

## **Mahmud Pasha Jaff and The Triumph of the Jaff Tribe's Inevitable Destiny**

Mahmud Pasha Jaff was born in 1845 E.C. He had been the vessel through which his father, Mohamed Pasha Jaff, had fulfilled his lifetime quest, which was the destruction of the Baban clan and the archrival to the throne of the Jaff clan, his cousin Aziz Bey Jaff, who was the Baban's puppet. This alliance had kept his father a refugee in Persia for most of his life. Fortunately, at this time, the Ottoman Sultan was slowly beginning to turn against the Babans, his former guardians of the Mesopotamian Northern border.

The Babans had also begun to become insubordinate to the Ottoman Sultan's mandates, aiding in Persia's conquest of Shahrizor, for example. The Babans would later hand Shahrizor to the Persian General, Abbas Mirza Qajar, in his devastating war against the Ottoman Empire in 1921. The Babans were crushed in 1847 by the Sultan's armies in the battle of Koya, in collaboration with the Jaff. The Baban Emirate would collapse as a whole in 1850. His father, along with his tribe, would then come under the protection of the Mamluk, or Ottoman Military Dictator, from the Ottoman Russian provinces, Sulaiman Pasha, who was the Vali of Baghdad. He would destroy all traces of the Baban in Shahrizor, over which he would give Muhammed Pasha Jaff complete dominion. His father's army would then be proclaimed part of the Ottoman Military by the Sultan, and they would crush all enemies who were opposed to his rule. His father would inherit a land full of many enemies. His father's cousin Aziz Bey Jaff's reign would come to a swift end, and Gulambar would be the new capital of the Jaff tribe. Shahrizor would be their new dominion.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II summoned Mahmud Pasha Jaff to be appointed as the leader and Qaimaqqam of Shahrizor in 1873, upon the Tanzimat reforms, which had reorganized the Ottoman Empire's administrative divisions from Eyalets into Vilayets. The newly-acquired Ottoman territory of Shahrizor, with Gulambar, would be organized into the Mosul Vilayet, becoming an official Ottoman territory. Mahmud Pasha would then become an official governor within the Ottoman Empire. He is remembered for having played a prominent role in the maturation of the Kurdish national consciousness, which began appearing during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and was also honored with medals and peerages by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> He had all the characteristics of a leader; he was a strategist, and his organizational skills were remarkable. Mahmud Pasha had to perform his duties within a very complicated geopolitical context, and in a defining era for the future of the Kurdish people of the late nineteenth century. On one hand, the stagnant Ottoman Empire was in a clear process of decline, and the centrifugal forces within it—demands of political participation, nationalist

sentiments, economic interests—postponed its transformation. But on the other hand, the international dynamics were moving toward the end of imperialism, and the rise of nationalist claims within all social groups that made up the Middle East created insecurity and instability in their immediate environment, leading the leaders of the Jaff tribe to adopt a pragmatic stance that did not antagonize either the Ottoman Empire nor the Qajari authorities in Iran, while maintaining an armed force of 4,000 members organized for defense.<sup>2,3</sup>

□□The Ottoman and Iranian states constantly cultivated friendship with the Jaff tribe, lending strategic importance to this area which was considered a "buffer zone" between the two empires, helping to ensure the integrity of their political boundaries. Mahmud Pasha was at the center of this strategy of demarcation; therefore, both the Iranian and Ottoman authorities extended honorary degrees to him recognizing his invaluable position: the title of Khan, awarded by the Iranian state, and the title of Pasha, from the Ottomans. Sultan Abdul Hamid II looked upon his alliance with the Jaff with grand ambition, for the Kurds proved to be more reliable soldiers than his own Ottoman armies, and he wished to model a Kurdish force after Tsarist Russia's Cossack units, which were trusted with the core securities of the state. The force would be named after him as the Hamidiye Calvary.<sup>4</sup> □□But despite the importance of the region for both countries, Mahmud Pasha Jaff embraced autonomist intentions and had his own plans for it, so he decided to distance himself from both. This antagonized Istanbul, which did not look kindly upon the rise of a nationalism that could destabilize the Ottoman Empire from within. He would take advantage of Russia's devastating invasion of the Ottoman Empire in an effort to support the Armenian insurgencies in the Ottoman Caucasus in 1877-1878, which would deplete the Ottoman war machine and leave the administration of its Eastern provinces in disarray. This would also create a perfect environment for Mahmud Pasha Jaff to distance himself from the Ottoman government. Segments of the Jaff, along with the Hewreman, would engage in brigandship and factional violence unhindered by the rule of Mahmud Pasha Jaff.<sup>5</sup>

During the time of the reign of Kai Khosrau Beg Jaff, there was a man by the name of Khaled I Baghdadi who would become a great Sufi Sheikh with 12,000 followers from Arabia to India, including the young Mohamed Pasha Jaff. Khaled I Baghdadi would Journey to Delhi and become a disciple of the Sufi Sultan Abdulla, returning to Kurdistan during the reign of Mahmud Pasha Baban. He would speak about many great ideas such as self-sacrifice and the fact that all things were brought into this world out of non-existence, and he was revered by the people of Shahrizor and Mahmud Pasha Baban himself, who was a devout follower. Mahmud Pasha Baban would seek Khalid I-Baghdadi's advice in his relations between Persia and the Ottoman Empire, opening all letters of correspondence between him and his brothers from the Sherzade of

Kermanshah and the Mamluk Vali of Baghdad in Khaled I Baghdadi's house. A coup against Mahmud Pasha Baban was prevented from his Uncle Abdulla Pasha, in cooperation with the Vali of Baghdad Suliaman, through the mediation of Khalid I Baghdadi.

One of his followers would ultimately be Ottoman Sultan Abdulmecid I. Abdulmecid I would put many of Baghdadi's principles into practice during his administration. Abdulmecid I, within the Gulhanne Park beside the Topkapi Palace, would proclaim the Edict of Gulhanne in 1839 C.E., which would provide equal rights to Christians and minorities in an effort to appease his western allies, and also out of respect to the Jaff Sheikh Baghdadi. He would later build a tomb and mausoleum for Baghdadi in Damascus, Syria upon his death. This, however, would ultimately destabilize the region. The Armenian populace, emboldened by the reforms, would rise up in full-fledged revolt, as would other minorities, including segments of the Jaff tribe under Mahmud Pasha Jaff.

The Russian Imperial Army, stationed in the Caucasus, was encouraged by this development to invade the Ottoman Caucasus in an effort to support these insurgencies. The white coats of the Russian army would swarm across the Caucasus border and conquer Bayezid, Ardahan, Kars, and Erzurum against the blue coats of the Ottoman army with their German-supplied weapons. This would cause anarchy throughout the region, from Van to Mosul. The Ottoman army and state institutions of the region would be left in a state of disarray, creating significant friction and disorder on the borders of the Persian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires's border.

His successor, Sultan Abdulaziz, was faced with his own insurgency. In the Ottoman Empire, Islam was heavily influenced by factional sectarian Arab Sheikhs, which was a threat to Sultan Abdulaziz's authority. The Turks were also very sectarian, and followed the Arabs, who controlled Mecca more than they did him. There was a general Islam-inspired anger against the Gulhanne Edict reforms that Abdulaziz inherited from his predecessor, Abdulmecid I. The reforms were seen as pro-Western and benefitting the Christian minorities more than the Muslims. The opposition had grown ever since the Gulhanne Edict reforms had emancipated people from slavery, as the slave trade was a major income provider among Arabs. This had turned Mecca against Abdulaziz. The Mutasharrif of Mecca, Abd al-Muttalib, would plot against him, and would join with many other angry officials within the Ottoman government of Istanbul in conspiring against Sultan Abdulaziz. He had very few friends in his empire, and this included his own people. The only people he could rely on from within his own empire were the Kurds. It was concluded that a Pro-Kurdish policy should be adopted within the Ottoman Military doctrine to shore up support against the Islamist and Arab brigands of the Ottoman Empire. For in the following years, Ottoman Policy would tend to favor the Kurds.

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the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz was slowly beginning to turn against the former guardians of his Mesopotamian Northern border, the Babans. The Babans had begun to become insubordinate to the Ottoman Sultan's mandates, aiding in Persia's conquest of Shahrizor. The Babans would hand Shahrizor to the Persian General, Abbas Mirza Qajar, in the devastating war against the Ottoman Empire in 1921.

1. The Babans were crushed in 1847 by the Sultan's armies in the battle of Koya, in collaboration with the Jaff.

2. The Baban Emirate would collapse as a whole in 1850.

3. His father, along with his tribe, would then come under the protection of the Mamluk, or the Ottoman Military Dictator, from the Ottoman Russian provinces, Daoud Pasha, who was the Vali of Baghdad. He would destroy all traces of the Baban in Shahrizor, and give Mohamed Pasha Jaff complete dominion over it.

4. His father's army would then be proclaimed a part of the Ottoman Military by the Sultan, and they would crush all enemies who opposed his rule. His father would inherit a land full of many enemies, and his father's cousin Aziz Bey Jaff's reign would come to a swift end. Gulambar would be the new capital of the Jaff tribe, and Shahrizor would become their new dominion. After the Mamluk Vali of Baghdad, Daoud Pasha, dealt a crushing defeat to the Persian occupation of Abbas Mirza Qajar of Northern Mesopotamia, and put to the Babans to flight in 1850, Mohamed Pasha Jaff—along with the Jaff nomads—were allowed to dwell in the Shahrizor, unharrassed by the Ottomans or Persians in any way.

5. A golden age began for the Jaff, as they became a major power in the region.

6. Their nomadic caravans were allowed passage from Khanaqin and Qizil Rubat to Panjwin in the Shahrizor region of Kurdistan. In these regions, Mohammed Pasha Jaff—from his position of power—began to crack down on all of his enemies, from the Pro Baban Jaff under Aziz Bey Jaff, who was the son of Kai Khasrow Beg Jaff, to the rival tribe of the Hemevand, who were anti-Ottoman. He would erect a Fortress on the banks of the Shirwan river to guard against all of these foes in 1866.

7. The name of this fortress is now known as the Shirwana Castle. In 1868, he would be appointed by the Mamluk Vali, Daoud Pasha of Baghdad. However, Daoud Pasha and Mohammed Pasha Jaff's power would begin to weaken during the Russo-Ottoman war, around 1878. The Jaff's rivals, the Hamavands, would go to the Caucasus and fight for the Russians against the Ottomans. The Russians would arm them and send them back to agitate the Shahrizor in an effort to create anarchy. Then, in collaboration with the Aziz Bey Jaff faction, they would launch an attack against Mohamed Pasha Jaff, killing him in 1880. Mahmud Pasha Jaff had inherited from his father the great task of ending the

insurgency of the Hamavand, whose allies were wrecking havoc all along the Mosul Vilayet, which the Imperial Russian Empire had the bold intention of annexing during their expansion into the Ottoman Empire from the Caucasus during the late 1870s. The Mosul Vilayet was rich in oil.

8. The Ottoman Empire had every intention of keeping it. They no longer even trusted their own valis with the administration of the region, switching them out after short periods of time. The province was truly ruled by the new sultan, Abdul Hamid II himself, and he wished for the Jaffs to be his allies and to continue the legacy of Mohamed Pasha Jaff against the Hamavand threat. The Jaff had always hated the Hamavand, and this was why Sultan Abdul Hamid the II trusted the Jaff above all the other Kurdish tribes. The equally powerful Barzinjis of Suliamania were former allies of the Babans.

9. The Ottomans, therefore, did not trust the Barzinjis.

10. The Jaff were the most promising allies for Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Sultan Abdul Hamid II looked upon his alliance with the Jaff with a grand ambition, for the Kurds proved to be more reliable soldiers than his own Ottoman armies, and he wished to model the Kurdish force after Tsarist Russia's Cossack units, which were entrusted with the core securities of the state. The force would be named after him as the Hamidiye Calvary. The Hamavands had gone on a rampage. They would launch a campaign of mass extermination in the region in an effort to create additional living space for their tribes. Mosul itself was now the center of the Ottoman administration for the Mosul Vilayet.

11. Mosul was also the center of the Chaldean Catholic church, which would constantly come under attack by the Hamavand.

12. The Hamavand would kill many, and cause disarray against the city. The Assyrian population would live in fear, as they did not possess adequate forces to properly defend themselves against the Hamavand. Mahmud Pasha Jaff would come to the aid of the Assyrians, defending them against the Hamavand armies. He would put up fierce resistance to the Hamavand juggernaut, from Mosul to Gulambar, to avenge his father. The Hamavand would eventually flee to Qasr-Ishirin, where the Jaff would lay siege to them. The Ottoman administration and the Assyrian population would award the Jaff army with 100 mares in gratitude for the defense of Sheikh Ubeydullah's and the Evangelicals' collaboration with the Jaff tribe in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman war, and the upcoming Armenian uprising in 1880.

13. This was coincidentally taking place at the same time as Sheikh Ubeidullah was launching his invasion of Persia in an effort to reclaim Urmia from the Mosul Vilayet for his new sheikhdom, which was his home city. Sheikh Ubeydullah was an insurrectionist trained by the Russians along with his army in Urmia, after the Russians had established a presence there during the Russo-Ottoman and

Persian wars. Urmia had become a center of Pro-Russian Armenian nationalism, which had also fueled Kurdish nationalism as well. Armenian Russian generals had led the Russian thrust into the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Ottoman war of the 1870s, and they were now giving aid to Ubeydullah's forces. Mahmud Pasha Jaff thought it to be within his right to proclaim his own country, and he began to collaborate with Sheikh Obeidullah, who had been heavily influenced by protestant missionaries from America, who encouraged him to revolt.

14. The missionary Joseph Conchran of Ubeidullah's Urmia had informed William Abbott, the British consulate in Tabriz, about Ubeydullah's insurrection, who then kept a close eye on the situation. Great Britain's grand strategy was to annex the whole Mesopotamian region for themselves.

15. Mahmud Pasha Jaff sent his most learned scholar, Keffee Effendi, to become Sheikh Obeidullah's personal scribe. He would travel all around the Kurdish lands in the Mosul Vilayet and would document them to provide Sheikh Obeidullah with knowledge about everything and everyone within his country.

16. Kefee Effendi would arrive in Mosul and become quite fascinated by the Yazdani schools, who worshipped fire and were the original religion of the Jaff from the Shaho mountains and Javunrud in Persia. He decided to reside in Mosul, and he soon came under the influence of evangelicals, becoming a part of the Committee for the revision of the Turkish Bible. This committee translated the bible into Turkish. It was here that Kefee Effendi began to gain knowledge of much of the known world. Kefee Effendi would come into contact with many of the different national envoys to Sultan Abdul Hamid II in Constantinople. Kefee Effendi would make a very good impression with the Jaff tribe to much of the Western world, for Said Pasha Kurd of the Jaff tribe would eventually be appointed as Ambassador to Berlin in Germany, a country that would become the number one ally of the Ottoman Empire.

17. Kefee Effendi would become very close to one primary missionary, Dr. H. O Dwight, who was the head of the evangelical missions to Armenia. Reverend Dwight's missions would later serve as logistics and coordination centers for the great Armenia revolts during the 1890s, which would kill many Kurds. Sheikh Ubeydullah had many Armenian Christians swelling the ranks within his army, and there was a great admiration for Sheikh Ubeydullah from Christians. He had developed extensive relations with the Evangelicals in the region, and he would later use their missions as bases for his troops. Evangelicals like Reverend Dwight encouraged Sheikh Ubeydullah's revolt in order to allow for a complete overthrow of the Ottoman Empire and thus the restoration of Christendom to Asia minor. Sheikh Ubeyduulah's hordes would attack from the Mosul Vilayet into Persia. They would then conquer the territory of the Jaff's old foes, the Ardalan, who had driven them from Javunrud in Persia in the 18th century. He would conquer the regions of Bohtan, Badinan, and Hakkari, all within the Ardalan Qajar Vilayet of Kordestan, defeating the Pro-Qajar Persians. But Ottoman

Emperor Abdul Hamid II would not allow for Sheikh Ubeydullah threat to his power to stand, especially in the vital region of the Mosul Vilayet, which was becoming an important asset with regards to his visions for the future of the Ottoman Empire. He would march with an Ottoman force against his hordes and, together with a Qajar counter attack, would crush the revolt in one year. Sheikh Ubeydullah would surrender to the Ottomans and be exiled to Istanbul, the same city where his subject Kefee Effendi was living. They would both die in Istanbul in 1883.

Though the Kurds had caused a great vexation to Abdul Hamid II's reign, this did not shake his resolve to make them the main ally of his administration, especially the Jaff. He would make one Jaff his ambassador in 1883 to his most important European ally, the German Empire. His name was Said Pasha Kurd, and he would later be promoted to the position of Foreign Minister of Abdulhamid II's Ottoman administration.□□

The Ottoman government was wary of the factitious sentiment that Mahmud Pasha Jaff had produced in Kurdistan, so they sent officials to prepare reports giving evidence allowing them to remove him from office in Halabja. The commander responsible for this was Namiq Pasha, the Qaimmaqam of Baghdad. Mahmud Pasha Jaff had knowledge that Namiq Pasha was sent by the Ottoman Government to spy on him, and thus he did not offer him any hospitality. This inhospitality was enough for Namiq Pasha to write a flawed report, accusing Mahmud Pasha Jaff of equating himself with the Sultan Abdul Hameed II and cooperating with his enemies, which would make him a threat to the security and stability in the region.□□

As a result of this report, a proclamation was made in 1888-1889 after which the Sultan Mahmud Pasha Jaff was dismissed as the Jaff tribe leader and replaced with his brother, Osman Pasha Jaff. Also, to keep him away from this area forever, he was appointed governor of the province Orpah. However, Mahmud Pasha Jaff rejected this offer. Instead, he joined the Kurdish revolt in 1880 that sought territory for the creation of autonomous Kurdish areas of the Ottoman Empire. Abdul Hamid's ambitions would continue on with Mahmud Pasha Jaff's brother Osman Pasha Jaff, and the formation of the Jaff tribe into Hamidiye regiments. This would ultimately undermine Sheikh Ubeydullah's rebellion, and the Hamidiye calvary would become a potent force that would ultimately play a major role in terms of the internal security of Ottoman Empire, killing off all the Armenian and Arab brigands and crushing their revolts. They would be feared by the Russian Army in their wars with Ottomans, including in World War I.<sup>6,7</sup>□

The outlook would change with the British occupation of Iraq, but not the importance of the Jaff tribe as an invaluable asset toward maintaining stability and security in the region. The British political forces attempted to ally with the tribal chiefs in order to gain support for their plans. However, Mahmud Pasha Jaff was unwilling to cooperate with the British, who looked with suspicion upon his

intentions with the Kurdish people. The following incident is a clear indication of both the British intentions as well as Mahmud Pasha Jaff position in the matter. The commander Edward William Charles Noel, political governor in Sulaimania, went to visit Mahmud Pasha Jaff in Zalem in an effort to ensure his allegiance to the British forces. However, Mahmud Pasha Jaff dressed in his Ottoman uniform to receive him.

The following conversation took place:

"Does Mahmud Pasha know the purpose of this visit?" said Commander Noel.

"I have no knowledge and would like to hear directly from you," said Mahmud Pasha.

Commander Noel: "The British Government intends for Kurdistan to give joy to the Kurdish people and to save them from the cruelties of the Ottomans, and the British Government wants to have the support of personalities and leaders like yourself in this task. What is your response?"

Mahmud Pasha replied: "My answer is full rejection for the following reasons. Firstly, I do not think that your intentions towards the Kurdish people are sincere. If your goal is to serve the Kurds and save them from the cruelties as stated, then you can be sure that, even without my support, there will be hundreds who will be willing to help you and certainly will succeed. The second reason is that I am a Muslim, and my religion prevents me from cooperating against my brothers in religion. The third and final reason is my old age, disability, and inability to take action."

After this meeting, the British began pressuring Mahmud Pasha Jaff, imposing heavy taxes on the Kurds while his physical condition weakened. He finally died in 1921 and was buried in the mosque of the city of Saedeia.

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