a strong force at Nobat Dakim and a Moveable Column in constant readiness at Sheikh Othman both of which in the case of any aggression are ready to move at once.

1914—1918.

When finally in November 1914 the Turk threw in his lot with the Germans the Turks garrisoned the Yemen including the Ports of Hodeida, Loheia and Mocha, with Sana as Head Quarter and with many inland posts down to our protectorate borders; with the exception of the territory under the influence of the Idrissi.

After the bombardment and attempted landing by the Turks at Perim from Sheikh Said in June 1915 they advanced via Sana on Lahej and Aden. The Idrissi were given permission to attack and occupy Loheia.

This they attempted but failed to do owing to the tribesmen being unable to face modern artillery.

In May 1915 an expedition from Aden proceeded up the Red Sea occupying the various islands, until then administered by the Turks, including Kamaran and the Farsan islands and when opposite Loheia reducing this town by gun fire from the ships, thus enabling the Idrissi Troops finally to enter and occupy the town.

At a later date Hodeida was captured and occupied by the British.

The Turks meanwhile having traversed the Imanic Yemen and unsuccessfully attacked Aden, had been driven back to a position between Sheikh Othman and Lahej.

This brings us then to 1918, when the Turks having unconditionally surrendered to the Allies, the Armistice terms stipulated for the evacuation of all Arabia proper by Turkish troops this was carried out, but "Troops" having been mentioned in the Armistice Terms, the "troops" alone evacuated the country leaving behind civil Governors, Judicial Administrators and all non-military officials!

The situation therefore at the dawn of 1919 was as follows:—

The northern Tehama, and all the coast as far as Loheia in the hands of the Idrissi.

The Highlands of the Yemen as far as the Aden Protectorate in the hands of the Imam, Hodeida in the hands of the British. The Turks nowhere except for their civil administrators and propagandists still in Imanic Yemen,

— 1919 —

In 1919 The British Government owing to economic pressure ordered the immediate evacuation of Hodeida and was at the same time for the same reason desirous of reducing the garrison of Aden. They therefore re-opened negotiations with the Imam towards a peace Treaty, previously attempted during the war.

For this purpose a mission under Colonel Jacob proceeded by sea to Hodeida with the idea of going thence by road inland to Sana. The Imam on his side promising an escort and safe conduct to the mission from Hodeida to Sana.

He however reckoned as did we ourselves without the intermediate tribes, Sunnis' to a man. The Imams escort was held up in the passes of the hills. The mission was allowed to proceed to the limit of the plain at Bajil, and there stopped.

The Sunni tribes although willing to be under the suzerainty of the Turks would have none of the Imam and his Zedis.

The mission was in captivity, but well treated, for four months whilst negotiations with the Foreign Office were proceeding.

It was then released! During this period the Imanic troops were at the edge of the hills waiting to occupy Hodeida. The Idrissi troops at Lohia about an equal distance awaiting the same opportunity.

The British troops evacuated Hodeida which was immediately occupied by the Idrissi, and peace negotiations between the Imam and the British were broken off.

Hodeida was last occupied to facilitate the evacuation of the Turks and held until 1921 when it was evacuated under orders from the Home Government. The Idrissi immediately re-occupied it and still holds it.

1st January 1922.

G. H. PLINSTON, Major,
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Aden.