



French Political And Military Mission To Hejaz 1916 Ad

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Abstract:

The article attempts to discuss the problematic transformation of France's policy towards Muslims performing the Hajj in its colonies in North and West Africa in 1916. From a policy of strictness and preventing the Hajj as the main cause of political unrest within the French colonies, and a spreader of infectious diseases such as cholera, to a policy of encouraging its Muslim subjects to perform the Hajj and covering all expenses, under the slogan of France's friendship with Muslims.

This article also attempts to shed light on the real reasons that prompted France to organize the Hajj in 1916, through French and British archives. It also reveals the extent of France's manipulation of the religious feelings of Muslims in its colonies in North and West Africa, and the role played by both Qaddour Ben Ghabrit and Al-Arabi Qadi in the success of the French political and military mission to the Hijaz in 1916.

The study reached a number of results that can be summarized by saying that the mission's success in achieving the goals set for it was a partial success, and not as the French government claimed and its press promoted, and that in light of the results achieved by the mission, France will work to draw up a future policy towards its dealings with the Muslims of its colonies.

Keywords: Ben Ghabrit, Hajj (Pilgrimage), Sharif Hussein, The Great Arab Revolt, France.

Introduction:

Since the French colonization of Algeria in 1830, and then the expansion of colonization in Tunisia, Morocco and the countries of West Africa, France saw the Hajj as a threat to the political stability of these colonies. Therefore, it worked to obstruct, limit or prevent its performance under the pretext of protecting the Muslims of its colonies from the cholera disease spreading in the Holy Land.

When World War I broke out, Sharif Hussein declared a revolution against the Ottoman Empire, and considered himself the protector of the Two Holy Mosques instead of the Ottoman Caliph Ahmed Rashad. France wanted to exploit the event and work with the help of

Britain to shift the Muslims' affection and loyalty to the Ottoman Caliph, who was hostile to them, to their ally Sharif Hussein. This was in order to divert the attention and affection of Muslims from loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, which had declared a fatwa of jihad against them, to Sharif Hussein, who reversed the position and called on Muslims to wage jihad against the Ottoman Empire.

During the Hajj season of 1916, France formed a political and military mission to accompany about 600 Muslim pilgrims from its colonies in North and West Africa to perform the Hajj at the expense of the French treasury.

This article addresses the problem of the French political and military mission of 1916 in terms of the circumstances of its formation, its objectives, and the results it achieved.

The Study Relied on a Group of Sources, Including:

1. The French archives are published in the following sources:
 - The French Armies in the Great War Part IX 9.1 Appendices issued by the French Ministry of War.
 - French Diplomatic Documents Series 1914-1916.
 - Deliberations of the French National Assembly for the years 1916-1917.
 - Deliberations of the French Senate 1916-1917.
2. The British Archives published in the book *The Arabian Peninsula through British Documents, Part Two*.

We also benefited from what was included in the memoirs of the leader of the French mission, Brémond, entitled (*Hijaz during World War I*). In addition to what was included in the *Al-Qibla* newspaper, which followed the news of the French mission from its arrival in the Hijaz until its departure. In addition to some French newspapers such as the events of Algeria.

To cover the subject, we tried to develop a plan that sheds light on the subject from the following aspects:

- Hajj before World War I, in which we discussed the French policy on Hajj.
- The political and military mission, in terms of its human structure and the objectives set for it.
- The mission's achievements in the Hijaz, and its fate after 1916.

The study relied on the descriptive historical approach in monitoring and analyzing the facts according to the analytical approach in order to reach the disclosure of the results achieved by the mission.

The French View of Hajj before World War I:

France viewed the pilgrimage of the peoples of its colonies to the holy places as a source of multiple dangers that must be dealt with firmly, as it believed that:

- A source of cholera, as the pilgrim brings with him upon his return to his country the cholera infection that is prevalent in Mecca.

- A source of widespread political turmoil. According to the French concept, the pilgrim returns to his country more fanatical and more rejecting of the French presence.¹ He becomes a time bomb that could explode at any time.
- A source of denigration of France's reputation. Describing France as barbaric and spreading lies about its committing massacres and holocausts in its colonies and its hostility to and war against the Islamic religion.
- In order to limit these risks, France implemented a policy that General Lyautey later referred to, which was to work to sever the connection between the Muslims of the French colonies and the Hajj indirectly and secretly so that they would not be provoked.² France enacted a set of laws to obstruct the Hajj. They were first implemented in Algeria as the first French colony, then generalized to the rest of the French colonies in North and West Africa, including the following:
 - It was mandatory to have a permit from the French authorities to go to Hajj. In addition to having a sum of money to cover the expenses of Hajj. Permits were only granted with great difficulty, and were denied to those suspected of or hostile to French colonial policy. In return, France facilitated Hajj for figures who cooperated with it in exchange for submitting detailed reports about the Hajj trip.
 - The pilgrimage was banned under the pretext of protecting pilgrims from the spread of cholera in the Holy Land. This happened, for example, during the years 1880-1890. Although cholera had spread in Mecca only during the years 1880-1883, France continued to ban it throughout the years 1884-1890. The real reason behind this was to prevent the spread of political news among Algerians, such as the Bouamama Revolution, as well as the imposition of French protection on Tunisia, and also the imposition of British protection on Egypt, in addition to the Mahdi Revolution in Sudan.³
 - France converted its consular office in Jeddah into a consulate in 1888, with the aim of monitoring pilgrims from French colonies. The French consul Daubie said that one of the reasons France converted the consular office into a consulate in Jeddah was to monitor the activities of Algerian pilgrims.⁴

The French View of Hajj in 1916:

With the outbreak of World War I, the Ottoman Empire participated in the war on the side of Germany against the Allied powers.⁵ The two resorted to waging malicious propaganda among the Muslims of the Allied colonies.⁶ One of its manifestations was the Ottoman Sultan's support for the fatwa of jihad issued by the Sheikh al-Islam on November 7, 1915, in which he called on Muslims under the control of the Allied powers to revolt and take up arms against them, and to refuse to be recruited into their forces.⁷

The issuance of the fatwa was followed by intense activity by the German and Ottoman media and propaganda. Thousands of copies of pamphlets and leaflets were printed and published in all languages and distributed to Muslims around the world, all of which called for the idea of jihad against European colonialism. The aim was to ignite revolutions in the Islamic countries subject to the alliance countries in order to distract them and push them to distract their war effort outside Europe.⁸

The German-Ottoman propaganda frightened both France and Britain. France and Britain, in turn, launched counter-propaganda based on refuting the German-Ottoman propaganda, trying to get closer to Muslims to gain their loyalty,⁹ and spreading the atrocities that the Federalists (Unionists)¹⁰ were committing in the Orient against everything Arab, by hanging their leaders, marginalizing the Arabic language, and shelling Mecca with cannons, which caused the curtains of the Kaaba to be burned,¹¹ and praising Sharif Hussein, who declared the Arab Revolution against all this injustice and the support of the Allied countries¹² for him in support of Islam and Muslims.

As part of this propaganda, France decided to send a double Hajj mission. A free Hajj mission for about 700 Muslims in its colonies in North and West Africa, in addition to a military mission to assist Sharif Hussein in his revolt against the heretical Federalists (Unionists).¹³

The Arab Revolution in the Hijaz:

Before World War I, the Holy Lands of the Hejaz were under Ottoman rule, and the Ottoman Empire appointed the ruler of the Hejaz from among the Hashemite nobles.

The position of governor of the Hejaz was a dangerous position, as its holder enjoyed a prestigious position among Muslims, and was looked upon with reverence and respect. Sharif Hussein¹⁴ had been the governor of the Hejaz since 1908. During his term, he was active in trying to gain independence for the Emirate of the Hejaz,¹⁵ in reaction to the policy of the Federalists (Unionists) who had deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid and replaced him with Muhammad Rashad.¹⁶ In addition, they adopted a policy of Turkification based on Turkish domination and the revival of the glory of the Turks at the expense of the rest of the ethnic elements that made up the Ottoman state, including the Arabs.

The Federalists (Unionists) tried to depose Sharif Hussein and replace him with another ruler, but the outbreak of World War I made them postpone the matter until the end of the war. During World War I, the Ottoman Empire asked Sharif Hussein, as the protector of the Holy Lands, to support the call for jihad declared by the Ottoman Caliph.

Sharif Hussein did not respond to the request, and followed a policy of procrastination and evasion¹⁷ until reaching an agreement with Britain, with whom he was negotiating the basis of cooperation between them against the Ottoman Empire. The negotiations between them ended with an agreement based in general on Sharif Hussein revolting against the Ottoman Empire in exchange for a vague British promise to assist him militarily and appoint him king of the Arabs. It is worth noting that France, Britain and Russia had secretly agreed to divide the Arab countries between them in what is known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement concluded on May 9, 1916,¹⁸ that is, one month before Sharif Hussein declared his revolution.

In June 1916, Sharif Hussein declared a revolution against the Young Turks.¹⁹ Military operations began on June 9, where Sharif Hussein's forces were able to occupy Mecca, Jeddah, and Taif.²⁰ However, they failed to seize Medina because of the Ottoman forces stationed there. The Federalists (Unionists) responded by dismissing Sharif Hussein and appointing another governor in his place, Sharif Ali Haidar Pasha, who would take Medina as his headquarters.²¹ Meanwhile, Sharif Hussein would take Mecca as his headquarters, and a

series of battles would begin between the two parties, ending with the fall of Medina into the hands of Sharif Hussein and the surrender of its garrison.

Sharif Hussein's declaration of revolt against the Ottoman Empire was a serious matter for the distribution of Ottoman forces. Instead of being concentrated in the Levant and Iraq, the forces were distributed over a wide front in the Arabian Peninsula, and attracted the attention of Muslims.²² In this context, France promoted Sharif Hussein's proclamation in which he declared his revolt against the Ottoman Empire and the reasons for it in North and West Africa.²³

France's Policy Towards Sharif Hussein's Revolution:

France and Britain hoped that Sharif Hussein's revolt would attract Muslim sympathy, which would shift the spiritual influence of the Muslims of their colonies from Istanbul to Mecca, and from the Turks to the Arabs. So, they agreed to cooperate in providing limited assistance²⁴ to Sharif Hussein.²⁵

The French government commissioned the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Muslim Affairs (CIAM)²⁶ to submit its proposals on how to benefit from Sharif Hussein's revolution. The committee had submitted proposals to the French government before the World War based on the need for the French government to get closer to the Muslims of its colonies, but the French government did not pay attention to that.

The committee proposed that the French government organize a pilgrimage for Muslims from its colonies and purchase two hotels in Mecca and Medina to accommodate the needy as French subjects.²⁷ All of this would serve as propaganda for France's good treatment of its Muslim subjects. The French Ministry of War entered the fray and proposed supporting Sharif Hussein's revolution militarily. Its success would help liberate the Arab peoples from Ottoman rule, which would make it easier for France to occupy the areas designated for it in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The revolution would keep the Turkish army busy and push it to distribute its forces across several war fronts. French support for Sharif Hussein would also attract Muslims to it, as it had helped him protect the holy places from Ottoman attacks.²⁸

At the end of August, Ottoman forces stationed in Medina began preparing to launch an attack on Sharif Hussein's forces in Mecca, which could threaten to nip the Arab Revolt in the bud. To prevent this, Britain urged France to hasten to provide military aid to Sharif Hussein.²⁹

Based on the proposal of Foreign Minister Aristide Briand, the French government issued an official decision dated 2-8-1916 calling for the dispatch of an official mission in the name of the French government, called the French Political and Military Mission to the Hejaz, to be financed by the French state treasury.³⁰ The French government sent a letter to Sharif Hussein informing him that the matter of the two missions had been completed, and he responded by saying: "The French delegation is welcomed with hearts before tongues"³¹ and he hastened to prepare to receive the two missions.³²

The Human Structure of the French Political and Military Mission to the Hejaz:

The leadership of the political mission was assigned to Qaddour Ben Ghabrit,³³ and the military mission to Ben Al-Arabi Qadi.³⁴ The leadership of the two missions and the coordination between them were entrusted to Officer³⁵ Edouard Brémond.³⁶ His

appointment came as a result of his qualifications, including his mastery of the Arabic language, his knowledge of the history and customs of the Arabs, and his experience in dealing with them.³⁷

❖ **The Political Mission:**

The political mission consisted of a group of pilgrims from the French colonies in North and West Africa, numbering about 661 pilgrims distributed as follows: 293 Algerians, 200 Tunisians, and 168 Moroccans in the Hajj of 1916, supervised by a small official delegation representing the French government headed by Qaddour Ben Ghabrit, and a group of representatives from the French colonies in North and West Africa,³⁸ as follows:

- **Representatives of Algeria:** Agha Sahrawi, an honorary Agha of Ouled Sidi Khaled of Jebel Nador, Mustafa Cherchali, an honorary professor at the Algiers School.
- **Representatives of Tunisia:** Chadli Al-Aqbi, leader of the suburbs of Tunis, and Hajj Al-Arabi Bin Al-Sheikh, from notables and landowners of Tunisia.
- **Representatives of Marrakesh:** Ahmed Bin Al-Hajj Sakrij, supervisor of the endowments of Fez, Mohammed Bin Youssef from Morocco.³⁹
- **Representative of Senegal:** Abdel Hamid Abdou Khan, a retired judge.
- **Secretary of the Mission:** Ali Malek, an employee of the Bordj Bou Arreridj court.⁴⁰

The members of the political mission were chosen to be prominent religious figures in the Maghreb who were loyal and faithful to France, regardless of their degree of religiosity. According to Al-Cherchali's report, the members of the mission were not truly religious; some of them entered Mecca without ihram but as tourists.⁴¹

The Declared Objectives of the Political Mission:

- Promoting the idea of France's love and friendship for Muslims and giving a good impression of the good situation the people live in under French rule.⁴²
- Purchasing two hotels in Mecca and Medina, and making them ostensibly an endowment for the benefit of poor pilgrims coming from French colonies. While the real goal was propaganda and espionage. Propaganda, so that it would appear to the rest of the pilgrims in the world that France cares about its poor pilgrims. And espionage, so that it could put the pilgrims under surveillance.
- Providing moral support to Sharif Hussein in order to shift the loyalty of Muslims towards him, as the protector of the Two Holy Mosques instead of the Ottoman Caliph.
- Delivering aid from the French government to Sharif Hussein. It was a sum of money worth one million two hundred and fifty thousand francs, directed to spending on his government. In addition to an amount of nine hundred thousand francs in the form of gifts and money distributed to Sharif Hussein and the notables of the Hejaz state. (Al-Qahtani, 2018, p. 114).

The Hidden Objectives of the Political Mission:

- Limiting the spread of anti-French ideas among Muslims, by promoting France's friendship with Muslims⁴³ and respect for the Islamic religion, and encouraging them to perform their religious rituals. The allocation of two inns in Mecca and Medina for the benefit of pilgrims from its colonies is evidence of this.⁴⁴

- France wanted to show Muslims the extent of its military power by bringing in its military forces to secure the Hajj route, despite the fact that World War I was raging at the time, unlike the Ottoman Empire, which was unable to do so.
- Encouraging Hajj and increasing the number of pilgrims would stimulate the economy of the emerging Emirate of Sharif Hussein, which was in dire need of financial resources,⁴⁵ especially if we know that the Hijazi economy depended entirely on the money that Hajj brought to the treasury, and on Ottoman aid that was cut off after Sharif Hussein declared his revolution against them.

❖ **The Military Mission:**

The members of the military mission were chosen to be Muslims.⁴⁶ This was so that Sharif Hussein would not be accused of working for France, and his value would be lost in the eyes of the Muslims, which would lead to the failure of the mission.⁴⁷ The military mission consisted of 42 officers, 983 soldiers, and 396 animals for transport under the command of Officer Ben Al-Arabi Qadi.⁴⁸ He was assisted by Muhammad Rahu, Saad Raqiq, Lahlou Muhammad, and Captain Kos.⁴⁹ The mission was distributed as follows:

- Machine gun platoon.
- 80mm field battery of 6 pieces drawn by mules. Also, 80mm mountain battery of 6 pieces.
- Engineering battalion with warehouse.
- Small artillery warehouse.
- Supply and clothing department.
- Field bakery.
- Field hospital for evacuation.⁵⁰

The Announced Objectives of the Military Mission:

- Meeting the British request. On September 2, 1916, the British government asked France to send urgent military aid to help Sharif Hussein, provided that they were Muslims.⁵¹
- Providing military support to Sharif Hussein in his war against the Ottoman forces stationed in the Hijaz.⁵²
- Facilitating the arrival of Moroccan pilgrims to the Hijaz state,⁵³ and securing their journey from possible attacks by the Axis powers.

The Hidden Military Mission Objectives:

Secret archival documents have shown that France was seeking to achieve a set of goals that it did not announce to the public. By reading some of the archival documents or the memoirs of those involved, the most important of them can be identified:

- Working to limit the work of Sharif Hussein's forces in the Arabian Peninsula and prevent them from advancing towards the Levant.⁵⁴
- Gaining the sympathy of the people of the Levant, considering France's assistance as a support for their liberation from Ottoman domination.⁵⁵
- Mobilizing the Levantines present in Sharif Hussein's army, caring for them, teaching them the French language, and training them militarily.⁵⁶ The purpose of this was to form an army of Levantines loyal to France to use them in future battles in the Levant.

It is known that according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Levant was France's share.

- Gathering information about Sharif Hussein's vision of the borders of his future state⁵⁷ and the British position on this.

The Journey of the French Political and Military Mission to the Hijaz:

After completing the necessary preparations, and to avoid the danger of German submarines operating in the Mediterranean, the members of the two missions set off for Hajj on three different trips as follows:

- The military mission left Marseille on August 23, 1916 on the ship Mosul heading to Alexandria, and its members remained there until the arrival of the political mission.
- The official delegation of the political mission, without the pilgrims, left Marseille on 06/09/1916 on board the ship Lotus,⁵⁸ and in Alexandria they were joined by members of the military mission, where they continued the journey together. On 09/20/1916, the ship arrived safely in Jeddah without being subjected to any German or Ottoman attack. It fired 21 artillery rounds in salute to the city, and the city responded with 21 rounds in welcome.⁵⁹ Al-Qibla newspaper wrote: The French cruiser Destour arrived in Jeddah waters at sunset yesterday, carrying to the holy places our esteemed guests, the men of the delegation representing the poles of the Near and Far Maghreb and the country of Senegal, under the auspices of our beloved ally, the great French Republic.⁶⁰
- The ship L'Orénoque set sail from Marseille, collecting pilgrims from the main ports of Casablanca, Algiers and Tunis.⁶¹ The French authorities attached importance to the ship's pilgrims as they were their propaganda mouthpieces. The ship's crew was active in providing the pilgrims with absolute comfort and luxury. Their requests were quickly met without grumbling or racist language. Food was served to them according to their requests and tastes. In every port city the ship stopped at, its men rushed to welcome them. France also deliberately demonstrated its military power to the pilgrims through the heavy guard that surrounded their ship, as many warships protected it from possible German or Ottoman attacks.⁶² On 09/25/1916,⁶³ the pilgrims' ship arrived in the city of Jeddah in the best conditions, and was received by members of the political mission. Al-Qibla newspaper mentioned many of the names of the arriving pilgrims.⁶⁴

The Official Meeting Between the Political and Military Mission and Sharif Hussein:

On 23-9-1916, the political and military mission headed to Mecca to perform the Hajj and meet with Sharif Hussein. On 28 September 1916, the official meeting between Sharif Hussein and the French delegation was attended by dignitaries of the Hijaz and senior officials.⁶⁵ The meeting began with Ben Ghabrit giving a speech in which he praised Sharif Hussein for being able to combine religious and worldly politics. He also maintained security in the Holy Land. He also praised France, the owner of human civilization, and stressed that his government had sent him to explain to Sharif Hussein France's keenness to stand by him until he restores the Arab dignity that the Ottoman Empire had defiled. He also stressed that the Muslims of France in North and West Africa stand with Sharif Hussein in his revolution to establish an Arab state.⁶⁶

After that, Sharif Hussein improvised a speech in which he welcomed the French delegation and thanked the French government for standing by the truth and supporting Islam and Muslims. He also thanked the people of Morocco for their interest in strengthening the bonds of love and affection with the Hejaz State.⁶⁷ After them, Chadli Al-Aqbi, the representative of the Tunisian delegation,⁶⁸ and Ahmed Sakrij,⁶⁹ the representative of the Marrakesh delegation, delivered their speeches. After the speeches were over, Ben Ghabrit introduced the members of the delegation one by one, as did Sharif Hussein, who introduced the notables of the Hejaz to the delegation.⁷⁰ After that, the gifts were distributed. Ben Ghabrit presented gifts from the French government to Sharif Hussein, which consisted of a dancing watch in the shape of an armored ship with cannons,⁷¹ and a valuable ring as a personal gift from the French president to Sharif Hussein, in addition to a sum of gold as French assistance to Sharif Hussein in paying the salaries of the soldiers and the custodians of the Grand Mosque.⁷² Al-Chadli Al-Aqbi and Ahmad Sakrij also presented their governments' gifts to Sharif Hussein. Lesser gifts were distributed among the notables and scholars of the Hijaz present.⁷³ All this was accompanied by the delivery of letters of support and congratulations to Sharif Hussein from the French Republic, the Bey of Tunis, and the Sultan of Marrakesh.⁷⁴

After the official meeting, the members of the mission began performing the Hajj rituals, accompanied by Sharif Hussein, who greatly honored them in front of pilgrims from all over the world. This was to promote the idea of France's friendship with Muslims. Examples of these honors include:

- They were given the honor of cleaning the floor of the Kaaba. The members of the mission shared with Sharif Hussein the honor of entering the Kaaba and cleaning its floor.⁷⁵
- When performing the prayer, Sharif Hussein placed Qaddour Ben Ghabrit next to him, and said in a loud voice to the commander Qadi, the honoree of the Battle of Verdun: "From Verdun to the Kaaba!"⁷⁶. This was in a hint to him that France had won the Battle of Verdun, and the Hijazi Revolution would be victorious thanks to its assistance.
- On October 6, at Mount Arafat, Sharif Hussein ordered his military band to play the French national anthem.⁷⁷

Purchase a hotel in Mecca:

Ben Ghabrit was able to reach an understanding with Sharif Hussein's Foreign Minister, Ahmed Effendi Ben Najjah, to purchase a building he owned near the Grand Mosque in Mecca⁷⁸ for a sum of one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs, and he paid him a down payment of two thousand francs. The property consisted of three buildings distributed around a central courtyard. The buildings were independent of each other and were built according to the architectural style of Mecca. The purchase of the inn in Medina was postponed to another time.⁷⁹

Return of the Political Mission to France:

After completing the tasks assigned to them by the French government, the members of the mission began to prepare to return to their countries. Before leaving, Sharif Hussein distributed gifts to them, which consisted of four robes and a piece of Kaaba cloth for each of them. He also gave them a special gift to the French President, which consisted of two Arabian

horses. He also presented the leader of the two missions, Brémond, with a luxurious sword. As for the Bey of Tunis and the Sultan of Marrakesh, he presented each of them with four high-quality robes.⁸⁰ The members of the political mission left Jeddah with the Hajj delegation on October 17, 1916, on board the ship L'Orénoque. They carried with them an additional 80 pilgrims⁸¹ from North Africa who were unable to return to their countries due to the outbreak of World War.⁸²

Upon returning to France, the political delegation presented the reports of the trip to the various organs of the French government. On November 18, 1917, Ben Ghabrit stood before the Political Committee and gave a presentation about the trip, which was well received by the members.⁸³ On November 11, the members of the political delegation met with the President of the Council and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who congratulated them on the success of the mission.⁸⁴ On November 15, they stood before the President of the French Republic, to whom Ben Ghabrit delivered a letter from Sharif Hussein. In turn, the President thanked the members of the political delegation for their professional and intelligent actions in making the mission a success for the benefit of France and its Islamic peoples.⁸⁵ It is clear from this that the French unanimously agreed on the success of the mission.

Activities of the Military Mission in the Hijaz:

While the members of the political mission returned to their homelands, the members of the military mission were attached to Sharif Hussein's forces as trainers and advisors such as the 19th Algerian Military Division to train Sharif Hussein's army in the use of artillery and explosives (Porte, 2015, p71). Or as field fighters within Sharif Hussein's forces distributed into three divisions (Touhadi, 2016, p9) as follows:

- Officers: Qadi, Zimouri and Kirung, were attached to Prince Ali's forces that were active in the Medina region and his headquarters was in Rabigh.
- Officers: Raho, Benjnat and Brost, were attached to Prince Abdullah's forces.
- Officer Lamotte was attached to Prince Faisal's forces.⁸⁶

The fighters of the military mission participated in several battles, including the battles of August 24, 1917 in Umm Al-Zarb. Officer Raho, with the help of his tribal men, was able to blow up about 5 km of railway and four bridges. Then, on August 28 in Jeddah, he was able to destroy another 4 km of railway.⁸⁷ Officer Qadi also participated with a group of his men in the battles of Rabigh,⁸⁸ starting on December 16, 1916.⁸⁹ The fighters of the military mission created a good impression on Sharif Hussein's forces, despite their simple capabilities compared to the British soldiers who were better equipped materially than the soldiers of the mission.⁹⁰

The Results Achieved by the French Political and Military Mission in the Hijaz:

❖ The Political Mission:

Official French reports were optimistic about the mission's results. According to a report addressed to the French Senate, the political mission succeeded in achieving the objectives set for it by the French government, as it was able to:

- Removing the bad image of France from the minds of Muslims.

- Purchasing a property in Mecca to be used as a hotel for the Muslims of North Africa.
- Establishing French friendship with Sharif Hussein.⁹¹

The report advised the French government to repeat the Hajj of the 1916 season for the coming seasons to consolidate the success achieved by the 1916 mission.⁹² In light of this report, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to organize the Hajj of the 1917 season and make it a success similar to the Hajj of the 1916 season.⁹³ Another report stated: Of the three objectives set by the French government for the political and military mission, we find that the first objective, which is the success of the Hajj of the 1916 season, has been achieved. Colonel Brémond has received well-deserved praise from all sides, and the future is assured in this respect. The second object, that of assisting the forces of Sharif Hussein, has not been fully achieved, because of the Sharif's express refusal to employ our instructors. The French Government have therefore decided to abandon the pursuit of this second object, and have actually reduced the number of fighters in the military mission. The third object, that of establishing friendship with Sharif Hussein and rapprochement with the Muslims, has also been achieved.⁹⁴

In a letter sent from the French ambassador in Cairo to the French Ministry of War, it was stated that the mission was able to achieve the following results:

- I. The success of the French government project in establishing friendly ties with Sharif Hussein and his entourage. French influence became dominant in the political circles of Mecca.
- II. The behavior of the pilgrims of the French colonies in North Africa gave a good reputation about the French government to all Muslims around the world.
- III. The French government gained a great position in Mecca that other nations did not obtain as a result of the interest and care that Sharif Hussein showed to the French dual mission.
- IV. The intensity of hatred and coldness among Muslims towards the French government disappeared, which would contribute to avoiding the problems of their armed uprisings.⁹⁵

But this success, which was talked about in the French reports and celebrated by their press, did not have a significant impact on reality. Sharif Hussein realized the aims of French policy, which aimed to use him to exhaust the Ottoman forces and to distract them, and nothing more, which made him lose interest in his relationship with the French. In his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence says that he pushed Sharif Hussein to request Schneider 65 mountain cannons from Brémond when he was in dire need of them. However, the French did not send it to him, citing various excuses, which made him realize that France was not serious about supporting his revolution.⁹⁶ Brémond's impolite answer when asked for cannons added to his revulsion, as he sarcastically said that he, Sharif Hussein, could send his men to climb mountains like goats instead of mountain cannons, which angered Sharif Hussein. He responded by asking him if he had ever climbed mountains like goats.⁹⁷ One of the first results of the turbulent relations between Sharif Hussein and the French was Sharif Hussein's rejection of a French request to open a bank branch in Jeddah.⁹⁸

France also failed to organize a free Hajj season in 1917, similar to the Hajj of 1916. This failure was due to the unwillingness of the people to go to the politicized Hajj. Despite the

efforts of the rulers of North and West Africa to convince the people to go to Hajj, they failed. Only ninety-three pilgrims responded to the invitation to go to the Hajj organized by France (Chantre, 2012, p. 345). The number dropped to 83 pilgrims in the Hajj season of 1918. This forced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be satisfied with organizing a limited delegation in 1917. It did not think about preparing a new official delegation for Hajj like the delegation in 1916.

The two hotels that France promoted as being at the disposal of its needy and poor subjects were in fact turned over to French administration employees and figures in the orbit of the colonial administration.

❖ **The Military Mission:**

The French mission succeeded in participating with King Hussein's forces in expelling the Ottoman army from the Arabian Peninsula. However, its efforts remained limited compared to the British. France's policy of not providing Sharif Hussein with the weapons he requested led to a deterioration in relations between the two parties. Brémond admits in his memoirs that his government's failure to send the weapons that Sharif Hussein was insisting on harmed relations between the two sides (Brémond, 1931, p123).

After the victory of Sharif Hussein's forces over the Ottoman forces in the Arabian Peninsula, France transferred Brémond on December 11, 1916 to other missions away from the Hijaz (Touhadi, 2016, p7), and he was replaced by officer Georges Catroux, who continued to manage the mission until August 24, 1917,⁹⁹ the date of the freezing of French military operations in the Arabian Peninsula. In 1920, France withdrew the mission from the Arabian Peninsula.

The Conclusion:

The political and military mission is considered one aspect of the French policy of deception in its dealings with the Muslims of its colonies, and this is evident from the following:

- ✓ French reports frequently referred to the success of the political mission, and that the members of the mission were able to improve France's image among Muslims and show it as a friend of Muslims.
- ✓ Muslims in Algeria and Tunisia continued to view the Ottoman Caliph as a symbol of the Islamic Caliphate, not Sharif Hussein.
- ✓ France did not succeed in organizing a Hajj delegation like the one in 1916 because Muslims in the Maghreb and West Africa were reluctant to go to the politicized Hajj.
- ✓ France succeeded in establishing a hostel in Mecca to accommodate Muslims from its colonies, but instead of allocating it to the poor among them - as it claimed - it actually allocated it to its loyal followers.
- ✓ To manage the Mecca Hotel and organize the Hajj seasons, France established the Endowments Association of the Two Holy Mosques under the leadership of Qaddour Ben Ghabrit.
- ✓ The military mission forces were able to provide valuable assistance to Sharif Hussein.
- ✓ After the expulsion of the Ottoman forces from the Arabian Peninsula, France worked to freeze its military mission in the Hijaz.

- ✓ France was unable to achieve the influence that Britain achieved in the Hijaz, as Britain dominated the region and made it follow its orbit.
- ✓ The Algerians played a major role in both missions, both in terms of the number of participants and the positions assigned to them.

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4. Saadallah, Abu Al-Qasim. **"Al-Cherchali's Journey to the Hijaz and the Arab Revolt of 1916". In the Footsteps of Muslims, a Movement in Contradiction**. Algeria: World of Knowledge, 2009.
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Footnotes:

¹ Houari Qabyli, "France's Religious Policy in Algeria: Framing the Hajj Obligation as a Model 1894-1939," *Algerian Journal of Manuscripts* 11, No. 12 (January 30, 2015): p. 262.

² Salam Sadiq, *France and its Muslims: A Century of Islamic Politics: 1895-2005*, translated by Zahia Jabbour Darwish (Abu Dhabi, 2012), p. 194.

³ Luc Chanter, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca in the Colonial Era (c. 1866-1940): France-Great Britain-Italy" (PhD dissertation, Poitiers, 2012), p. 71.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The warring countries during World War I were divided into the Axis Powers, the main countries of which were: Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and Austria. The Allied Powers, the main countries of which were: Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and the United States.

⁶ Al-Talili Al-Ujaili, "France's Religious Policy on the Frontlines towards Tunisians Recruited in World War I," *Annals of the Tunisian University*, No. 32 (1991): pp. 175-176.

⁷ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening, History of the Arab National Movement*, translated by Nasser al-Din al-Assad and Ihsan Abbas, 8th ed. (Beirut: Dar El Ilm Lilmalayin, 1997), p. 215.

⁸ Same reference, p. 223.

⁹ Al-Ujaili, op. cit., p. 183.

¹⁰ Federalists (Unionists): In reference to the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress, a Turkish association founded in 1889 that sought to change the ruling system in the Ottoman Empire and establish a democratic state on the European model. In 1909, the association was able to seize control of the government, depose Sultan Abdul Hamid, and appoint Muhammad Rashad in his place.

¹¹ Tawfiq Brou, *The Arab Issue in World War I* (Damascus: Talas for Studies, Translation and Publishing, 1989), p. 372.

¹² Federalists (Unionists): In reference to the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress, a Turkish association founded in 1889 that sought to change the ruling system in the Ottoman Empire and establish a democratic state on the European model. In 1909, the association was able to seize control of the government, depose Sultan Abdul Hamid, and appoint Muhammad Rashad in his place.

¹³ See the revolution statement, *Al-Qibla* newspaper, issue 11, p. 1.

¹⁴ Sharif Hussein: (1853-1931) belonged to the Hashemite family that ruled the Hijaz. He declared a revolution against the Ottoman Empire in 1916 with the help of Britain on the basis of eliminating Ottoman rule over the Arab countries and forming a unified state under his leadership. After the end of World War I, Britain disowned him and reduced the

borders of the state he imagined to the Hijaz only. After a series of wars with the Al Saud, he was forced in 1926 to abdicate in favor of the Al Saud family and was exiled to Cyprus.

¹⁵ Nidal Daoud Al-Momani, Sharif Hussein bin Ali and the Caliphate (Amman: Publications of the Jordanian History Committee, 1969), pp. 56-62.

¹⁶ The same reference, p. 50.

¹⁷ Antonius, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

¹⁸ The Sykes-Picot Agreement (May 9, 1916) was an agreement between Britain and France, which Italy later joined, under which the lands of the Islamic Caliphate were divided among them.

¹⁹ Amin Said, *Secrets of the Great Arab Revolution* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, no date), p. 141.

²⁰ Circular. Mr. BRIAND, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS. Paris, June 22, 1916, cited. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. DIPLOMATIC ARCHIVES COMMITTEE French diplomatic documents. 1916, Peter Lang: Brussels 2017. p820.

²¹ Amin Saeed, *The Great Arab Revolt. A Detailed and Comprehensive History of the Arab Cause in a Quarter of a Century* (Cairo: Madbouly Library, 1996), p. 158.

²² Al-Qibla Newspaper, 08/09/1916.

²³ To view the full publication, see: The Hashemite Sharif Publication, Al-Qibla Newspaper, Issue 11 (09/18/1916), p. 1.

²⁴ The purpose of the British-French aid to Sharif Hussein was to distract the Ottoman states, not to create an Arab leader who might obstruct their plans and spoil the implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement after the end of the war.

²⁵ Saeed, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

²⁶ (CIAM): Abbreviation for the following phrase (Commission Interministérielle des Affaires Musulmanes), which is a French governmental civil body in which several ministries participate (the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, War and Colonies). It was officially established in 1911 to study and follow up on the affairs of Muslims subject to French colonialism and to provide advice and appropriate suggestions to French governments and participate in it.

²⁷ Telegram from the British Consul in Tangier to his government dated June 29, 1916, Najdat Fathi Safwa, *The Arabian Peninsula in British Documents, Part 2*, Dar Al Saqi, Beirut, 1969, p. 352.

²⁸ Saeed, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

²⁹ The Minister of War to Lieutenant-Colonel Brémont, Deputy Chief of Staff of the 35th Army Corps. Paris, August 15, 1916. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War, volume IX, 1st VOLUME OF ANNEXES*, Paris, National Edition, 1935, annex 91.

³⁰ Senate (1917) France, "projects, proposals, reports... / Senate", October 26, 1917, p4.

³¹ "The revival of Islamic knowledge with the blessed Hijazi Renaissance," Al-Qibla Newspaper, September 7, 1916, Issue 8, p. 1.

³² "Reception of the Moroccan delegation," Al-Qibla newspaper, September 11, 1916, issue 9, p. 3.

³³ Abdelkader or Qaddour Ben Ghabrit (1868 or 1873 - 1954) was born in Sidi Bel Abbes. He studied in Algeria and then moved with his family to Tangier, where he held several dual government positions. He worked for the Alaouite family as head of the Makhzen's Protocol Office and advisor to its sultans. He also worked for the French authorities as a translator, then as their ambassador in Fez, then as dean of the Paris Mosque.

³⁴ Ben Al-Arabi Qadi (1867-1939) was born in Souk Ahras, Algeria. He is descended from the Kablutia tribe. He was an officer of Algerian origin. He was the first Algerian to study at the Polytechnic School in France. He specialized in artillery with the rank of colonel. He then obtained French citizenship in 1889 and was awarded the French Legion of Honor with the rank of general officer.

³⁵ Edouard Bremond (1868-1948) was a French general who worked in Morocco and the Hijaz. His government supported Hussein bin Ali in his revolution against the Ottomans. The French mission to the Hijaz bore his name and was known as the "Hijaz Mission or the Bremond Mission."

³⁶ The Minister of War to Lieutenant-Colonel Brémont, Deputy Chief of Staff of the 35th Army Corps. Paris, August 15, 1916. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War, volume IX, 1st VOLUME OF ANNEXES*, Paris, National Edition, 1935, annex 70.

³⁷ Taher Sabqaq, "The Hijaz Mission: The Road to Imposing the French Mandate on Syria and Lebanon 1915-1920," Al-Baheth Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences 7, Issue 2 (December 30, 2016), p. 163.

³⁸ LUCIEN HUBERT. REPORT MADE On behalf of the Finance Committee charged with examining the bill, ADOPTED BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, providing for the Minister of Foreign Affairs a credit of 2,800,000 Fr. for the costs of a mission to Arabia. No. 350 Annex to the minutes of the session of October 26, 1917. PRINTING HOUSE OF THE SENATE Palais du Luxembourg 1918. PARIS. P6.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁴⁰ Sabqaq, *Op. cit.*, pp. 160, 161.

⁴¹ Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, "Al-Cherchali's Journey to the Hijaz and the Arab Revolution of 1916," in *In the Footsteps of Muslims: A Movement in Contradiction* (Algeria: Alam al-Ma'rifah, 2009), p. 103.

⁴² Mr. BRIAND, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO Mr. PAUL GAMBON, AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN LONDON. Paris, August 3, 1916. cited. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. DIPLOMATIC ARCHIVES COMMITTEE French diplomatic documents. 1916, Peter Lang: Brussels 2017, p 879.

⁴³ Hayat Touhadi, "The Soldiers Forming the French Contingent in the Hejaz: Origins and Journeys (1916–1920)", *Arabian Humanities. International Journal of Archaeology and Social Sciences in the Arabian Peninsula*.

⁴⁴ Saeed bin Mushabab Al-Qahtani, "The French Government Mission Project to Mecca during the Reign of Sharif Hussein bin Ali in 1334 AH 1916 AD: A Historical Documentary Study," *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Arts and Humanities* 26, Issue 03 (2018), p. 111.

⁴⁵ Sabqaq, "The Hejaz Mission," 162.

⁴⁶ The Minister of War to Lieutenant-Colonel Brémond, Deputy Chief of Staff of the 35th Army Corps. Paris, August 15, 1916. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War*, volume IX, 1" VOLUME OF ANNEXES, Paris, National Edition, 1935, annex 78.

⁴⁷ Al-Qahtani, "Op. cit.," p. 110.

⁴⁸ The same reference, p. 104.

⁴⁹ Abu Al-Qasim Saad Allah, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Edouard Brémond, *The Hejaz in the World War*. (Paris, 1931), p64.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p 62.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ Al-Qahtani, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁵⁴ Thomas Edward Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Beirut: Commercial Office for Printing and Publishing, 1963), p. 128.

⁵⁵ Report on the Hejaz by Captain George Lloyd, 22 December 1916, *The Arabian Peninsula in British Documents*, p. 645.

⁵⁶ Chantre, *op. cit.* p69.

⁵⁷ Al-Qahtani, "The French Government Mission Project to Mecca during the Reign of Sharif Hussein bin Ali in 1334 AH 1916 AD: A Historical Documentary Study," 104.

⁵⁸ LUCIEN HUBERT. REPORT MADE On behalf of the Finance Committee charged with examining the bill, ADOPTED BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, providing for the Minister of Foreign Affairs a credit of 2,800,000 Fr. for the costs of a mission to Arabia. No. 350 Annex to the minutes of the session of October 26, 1917. PRINTING HOUSE OF THE SENATE Palais du Luxembourg 1918. PARIS. P6.

⁵⁹ Saad Allah, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-76.

⁶⁰ "Our Distinguished Guests," *Al-Qibla Newspaper*, September 21, 1916, Issue 13, p. 3.

⁶¹ Army General Staff. Historical Service France, *The French Armies in the Great War*. Volume IX. 9,1, ANNEXES, 1930, p134.

⁶² Chantre, *op. cit.* p329.

⁶³ Al-Qahtani, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁶⁴ "Notables of the Moroccan Hajj," *Al-Qibla Newspaper*, 2 0/10, 1916, Issue 15, p. 04.

⁶⁵ Saad Allah, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁶⁶ See the full text of the speech in *Al-Qiblah newspaper*, 09/28/1916, issue 14, p. 2.

⁶⁷ See the full text of the speech in *Al-Qibla newspaper*, *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ See the full text of the speech in *Al-Qibla newspaper*, *Ibid*.

⁶⁹ See the full text of the speech in *Al-Qibla newspaper*, *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ Official interview, *Al-Qibla newspaper*, *Ibid*.

⁷¹ Our Distinguished Guests, *Al-Qibla newspaper*, *Ibid*.

⁷² Chantre, *op. cit.* p69.

⁷³ Al-Qahtani, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁷⁴ Chantre, *op. cit.* p69.

⁷⁵ "Washing the Holy Kaaba", *Al-Qibla Newspaper*, October 2, 1916, Issue 15, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Brémond, *The Hejaz in the world war*, p52.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p52.

⁷⁸ Sabqaq, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁷⁹ The purchase of a hostel in Medina was not completed as planned, and France abandoned the idea altogether and settled for the Mecca hostel.

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- ⁸⁰ Saad Allah, "Al-Cherchali's Journey to the Hijaz and the Arab Revolt of 1916," 130.
- ⁸¹ Telegram. Colonel Brémond to Guerre in Paris. Cairo, October 19, 1916. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War*, volume IX, 1st VOLUME OF ANNEXES, Paris, National Edition, 1935, Appendix No. 119.
- ⁸² *op. cit.*, p 133.
- ⁸³ "The Return of the French Muslim Mission to Mecca", *L'ÉCHO D'ALGER*, November 19, 1916, p1, 1701.
- ⁸⁴ "The Return of the French Muslim Mission to Mecca", *L'ÉCHO D'ALGER*, November 12, 1916, p1, 1694.
- ⁸⁵ "The Muslim mission at the Maily camp", *L'ÉCHO D'ALGER*, November 16, 1916, p1, 1698.
- ⁸⁶ Major General Bailloud (reserve), inspector of French troops in Egypt and Palestine, to the Minister of War. El Kantara, 1st, 6 September 1917. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War*, volume IX, 1st VOLUME OF ANNEXES, Paris, National Edition, 1935, annex 404.
- ⁸⁷ Information bulletin. Jeddah, September 8, 1917. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War*, volume IX, 1st VOLUME OF ANNEXES, Paris, National Edition, 1935, annex 405.
- ⁸⁸ Rabigh Governorate is located in western Saudi Arabia, between Jeddah and Yanbu Governorate, and is approximately 140 kilometers north of Jeddah.
- ⁸⁹ Chantre, *op. cit.* p338.
- ⁹⁰ Major General Bailloud (reserve), Inspector of French Troops in Egypt and Palestine, to the Minister of War. El Kantara, September 6, 1917. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War*, volume IX, 1st VOLUME OF ANNEXES, Paris, National Edition, 1935, annex 404.
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- ⁹² *Ibid.* pp3-4.
- ⁹³ Chantre, *op. cit.*, pp 343–44.
- ⁹⁴ Major General Bailloud (reserve), inspector of French troops in Egypt and Palestine, to the Minister of War. El Kantara, September 6, 1917. Cited in *The French Armies in the Great War*, volume IX, 1st VOLUME OF ANNEXES, Paris, National Edition, 1935, annex 404.
- ⁹⁵ Al-Qahtani, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
- ⁹⁶ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 129.
- ⁹⁸ Report on the Hejaz by Captain George Lloyd, December 22, 1916, *The Arabian Peninsula in British Documents*, pp. 656-657.
- ⁹⁹ Pascal Le Pautremat, "Lieutenant-Colonel Brémond's Mission in the Hedjaz, 1916-1917", *World Wars and Contemporary Conflicts* 221, (2006): 19, N1. doi:10.3917/gmcc.221.0017.