

## The Jaff at the Center of Ottoman Military Doctrine

Mahmud Pasha Jaff was born in 1845. He had been the vessel in which his father Mohamed Pasha Jaff had fulfilled his lifetime quest, which was the destruction of the Baban clan and archrival to the throne of the Jaff clan, his cousin Aziz Bey Jaff, who was an ally to the Baban. This alliance had kept his father a refugee in Persia for most of his life. Fortunately, at this time, the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz was slowly beginning to turn against his former guardians of the Mesopotamian Northern border, the Babans. The Babans had begun to become insubordinate to the Ottoman Sultan's mandates, aiding in Persia's conquest of Sharizor. The Babans would hand Shahrizor to the Persian General, Abbas Mirza Qajar, in his devastating war against the Ottoman Empire in 1921.<sup>1</sup> The Babans were crushed in 1847 by the Sultan's armies in the battle of Koya in collaboration with the Jaff.

<sup>2</sup>The Baban Emirate would collapse as a whole in 1850.<sup>3</sup> His father along with his tribe would then come under the protection of the Mamluk or Ottoman Military Dictator from the Ottoman Russian provinces, Daoud Pasha, who was the Vali of Baghdad. He would destroy all trace of the Baban in Shahrizor, and give Mohamed Pasha Jaff complete dominion over it.<sup>4</sup> His father's army would then be proclaimed a 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. Gulambar would be the new capitol of the Jaff tribe and Shahrizor would be 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 flight the Babans 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.<sup>5</sup> A golden age began for the Jaff as they became a major power in the region.<sup>6</sup> Their nomadic caravans were allowed pasture 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.<sup>7</sup> The name of this fortress is now known as the Shirwana fortress. In 1868, he

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<sup>1</sup> BAILLIE, Fraiser K., *Travel in Kurdistan*, London, Bangor House, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Nació en 1847 en una familia de liderazgo en Sanandaj, la segunda ciudad más grande del Kurdistán iraní.

<sup>3</sup> HITCHENS, Keith, "Goran, Abdulla", *In Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century. Vol. 2. 3rd ed., completely rev. and enl.* Edited by Steven

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. MCDOWELL, David, "A modern history of the kurds", London, I.B. Tauris, 2005, p. 13

<sup>5</sup> Sobre el origen de la palabra Pasha véase Online Etymology Dictionary, "Pasha", [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=pasha&searchmode=none](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=pasha&searchmode=none).

<sup>6</sup> Basil Nekitin en su texto destacó su capacidad para organizar a 4 mil combatientes en sólo unas horas. Véase Nekitin, Basil. "Some observations about the Kurds", pp. 167-169.

<sup>7</sup> ARFA BEG, Hassan, *The Kurds*, London, New Left Books, 1968.

would be appointed by the Mamluk Vali, Daoud Pasha of Baghdad. However Daoud Pasha and Mohammed Pasha Jaffs' 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 and create anarchy. They, in collaboration with the Aziz Bey Jaff faction, would launch an attack against Mohamed Pasha Jaff, killing him in 1880<sup>1</sup> Mahmud Pasha Jaff had inherited from his father, a great task of ending the insurgency of the Hamavand, who as allies were wrecking havoc all along the Mosul Vilayet, which the Imperial Russian Empire had the bold intention of annexing in their expansion into the Ottoman Empire from the Caucasus during the late 1870s. The Mosul Vilayet was rich in oil.<sup>8</sup> 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 over short periods of time. The province was truly ruled by the new sultan, Abdul Hamid II himself, and he wished the Jaffs to be his allies and continue the legacy of Mohamed Pasha Jaff against the Hamavand threat. The Jaff had always hated the Hamavand, and this is why Sultan Abdul Hamid the II trusted the Jaff above all other Kurdish tribes. The equally powerful Barzinjis of Suliamania were former allies of the Babans.<sup>9</sup> The Ottomans, therefore, did not trust the Barzinjis.<sup>10</sup> 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 more reliable soldiers than his own Ottoman armies, wishing 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.

The Hamavands had gone on a rampage. They would launch a campaign of mass extermination in the region to make living space for their tribes. Mosul itself, the center of the Ottoman administration for the Mosul Vilayet<sup>11</sup> and for the Chaldean Catholic church, would constantly come under attack by the Hamavand.<sup>12</sup> They would kill many, and cause disarray against the city. The Assyrian population would live in fear, as they did not have adequate forces to 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-I-Shirin, where the Jaff would lay siege to them. The Ottoman administration and Assyrian population would award the Jaff army with 100 mares in gratitude for the defense of

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<sup>8</sup> Idem.

<sup>9</sup> Dentro de la familia de lenguas kurdas, el sorani es la lengua más difundida en la región kurda del sureste; es decir el noreste de Irak y las regiones kurdas de Irán. Se estima que hay alrededor de 6,750,000 hablantes de sorani en todo el mundo, de los cuales, 3,500,00 se concentran en Irak.

<sup>10</sup> El Emirato Baban fue un clan kurdo que gobernó de 1649-1850 E.C. la provincia otomana o "Eyalet de Shahrizor" en la frontera otomana-persa.

<sup>11</sup> El vilayato de Mosul fue una provincia otomana de 1878-1918 E.C, que fue creada en el norte de Mesopotamia como parte de las reformas del sultán Abdulmecid II.

<sup>12</sup> CLAUDIUS, Gims R. *Narrative Residence in Kurdistan and Site of Ancient Nineveh*, England, GeagInternational Publisher, 1972.

their city and their churches.<sup>13</sup> The Ottoman Administration was still very weak in Mesopotamia.

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<sup>13</sup> WILD, Millingen. F, *Life among Kurds*, London, Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1870.

## **Sheikh Ubeydullah's and the Evangelicals' collaboration with the Jaff tribe in the aftermath of the Russo Ottoman war and coming Armenian uprising in 1880**

This was coincidentally at the same time that Sheikh Ubeidullah was launching his invasion of Persia to reclaim Urmia for his new sheikhdom from the Mosul Vilayet, which was his home city. Sheikh Ubeydullah was an insurrectionist trained by the Russians along with his army in Urmia, since the Russians established a presence there during the Russo Ottoman and Persian wars of the century. Urmia had become a center of Pro Russian Armenian nationalism, which had fueled Kurdish nationalism as well. Armenian Russian generals were had led the Russian thrust into the Ottoman Empire during the Russo Ottoman war of the 1870s. They were now giving aid to Ubeydullah's forces. Mahmud Pasha Jaff thought it within in his right to proclaim his own country. He began to collaborate with Sheikh Obeidullah. Sheikh Obeidullah had been heavily influenced by protestant missionaries from America, who encouraged him to revolt.<sup>14</sup> The missionary Joseph Conchran of Ubeidullah's Urmia had referred Ubeydullah's insurrection to the British consulate in Tabriz of William Abbott, who kept a close eye on the situation. Great Britain's grand strategy was to annex the whole Mesopotamian region for themselves.<sup>15</sup> Mahmud Pasha Jaff sent his most learned scholar, Keffee Effendi, to be Sheikh Obeidullah's personal scribe. He would go around all of the Kurdish lands of the Mosul Vilayet and document them to enable Sheikh Obeidullah to have knowledge of everything and everyone within his country.<sup>16</sup> Kefee Effendi would arrive in Mosul and become much fascinated by the Yazdani schools, who worshipped fire and were the original religion of the Jaff of Shaho mountain and Javunrud in Persia. He decided to reside in Mosul. He soon came under the influence of evangelicals, and become apart of the Comittee of revision for the Turkish Bible. This comittee translated the bible to 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 on much of the Western world for Said Pasha Kurd of the Jaff tribe would be appointed as Ambassador to Berlin in Germany, this country would become the number one ally of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>17 18</sup> Kefee Effendi would become close to one main missionary, who was head of the evangelical missions to Armenia, Dr. H. O Dwight. Reverand Dwight's missions would later serve as logistics and coordination centers for the great Armenia revolts during the 1890s, which would kill many Kurds.

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<sup>14</sup> BELTONS, David. K. *Kurds, Arabs (The Memdin of WallacLyon in Iraq)* 1918-1944, London, Field House, 2002

<sup>15</sup> LORY, P, "Shahrazuri" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, ed. by H.A.R. Gibbs, B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, C. Bosworth et al., 11 vols, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960-2002), vol. 9, p. 219

<sup>16</sup> Cfr., MCDOWELL, David; *op. cit.*, p. 30

<sup>17</sup> GULLIVER John. P, TAYLOR, John Phelps, MOORE, George. F, WOODRUFF, Frank. E., *The Andover Review, A religious and Theological Monthly*, Cambridge, The Riverside Press, 1885 PP- 22-29

Sheikh Ubeydullah had many Armenian Christians swell his ranks within his army. There was a great admiration from Sheikh Ubeydullah from Christians. He had developed extensive relations with the Evangelicals in the region. He would later use their missions as bases for his troops. Evangelicals like Reverend Dwight encouraged Sheikh Ubeydullah's revolt to allow for a complete overthrow of the Ottoman Empire and the restoration of Christendom to the Asia minor. Sheikh Ubeyduulah's hordes would attack from the Mosul Vilayet into Persia. They would conquer the territory of the Jaff's old foes, the Ardalan, who had driven them from Javunrud in Persia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He would conquer the regions of Bohtan, Badinan, Hakkari within the Ardalan Qajar Vilayet of Kordestan, defeating the Pro-Qajar Persians. Ottoman Emperor Abdul Hamid II would not allow for the Sheikh Ubeydullah menace to his power stand, especially in the vital region of the Mosul Vilayet, which was becoming an important asset to his visions for the Ottoman Empire. He would march with an Ottoman force against his hordes and together with a Qajar counter attack, crush the revolt in one year. Sheikh Ubeydullah would surrender to the Ottomans, and be exiled to Istanbul in the same city where his subject Kefee Effendi was. They would both die in Istanbul in the same year in 1883. Though the Kurds had caused a vexation to Abdul Hamid II's reign. It did not shake his resolve to make them the main ally of his administration, the Jaff especially. He would make one Jaff his ambassador in 1883 to his most important European ally, the German Empire. His name was Said Pasha Kurd. He would later be promoted to his foreign minister.

## **The Abdul Hamid II-Osman Pasha Jaff alliance and the ousting of Mahmud Pasha Jaff in the demarcation and consolidation of the Jaff tribe in the Ottoman Empire in the late 1880s**

The Jaff had now infiltrated the main circles of Berlin under the new mysterious German Empire that had come about through the Prussian conquests of the remains of the Catholic Holy Roman Empire. The Prussians, of course, were the offspring of Teutonic renegade knights that had ransacked Russian lands. Said Pasha Kurd had entered as Ottoman envoy of Abdul Hamid II to Otto Von Bismark and Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1883. They considered the Ottoman Empire an essential ally for control of the Levant and the Persian Gulf. They looked upon Mesopotamia as a most important area of interest of German Imperial ambition in the Levant.<sup>19</sup> Rich in oil and having a great port in the Persian Gulf that emptied out into the Indian Ocean, Mesopotamia would become a main point of investment for the German Empire.<sup>20</sup> The Germans would build a grand railway, extending from Mosul to Baghdad<sup>21</sup>. Thus, it would be named the Berlin Baghdad express.<sup>22</sup> The decaying Ottoman armies would be bolstered by German arms and Military training. The Jaff would also be armed by German weapons to crush the Pro Russian Hamavand, which the Germans had a mutual hate for the Russian Empire. They also trusted the Jaff to pacify the region through Osman Pasha Jaff's good repute with Sultan Abdul Hamid II.<sup>23</sup> The Germans had developed a fascination with the Kurds and Persian peoples. Their archaeologists had discovered the ruins of Troy under Schliemann, including the swastika, which was a Persian symbol. The Germans began to expose the belief that the Persians were their ancient ancestors or ancient Aryans. This included the Kurds, who were as they believed Alans, which are the present day Ossetians. They believed that the Origins of the Aryan race lay in the Zagros mountains. The Zagros mountains were the birthplace of the Jaff tribe as their Sayyed, Pir Khidhr of Shaho, came from Shaho mountain of the Zagros, turning the land green from under him. The Jaff came from a town very close to this mountain called Javunrud.<sup>24</sup> The Yazdan religion of the Pir Khidhr of Shaho was practiced among them and the Hamavand, whom constantly war against each other. The great German writer Nietzsche would later write a book, celebrating the Aryan German roots within the Yazdan and Zoroastrian religions called Zoroaster.

Abdul Hamid II, however, had problems with the current Jaff leadership. Though Sheikh Ubeydullah had been defeated. The Jaff from their pursuit of the Hamavand had now been able to roam unhindered in the surrounding Persian areas of Qasr I Shirin. This was an obstacle to the border demarcation between Persia and the Ottoman Empire. This

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<sup>19</sup> DRIVBR, Gr, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, London, Zed Press, 1920

<sup>20</sup> Periódico "Zayan", ed. 499, 1936

<sup>21</sup> *Iraq Administration Reports, 1914-1932*, Vol 1-10.

<sup>22</sup> JWAIDAH, W, *The Kurdish national movement: its origins and development*, Syracuse University Press, 2006 pp. 419

<sup>23</sup> STINFLY, Long G. *Century From Iraq History*, London, Oxford University press, 1986

<sup>24</sup> QOBODI, Khanai, *Širin o Kōsrow*, ed. M. M. 'Ebd el Kerim, as *Šīrīn ū Kūsrew*, akari ř'irī nawdarī kurdXanay Qubadi", Bagdad, 1975.

also created antagonism to the Ardalan, who were back in power in the Vilayet of Kordestan. Mahmud Pasha Jaff's brother was married to an Ardalan, who also was opposed to Mahmud Pasha Jaff's lawless brigandage in Qajar Persia. This began a new alliance between Osman Pasha Jaff and Abdul Hamid II, who would replace Mahmud Pasha Jaff with Osman Pasha Jaff as Kaimakam of Shahrizor in 1889. Osman Pasha Jaff wished to exploit the rift between his brother and the Sultan. He was tired of being the junior to his brother. He wanted to be leader of the Jaff instead of his brother. He hated his brother. His brother was very factitious, and sparked much strife and disunity within the tribe. The Ottomans presented him, however with an opportunity to become chief of the Jaff tribe and more than this, an Ottoman Kaimaqam of Shahrizor. This was how he could cheat his brother out of authority by joining forces with the true authorities in Shahrizor, the Ottomans. Osman Pasha Jaff's clan would be proclaimed Hamidiye by the Sultan, and with this authority they would stike down all foes who stood in their way. Mahmud Pasha Jaff would flee to the borderlands and live as a nomad with his clan. He would be the Chief of the Jaff, according to the Jaff. Osman Pasha Jaff would be chief of the Jaff tribe, according to the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Osman Pasha Jaff would become the established Kaimaqam of Shahrizor, establishing himself in Gulambar. Mahmud Pasha Jaff and Osman Pasha Jaff came to hate each other, and were banned from crossing into each others territories. When they did meet, they would often engage in knife fights. They would luckily be restrained from killing each other, because any act of strife could give the opportunity for the Ottoman government to exile them. The Ottoman and Iranian states constantly cultivated friendship with the Jaff tribe, giving strategic importance to this area considered a "buffer zone" between the two empires, which helped 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 recognize his invaluable position: the title of Khan, awarded by the Iranian state, and from the Ottomans, Pasha. Sultan Abdul Hamid II looked upon his alliance with the Jaff with a grand ambition, for the Kurds proved more reliable soldiers than his own Ottoman armies, wishing 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. In 1894 the Anti Muslim Armenian revolts would break out, and the Armenians would commit many atrocities against the Kurds. The ranks of the Hamidiye would swell with Kurds, and they would begin to suppress the Armenian revolt. The Hamidiye would be held in high esteem by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, relying on them for the security of the Ottoman Empire. A mosque would be built in their honor near the Yildiz Palace in Besiktas.