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British-Idrisi relations in resisting Ottoman influence in Tihama Asir 1915-1926

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Abstract

The study dealt with a significant historical topic: Britain's relations with the Idrisis in Tihama Asir from 1915 to 1926. It showed the features and objectives of this relationship. The study described and analyzed the reasons for Britain's persistent efforts to secure its maritime communications line in the Red Sea, as well as placing obstacles in the way of the Ottoman Empire to prevent it from threatening British influence in Aden. Therefore, it resorted to allying itself with the Idrisis in Tihama Asir. For this purpose, it concluded several treaties with them and provided various financial and military support. As for the Idrisids, their ultimate goal was to provide money, weapons, and military support for their emirate to ensure its continuity and prevent it from falling into the hands of their opponents.

Keywords: Britain, Al-Idrisi, Tihama Asir.



Introduction

A crucial geographical location distinguishes the Tihama Asir region. It is located in the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula. It overlooks the Red Sea's eastern coast, making it a focus of interest for the European powers before the outbreak of World War I.

The Idrisis were able to tighten their control over the Tihama Asir region, especially with the emergence of Muhammad bin Ali Al-Idrisi on the scene at the beginning of the twentieth century AD. A great deal of instability marred their relations with the Ottoman Empire and the Imam of Yemen, prompting them to attempt to communicate with the active European powers at the time to provide sufficient protection for their tiny emirate to continue to exist. Therefore, they sought to contact Italy to ensure that it would stand by them and provide them with money and weapons so that they could confront the ambitions of their neighbors or any other power that sought to impose its control over them.

Considering the developments of international events, which contributed significantly to the emergence of Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi due to the Italian support for him against the Ottoman Empire, however, this cooperation with the Italian side did not last long; when he felt that Italy had exhausted its goals in allying with him, he began to look for a new ally, so he headed towards Britain to ally with it, which was seeking to protect its maritime lines of communication in the Red Sea and to cause trouble for the Ottoman Empire so that it would not threaten the British presence in Aden. The study included three main axes: the first axis dealt with the lineage of the Idrisid family and the establishment of their emirate, the second axis addressed the British-Idrisid relations from 1915 to 1923, while the third axis analyzed the British-Idrisid relations from 1923 to 1926.

The Idrisid family and the establishment of the emirate:

The Idrisid family is attributed to Tihama Asir to Mr. Ahmed Al-Idrisi, nicknamed Abu Al-Abbas (1758-1837), who is considered its founding grandfather; as his lineage goes back to the Idrisi Sayyids in Morocco, so his lineage goes back to Imam Idris bin Abdullah, who is attributed to the lineage of Al-Hassan bin Ali bin Abi Talib, so he is of good lineage, Moroccan by birth (Makhlouf, 2003: 396), he was interested in religious sciences and Sufism, and devoted most of his time to worship and working in religious sciences. Then he visited Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and Mecca (Ben Ali, 1966: 21). His goal was to spread his ideas, and for that purpose, he stayed in Mecca for nearly 30 years, during which he worked to spread the principles of his call and ideas, and he also established his method, which was named Ahmadiyya after him (Al-Rayhani, 1980: 299). In 1828, he headed towards Tihama, Yemen, at the invitation of his students who came to him from Tihama, Yemen, and Sabya and Abu Arish. The following year, he and his family settled in Sabya and began working to spread his popular and accepted ideas and principles. In 1837, he died in Sabya and was buried there (Al-Rayhani, 1980: 303).

After his death, his followers and supporters dispersed in various directions, as his sons were not distinguished by his strong personality. They lived on the legacy of their father, who passed it on to them. They did not have an influential role in the history of Tihama Asir except in what related to reforming the relationship between the tribes in that region (Bin Ali, 1966: 34); the situation remained like this until his grandson Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi came, who can be described as the actual founder of the Idrisi emirate in Tihama Asir (Al-Manar, 5 June 1913: 465; Abdul Mohsen, 2007: 235).

Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi was born in Sabya in 1876 and grew up there (Ziyadah, 1979: 141).

In his youth, he received religious knowledge from his father (Al-Manar, 5 June 1913: 465). Because of his desire to gain more religious knowledge, he went to Mecca and stayed there for several months. Then he traveled to Egypt and took religious knowledge from the scholars of al-Azhar at that time (Al-Nu'ami, 1999: 222), after spending six years in Egypt, he headed to the city of Kufra in Barqa in the Maghreb, which is considered a center for the Sanusis, and he stayed there for three years (Al-Zarkali, 1977: 529), then he returned to his birthplace, Sabya, in Tihama Asir at the beginning of the twentieth century AD, and he began to reform the condition of the tribes on sound religious foundations (Abaza, 1976: 622), he also worked to get closer to the people and learn about their conditions, and to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong (Al-Nu'ami, 1999: 222; Bin Ali, 1966: 34), which led to the tribes and individuals rallying around him because of his firmness and broad knowledge (Shaker, 1976: 228), mainly since the region at that time was dominated by a state of chaos and instability, due to the weakness of the position of the Ottoman state in Asir at the beginning of the twentieth century AD, as its influence was limited to specific areas (Al-Ahram, 21 August 1909: 1; Al-Barakati, 1912: 5; Hamza, 1968: 363).

Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi began preparing to implement his political goals, establishing the Idrisid Emirate. However, he faced several difficulties in this regard; he was surrounded from the south by Imam Yahya, the Imam of Yemen., from the north, by the Hashemite nobles, led by Sharif Hussein bin Ali in the Hijaz Both had ambitions in Tihama Asir and its tribes, in addition to the fact that they had historical roots in their regions. He was viewed as a stranger to the region (Al-Maddah, 1985: 102), so he sought to obtain the allegiance of the people in Tihama Asir. This was achieved for him in 1907 from the tribes of Tihama Asir and some of the tribes that were under the control of Imam Yahya (Al-Manar, 5 June 1913: 468).

Al-Idrisi's influence increased his status rose, and a state of relative stability prevailed in the Tihama Asir region, which aroused the ire of the Turkish governor of Al-Hodeidah., who sent a telegram to the Ottoman state warning of the growing danger of Al-Idrisi, which in turn sent a delegation to meet Al-Idrisi in order to closely learn about his goals and intentions (Rafi', 1954: 141), and this resulted in the signing of the Al-Hafa'ir Agreement in 1910. It was named after the location where it was held. According to this agreement, the Ottoman Empire recognized the legitimacy of Al-Idrisi's rule. It appointed him as the governor of Sabya in exchange for his recognition of his allegiance to it (Al-Zarkali, 1977: 531), which increased his influence. However, this agreement did not last long because of his desire for his region to gain independence, which prompted him in 1910 to ally with Imam Yahya in Yemen and coordinate the revolution against the Ottoman Empire together (Al-Uqaili, 1982: 769), following this, Imam Yahya besieged Sana'a, and Al-Idrisi laid siege to Abha, which was considered the center of the Ottoman garrison. In turn, the Ottoman state sent a military campaign led by Ahmed Izzet Pasha. to end the siege of Sana'a, and he was able to sign the Da'an Peace Treaty with Imam Yahya in 1911.

The Ottoman Empire also sent the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, to lift the siege on Abha. He could do so (Al-Nu'ami, 1999: 235), which prompted Al-Idrisi to flee towards the mountains. When the forces of Al-Hussein bin Ali returned to Mecca, Al-Idrisi began to organize his ranks (Al-Jarafi, 1987: 224). It is worth mentioning that the tension in the relationship between Al-Idrisi and the Ottoman Empire led him to look to ally with foreign powers. The Ottoman Empire neglected him and did not seek to conclude a peace treaty with him like the Treaty between Da'an and Imam Yahya, as it considered

him an intruder in the region and sought to eliminate him (Jacob, 1983: 152).

Al-Idrisi sought to escape his difficult situation after signing the Da'an Peace Treaty. His relationship with Imam Yahya had deteriorated after the latter reached a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire, which made Al-Idrisi feel that he was surrounded by opponents, the Ottoman Empire on one side and Imam Yahya on the other, in addition to the Hashemite family in the Hijaz. He wanted to escape this challenging situation through his alliance with international powers (Al-Rayhani, 1980: 317), and communication took place between him and Italy. In this regard, Al-Wasai'i indicates in his book, *History of Yemen*, that Al-Idrisi's communication with the Italian side took place through the friendship that linked him with Muhammad Ali Alawi, the translator at the Italian Legation in Cairo (Al-Wasai'i, 1982: 341), Al-Aqili also mentions in his book *Al-Mikhlaḥ Al-Sulaymani* that Al-Idrisi's contact with Italy was through Muhammad Salim Al-Masou'i and Tahir Al-Shaniti, who were two merchants who had strong commercial relations with the people of Tihama Asir (Al-Aqili, 1982: 58). There is a third opinion, referred to by Sulayman Shafiq, the governor of Asir during the Ottoman era, that Al-Idrisi's contact with Italy was through Al-Idrisi's nephews in Egypt (Al-Aqili, 1984: 41). Italy controlled parts of the western coast of the Red Sea, as it was able to occupy the port of Assab in 1882, as well as occupy Massawa in 1885 (Haraz, 1974: 215; Macro, 1968: 130). Therefore, it sought to rely on Al-Idrisi and provide him with the money and weapons he needed to open a new front against the Ottoman state to drain its power, which would facilitate its mission of tightening its control over Tripoli in the West (Naseef, 1349AH: 18). Thus, Italian interests met with Al-Idrisi's interests represented in establishing his political entity.

Italian support for Al-Idrisi included providing money and weapons, as well as the Italian fleet's bombardment of the Yemeni ports of the Ottoman Empire during the years 1911 and 1912 (Jacob, 1983: 152; Macro, 1968: 132), which enabled Al-Idrisi to achieve victories over the forces of the Ottoman Empire in Asir. It can be said that Italian interests were not limited to opening a new front against the Ottoman Empire but rather its desire to control the Yemeni ports and the economically prosperous ports of Asir (Abaza, 1976: 547). However, Italy's determination to support Al-Idrisi weakened after securing its control over Tripoli (Al-Wasai, 1982: 243), and he became alone between two opponents: The Ottoman Empire and Imam Yahya. Therefore, he sought to find another ally to enable him to achieve his goals.

British-Idrisi relations between 1915-1923

Britain felt suspicious of the military preparations made by the Ottoman Empire after the defeat it suffered in Tripoli and the Balkan War, as the Ottoman Empire made military preparations before World War I. It increased its military activity in Yemen and Asir (Nawwar and Na'na'i, 2014: 441-443). Britain made an effort to closely monitor the military movements of the Ottoman Empire through its military base in Aden, and through its war fleet that roamed the Red Sea in order to protect the sea route leading to India and the Far East, as well as to secure the port of Aden, which is located on its sea transportation route towards India (Abaza, 1976: 129).

When the First World War broke out (1914-1918), the Arab world became an arena for the Ottoman-British conflict, which prompted Britain to gain the Arabs' support, as it was aware of the troubles that could be caused to it by the Ottoman Empire, which at that time controlled Iraq and the Levant. It posed a threat to the Suez Canal, the northern entrance to the Red Sea, which would

negatively affect its maritime transportation route, as well as its fear for the oil sources of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company on the eastern coast of the Arabian Gulf. Britain did not overlook the danger that the Ottoman Empire could cause through the ports of the eastern coast of the Red Sea in Yemen and Asir. This would harm British maritime interests and the Ottoman Empire's ability to threaten British influence in Aden (Abaza, 1976: 561). Therefore, Britain sought to ensure that the local Arab powers would stand by its side, especially in the Arabian Peninsula, a theatre of political and military conflict between it and the Ottoman Empire (Al-Maddah, 1985: 238-239).

Britain sought to ensure that Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi would stand by its side, as he had military influence in Tihama Asir and was able to cut off the Ottoman military lines of communication between the Ottoman forces in the Hijaz and Yemen, as well as strike the Ottoman forces if they decided to attack Aden. However, the most crucial benefit for Britain lay in the possibility of al-Idrisi preventing the Ottoman state from using the ports of Asir. Britain found that the influence of Al-Idrisi was concentrated mainly on the coasts of Asir, which meant accessible communication with the British fleet stationed in the Red Sea and the resulting reduction in the burdens placed on this fleet. Thus, the British fleet could devote itself to besieging the ports of the Ottoman Empire in the Hijaz and Yemen (Abaza, 1983: 23, 29).

In light of the above, the British political resident in Aden began to make contacts with Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi with the aim of reaching a treaty between the two parties (Saeed, 1959: 44). Britain did not face much difficulty in reaching an understanding with al-Idrisi, who in turn welcomed cooperation with Britain and an alliance with it in order to fight the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman position opposing Al-Idrisi and the signing of the Da'an Peace Treaty between the Ottoman state and Imam Yahya had a significant impact on Al-Idrisi's welcoming of the alliance with Britain (Abaza, 1983: 26; Al-Mukhtar, 1957: 173).

The British-Idrisi contacts resulted in a friendship treaty between the two sides on April 30, 1915 (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B250a, No. 33 A of 1915, 20 May, 1915: 1-3). Britain welcomed the signing of the Treaty and its alliance with the Idrisi against the Ottoman state, as it considered this alliance a preventive action against any attempt by Imam Yahya against the British presence in Aden (Hurewitz, 1956:12). The Treaty also regulated the relationship between Britain and Al-Idrisi, and indicated the position of each of them regarding the Ottoman Empire and Imam Yahya in Yemen. This is considered the first Treaty concluded by Britain with an Arab leader during the First World War (Al-Saruji, 1981: 77).

The British goal of this Treaty was for Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi to declare war on the Ottoman state and to do his utmost to expel the Ottoman forces from Asir, and thus increase the area of land he controlled (Al-Rayhani, 1980: 317). The Treaty also defined the features of al-Idrisi's military movements, as it required him to direct his military activity only towards the Ottoman forces, and not against Imam Yahya in Yemen as long as the latter did not oppose Britain (Arabian Boundaries, 1988: 92). In return, Britain pledged to protect Al-Idrisi's lands from any aggression that might occur against them (Al-Rayhani, 1980: 317), and guaranteed Al-Idrisi's independence in his lands with British pledges to settle the dispute between him and Imam Yahya in Yemen after the end of the war (Troeller, 1976: 208-209). It also included a British pledge to provide the necessary financial and military support to Al-Idrisi in exchange for the military actions he was carrying out against the Ottoman forces. It allowed Al-Idrisi to open his seaports, which led to a revival of commercial activity there (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B250a,

No. 33 A of 1915, 20 May 1915: 1-3).

It is worth noting that the Treaty highlighted the features of British policy in Tihama Asir during World War I, which aimed to resist the influence of the Ottoman Empire on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, as Britain sought to ignite a local war through which it would exhaust the efforts of the Ottoman Empire. In order to achieve this goal, the British agreed with Muhammad bin Ali Al-Idrisi to fight the Ottoman Empire, their common enemy, and to occupy it in Asir and prevent it from using the eastern ports of the Red Sea against the British presence. In order to ensure the success of its goal, Britain pledged to provide everything Al-Idrisi needed in his war against the Ottoman Empire (Abaza, 1983: 42). The Treaty guaranteed Al-Idrisi the flow of British aid in the form of money and weapons, in addition to the support he received from the British fleet to support his forces in Tihama Asir (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B250a, No. 33 A of 1915, 20 May 1915: 1-3). Al-Idrisi's alliance with Britain was a severe blow to the efforts of the Ottoman state during the First World War. Under the British-Idrisi Treaty, Britain did not grant Al-Idrisi absolute powers; instead, it drew up his battlefield as stated in Article Three of the Treaty: "He may expand his lands at the expense of the Turks," and Article Four: "He shall refrain from any hostile movement against Imam Yahya as long as this does not put his hand in the hand of the Turks." The Treaty also opened the seaports controlled by Al-Idrisi to commercial activity, which led to a tangible economic boom (Abaza, 1983: 42; Al-Maddah, 1985: 248).

As for the military support Britain provided to Al-Idrisi under the Treaty signed between the two parties, Jacob, the assistant to the British political resident in Aden, indicates that it included large quantities of light weapons and various types of ammunition. It contained four siege cannons and thirty mortars (Jacob, 1983: 174). As a result, Al-Idrisi continued his combat operations against the Ottoman forces. In May 1915, his forces attacked the port of Al-Luhayyah, located on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, north of Al-Hudaydah (Wahba, 1967: 39). Mustafa al-Idrisi led the Idrisid forces, who divided his forces into two sections. The first section headed towards the port of al-Luhayyah but failed to control it; this was due to the disorganization of the ranks of the Idrisid army and its inability to penetrate the Ottoman defenses (Hogarth, 1922: 127). While the second part of the Idrisi army headed towards the village of Deir Hussein, affiliated with Al-Hodeidah, Britain also participated in the Battle of Al-Luhayyah, where its fleet struck the port in June 1915, in implementation of the British-Idrisi Treaty, and to encourage Al-Idrisi to continue his fight against the Ottoman forces. As a result of this intervention, Al-Idrisi was able to control the port, where Commander Mustafa Al-Idrisi made it the headquarters of his command (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B228, No. C. 96, 29 January 1916: 1-5).

The Idrisi control of the port of Al-Luhayyah angered the Ottoman side, which prompted the commander of the Ottoman forces in the Asir region, Ghalib Bey, to reorganize the ranks of his forces, attack the Idrisi camp in Deir Hussein, and defeat the Idrisi forces stationed there. However, the Ottoman forces could not regain the port of Al-Luhayyah due to the concentration of the Idrisi forces there and the presence of the British fleet off its coast (Al-Uqaili, 1982: 109).

It is noteworthy that Al-Idrisi was upset by the British fleet's bombing of the port of Al-Luhayyah, so he wrote to Britain expressing his dissatisfaction with the damage that had befallen the people, as the damage had affected the people and was not limited to the forces of the Ottoman Empire. It seems that he was seeking to exempt himself from responsibility for this act that enabled him to control the port, as well as not to incite the tribes against him, at a time when the feelings of some of the tribes of Tihama Asir began to lean towards the Ottoman state after his trade had gained freedom of movement.

Therefore, Al-Idrisi saw that it was appropriate not to publicly show his cooperation with Britain for fear of losing his position (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No.C.80, 27 January 1916: 3-7).

The British-Idrisi cooperation continued in the Battle of Dayr Hussein, in which part of the Idrisi forces were defeated by the Ottoman forces, as the Idrisi forces in the Al-Atan region, located to the northwest of Sana'a, were unable to support the forces stationed in Dayr Hussein, due to the strong positioning of the Ottoman artillery, and remained in Al-Atan until the Ottoman forces surprised them, which prompted them to withdraw towards Midi overlooking the Red Sea (Al-Uqaili, 1982: 111). The Ottoman forces also sought to enter Al-Luhayyah. However, they feared that the Idrisid forces withdrawing from Al-Atan had fortified themselves there in the British fleet's presence, which protected the Idrisid army from the sea. When the Ottoman forces learned that Al-Luhayyah was empty of Idrisid forces, they attacked it and took control of it; this prompted the British fleet to bombard Al-Luhayyah again, which led to the withdrawal of the Ottoman forces from it (Abaza, 1976: 584). In turn, the Idrisid forces attacked the Ottoman forces in WadiMawr, located to the south of Al-Luhayyah, but they failed in their attack, which prompted the tribes of WadiMawr to join the Ottoman side (Al-Maddah, 1985: 255).

The Idrisi military movements supported by the British fleet caused disturbance to the Ottoman side and weakened its position on the southern front opposite the British forces in Aden. However, these movements did not achieve the desired success, which prompted Britain to provide more support to the Idrisi to play his role more in fighting the Ottoman state and occupying it in Asir (Abaza, 1983: 46). It is worth noting that the Ottoman forces were able to seize Lahj in the southeastern part of Sana'a in May 1915 (Jacob, 1983: 215), then headed towards the Sheikh Othman region located to the north of Aden, but the British forces were able to expel them from Sheikh Othman; This prompted the Ottoman forces to retreat towards Lahj and fortify themselves there (Al-Rayhani, 1980: 367). William Walton, the acting British Political Resident in Aden, indicated that Britain's prestige and influence in Aden and the surrounding areas were negatively affected by Ottoman control over Lahj (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B227, No. C.273, 14 March 1916: 1).

British reports indicated the nature of Britain's relationship with Al-Idrisi. General Price, the British Political Resident in Aden, stated in his letter to the British administration in India dated 27 January, 1916, that the Assistant British Political Resident in Aden, Jacob, accompanied by several British army officers, visited Sayyid Muhammad bin Ali Al-Idrisi in early January 1916 (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916:1-2). Price described this visit as fruitful and pointed out that the British and Idrisi sides had discussed the issue of trade exchange between the Idrisi ports and the ports of the Hijaz and what resulted from that in terms of some goods arriving at the ports controlled by the Ottoman state, as well as the difficulties faced by the British ships assigned to monitoring and guarding, due to the lack of anything that distinguished the Idrisi ships from others (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916:1-2). In turn, Al-Idrisi pointed out to the British delegation that stopping trade exchange between his ports and the ports of the Hijaz would lead to depriving his people of a cheap source of food supplies. Price also asked the British administration in India to take Al-Idrisi's point of view into account so that he would not be embarrassed in front of his followers. This negatively affected his support for Britain against the Ottoman Empire (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916:1-2). Jacob suggested that Al-Idrisi be awarded a British knighthood for his continued cooperation with Britain, but Price saw this as premature (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916:1-2).

Jacob, the head of the British delegation to Al-Idrisi, prepared the report, including the points discussed between the two sides. Jacob stated that Al-Idrisi was very careful not to reveal his relationship with Britain to his followers so that his religious standing with his supporters would not be affected as a result of the alliance with non-Muslims (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916: 3-7). The British-Idrisi discussions also included the nature of the commercial movement with the ports of the Hijaz under the control of the Ottoman Empire, as Idrisi denied the arrival of any food supplies from his ports to the Hijazi ports. However, he did not deny the occurrence of some smuggling operations, so the British side demanded the necessity of tightening security to limit smuggling operations (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916: 3-7). As for the British claim that the Farasan Islands, located off the coast of Asir, were used as a hideout for Ottoman ships, Al-Idrisi vehemently denied this and pointed out that the Farasan Islands were reserved only for his pearl-diving ships (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916: 3-7).

Jacob also stated in his report that stopping trade with the port of Jeddah was an ill-considered act, as it would lead to results that would harm the British position since the port of Jeddah was an Arab Islamic port; which would lead to stirring up Arab feelings against Britain on the one hand, and depriving the Idrisi ports of their commercial activity with India and the ports of the western Red Sea on the other hand, and what would result from that in terms of an increase in the prices of goods, and thus a state of anger towards Britain at a time when it was seeking to win the Arabs to its side (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916: 3-7).

In his report, Jacob expressed a great deal of emotion about Al-Idrisi's position towards the Ottoman Empire. He referred to the hostility that Al-Idrisi held towards it and stated that Al-Idrisi was completely confident that Britain would achieve victory in the First World War (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C. 80, 27 January 1916:3-7).

Jacob also included in his report Al-Idrisi's reservations, which included his fear that Britain would conclude a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire that would keep it in its possession in the Arabian Peninsula, as he feared the Ottoman Empire remaining in the areas close to him. The report mentioned that Al-Idrisi was active in attracting tribes to Britain's side in Tihama Asir, as well as his numerous attempts to attract the powerful tribes of Yemen, such as the Hashid and Bakil tribes, as he believed that the possibility of attracting these tribes was possible if they were provided with sums of money (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916: 3-7). In his report, Jacob concluded that Britain must provide all kinds of military support to Al-Idrisi so that he can confront the forces of the Ottoman Empire, as well as provide him with the money necessary to win the favor of the tribes (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C.80, 27 January 1916: 3-7).

As for the report submitted by Bradshaw, the General Staff Officer of the British Army in Aden, who was part of the delegation accompanying Jacob on his visit to Al-Idrisi, he indicated that Al-Idrisi played an essential role in preventing the Ottoman state from communicating with the Arab tribes in his area of influence, and about his military actions against the Ottoman forces, the report described it as lacking proper planning. Bradshaw indicated in his report that Al-Idrisi did not fully know the Ottoman military capabilities in Asir and northern Yemen. Bradshaw expressed in his report his confidence in Al-Idrisi's hostility to the Ottoman state despite the absence of any military clashes on the front line between Al-Idrisi and the Ottoman forces during the beginning of 1916 (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B228, No.C.96,29 January 1916: 1-5).

Regarding the dispute between Al-Idrisi and the Imam of Yemen, Bradshaw indicated that it would benefit Britain if it were exploited appropriately. Bradshaw realized that Al-Idrisi did not intend to carry out military operations in early 1916 because he wanted to wait to see how the circumstances of the First World War would develop; he did not want to implicate himself before the situation became apparent, and he was also not in a position to launch an attack on the Ottoman forces; however, he had weapons, he was suffering from a lack of sufficient ammunition (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B228, No.C.96,29 January 1916: 1-5). However, Bradshaw noted in his report that Al-Idrisi's position as an ally was essential to Britain due to the hostility he held towards the Ottoman state and the Imam of Yemen (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B228, No.C.96,29 January 1916: 1-5). At the end of his report, Bradshaw concluded that Al-Idrisi could not carry out military operations that would force the Ottoman forces to withdraw from Lahij because the threat he posed to the Ottoman forces was insufficient. Therefore, Bradshaw stressed in his report the need to increase British military support for him (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B228, No.C.96, 29 January 1916: 1-5).

The visit of the British delegation headed by Jacob strengthened the British-Idrisi relations, as the visit prepared the conditions for concluding a new treaty between the two parties. In January 1917, a treaty was signed regarding Britain's recognition of the Idrisi's affiliation with the Farasan Islands. The Treaty stipulated that the Idrisi pledged not to cede the Farasan Islands to any other country and that Britain would commit to assisting the Idrisi and protecting his property from any external aggression without interfering in the internal affairs of the Idrisi Emirate (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B250, No. C.59, 26 January 1917: 1-4). The Treaty also stipulated that Al-Idrisi must send his workers to the Farasan Islands as a manifestation of his sovereignty over them, and the Treaty indicated that these rights include Al-Idrisi and his successors after him (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B250, No. C.59, 26 January 1917: 1-4).

This Treaty strengthened the bonds of Idrisi-British relations, as Britain pledged to provide adequate protection to Idrisi in the event that he was exposed to an external threat, and Idrisi pledged not to establish political or economic relations with any country except with the approval of the British side (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B250, No. C.59, 26 January 1917: 1-4).

Al-Idrisi gained many benefits from his alliance with Britain, especially in the economic aspect, as the ports under his control continued to carry out their commercial activity, which was positively reflected in the lives of his followers. At a time when Britain was imposing a tight siege on the Yemeni ports (Hurewitz, 1956: 12), it sought to open the Idrisi ports to commercial activity, protected the Idrisi ships, and linked the Idrisi ports to the port of Aden (I.O.R./L/PS/18/B229, No. C. 83, 27 January 1916: 8), it seems that the British goal of this was to stimulate Al-Idrisi's economic activity and increase his financial resources so that he could achieve the goals assigned to him related to confronting the Ottoman forces (Al-Maddah, 1985: 268). Britain continued to support its Idrisi ally after the end of World War I and the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from Yemen and Asir. British interests converged with Idrisi interests, as neither wanted to increase Imam Yahya's influence in Yemen, who considered himself an heir to Ottoman influence. For this reason, Britain occupied the port of Hodeidah, Imam Yahya's sea outlet on the Red Sea (Al-Aqili, 1989: 113). Britain aimed to deprive Imam Yahya of this outlet and hand it over to its Idrisi ally, who sought to increase the area of land he controlled (Khoda, 1990: 69-72). Al-Idrisi's forces entered the port of Hodeidah in January 1921 against the will of its people because its inhabitants were merchants who did not want to work in politics and sought peace and stability (Al-Rayhani, 1980: 361).

Thus, it becomes clear that Britain intervened in the issue of geographical borders between two competing rulers, Imam Yahya and Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi. Britain did not control al-Hudaydah before World War I, and al-Idrisi did not seize it from the Ottoman Empire during his conflict with it, in addition to the fact that al-Hudaydah is considered the natural port of Sana'a. Therefore, Britain's goal in allowing al-Idrisi to enter the port of al-Hudaydah was to preserve its area of influence in Aden, as well as to continue the conflict between Imam Yahya and al-Idrisi so that the Imam would not seek to regain Aden and threaten British influence there (Jacob, 1983: 331). Therefore, it can be said that Al-Idrisi increased the borders of his emirate, relying on his alliance with Britain, which provided him with all possible assistance.

British-Idrisi relations from 1923 to 1926

Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi died on Saturday, 21 March 1923. It is worth noting that he did not appoint anyone as crown prince, which led to competition among members of the Idrisi family for his succession and the intensification of the conflict between his heirs, which negatively affected the stability of the Idrisi emirate. The members of the Idrisi family decided to pledge allegiance to Ali, the eldest son of Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idrisi, to rule the Idrisi emirate. However, the conflict soon became apparent between him and his uncle al-Hasan on the one hand and his father's cousin Mustafa al-Idrisi on the other hand (Attar, 1972: 1099). Ali ibn Muhammad al-Idrisi was able to limit the influence of his opponents by concluding a peace treaty with them, which resulted in the appointment of Mustafa al-Idrisi as his deputy in the southern region of the Idrisi emirate (Al-Maddah, 1985: 301).

Mustafa Al-Idrisi did not abandon his ambition to assume the rule of the Idrisid Emirate, so he sought to gain Britain's favor by granting British companies a concession to extract the salt mine of Al-Salif, located to the northwest of Al-Hodeidah in exchange for Britain supplying him with money and weapons. However, this attempt failed when Ali bin Muhammad Al-Idrisi learned of it, and he sent a telegram to the British side in which he expressed his refusal to conclude any agreement related to the Idrisid Emirate without referring to him, in his telegram, he referred to the friendship treaty that brought his father together with Britain. As for the British side, it sought to reassure Ali Al-Idrisi and pledged to him not to conclude any agreement related to the Idrisid Emirate without returning to him (Al-Jarafi, 1987: 304), Perhaps the reason for this British position is that Ali Al-Idrisi's advantage is greater than that of his rival, Mustafa Al-Idrisi, who in turn expressed his disappointment with the British position (Al-Maddah, 1985: 304).

Imam Yahya sought to benefit from the state of chaos that had afflicted the Idrisid emirate as a result of the internal competition between the members of the Idrisid house. In 1925, he was able to enter Al-Hodeidah, as well as control some of the southern regions of the Idrisid Emirate (Macro, 1968: 113), which prompted Ali Al-Idrisi to seek aid from Britain, which met his request with complete indifference, because it found in the development of the situation service to its interests, as Imam Yahya's preoccupation with his conflict with the Idrisids would lead to protecting its influence in its protectorates in Yemen (Al-Maddah, 1985: 312). As a result of the deterioration of the situation in the Idrisid Emirate, Ali al-Idrisi abdicated in favor of his uncle, al-Hasan al-Idrisi, in 1926, who tried to maintain security and protect the borders of the emirate. However, Imam Yahya continued to expand at the expense of the Idrisid Emirate (Al-Aqili, 1982: 906; Salem, 1971: 281). The Idrisid Emirate also suffered from severe financial distress (Al-Maddah, 1985: 318); Al-Hasan al-Idrisi sought to find a solution to the financial

distress suffered by the Idrisid Emirate by granting the British Anglo-Saxon Company the concession to explore for oil in the Farasan Islands. The Idrisi side saw that this would be of great benefit to the Idrisid Emirate through the financial support it would receive, in addition to the fact that the presence of a British company would lead to Britain's support for the Idrisids in their conflict with Imam Yahya (Rafi', 1954: 147).

The British position on the rapid developments in the Idrisid Emirate was characterized by negativity and lukewarmness. Britain declared its neutrality despite the treaties concluded between the two parties, as it saw that it was not obligated to provide aid to the Idrisid Emirate if an Arab ruler attacked it, and that the commitment to support the Idrisid Emirate was related to its exposure to aggression from a European country. It also expressed its intention not to arm the Idrisids, claiming that its policy was based on non-interference in conflicts between Arab rulers (Al-Maddah, 1985: 354). This British position indicates that Britain began to think about the fate of the Idrisid emirate and the possibility of its demise. Despite the above, it was keen to protect the Farasan Islands due to their importance to its maritime communications line across the Red Sea. Jacob explains the features of British policy in this context: "Britain's interests in this region can be focused on strengthening our position in Aden and leaving the interior to develop in an Arab line... Our policy must be profit without seizure, action without actual presence, and development without control" (Jacob, 1983: 202). Jacob expressed the British point of view and did not consider the hopes and aspirations of the country's people.

As a result of Britain's refusal to extend a helping hand to the Idrisid Emirate, which could not repel Imam Yahya's forces, Al-Hasan Al-Idrisi sought support from Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud. The negotiations between the two sides resulted in the conclusion of the Mecca Treaty in 1926, which protected the Idrisid Emirate from attacks by the forces loyal to Imam Yahya (Al-Manar, 1926: 798-799).

Conclusion

Muhammad bin Ali Al-Idrisi was able to bring the Idrisid Emirate into existence, relying on his grandfather's religious legacy and his extensive knowledge and awareness of the conditions of the tribes of Tihama Asir. He sought to reform the conditions of the people, maintain security and order, and unite the tribes. He tried in every way to eliminate sedition to gain control of the people's hearts in preparation for revolting against the Ottoman Empire, which had neglected the Tihama Asir region. The emergence of the Idrisid Emirate at the beginning of the twentieth century AD led to conflicts in the Tihama Asir region. The Idrisid Emirate was surrounded by many opponents who coveted it. In the south, there was Imam Yahya in Yemen, and in the north, there was Sharif Hussein bin Ali in the Hijaz. Both believed the Idrisid was an intruder in the region and had no right to monopolize power in Tihama Asir. In addition, there was the Ottoman Empire, which considered the Idrisid a rebel against its authority after he had disobeyed it.

Muhammad bin Ali Al-Idrisi sought to ally with Imam Yahya in Yemen to unify their efforts to confront the Ottoman Empire. However, the Ottoman Empire was able to achieve separation between Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idrisi and Imam Yahya when it concluded the Da'an Peace Treaty with the Imam, which led to an increase in the intensity of hostility between the two sides because the Imam abandoned him and left him alone in confronting the Ottoman Empire. In the face of these dangers surrounding the Idrisid Emirate, Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idrisi sought to ally with international powers. Indeed, this

alliance began with Italy, which provided him with money and weapons. Then he moved to ally with Britain, with which he concluded two treaties in 1915 and 1917, according to which the Idrisid Emirate was placed under British protection. His goal in these alliances was to preserve the stability of the Idrisid Emirate and protect it from its covetous neighbors.

The British-Idrisi relations during the reign of Muhammad bin Ali al-Idrisi were characterized by fruitful cooperation. Al-Idrisi supported Britain during the First World War, which increased his political, economic, and military influence in Tihama Asir. After the end of the First World War, Britain handed over the port of Hodeidah to him to appreciate his efforts during the war against the Ottoman Empire.

Muhammad bin Ali Al-Idrisi's alliances with foreign powers were short-lived and directed towards the Ottoman Empire. The tension in Idrisi-Ottoman relations was the motive behind these alliances. Foreign powers (Italy and Britain) also sought to benefit from the location of the Idrisi Emirate, which overlooked large parts of the eastern shores of the Red Sea, as well as exploit the Idrisi conflict with the Ottoman Empire to serve their interests. After achieving their goals, their determination to support the Idrisi Emirate weakened.

The death of Muhammad bin Ali Al-Idrisi, the founder of the Idrisid Emirate, led to an escalation of the conflict between the members of the Idrisid family over his succession to power, which weakened the Idrisid Emirate, especially after his son Ali assumed power, who lacked the political and military experience that his father had, this prompted Imam Yahya to exploit those circumstances and expand at the expense of the Idrisid Emirate. As a result, al-Hasan al-Idrisi assumed power, and he, in turn, sought protection from Abdulaziz Al Saud due to the cessation of British support for the Idrisid Emirate. This was likely due to Britain reaching the conviction that the demise of the Idrisid Emirate was imminent.

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